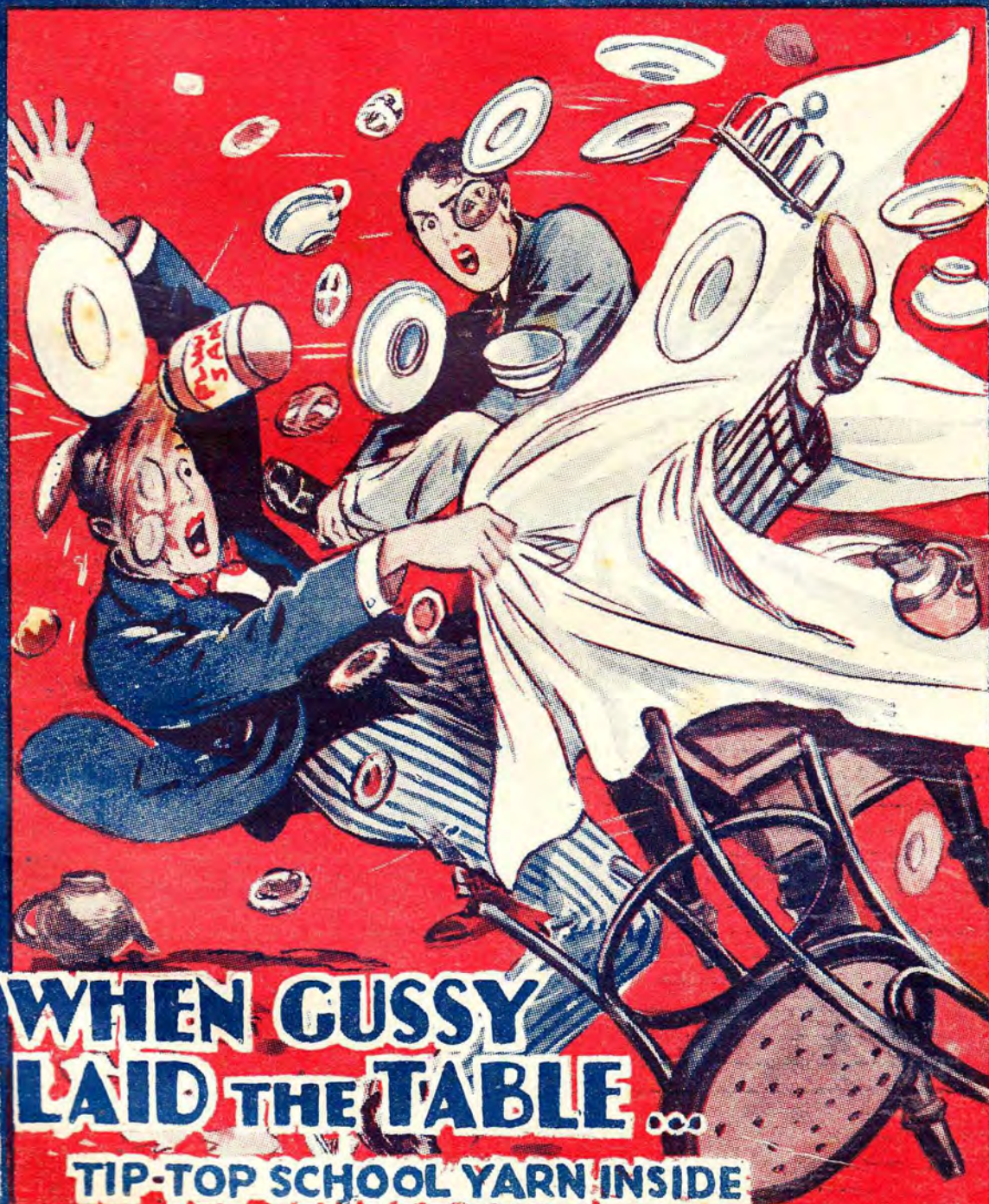


THRILLING SCHOOL, SPORT AND ADVENTURE STORIES INSIDE!

The GEM

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EVERY
WEDNESDAY.



SPARKLING LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY FEATURING—

CAPTAIN—

By
Martin
Clifford

Seniors, juniors and fags, with few exceptions, worship Eric Kildare, for the captain of St. Jim's is all that a manly youth should be. Then comes the startling discovery that the idol of St. Jim's has feet of clay!

CHAPTER 1

Fagging for Kildare!

"FAG!"

"Oh, blow!"

It was the voice of Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, that had come floating down the stairs from the Sixth Form passage, yelling for his fag. And it was Wally D'Arcy of the Third who had said "Oh, blow!" in consequence.

It was getting on for four o'clock, on a Wednesday. Wednesday afternoons were half-holidays at St. Jim's, and Wally D'Arcy, Reggie Manners, Frank Levison, and Curly Gibson, the leading lights of the Third, were crossing the Hall towards the big doorway opening on to the quad. Wally & Co. were going out, and a moment before had been looking very pleased with themselves—until the voice of the captain of St. Jim's, shouting "Fag!" had brought sudden dismay to their rather inky features.

Wally was Kildare's fag. The leader of the fag fraternity was duly proud of that fact, for the Third-Formers all worshipped the very ground upon which the popular athletic captain of St. Jim's walked.

But on this occasion Wally had reasons for looking decidedly "sick" at hearing the summons from the lofty realms of the mighty Sixth!

Wally & Co. were "broke," and they had spent the whole afternoon till then in raising the wind in order to visit Wayland cinema. A few coppers here and there from friends in the Third, and the contribution of a whole shilling from Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell, had at last provided them with sufficient means—mostly in copper—to go off and see Jack Holt's latest big film at the Wayland Regent. But Kildare was yelling for his fag!

"Oh, blow!" repeated Wally, coming to an abrupt halt.

"Hang!" ejaculated Curly Gibson vehemently.

"Just our luck!" groaned Reggie Manners.

The four fags looked at one another doubtfully.

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"Fag!"

Again Kildare's voice came floating down the stairs.

"Don't go!" growled Frank Levison. "Come on—let's get out quick!"

Wally glanced uncertainly towards the stairs.

As a general rule Wally answered Kildare's call very promptly. The captain of St. Jim's was as good-natured a fellow as could be found at the school, and he made a fag-master to be envied—as Reggie Manners, who fagged for Gerald Knox, the most unpopular fellow in the Sixth, was wont to remark wistfully to Wally. But even Kildare would not put up with any slackness from his fag. When he called he expected Wally to come—and at once! If he knew that Wally was in a rush, and failed to obey his summons, there was liable to be trouble for Wally.

"Fag!"

A third time Kildare's voice came down the stairs to the dismayed ears of the four fags. There was a note of impatience in it now.

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—TOM MERRY & CO., AND ERIC KILDARE OF ST. JIM'S!

and CHEAT?



"Oh dear!" said Wally. "I—I'd better go!"
 "Rats!" urged Frank Levison. "He only wants you to get his tea ready. Let him get his own tea!"
 "You can be clear before he comes downstairs to look for you," nodded Reggie Manners eagerly. "Come on!"
 "There'd be a frightful row if he knew," muttered Wally. "He's got some visitors coming to tea—I heard him tell Darrell. His giddy uncle, Sir Napier Wynter, you know, and that chap Saville who's coming into the Sixth, Kildare's blessed cousin. Saville arrives to-day, and Sir Napier's coming down with him from London, and, of course, old

Kildare is giving 'em tea, and—and—"

"Oh, blow them!" said Carly Gibson warmly.

"It's all very well for you asses to talk!" snapped Wally, with an uneasy glance at the stairs. "I'm the one that stands to get a whack-ing!"

"You won't!" said Reggie, confidently. "He won't know! Come on—scat!"

Still Wally hesitated. If it had been Knox he would have taken the risk of ignoring the summons without a doubt. But Wally did not like "letting down old Kildare."

But the temptation of the cinema was strong—very strong. And, after all, Wally was telling himself, Kildare would be able to find some other fag to prepare things for his little tea-party. With sudden desperate resolution Wally nodded.

"All right!" he muttered. "I'll come!"

"Good egg!" grinned Carly.

The fags hurried towards the doorway. As they did so Kildare's voice could be heard again—louder than ever, and at last thoroughly impatient.

"Look out!" gasped Levison minor. "He's coming!"

They could hear the captain's striding footsteps at the top of the stairs. With a gasp, Wally broke into a run. The chums of the Third fairly raced down the steps and across towards the gates. As they approached them at a breathless rate an elegant figure in a topper and monocle came sailing in from the road. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth, the swell of St. Jim's, Wally's celebrated major.

Arthur Augustus came to a halt and adjusted his gleaming monocle to survey his hurrying minor.

"Bai Jove! You appear to be in a gweat huwwy, Wallay!" ejaculated the swell of St. Jim's in a curious tone.

"Out of the light, Gus!" gasped Wally. "I'm giving old Kildare the slip—"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus grasped Wally's shoulder as his minor tried to slip past him. "You mean you are goin' out when Kildare is wantin' you?"

"Yes!" hooted Wally. "Let go, you ass!"

"Gweat Scott!" Arthur Augustus frowned severely. "I am shocked, Wallay! Yaas, wathah! I considah that if Kildare wants you to fag for him it is your dutay to do so. As your majah, I considah—"

"Leggo!" roared Wally, wriggling to free himself.

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus firmly, retaining his grip. Arthur Augustus took his position as Wally's "majah" very seriously. He was shocked to find that his scapegrace minor was deliberately failing in his duty as fag to the popular

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captain of St. Jim's, and he considered it his duty to bring Wally back to the straight and narrow path. "I considah—"

But what Arthur Augustus considered at that moment was never known.

Reggie, Frankie, and Curly had hurled themselves to the rescue of their leader. There was a breathless yell from the swell of St. Jim's as he was bowled over by the combined rush of the fags.

"Oh! B-bai Jove! Yawooooooooough!"

"Come on, Wally!" panted Reggie.

"Yawooooooooough!"

Arthur Augustus yelled again as the fags scampered over him. Wally's boot landed on his fallen topper, and the topper promptly disguised itself as a concertina. The swell of St. Jim's had been scrambling up, but he was knocked down again as they swept over him. He lay gasping breathlessly, as Wally & Co. vanished into the lane.

"Oh! Oh crumbs! Gwooh! I—I shall administah feafuhl thwashin's! I—I—"

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's furious threats were wasted on the desert air, so to speak. The fags had gone!

It was a very dishevelled-looking swell of St. Jim's that limped up the School House steps a minute or two later, minus his topper, and scarlet with wrath. He almost ran into the tall figure of Eric Kildare.

Kildare's handsome and usually good-humoured face bore a frown. If the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet had to go to the mountain, and so, when Wally had failed to appear in answer to his call, Kildare had come down in search of his fag.

At sight of Arthur Augustus the captain gave an exclamation.

"I'm looking for that precious minor of yours!" he said grimly. "Do you happen to have seen him, D'Arcy?"

"H'm! I—I wathah fancy he was goin' out!"

"Oh!" Kildare's tone was again very grim.

Arthur Augustus surveyed the captain very anxiously through his gleaming monocle. He was eager to avert Kildare's justifiable wrath from Wally's head, if possible. But the swell of St. Jim's, though he had a great idea of his own wonderful tact and judgment, was, perhaps, the most tactless fellow in the school.

"Yaas, he was goin' out," nodded Augustus unhappily. "I am afraid it was wathah wemiss of the youngstah to go out when he knew he was wanted by you—"

"What?" ejaculated Kildare, his brow going thunderous.

"What's that? He knew I wanted him—eh?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Oh deah! I—I had no intention of sayin' so!" he gasped. "Though I disapprove of Wally's thoughtless act vevy stwongly, I can assuah you I had no intention of givin' the game away—I mean," he corrected hastily, "of conveyin' the impressation that he knew he was wanted all along! I—"

"I think perhaps you've said about enough!" said Kildare, with tight lips. "So the kid knew he was wanted, and went out all the same? The young scoundrel! I'll deal with him!"

"Oh ewumbs! I—I twust nothin' I have said has landed Wally in the soup!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "I can assuah you I will speak vevy seavehly to Wally when he weturns—"

"Thanks; but I dare say I can do that myself—with an ashplant!" said the captain, in his grimmest tones.

He glanced at his watch. It was nearly four o'clock. At any moment now his uncle, Sir Napier Wynter, and his cousin, Rex Saville, another nephew of Sir Napier's, who was coming to the school to enter the Sixth, would arrive at St. Jim's.

There was a look that boded ill for Wally D'Arcy in the eyes of Eric Kildare as he swung on his heel and stole off towards the fags' quarters. Arthur Augustus watched him go with a very unhappy expression on his aristocratic face.

"Oh deah! This is wotten!" muttered the swell of St. Jim's breathlessly. "I am afraid I accidentally must have said somethin' to land Wally in the soup!"

Down the passage that led to the fags' Common-room the captain halted outside the door of the fags' quarters, and opened it, glancing in. It was empty. All the Third were out that afternoon, it seemed.

"Oh gad!" breathed Kildare. "This is the limit! Not a fag! I'll slaughter young Wally D'Arcy for this, the young rascal!"

He turned back towards the Hall. Arthur Augustus was still there, looking very uneasy.

"Buzz across to the New House and ask Monteith if I can borrow a New House fag!" ordered the captain of St. Jim's, with a frown.

"I twust nothin' I said is goin' to bwing twouble to my

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minah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I can assuah you—"

"I certainly mean to give him a lesson, if that's what you mean!" said Kildare angrily.

"Oh, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus looked a picture of distress. "Look heah," he went on suddenly, in a desperate tone, "I'll tell you what! If you like, Kildare, I will pwepah tea for you in your studey, on Wally's behalf!"

The swell of St. Jim's watched the captain very eagerly as he made that suggestion. As a member of the Fourth, Arthur Augustus was exempt from the duty of fagging for the Sixth, and, as a rule, he would have considered it very much beneath his dignity to offer to do so. But even the "tactful" Gussy could not fail to realise that but for him Kildare would not have known that Wally had deliberately given him the slip, and it was up to him to do all he could to make amends for that little accident. To his great relief he saw that Kildare's face cleared suddenly.

"That's very good of you!"

Kildare knew only too well how unlikely it was that there would be a New House fag available just then. D'Arcy's offer, therefore, came as a welcome solution to the problem.

"Jolly good of you!" he repeated. "Thanks, young 'un! I'd be obliged!"

"Not at all!" beamed Arthur Augustus. "I—I suppose, since one good turn deserves another, and all that, you won't be unduly seaveh with Wally, if I do this for him—what?"

Kildare frowned. But his frown gave way to a smile. He broke into a laugh.

"Oh, all right!" he nodded. "I'll let the young rascal off with a good talking-to this time!"

"That's wippin' of you!" beamed Arthur Augustus.

"You'll find the tea-things in the cupboard," said Kildare. "I'll wait down here, I think, to meet my uncle and cousin; they'll turn up at any moment now. Lay for four, will you? You may find Darrell up there—if so, explain I sent you."

Arthur Augustus sailed up the stairs and made his way to the Sixth Form passage. Darrell of the Sixth, Kildare's greatest friend at St. Jim's, was entering the captain's study as the swell of the Fourth arrived on the scene.

Arthur Augustus explained his mission to the rather surprised prefect.

"All right," nodded Darrell. "I'll wait here till they come up."

He seated himself in a chair by the fire, and picked up a magazine that was lying on the arm, while Arthur Augustus got to work.

He laid the cloth, and went to the cupboard. There was a rattle of crockery for a minute or two, while Darrell turned the pages of his magazine.

Crash!

"What the dickens—"

Darrell almost leapt a foot into the air. A tremendous crash had echoed through the study. He glanced round, and found that Arthur Augustus was surveying with dismay a couple of teacups that were lying smashed at his aristocratic feet.

"Bai Jove! I am afraid I have bwoken a couple of cups!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's. "Slipped out of my hand, somehow or othah—"

"Better fish out two more, then," said Darrell, with a dry grin, returning to his magazine.

As a substitute fag Arthur Augustus was undoubtedly willing; but he was not, perhaps, very efficient. A minute later another crash echoed round the room.

"Oh gad!" gasped Darrell.

"B-bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and surveyed the wreckage of a china cake-stand with great surprise.

"How evah did I come to dwop it, I wondah?" he murmured, in a puzzled tone. "Most astonishin'! I considah—"

"Well, don't quite bust up the happy home!" groaned Darrell. "And you'd better clear up that broken china, you young ass!"

"Oh, yaas, wathah!"

With a dustpan and brush the swell of St. Jim's cleared up the pieces of the cake-stand and the two teacups, and consigned them to the waste-paper basket. He found another cake-stand in the cupboard, and the table was laid without further mishap for the moment.

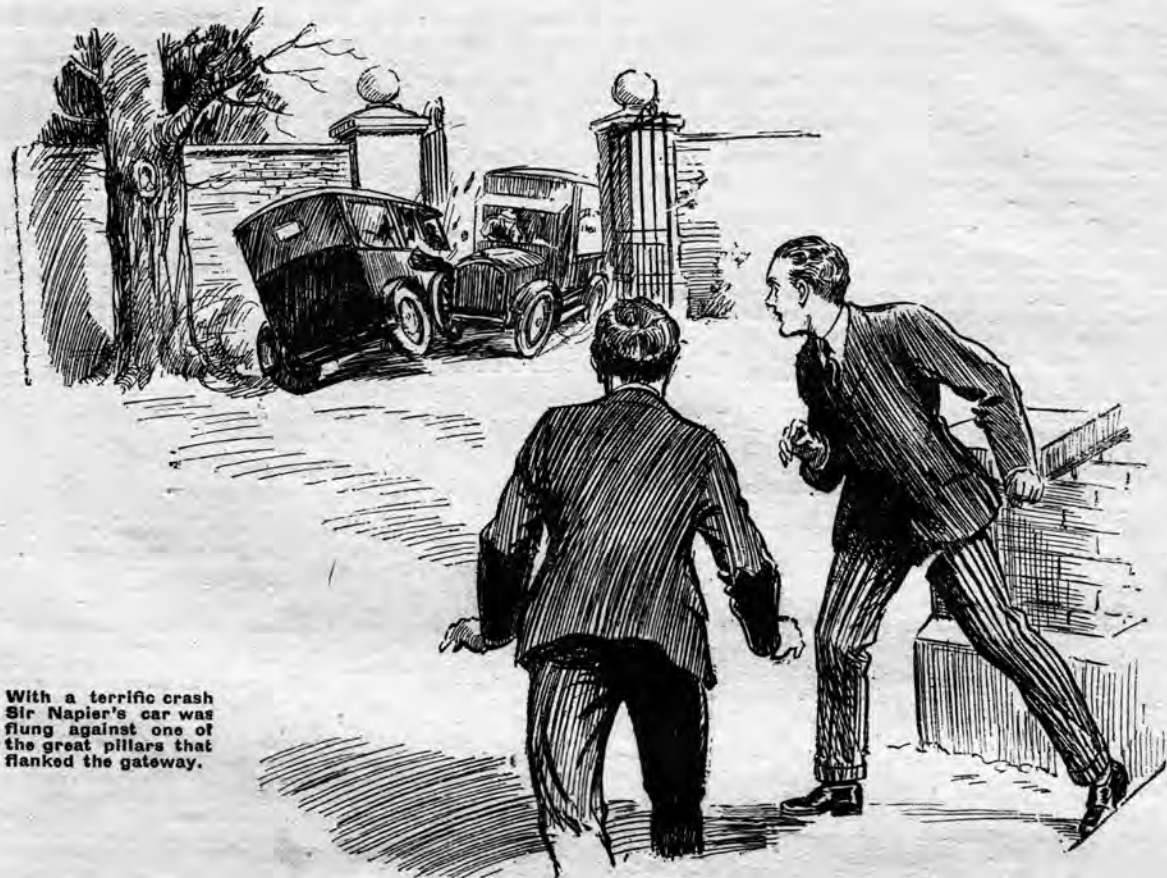
It looked very tempting, with the plates of delicacies from the tuckshop that Arthur Augustus had found provided, and put out on plates in the centre of the white cloth.

Darrell surveyed it with an approving eye.

"Now for the kettle, kid!"

"Yaas!"

Arthur Augustus went off to fill the kettle, and returned to place it on the fire. It was soon singing merrily.



With a terrific crash Sir Napier's car was flung against one of the great pillars that flanked the gateway.

Darrell glanced out of the window, and gave an exclamation as he saw a big car drive into the quad from the road and come to a standstill by the School House steps, where the tall figure of Eric Kildare could be seen hurrying forward to greet the newcomers.

"Here they are! Better brew tea right away!"

"Vewy well," nodded Arthur Augustus.

It did not take the kettle long to boil up, and the swell of St. Jim's got busy with the teapot.

"Buck up! They'll be here in a second or two," remarked Darrell. "I— Oh my hat! Look out!"

But the warning had come too late. Arthur Augustus, pouring water into the teapot from the kettle, had allowed a generous quantity of scalding-hot water to splash out on to the fender. And since Darrell's feet were resting on the fender just then, Darrell leapt into the air with a sudden wild yell.

"Oh! Yaroooooop! Ow! You—you—you—"

"Sowwy!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I— Oh deah!"

In glancing up at Darrell's yell the swell of St. Jim's failed to look what he was doing. As he swung the kettle round, a stream of steaming water came shooting out of the spout. It fell over Darrell's trousers, and the prefect gave another wild howl as the scalding water made itself felt very painfully.

"Yow-ooooop! Look out! Oh, you burbling young idiot—"

Darrell jumped forward to snatch that dangerous kettle from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's grasp. The swell of St. Jim's promptly dropped it altogether in his excitement—also the teapot, which promptly smashed on the hearth—and hot water flew in all directions.

"Oh gad!" gasped Darrell. "Wowps! Oh—"

"Yawwoogh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Darrell of the Sixth had shared the flying hot water about equally between them.

Darrell danced on one foot, clasping his scalded ankle, and Arthur Augustus, after a moment or two of wild leaping that looked as though he were indulging in a South Sea Islander's war-dance, lost his balance altogether and went sprawling. As he fell, his clutching hands caught hold of the tablecloth, dragging it on top of him.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

Cups and saucers and plates went flying as the unhappy Gussy dragged the cloth from the table. A large bread-

and-butter plate skidded on to his aristocratic napper and shivered into a dozen pieces. A flying jam-jar empties its contents over Arthur Augustus, and a plate of tarts filled his lap with some of Mrs. Taggles' best delicacies. A twopenny puff attached itself to his left ear, and a chocolate eclair stuck to his hair.

"Ow! Yow! Gwooooh!" panted Arthur Augustus.

He struggled wildly to free himself from the folds of the tablecloth.

Crash, crash!

Those articles of crockery which had not been broken already in the fall smashed merrily as the swell of St. Jim's wrought havoc among the scattered tea-things with his wildly kicking legs. And every movement entangled Arthur Augustus more hopelessly with the jammy cloth.

"Ow! Wescue! Bai Jove, I—"

There was a sound at the door. The next moment it had swung open, and the amazed face of Eric Kildare stared blankly into the study.

In the passage behind him was the tall, soldierly figure of his uncle, Sir Napier Wynter, and another—evidently Rex Saville, the new Sixth-Former. The unhappy swell of St. Jim's blinked at their astonished faces dazedly.

"Oh cwumbs!"

The captain of St. Jim's and his guests had arrived at the study just in time to witness the wreckage of their tea!

CHAPTER 2.

Rex Saville!

"GOOD gad!"

Eric Kildare stared into the study with an utterly dazed expression on his face.

George Darrell was still hopping on one leg, a look of anguish on every feature. The scalding water had hurt him. From the passage came the astonished voice of Kildare's uncle.

"What on earth's happening in here, Eric?" ejaculated Sir Napier, staring over his nephew's shoulder with humorous grey eyes that held the beginning of a twinkle.

"Great Scott!" The drawling tones of Rex Saville, Kildare's cousin, broke in. "Is it usual to have kids playing the goat in the Sixth Form studies at St. Jim's?"

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Arthur Augustus scrambled up, free at last from the tablecloth. He was covered with jam, and his face was crimson as he gasped for breath.

"I—I am fearfully sowwy, bai Jove!" he panted. "I'm afraid I had a little accident, don't you know. I—I—" "You blessed young idiot!" hooted Darrell. "Ow! I'm scalded!"

Kildare strode into the study, with thunderous brow. Sir Napier followed. He was a tall, handsome man, with a strong, good-humoured face and a clipped grey moustache. His other nephew, Rex Saville, strode after him.

Saville was a tall, good-looking fellow, with fair hair brushed smoothly back from his forehead. He was very neatly dressed—evidently something of a dandy. There was a smile on his face—rather a superior smile—as he surveyed the unhappy Arthur Augustus. Rex Saville looked like a fellow who had a good opinion of himself.

"Good gad!" he drawled. "What's the idea, kid?"

Arthur Augustus wiped jam from his monocle and blinked at Saville unhappily.

"Oh deah! I weally don't know how it happened, bai Jove! I am frightfully sowwy, Kildare—"

"So this is how you do your minor's job for him, is it?" exclaimed Kildare angrily. "Great Scott! The fags are bad enough, but it looks as if the Fourth are even worse! You—you—you—"

Words failed the naturally irate captain. He seized Arthur Augustus by the ear and jerked him to the door.

"Scat!" he snapped. "Clear out, for goodness' sake, before you smash the blessed chairs and table as well!"

And, breathing very hard, Kildare swung the gasping swell of St. Jim's into the passage by his ear, and slammed the door.

"Yawwooop!"

Arthur Augustus sat on the hard, unsympathetic linoleum and blinked dazedly at the closed door of the captain's study. From within he heard a hearty laugh. It was from Sir Napier Wynter. It was joined by a sudden laugh from Kildare. Apparently Kildare had seen the funny side of it all, after all.

"Oh deah!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

He limped to his feet and away down the passage. In Kildare's study the captain of St. Jim's surveyed the chaos with a rueful grin.

"Ye gods!" he ejaculated. "The burbling young ass! I wish I'd never let him loose in here!"

"Well, it can't be helped!" laughed Sir Napier. "We'd better clear up this mess, hadn't we?"

"You sit down, uncle—and you, too, Rex, old chap," said Kildare. He coloured. "I'm awfully sorry about this. But we'll soon get you some tea—eh, Darrell?"

Kildare and Darrell began to clean up the wreckage of the tea-things, while Sir Napier sat down, smiling. Rex Saville planted himself on the hearthrug, with slightly raised eyebrows. He did not offer to help.

"Gad!" he drawled again. "Is this sort of thing usual at St. Jim's?"

Kildare crimsoned and did not answer. The next moment there was a tap on the door. In answer to an invitation from the captain it opened, to reveal the grinning faces of Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth, and Herries and Digby, his two chums from Study No. 6.

They chuckled as they surveyed the scene in the study. Kildare and Darrell glared at them.

"What do you kids want?" snapped Darrell, in an exasperated tone.

"Just met Gussy," explained Blake cheerfully, stepping into the study. "He said he'd had a little accident in here! We thought perhaps we could lend a hand on behalf of Study No. 6! We feel we're responsible for old Gussy, you see!"

Kildare's face cleared.

"That's jolly good of you kids!" he said gratefully.

"Oh rats!" grinned Herries. "Leave this to us!"

It did not take Blake, Herries, and Dig long to finish cleaning up the mess. They laid a fresh cloth, and while Herries went down to the tuckshop for fresh supplies, Blake and Digby fetched crockery from Darrell's study and laid the table. In a few minutes they had everything ready, and a kettle singing cheerfully on the fire.

"Thanks awfully, young 'uns!" said Kildare gratefully. "Don't bother about the tea. I'll make that. You can get along now if you like. Take these with you," he added, holding out a couple of plates of Mrs. Taggles' best pastries. "They'll do for your tea."

"That's jolly nice of you, Kildare!" grinned Blake, taking the proffered tuck. "So long!"

Sir Napier Wynter nodded a smiling good-bye to Blake & Co. as they left the study. In the passage, as they turned towards the stairs, Digby sniffed.

"Blowed if I like that chap Saville!"

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"Neither do I!" grunted Blake. "I should say he's an outsider. Abso-bally-lutely!"

"Hear hear!" nodded Herries. "One of those smooth, nice-looking sort of rotters! Wonder why he's come to St. Jim's, at that age? He must be eighteen at least."

"Oh, he was at a school that closed down when its headmaster died—a private school," explained Blake. "That's what Gussy told me young Wally had heard Kildare tell Darrell. Well, I wish Saville hadn't come here. Not that it will really affect us much, I suppose—"

But Blake was wrong.

Had he only known it, the arrival at St. Jim's of the Sixth-Former, Rex Saville, was fated to affect Blake & Co. in an amazing way—to say nothing of Eric Kildare, and other juniors, too, such as Tom Merry & Co. of the Shell.

Though they little dreamed of it, Kildare's cousin was destined to bring some startling happenings into their lives—to lead them into strange perils far from St. Jim's, far even from England itself!

CHAPTER 3.

The Car Smash!

"WELL, I must be getting along!"

George Darrell rose to his feet.

Tea was over in the captain's study, and Kildare and his guests had been sitting round the fire chatting for a while.

Darrell had just glanced at his watch.

"Afraid I must be getting along," he repeated. "I've got to get in some work this evening for the Hilton Medal."

"The Hilton Medal?" queried Sir Napier.

"It's a Sixth Form Latin prize," explained Darrell. "I shan't win it, of course—not with old Kildare going in for it as well!" he finished with a laugh.

"Oh, rot!" smiled the captain of St. Jim's. "You stand as much chance as I do, old man! Well, so long!"

Darrell left the study, and Kildare closed the door behind his chum and returned to his seat. Sir Napier glanced at his two nephews with a thoughtful look in his grey eyes.

The baronet was a keen judge of character; and he had to admit to himself that he liked Eric Kildare the better of the two. Rex Saville, he knew very well, lacked a good many of Kildare's manly qualities. But though he recognised Saville's faults, to some extent, perhaps the latter was careful that his uncle did not know all of them. Rex Saville was always very keen to show his pleasantest side to his wealthy uncle.

"Well, Rex," said Sir Napier, with a smile. "Here you are at St. Jim's. Think you'll like the old place?"

"Oh, I dare say," nodded Saville languidly, straightening his silk tie and flicking a speck of dust from the sleeve of his elegantly tailored suit. A smile appeared on his handsome face, with its rather pale blue eyes and fair, smooth hair. He glanced at his cousin. "I have no doubt Eric will soon show me the ropes here."

His tone was very friendly. It was a friendliness that was perhaps rather of the shop-window kind—for the benefit of Sir Napier Wynter. But Kildare answered heartily:

"Oh, rather! You'll soon settle down in the Sixth!" he exclaimed cheerily.

Though Kildare did not care particularly for his cousin's dandyism, or his languid, rather affected air, he had always got on well enough with Saville on the few occasions when the pair had met.

Saville was an orphan who had spent most of his life in the care of an aunt of his who was no relation to Kildare—a lady who had done her best to spoil her handsome ward ever since he had been in knickerbockers!

Despite the fact that he inwardly regarded Saville as a "spoilt" youth, however, Kildare was out to extend a warm welcome to his cousin on his arrival at St. Jim's. He had every hope, too, that St. Jim's would knock off a few corners where Saville was concerned, and bring out the best in him.

Sir Napier glanced at his watch.

"I must be getting back to London soon!" he exclaimed. "Before I go I want to tell you two fellows something that may be of interest to you."

"Yes, uncle?" murmured Saville, in the rather obsequious tone he usually adopted when speaking to his wealthy uncle.

"I saw my lawyers the other day," went on the baronet. "I have drawn up my will—not that I am expecting anything to happen for many years yet, of course! I have left my money—"

He paused. A quick gleam leapt into Saville's eyes, swiftly veiled.

"I have left my money," repeated the baronet, glancing from one to the other of the cousins, "to be equally divided between you two fellows."

Kildare gave an exclamation.

"That—that's awfully kind of you!" he ejaculated. "I never thought—"

Rex Saville had drawn a swift, almost hissing, breath. But when he spoke his voice was so smooth as to be almost oily.

"You are very kind, very kind, Uncle Napier!" he murmured. "Most kind! But I trust that it will be a very long time indeed before any will of yours is needed!"

Kildare glanced at his cousin, with a faint, knitted line appearing on his forehead. Saville's almost fawning manner towards Sir Napier jarred the captain a little, though he did not for a moment question the sincerity of Saville's affection for his uncle.

Sir Napier laughed.

"Well, I hope so, too, Rex!" he smiled. "But I hope, too, that, when my number is at last up, there will be something to come to you two fellows. As you know, I am at present considered a wealthy man. As you know, I hold the controlling interest in the new company that has been formed for the purpose of starting a transatlantic airship service—"

Kildare's eyes gleamed with interest.

"You mean the jolly old S 1000 Company, uncle?"

"Yes," smiled Sir Napier. "Nearly all my money has been sunk in that venture, so I trust it will be a highly successful one, too. The company has already almost completed the building of its second airship, the S 1001. It is a big thing, I can tell you—it will carry fifty passengers and crew, and tons of freight, and we hope it will be able to offer an Atlantic crossing of record speed."

"It sounds a great scheme!" exclaimed Eric Kildare.

Rex Saville said nothing. He was thinking, perhaps, that if his uncle's daring venture failed, there would be no wealth for him to share in, when Sir Napier's will eventually came into force!

The baronet glanced at his watch.

"I must get along," he said, rising to his feet. "Thanks for the tea, Eric."

"Jolly glad to see you at St. Jim's—always!" answered the captain frankly.

He made a movement to cross to the door and open it for his uncle. But Saville was before him; the new Sixth-Former opened the door in rather an obsequious way for Sir Napier, and the three left the study, going downstairs to the quad, where the car and chauffeur were waiting to take the baronet back to London.

"Good-bye, Eric! Good-bye, Rex! Best of luck!"

Sir Napier Wynter shook hands with his two nephews, and stepped into the car. Kildare and Saville stood at the foot of the School House steps watching it drive off towards the gates.

There was a sudden, startled shout from the captain of St. Jim's.

"Great heavens!"

A tradesman's motor-van had come swinging into the gateway without warning, travelling at a reckless rate; the youth at the wheel of it was evidently an inexperienced driver. That a crash was inevitable was certain. Kildare had realised that at once. His face was suddenly deathly white as he gave a startled cry.

"Good gad!" gasped Saville.

The car bearing Sir Napier Wynter had swung violently sideways, as the chauffeur made a desperate attempt to avoid meeting the van in a head-on collision. But the van swerved, too, and skidded. There was a crash, and Sir Napier's car was flung against one of the great pillars that flanked the gateway, the front of the van pinning it there.

Kildare broke into a breathless run towards the scene of that sudden, startling smash. Rex Saville followed at the captain's heels.

Other figures were racing across the quad now to the accident. Lefevre of the Fifth, with his two chums, Smith major and Lee, had appeared from the direction of the playing fields and were tearing across towards the gates with startled faces. So were Tom Merry & Co. of the Shell, who had seen the crash from under the old elms, where they had been chatting with Bernard Glyn, Clifton Dane, and Kangaroo, the Australian junior, the three chums of Study No. 11, who were also now heading for the gates. Figgins & Co. had appeared from the steps of the New House, and old Taggles had appeared from his lodge at the sound of the accident.

"My heve!" gasped old Taggles. "It's a motor smash, blowed if it hain't!"

And Ephraim Taggles joined the crowd running towards the van and the wrecked car.

Sir Napier's chauffeur had been flung from the driving-

seat. But he had scrambled up unhurt. The youth driving the van was also undamaged. But of the occupant of the car—Sir Napier Wynter—there was no sign.

Kildare reached his uncle's car first, and dragged open the door, white-faced.

Sir Napier was lying huddled within, his head bruised and bleeding. The side of the car at which he had been sitting had been smashed in by the corner of the stone pillar, and it was clear enough that he had been struck a terrible blow.

Kildare lifted out the unconscious figure tenderly, with the aid of Tom Merry and George Figgins.

"Quick!" muttered the captain hoarsely. "We must get him to the sanny! Lowther, hurry, and tell them what has happened! Tell them to telephone for a doctor without delay!"

Monty Lowther of the Shell nodded, and raced away.

Rex Saville stepped quickly to Kildare's side.

"Is—he badly hurt?" he breathed. He moistened his lips as if they had gone queerly dry.

"I'm afraid so," nodded Kildare. His face was set.

"Help me carry him, man!"

"All right!"

The new Sixth-Former relieved Tom Merry and Figgins of their share of the burden, and together with the captain of St. Jim's bore the inert, bleeding figure of the injured baronet across the quad towards the sanatorium building. The throng of seniors and juniors, the chauffeur, and the young fellow who had been driving the van, and old Taggles, watched silently as Sir Napier was carried in through the doorway, where there was a momentary glimpse of Marie Rivers, the pretty school nurse, in her uniform.

After a while Monty Lowther returned to join his chums. Monty's usually cheery face was grave as he glanced at Tom Merry.

"He's in a pretty bad way," he muttered.

"Rotten!" said Tom quietly.

"I guess Kildare looked sure upset," put in Cyrus K. Hancock, the junior from New York City, in a sympathetic tone. "But, say, who was that other guy? The galoot with the brown suit, and the hair all slicked back?"

(Continued on next page.)

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"Must have been Saville, Kildare's cousin, who's coming into the Sixth," muttered Manners. "He was arriving at the school to-day, I know."

"I guess I don't care for the looks of that bird Saville," confessed the American junior bluntly. "Can't say for why—I guess I just don't."

"Oh, he looked all right to me!" said Manners, in surprise.

Cyrus K. Hancock did not answer, or argue. He simply shrugged his shoulders and said no more regarding Rex Saville.

"Let's wait and see what the news is," said Tom Merry, in a low, anxious voice.

Tom Merry was quite an old friend of Sir Napier Wynter, and the captain of the Shell was feeling terribly worried. The chums of Study No. 10 joined the silent crowd waiting by the steps of the sunny—a throng which was enlarging every moment, as the news of the accident spread through the school. All sorts of unlikely fellows appeared on the scene. Even Baggy Trimble, the Falstaff of the Fourth, came rolling up, and waited about for news of Kildare's uncle.

It was not long before the doctor arrived, and hurried into the building. Soon after that the tall figure of Eric Kildare appeared. The captain's face was haggard with anxiety.

"What's the news?" asked Tom Merry quickly.

Kildare glanced at him.

"He's bad," he said hoarsely. "They've phoned for a road ambulance to take him to London to one of the big hospitals. There's got to be an operation. His head—"

He broke off rather thickly.

"We—we're all awfully sorry about this," said Tom Merry, with deep sympathy in his voice. "I hope Sir Napier will—will be all right."

"Thanks, young 'un!"

Kildare's clouded eyes turned towards the gates. P.-c. Crump, the village constable, had appeared on the scene by now, with astonishing promptitude, and was standing by the interlocked car and van, taking down particulars of the accident in his bulky notebook from the chauffeur and the youth who had been in charge of the van. In the road behind them there suddenly appeared a white-painted ambulance.

With ringing bell it drove rapidly into the quad, the still increasing crowds falling away to let it pass. It came to a standstill by the doorway of the sanatorium, and the uniformed attendants jumped out, and hurried into the building with a stretcher.

Kildare vanished after them.

A few minutes later the ambulance was speeding out of the gates again with its unconscious passenger. From the quad Rex Saville watched it vanish into the road with a peculiar look on his handsome face.

He glanced at Kildare.

"Queer, this happening—eh?" he murmured. "After he had been talking about his will, and leaving his wealth to us two."

The captain of St. Jim's looked at his cousin in a way that brought a faint flush to Saville's cheeks.

"This is scarcely a time to think of that sort of thing, is it?" answered Kildare quietly.

"Well, it looks as though he might not pull through," said Saville queerly. "I wish he hadn't put his money into a wild-cat scheme for a transatlantic airship service, that's a fact! If the worst should happen, and he doesn't pull through this—"

Kildare's eyes blazed.

"Stop!" he said fiercely, his fists clenching. "I don't want to hear any more of that kind of talk, Saville! Who cares about his money, or the will? Haven't you any decency? It's he that I'm thinking of, not his money."

"Oh, yes, of course!" nodded Saville swiftly, colouring a trifle before the contemptuous gleam that had come into his cousin's eyes. "I—I was only saying that if—"

"Well, please don't!" said Kildare savagely.

The captain of St. Jim's swung on his heel and strode away, leaving his fellow heir to Sir Napier Wynter's thousands staring after him with a twisted smile upon his lips.

That Sir Napier was hanging between life and death, Rex Saville knew.

Saville did not for a moment definitely hope for his uncle's death, in order that he might inherit half his wealth. But he was, at any rate, callous enough to let his mind dwell far more on what Sir Napier's death would mean to him personally than on the hopes of his recovery. And Kildare had seen that in his face.

Saville knew, too, that his cousin had seen it.

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His face was still faintly flushed as he strode away towards the School House. Tom Merry & Co., who had seen that there had been angry words between the new Sixth-Former and the captain of St. Jim's, stared after Saville wonderingly.

"What the dickens is the matter between those two?" muttered Monty Lowther.

"Goodness knows!" Tom Merry frowned. "But it looks as if Kildare and this fellow Saville aren't going to be the best of pals, doesn't it?"

"You've said a mouthful," agreed Cyrus K. Hancock laconically. "I guess Saville isn't too sweet on Kildare; and, from the look of things, Kildare don't seem exactly to think the world of Saville, either!"

CHAPTER 4.

Cousin—and Foe!

TAP!

It was three days later, and Eric Kildare had halted outside the end study of the Sixth Form passage, and knocked on the door. It was the study occupied by his cousin, Rex Saville.

Saville's voice bade him enter. Kildare pushed upon the door and strode in.

An exclamation escaped him.

Saville was not alone. Gerald Knox, the black sheep of the Sixth, was also in the room, sitting by the fire. And both Rex Saville and Gerald Knox held smouldering cigarettes between their fingers.

"Hallo!" drawled Saville, raising his eyebrows. "Want anything?"

At sight of the captain of St. Jim's, Knox had looked rather sullen and sheepish, and had hastily tossed his cigarette into the fire. But Saville eyed Kildare with a cool smile on his handsome face.

Kildare's brow darkened in a frown. He shut the door, and crossed towards his cousin.

"So that's one of your little habits, eh?" he said quietly, indicating the cigarette that Saville was raising to his lips.

"What, the fag?" drawled Saville. "Oh, I like a whiff now and then, you know!"

"Don't you understand it's against the school rules?"

Saville nodded, with smiling insolence.

"Certainly. But as a member of the Sixth—"

"As a member of the Sixth," broke in Kildare grimly, "you are expected to show a decent example to the fellows in lower Forms!"

"Really?" Saville blew a thin stream of smoke from his pursed lips. "Thanks for tellin' me!"

For a moment Kildare's eyes blazed. He made a movement as if to stride forward to snatch the cigarette from his cousin's mouth. But then his hands fell to his sides. The last thing in the world Kildare wanted was trouble with Rex Saville.

He changed the subject abruptly.

"I looked in to tell you the latest news of Uncle Napier," he said, in rather a strained voice. "I've just been on the Head's phone to the hospital in London."

Saville sat up swiftly. His eyes gleamed.

"Well?" he breathed. "Is—is he getting on all right?"

"Just the same condition—that's what the doctor told me," replied Kildare quietly. "The operation, as you know, was successful. But Uncle Napier still hangs between life and death. He may pull through. Or—well, he may not."

Saville muttered something under his breath, and sat staring into the fire, deep in thought.

"I—I hope he pulls through all right, of course," he said at last, in a queer, thick tone. "Thanks for telling me."

"I thought you would like to know the news," said Kildare.

He glanced from his cousin to Gerald Knox. His eyes were clouded.

Kildare had never known Rex Saville very well, despite their relationship. But though he had not cared for some of his cousin's characteristics, he had always believed that he was a good fellow at heart. It had troubled him to find that from the very first day of Saville's arrival at St. Jim's, the new Sixth-Former had somehow managed to strike up what looked like developing into a warm friendship with Gerald Knox.

Though Knox was a prefect, he was as shady an individual as St. Jim's contained among its numbers. He was the last fellow in the school whom Kildare would have wished his cousin to pal up with.

He had hinted as much to Saville only the previous day. He had been rewarded with a snub for his pains.

Birds of a feather flock together! Rex Saville and Knox were apparently a couple to whom that old saying applied.

"Care to come along to my study for a chat, old man?" said Kildare, with a forced tone of friendliness that he was far from feeling.

"Not just now, thanks!" said Saville curtly.

"Some other time, perhaps?"

"Perhaps!"

The tone in which the answer came caused Eric Kildare to bite his lips. He turned towards the door. With his hand on the knob, he turned again.

"You are in the Sixth, Saville," he said quietly, "and old enough to judge things for yourself, I suppose. But if I may offer a piece of advice, I should chuck that rotten smoke business. See?"

And Kildare strode from the room, leaving his cousin glaring after him. Knox laughed softly.

"Your cousin is one of the good boys, you know," he said tauntingly. "No family likeness, I hope?"

"No!" snarled Saville. "I can't stand him! I'll admit that to you." He produced a silver cigarette-case. "Have another smoke? What the dickens did you want to chuck your cigarette away for, because he came in? Hang it, you're not in the Third!"

"No," said Knox, colouring, as he took a cigarette and lit it. "But—"

"My cousin scares you, does he?" jibed Saville.

"Oh, rats!" snarled Knox angrily. A smile suddenly replaced his frown. "I'm afraid your cousin doesn't approve of you palling up with me, eh?" He laughed softly.

Saville did not answer. He was staring into the fire with a thoughtful frown, biting his lip.

"I'll tell you something!" he said. "Sir Napier Wynter, my uncle, and Kildare's uncle, has made a will leaving all his money to be divided between the two of us. What do you think of that?"

Knox whistled. He knew what a wealthy man Sir Napier Wynter was said to be.

"You're in luck's way, Saville!" he said enviously.

"Yes," Saville nodded. "But it could be better! It would be a lot better, for example, if, instead of having to share with my cousin, I was my uncle's sole heir."

His eyes were gleaming qucerly as he glanced at Knox. Knox grinned.

"Of course," he nodded. He eyed his new friend keenly. "But—what do you mean?" he added suddenly, struck by something in the other's face.

"Sir Napier is in a pretty bad way!" muttered Saville, staring again into the flames. "He might die as a result of that crash. Any day he might die, Knox. Of course, I hope he lives," he added hastily. "Of course I do—"

"Of course," nodded Knox. "But if he doesn't—"

"That's it! If he doesn't—well, it would be a good thing for me if, during his illness, he altered his will, cutting my Cousin Kildare out of it altogether, leaving everything to me!"

His eyes blazed up with covetousness. Knox stared at him.

"Yes, but—"

"My uncle thinks the world of Kildare," went on Saville bitterly. "Thinks he's a fine fellow! Likes him better than me, I'm certain. But if something happened to alter his opinion—if Kildare was found to have done some despicable, dishonest thing, he'd cut him out of his will, for a cert!"

"You—you mean—"

"I mean," said Saville, his face paling with the excitement surging within him at the thought, "it might be possible to get Kildare utterly disgraced, somehow or other! He may be a namby-pamby boy, but, all the same, something might happen which would make it seem certain he had done something caddish and dishonourable!"

He leaned across, grasping Knox's wrist with a shaking hand.

"I'm telling you," he breathed, "because I know you dislike him just as much as I do! If we could work it



Saville pulled out the writing-flap and laid his torch upon it, so that the light fell directly on the lock!

between us to disgrace Kildare in my uncle's eyes, it would mean a fortune. I'd see that you got your share, too."

Knox stared into Saville's burning eyes with a startled face. He had gone quite pale.

"Great Scott, Saville—"

"It would have to be done soon," went on Saville, his voice gone suddenly calm again. He nodded thoughtfully. "It would have to be soon, to give Sir Napier time to alter his will. Then, if this accident of his proved fatal—"

He smiled silkily, tossing his cigarette-end into the flaming coals.

"What do you think, old man?"

Knox was breathing hard and fast. His eyes were gleaming.

The shady prefect had long hated Eric Kildare. He would considerably enjoy seeing the captain of St. Jim's disgraced in some way, particularly when knowing that he stood to lose a fortune thereby! And, further, Saville had assured him that if the scheme worked, it would be to Knox's advantage. Saville would see to that if he inherited Sir Napier's wealth, supposing the baronet, hanging now between life and death, failed to pull through.

"It—it might be done!" Knox muttered.

"How?" asked Saville coolly.

Knox leant back in his chair, frowning thoughtfully. Suddenly he smiled. It was a smile that was anything but pleasant to look upon. He leant forward again, with gleaming eyes.

"The Hilton Medal, Saville! Kildare is in for that. If it were found that he had cheated in the exam for the Hilton Medal, and was expelled for it—"

"Gad!" Saville gave a low, triumphant laugh. "The very thing—if it could be worked!"

"It can be worked!" muttered Knox. "Listen! This is what you've got to do—"

CHAPTER 5.

The Trap Laid!

CLICK!

The door clicked shut behind Rex Saville as he stepped out silently and cautiously into the gloom of the Sixth Form passage.

It was two days later—the night before the day set for the Hilton Medal examination. Across the quad midnight was striking in deep tones from the old clock of St. Jim's.

Saville was wearing a dark dressing-gown over his pyjamas, in the pocket of which reposed a small electric torch. His fingers were closed upon it as he moved off with noiseless strides towards the stairs.

The Sixth, unlike the rest of the Forms, slept in their own rooms. As he stole past Kildare's room, Saville paused, listening.

From within, very faint in the stillness of the sleeping House, could be heard the steady breathing of the captain of St. Jim's. A flickering smile appeared on Saville's handsome face as the captain's rascally cousin moved on, silent as a ghost, along the shadowy passage. He crept down the stairs to the next landing, and turned towards the Head's study.

Outside the door he paused, glancing back guiltily over his shoulder. Then, as if impatient at his momentary qualm, Rex Saville swung the door open without a sound and stepped quickly into the dim room.

He was breathing a little faster as he took the torch from his pocket and sent a ray of light darting through the darkness.

The curtains were drawn across the window. The big study was just as the old Head had left it on retiring to bed earlier that night. The desk was shut, however, and Saville gave a mutter of annoyance at finding that it was locked into the bargain.

But he had come prepared for that emergency.

He pulled out one of the writing-flaps and laid the torch upon it, so that the circle of light fell directly upon the lock. It was not a difficult one to pick for anyone who knew anything about that dubious accomplishment, and two minutes later, with the aid of the little instrument he had brought with him, Rex Saville heard the lock click open.

"Good!" he breathed.

As he raised the sliding lid, careful to make no sound in doing so, he glanced at the door. It was eerie in that big, shadowy room, vaguely lit by the torchlight, and the wind was moaning round the old buildings of St. Jim's in a way that even Saville found queerly unnerving. It was with fingers that quivered slightly that he lifted the torch again and flooded the interior of the Head's desk with light.

He had not far to look for what he sought!

Lying in one corner of the desk was a little pile of papers, just as they had been delivered by the printers that morning—the question papers that would be distributed in the Sixth Form room to the entrants of the Hilton Medal exam on the following day.

Saville drew in his breath with a sharp, hissing sound as his eyes gleamed down upon them.

With quick fingers he extracted one of the sets of question papers, thrusting it inside his dressing-gown, careful not to crease or rumple it. He closed the desk all but an inch—he did not want the spring lock to snap shut—and turned back towards the door with rather a white face. Even Saville realised in his heart the enormity of the offence, and that knowledge frightened him.

He left the study as silently as he had entered it, and stole up the stairs to the Sixth Form passage, along to his room. He was not there more than a few moments. When he emerged from it again he was carrying a small black case. It contained a portable typewriter, the property of Eric Kildare.

Saville was going to type out a copy of the examination paper there and then. But to do so in his own room would have been too risky. The noise of the machine might easily have disturbed someone.

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Carrying the typewriter, which he had "borrowed" from Kildare's room that evening, seizing a chance when the captain of St. Jim's had been out, Saville crept back down the stairs. He made his way to the ground floor and along towards the servants' quarters. From there a flight of stone steps led him down into the chilly cellars beneath the building, and in one of them, with the heavy door shut behind him, Saville felt safe enough to carry out his plan.

With the torch laid upon the top of a big pile of bundles of firewood, its steady beam white in the gloom, the captain's cousin placed the typewriter on an overturned box, seated himself upon another, and drew out the printed sheets he had extracted from the Head's desk.

For twenty minutes the staccato rattle of the typewriter filled the little cellar, far from the ears of the sleeping school!

It was a long paper that the Head had set, and the long passages in Latin that it contained made it rather a slow task for Saville. But he finished at last.

As he stole back up the stairs, the school clock struck the half-hour. Five minutes later, with the examination paper returned to the Head's desk, and the desk once more locked, Saville was back in his own room. He put the typewriter away, and the copy he had taken of the Hilton Medal paper, and slipped into bed with a sardonic smile.

"I fancy I'm going to work it all right," he told himself softly, as he lay staring across the dark room to the dim, grey square of the window. "It'll be a shock to Uncle Napier to find that his beloved nephew, Eric Kildare, is known to have cheated in the big exam! And if he doesn't alter his will, my name isn't Rex Saville!"

"Good luck, old chap!"

There was a friendly smile on the face of Rex Saville as he spoke.

It was his cousin, the captain of St. Jim's, whom he had addressed.

Kildare, Darrell, and half a dozen other Sixth-Formers were going down the passage to the Sixth Form room, at the heels of Dr. Holmes. It was the following afternoon, and the exam for the Hilton Medal was beginning in five minutes. Several seniors had gathered at the end of the passage to watch the entrants go in, and to wish their respective friends luck. But it was generally felt that Kildare would carry off the prized medal, without much doubt.

Kildare paused, glancing round, as he heard Saville's words.

"Thanks!" he exclaimed.

Kildare was a little surprised, to say the least, that his cousin had bothered to put in an appearance, apparently with the purpose of wishing him luck in the exam. He had scarcely exchanged a word with Saville since seeing him a few days before in company with Knox, a cigarette in his lips.

Though he would very much have liked to have been on good terms with his cousin, for Sir Napier's sake, Kildare had felt so sure that Saville had no wish to be friendly with him that he had resolved to force his unwanted presence upon his Cousin Rex. He had looked in to see him that morning to tell him that the latest news from the hospital was the same—that Sir Napier was still hanging between life and death. Otherwise, he had not spoken to Saville for several days, except to wish him good-morning, when they had happened to meet at breakfast-time or going into the Sixth Form room.

"Best of luck, old chap!" repeated Saville smoothly.

He held out his hand. Kildare took it rather eagerly. Was his cousin feeling a little ashamed of the way he had behaved towards him since his arrival at the school? It looked like it to Eric Kildare—who did not realise for a moment the utter hypocrisy of that handshake so far as Saville was concerned.

But Rex Saville had his reasons for wishing Kildare to think of him as his friend just then!

There was a veiled, sardonic gleam in Saville's eyes as he watched his cousin's stalwart figure vanish into the Sixth Form room, the last of the group who had followed Dr. Holmes through the doorway. The door closed.

Saville turned and strode away towards the Sixth Form room. The Sixth-Formers who were not in for the Hilton Medal were spending that afternoon in the laboratories; but there were still five minutes or so before Saville need put in an appearance there.

He hurried to his room, to reappear a few moments later with Kildare's portable typewriter in his hand. There was no one about, so with a mutter of satisfaction he went quickly along the passage to the captain's study, and entered.

Putting down the typewriter, he took from his pocket the copy he had taken of the exam papers, and crossed to the captain's desk. Opening a drawer he slipped it in,

beneath other papers, and closed it with a quick breath of relief.

"That's that!" he told himself with satisfaction. "When that's found—and I'll see that it is found—"

He broke off with a smiling shrug of the shoulders, and turned to where the typewriter was standing on the floor in its closed case. Picking it up, he replaced it where he had found it the previous day—underneath the small settee by the fireplace. As he straightened himself a sudden sound behind him brought a breathless gasp of consternation to his lips. He swung round, to find himself staring into the astonished eyes of Eric Kildare.

"Hallo!" ejaculated the captain. "What the dickens—"

For a moment Saville felt panic-stricken. But he recovered himself instantly, and smiled coolly.

"Oh, hallo! I thought you were in the Sixth Form!"

"I was, of course," nodded Kildare, surveying him rather oddly. "But the Head asked me to fetch him a Latin Grammar."

Though he did not ask the question, it was clear enough in his eyes that he was wondering what had brought his cousin there in his absence. Saville laughed.

"Oh, I see! You've caught me red-handed, then! I wanted to borrow a book of logarithms, for physics in the lab. I've mislaid mine, and I thought you wouldn't mind if I borrowed yours without asking, since I couldn't go into the Sixth's room to ask for it. Do you mind?"

"Of course not," said Kildare quietly. "But you didn't expect to find it under the settee, did you?"

Again Saville laughed smoothly.

"Well, no! I'd dropped my pencil, that's all—it rolled under there, and I was just picking it up as you came in."

"Oh, I see!" Kildare smiled and went to the bookcase.

"Here's the log-book! Any time you want to borrow anything like that, just barge in and help yourself, of course. I'm glad you did, old man."

"Thanks!"

Kildare took a Latin Grammar from the shelves, and the two seniors left the study together. Saville looked after his cousin as the captain of St. Jim's disappeared down the stairs, with a faint frown on his handsome face.

"Curse the luck!" he muttered. "But he didn't guess I had touched his typewriter, of course—he's not likely to guess! But, hang it all the same, I wish he hadn't caught me in there!"

And it was with a frown still furrowing his brow that Rex Saville went off to the laboratories; while in the Sixth Form room, in a silence broken only by the occasional rustle of papers and the scrape of pens, Eric Kildare, undreaming of treachery, set to work on the Head's questions for the Hilton Medal.

CHAPTER 6. Kildare Wins!

"LOOK here, young Curly—"

"I tell you, young Wally—"

"If you want a punch on the nose—"

"If you want a thiek ear—"

In the Third Form room Wally D'Arcy and Curly Gibson surveyed one another fiercely, and breathed hard.

It was two days after the examination for the Hilton Medal. Afternoon classes were over, and the results were to be given out by the Head in Big Hall in a few minutes' time. And a little argument had started as to who was going to be the winner.

Wally would not hear of anyone but Kildare being even remotely likely to win the coveted distinction. Curly Gibson, however, was Darrell's fag, and like a loyal fag, Curly was sticking up for Darrell's chances with a good deal of heat—if not with very much inward conviction.

"I tell you Kildare will win it on his neck!" said Wally, thrusting a warlike countenance into his friend's face.

"And I tell you that Darrell will walk away with it," said Curly, struggling to control his wrath. "Kildare doesn't stand an earthly! I tell you, old Darrell—"

"I'll punch your silly nose if you say Kildare doesn't stand an earthly!" roared Wally.

"Oh, will you?"

"Yes, I jolly well will!"

"I don't think! You wouldn't dare punch a dying donkey!" sniffed Curly.

That was a little too much for Wally. He hit out, and there was a yell from Curly as his leader's knuckles landed on his nasal organ. The next instant there was a yell from Wally, in turn, as Curly's fist punched him in the eye.

"Yaroooooh! Yow! My hat, I'll teach you!" gasped Wally, and flung himself at his friend.

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it, ye cripples!"

There was a yell of encouragement from the grinning fags as Wally and Curly grappled with one another, and began a weird and wonderful dance, locked in each other's arms. They tumbled over in a wild heap, and there was a howl from Levison minor as one of Wally's waving boots caught him on the shin.

"Yaroooooh! Oh! Yow!" roared Frank Levison, dancing in an agonised way on one leg. "You ass, Wally!"

But Wally was too busy to trouble over Levison minor's worries. Curly was sitting up with Wally's head in chancery, pommelling away merrily. Wally yelled:

"Yow! Ooooooh! Oh crumbs! I—I'll slaughter you, young Curly!"

"Do you admit Kildare couldn't win the Hilton Medal in a thousand years, then?" gasped Curly.

"No!" hooted Wally. "Yooooops! Ow!"

Curly recommenced his pommelling. But with a mighty effort Wally twisted free, and the next moment it was Curly's head that was in chancery, and Curly who was yelling.

"Who'll win the Hilton?" hooted Wally.

"Yaroooooh! Darrell, of course! Oh! Wow!"

"Who'll win?" roared Wally again, after another hearty pommelling.

"Oh crumbs! Yow! Darrell will— Oh, yooop! I—I mean, Kildare will!" wailed Curly.

Wally, with a triumphant grin, released his friend and scrambled up, dusty and dishevelled. Curly also rose painfully, glaring at his leader. He opened his mouth breathlessly as if to retract his enforced statement. But just then the clang of the bell rang out noisily, summoning the school to Big Hall. The fags poured out of their room, Wally and Curly in their midst, their little argument forgotten already in the excitement of the moment.

The fags took their places noisily enough, until a barked command from Knox scared them into silence. When the last fellow had taken his place—it was Trimble of the Fourth, whose lateness had been due to the fact that Baggy Trimble had been hastily finishing a plate of tarts in Mrs. Taggles' little tuckshop before answering the summons of the bell—the Head appeared on the dais, a sheaf of papers in his hand.

There was an instant silence from juniors and seniors alike as the Head rustled forward to the front of the platform.

The eyes of most of the fellows present were directed towards the ranks of the Sixth. It was generally expected that Kildare would prove to be the winner of the coveted distinction that only half a dozen or so of the Sixth had dared enter for. But there was a great deal of interest and excitement, for nothing could be considered certain.

Kildare himself was looking quite cool, as though the result meant nothing to him. Kildare was naturally very hopeful that he had won the medal, for it was a valued prize. But he was the last fellow present to feel in any way over-confident. He was concealing the thrill he must have felt while waiting for the result very well, however.

Near him Saville was lounging in a disinterested fashion. But there was an odd look in the new senior's eyes, carefully veiled.

"I have here the result of the examination for the Hilton Medal," began the Head, in his deep, majestic tones. "I am glad to say that a very high standard of work indeed has been shown in the papers. St. Jim's should feel proud of its Sixth Form Latin scholars!"

"Oh, bow-wow!" grinned Burkett, the bully of the Shell.

"The winner of the medal," went on the Head, who had not heard Burkett's disrespectful murmur regarding the Sixth, "is Kildare, who has gained no fewer than ninety-six marks out of a hundred. The second place goes to Darrell, with ninety marks—"

But the Head's next words were drowned by the crashing cheer that had rung out in Big Hall, in acclamation of the popular captain. Kildare flushed with pleasure. Wally D'Arcy turned a triumphant glance towards Curly Gibson.

"What did I tell you, young Curly?" grinned Wally.

"Oh, rats!" growled the discomfited Curly.

Again the cheering rang out as Kildare stepped forward to receive the medal, in its leather case.

"Good old Kildare!" shouted Tom Merry, from the ranks of the Shell.

"Yas, wathah!"

"Hurrah!"

Suddenly the cheering died away. An unusual thing had happened. Accompanied by old Taggles, a telegraph-boy had appeared at the back of the dais. Cap in hand he came forward, and held out an orange envelope to the Head.

Dr. Holmes adjusted his glasses and ripped it open, drawing out the enclosed telegram. A startled exclamation broke from him.

It was marked as having been landed in at Wayland twenty minutes before. It was a long wire. The sender had not bothered to save money in sending it.

"I feel it is my duty," ran the telegram, "to inform you that it has come to my knowledge, by chance, that one of the candidates for the Hilton Medal found means to see the exam paper beforehand, and took a copy of it. If the Sixth Form studies are searched this copy will be found. For obvious reasons I regret I cannot sign this."

The Head's hand shook as he stared down with startled, found. For obvious reasons I regret unable to sign this."

CHAPTER 7.

Caught in the Trap!

"GOOD heavens!" breathed the Head.

"Any answer, sir?" inquired the telegraph-boy.

"No answer," said Dr. Holmes slowly.

The boy disappeared, in charge of old Taggles. Again the Head read the telegram, and a third time.

In Big Hall a strange hush had fallen.

It was obvious to everyone that the telegram contained news that had come as a severe shock to the old Head. The fellows stared at one another with startled, rather anxious faces.

"What the merry dickens—" breathed Monty Lowther.

"Looks as if the Head's had bad news," muttered Tom Merry, in a troubled tone. "I wonder what it is?"

The faint murmur of whispering that began died away the next moment as the Head turned again to the assembled fellows, and raised a hand for silence. His dignified old face was set in a peculiar way, it was seen.

"Boys, dismiss! But I wish the entrants for the Hilton Medal examination to remain."

With the exception of the group of Sixth-Formers concerned, the big throng of seniors and juniors tramped from the Hall. When the last of them had gone the Head stepped slowly down from the dais, and approached the bewildered group of Sixth Form fellows.

"I have just received a very peculiar announcement," said the Head quietly. "I can only pray that there is no truth in it whatever. I will read this telegram."

He did so. There were one or two startled exclamations. The Sixth-Formers stared at the Head as though they could not believe their ears.

"Good gad!" breathed George Darrell. "It can't be true, sir!"

"Surely it's just some absurd attempt at a joke, sir?" exclaimed Kildare, with a shrug.

"I trust so," nodded the Head. He hesitated. "But I feel I should be negligent in my duty if I failed to prove to the satisfaction of you all, for your own sakes, the utter absurdity of this terrible suggestion."

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed North emphatically. "I, for one, sir, would be only too glad to have my study searched."

There were murmurs of agreement.

"But who can have sent it?" said Kildare quietly, with a dark frown. "It's a poor kind of joke. The fellow who dared send it should be made to answer."

"I fear it would be utterly impossible to trace the sender," put in the Head, shaking his head. "Even if it is a St. Jim's boy who is responsible, I am afraid we could not hope to find out his identity." He glanced round at the group. "I expect you are all agreed that the easiest way to clear the air of this unpleasant suggestion would be to make the search which the anonymous sender suggests, and so prove the falsity of his wicked implication?"

"Absolutely!" nodded Darrell angrily.

"No one objects to this unfortunate and unpleasant search being made?" persisted the Head.

There was no answer from the Sixth-Formers. However much they resented the suggestion made in the anonymous wire, and felt the indignity of the proposed search, they all realised that it was the only way to clear the air, as the Head had said.

"Very well," nodded Dr. Holmes. "Perhaps it would be better if you all accompanied me to the Sixth Form passage without delay. I will request Mr. Railton to aid in the search."

"Very good, sir!" said Kildare.

There were no New House seniors among the entrants for the Hilton Medal, so that the whole search would take place in the Sixth Form passage in the School House. The startled Sixth-Formers followed Dr. Holmes with rather grim faces as the headmaster of St. Jim's strode off with rustling gown.

Mr. Railton's astonishment when he heard of what was about to take place was only equalled by the astonishment that the Head himself had felt upon first reading that mysterious telegram. It was with a very upset expression that he joined the Head for the visit to the Sixth Form passage.

"Is this search really necessary, Dr. Holmes?" he exclaimed. "This can only be a cruel hoax—"

"I think it is better that the search be made," nodded the Head, with a troubled frown. "Otherwise, there might always be the unpleasant thought in the minds of some that the examination has not been conducted on the scrupulously fair lines that we believe it to have been."

"Very well, Dr. Holmes."

That something was "up" was soon known to the whole school, it seemed. Groups of curious juniors watched the Head and the Housemaster and the grim-faced Sixth-Formers march past on their way to the lofty realms of the Sixth, and every group broke into a hum of wondering conjecture when the little procession had gone by. Some of the more daring spirits even ventured to follow at a discreet distance. But as the Head strode into the Sixth Form passage he glanced back, and came to a halt at sight of the juniors behind him.

"Return to your own quarters at once, boys!" commanded the Head sternly, and the juniors retreated with disappointed faces.

"What evah can the mattah be?" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a puzzled frown. "It is weally most peculiah!"

"Waal, I guess we'll get wise to it in the end!" drawled Cyrus K. Handcock, the American junior. "So don't you worry, Clarence. Your nut wasn't made for thinking with, I guess."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Look heah, Handcock—"

And Arthur Augustus was arguing warmly with the grinning American as Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co.

Potts, The Office Boy!



returned to the junior Common-room in a body, wondering what on earth the trouble could be in the Sixth.

In the Sixth Form passage the Head halted outside the first study concerned. It was Eric Kildare's.

Kildare opened the door; and the Head and Mr. Railton entered. The captain followed, leaving the rest of the Sixth-Formers waiting outside, talking in low, angry tones.

"I feel how absurd it is to trouble to make this search—in your study, in particular, Kildare," said the Head.

"Thank you, sir. But I welcome the search, of course."

"Perhaps you will let me have your keys?"

"Oh, there's nothing locked, sir!" smiled Kildare.

"Then, perhaps, Mr. Railton, as a mere matter of form, you will be so good as to—ah—perform this unpleasant and, I am sure, unnecessary duty?" went on the Head, turning to the Housemaster.

"Very well, Dr. Holmes."

With a faint flush upon his face, that showed how little he relished the task, Mr. Railton glanced through the books and papers lying on the table, and on the top of the low bookcase. He crossed to the desk and opened it, searching through the neatly arranged contents.

"This supposed copy of the examination papers is certainly not here, Dr. Holmes," he said quietly. "Need I continue this unpleasant farce further?"

"I feel that, for Kildare's sake, it should be a thorough search," said the Head frankly, with a glance at the captain of the school, who nodded. "Those drawers, for instance—"

"If you wish it," said Mr. Railton, with a faint tone of impatience.

He pulled open the top drawer of the desk, and lifted out the papers within, glancing casually through them.

A sudden change came over his face. The Housemaster seemed almost to stagger. His lips opened soundlessly.

"Good heavens!"

His face had gone deathly white. He turned dazedly to the Head, holding out, with a quivering hand, a typewritten sheet of foolscap. His eyes, however, were not on the Head, but fastened upon the captain of St. Jim's.

"Mr. Railton!" breathed the Head. "What—what—"

The Housemaster still did not speak. Dr. Holmes took the typewritten sheet from his colleague's hand and stared down at it wonderingly.

The next moment his fine old face had gone ashen grey. His lips twitched as he raised his eyes to those of Eric Kildare.

Dr. Holmes steadied himself with an effort.

When he spoke his voice was scarcely audible.

"Kildare! How—how do you account for this? What have you to say?"

In dumb surprise, the captain took the sheet of foolscap from the Head's hand. He ran his eyes over the typewritten scrawl, and a queer, hoarse exclamation broke from his lips as he saw that it was an exact copy of the questions set in the Hilton Medal examination of two days ago!

From the passage the startled faces of the Sixth-Formers stared in as Kildare glanced, white-faced, from the accusing eyes of the Head to those of his Housemaster.

CHAPTER 8.

Stripped of His Honour!

"I DON'T understand, sir, how this came to be in my study."

The captain of St. Jim's tried to speak normally. But his voice was hoarse despite himself, as he laid the incriminating sheet upon the desk and faced the Head again.

"Kildare!" The Head's voice shook. "You must know how it came here! Who else but you can know that?"

Kildare did not answer. His mind was in a whirl! He made a helpless gesture. The Head's face hardened.

"This discovery is terrible!" he said in a voice that had gone steely. "I—I would have staked my life upon your uprightness! And yet—" He broke off, with an almost despairing gesture. "We find this!"

"I don't understand!" muttered Kildare. "Surely, sir, you can't believe—"

"There is a great deal I do not understand. But what else can I believe than that you—you—"

He did not finish. Kildare's face was strangely haggard as he stared from the Head to Mr. Railton. The Housemaster stepped forward.

"One moment, Dr. Holmes. This copy of the examination papers is typewritten. As far as we are aware, Kildare does not possess a typewriter."

He glanced questioningly at the captain. Kildare moistened his lips. But he straightened himself almost defiantly as he answered:

"Yes, I do possess a typewriter."

"Pray allow us to see it," said the Head in a low voice. He glanced at the door and then at Mr. Railton. "Kindly close the door, Mr. Railton. Boys, go to your studies."

The Sixth-Formers began to disperse, with faces that were dazed and incredulous, as Mr. Railton shut the door. Kildare stooped over the settee and drew out the typewriter in its case.

"This is my machine, sir."

"Take this," ordered the Head, handing him a sheet of clean foolscap from the desk. "Kindly typewrite a few sentences."

The machine rattled out as the captain obeyed. He handed the result to the Headmaster and Mr. Railton. The two masters placed the sheets side by side and bent over them, comparing them. Mr. Railton gave a startled exclamation.

"It is the same machine which printed this copy, Dr. Holmes. Without a doubt. If you notice, the letter 'L' is slightly damaged, leaving the same defective impression."

Their eyes went to the captain. Kildare was standing very straight. But his face was deathly pale.

"What have you to say, Kildare?" asked the Head in a low, troubled tone.

"All I can say is that I did not type out that copy of the question-paper, sir. And I cannot account in any way for its presence in my desk," returned the captain of St. Jim's quietly. "It is all a mystery to me, I swear."

"Have you lent this typewriter to anyone?" asked Mr. Railton. "Has it ever been out of your possession?"

"No, sir," muttered Kildare, after a moment's hesitation.

The Head's face darkened.

"That is a very serious statement, in the circumstances, Kildare. Reluctant though I am to believe this terrible thing of you, I have very little choice, you must agree, but

"Mourning" Off!



to realise that there is a very strong case against you!" The Head's face was almost as haggard as that of the captain himself. To Dr. Holmes it had come as a staggering shock to find that the one fellow whose honour he would have valued higher than that of anyone else at the school, was standing before him condemned by heavy evidence as a despicable cheat.

Mr. Railton was just as shocked. But his face, like that of the old Head, was growing sterner every moment.

"Then, once again, Kildare—since you deny your guilt—how can you account for the finding of this copy of the question-paper in your study?" the Head demanded again, in a shaken voice.

"I cannot account for it," came the low answer. "But I swear that I did not make that copy of the questions. When I went into the Sixth Form room for the Hilton exam, I swear I had never seen the questions set."

There was a long silence in the study. Kildare's lips were set in a compressed line. His fists were tightly clenched, showing the stress of mind through which he was passing as he quietly faced the sorrowful, rather than angry, faces of the Housemaster of the School House and the headmaster of St. Jim's.

After what seemed an eternity, the Head spoke.

"I regret that I feel unable to believe you, Kildare," he said, in measured tones.

The captain's white face flooded with scarlet. But his voice was still quiet. He smiled bitterly as he spoke.

"I cannot make you believe me, sir. But it is true."

For a moment the Head closed his eyes. The shock seemed to have left him tired out. He sighed.

"The evidence proves beyond doubt that, by some means, you were dishonourable enough to find a way of gaining access to the Hilton Medal question-paper before the exam, in order to prepare the answers for when the examination came, Kildare. I could not have believed this of you—of you less than anyone in the school—were the evidence not overwhelming. But I consider the case proved beyond question."

Kildare seemed to reel as if from a physical blow. His hands went out behind him to the table, seeking for support. But he did not speak.

"Naturally, your fraudulent claim to the Hilton Medal is null and void," went on the Head steadily. "Further, I here and now deprive you of the position of captain of St. Jim's—the position of which you have proved yourself so utterly unworthy. You will not even remain a prefect."

Kildare's lips opened as if he were about to speak. But he remained dumb.

"I—I shall not expel you, Kildare," the Head continued, in a voice that suddenly quivered with emotion. "I cannot help but regard your astounding act as one that must have been performed in a moment of mental aberration. You may remain at the school, as I say, for that reason. Further, I am willing that this unhappy affair shall be hushed up, for the honour of St. Jim's. Your resignation from the captaincy and your rank as prefect will be announced without explanation, and I shall see that those members of the Sixth who were witnesses of this discovery do not spread their knowledge."

He glanced at Mr. Railton.

"Will you be so kind as to gather the Sixth in their Form-room, for me to speak to them, Mr. Railton?"

"Very well, sir."

The Housemaster opened the door, and the Head rustled out. Mr. Railton, after a last glance at Kildare, followed, closing the door behind him, and taking with him the fateful paper.

In the study the ex-captain of St. Jim's stood gripping the table to support himself, staring at nothing, with ashen face.

He felt dazed, stupefied.

Kildare was a fellow who valued honour higher than life itself. To find himself branded as the vilest cheat had brought his whole world crumbling in ruins round him. His whole being cried out against the bitter injustice of it—but he was powerless to prove his innocence.

Without a sound, he staggered from the table, and dropped into a chair, burying his face in his hands.

CHAPTER 9.

Kildare's Downfall!

CRASH!
The door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage flew open. Blake & Co., seated round the table enjoying their tea, turned surprised faces to the doorway. At sight of the fat figure of Baggy Trimble framed there, panting and breathless with hurry and excitement, Blake picked up a footer-boot from the floor, Herries

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seized the bread-board, Digby reached out for a book from the bookshelf, and Arthur Augustus grasped a cushion from an easy-chair near him.

And in one voice the chums of Study No. 6 said:

"Scat!"

"Chuck it, you asses!" gasped Baggy. "I—I—I—"

"Certainly, deah boy!" grinned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Baggy Trimble had not meant "chuck it!"—at any rate, not in the sense that Blake & Co. apparently construed his



As the juniors watched breathlessly, a swinging

words! He gave a yell of alarm as a footer-boot, a bread-board, a dictionary, and a pillow sailed through the air towards him.

"Yaroooooop!"

Herries' aim had been the best. The bread-board caught Baggy well and truly in the centre of his fat waistcoat, and he doubled up with a gasp. The boot whizzed past one fat shoulder, and the dictionary past the other, while the cushion swept his feet from under him. Baggy sat down in the doorway with a mighty concussion that fairly shook the floor.

"Oh! Yooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sight of Baggy sitting dazedly blinking into the study, as if wondering whether he was standing on his head or his heels, brought a yell of laughter from the chums of No. 6. Baggy scrambled up with a furious snort.

"Oh, you beasts!" gasped Baggy. "Groooooch! I'm

hurt! I jolly well came to tell you the news about Kildare, but I shan't now—"

"We know Kildare's won the Hilton Medal, thanks, ass!"

"Pway woff off, Twimble!"

"It's not that!" roared Baggy. "It's been found that Kildare cheated. He's not got the medal, after all! He's been kicked out of the captaincy—he ain't a prefect now! But I'm jolly well not going to tell you, so there! Yah!"

And Baggy, with a snort and a glare, rolled away along



from Kildare sent Saville crashing to the boards!

the passage, apparently blissfully ignorant of the fact that despite his intention of withholding his amazing news, he had let it out of the bag despite himself!

"What?" gasped Blake. "Kildare cheated? It can't be true!"

He leapt excitedly to his feet.

"Gammon!" ejaculated Digby incredulously. "Baggy's crazy!"

"He must be wandahwin' in his mind!" panted Arthur Augustus.

But he, like Digby and Herries, jumped swiftly to his feet. In a body, the four chums of the Fourth rushed from the study and along the passage in pursuit of Baggy. They collared him in a few yards, and surrounded him. Herries grasped the Falstaff of the Fourth by the shoulder breathlessly.

"You fat fibber!" he gasped. "That's not true about Kildare—"

"I didn't—" hooted Baggy. He blinked nervously at

Blake & Co.'s angry faces. "It is true! I—ahem!—happened to break a bootlace as I was passing the Sixth Form room just now, and I happened to hear the Head inside, gassing to the Sixth, who were there with him. He was telling 'em that they weren't to breathe a word about it, as he was going to hush the whole thing up—"

"Good heavens!" breathed Blake.

His face had gone quite pale.

That Baggy was telling the truth was obvious. That Baggy had been listening outside the Sixth Form room they could well believe—and even Baggy would not have made up such a staggering story as that out of his own fertile mind.

"Good heavens!" repeated Blake hoarsely. He stared at his chums in a dazed way. "Kildare—a cheat!"

Though they had to believe it, it was hard to do so of the captain of St. Jim's. Eric Kildare was the very last fellow in the world of whom they would have dreamed such a thing. It was a staggering shock. Blake looked as though he had received a physical blow.

"Gweat Scott!" breathed Arthur Augustus, in a voice that was oddly unlike his own.

Baggy grinned.

"He, he, he! Who'd have thought it? It seems Kildare managed to see the question-paper before the exam, and took a copy of it, and swotted up all the right answers. No wonder he came out top, eh? He, he, he!"

And Baggy scuttled off to spread the astounding news farther. Blake & Co. watched him vanish round the corner with stupefied expressions on their faces.

"I—I can't believe it!" muttered Digby.

"Let's see if anyone else knows of it," put in Herries quickly. "It's just possible Baggy has misunderstood something he heard the Head say."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The chums of Study No. 6 hurried along the passage and down the stairs. In the Hall, they soon found proof enough of what Baggy had said. Gathered round the notice-board was a dense throng of juniors and seniors, reading with the greatest astonishment a notice that was pinned there, written in the Head's own handwriting:

"Kildare, having resigned his position as a prefect and captain of the school, the captaincy is now open to candidature. An election will take place on Monday. Candidates for election should send their names into me before six o'clock to-morrow evening."

It was signed with Dr. Holmes' familiar signature.

"Well I'm blessed!" ejaculated Kerruish of the Fourth in the middle of the crowd. "Why the dickens has old Kildare resigned?"

"Looks fishy to me!" grinned Percy Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth. "We know there was trouble in the Sixth this evening, after the result of that blessed Hilton Medal examination was known!"

"I guess it's mighty queer!" remarked Cyrus K. Handcock, who had just appeared and read the notice with Tom Merry, Manners, and Monty Lowther. "Watcher know about that?"

The Hall was filled with a buzz of excited conversation as the crowd discussed the surprising notice. Blake & Co. alone knew the reason just then. But a few minutes later the fat, excited figure of Baggy Trimble came scuttling down the stairs, after looking in at various studies to tell his story, and in a few moments more the truth was known!

The Head, in his anxiety to hush the matter up, for the sake of the honour of the school, had reckoned without the Paul Pry of the Fourth!

At first, the fellows would not believe Baggy. But he convinced them at last that what he had said was true. The notice itself was almost proof of that!

"Great heavens!" breathed Tom Merry dazedly.

"For the love of Mike!" gasped Cyrus K. Handcock.

Juniors and seniors alike were utterly flabbergasted, there was no doubt about it. They looked at one another like fellows in a dream. A queer hush had fallen, to be broken by a scoffing laugh from Frederick Burkett.

"Well, the best of us have our faults, it seems!" chuckled the bully of the Shell. "Even Kildare ain't an exception, apparently! But fancy him posing as an angel of light so long, and getting away with it! Haw, haw!"

"Oh, shut up, you cad!" snapped Tom Merry.

"Look here—" began Burkett, with an angry flush, glaring at the captain of the Shell. But he broke off.

The figure of Mr. Railton had appeared on the stairs. In the silence that fell, the Housemaster, whose face was set rather queerly the fellows were quick to notice, crossed to the board and pinned up a notice beside the Head's. As soon as he had gone back up the stairs there was a rush to read it.

"Owing to an error made, the result of the Hilton Medal examination as announced in Big Hall has been revised," the notice read. "The winner of the Hilton Medal is Darrell, with ninety marks out of a possible hundred."

"Well, this proves it!" muttered Clifton Dane.

"Great Scott, yes!"

Blake & Co., on the outskirts of the crowd, turned away. They felt sick at heart. Kildare had long been an idol to the juniors; it was heart-breaking to find that their idol had been so utterly unworthy of their regard.

But as they made for the stairs to return to their study, they came to a sudden startled halt.

A haggard figure had appeared on the stairs, coming down into the crowded Hall. It was Kildare himself.

"Heah he is!" breathed Arthur Augustus.

The buzz of talk died away in a moment as Kildare reached the foot of the stairs. The faces of all were turned towards him. The throng fell back silently, leaving a lane for the ex-captain to pass through as he crossed towards the doorway opening on to the quad.

Kildare himself seemed unconscious of the staring eyes as he walked quietly between the ranks of the St. Jim's fellows. His eyes were filled with misery, apparently unseeing. He glanced neither to right nor left as he crossed the Hall and vanished through the doorway.

Jack Blake drew a deep breath. He grasped Arthur Augustus by the arm.

"I don't believe it!" he muttered hoarsely. "Kildare isn't a cheat! The Head may believe it, and Ralton, too, but I don't, and I won't! It must be a ghastly mistake—I'll swear it is!"

"Bai Jove, I agree with you!" cried the swell of St. Jim's, fiercely. "I don't believe he is weally a cheat, eithah!"

"Nor do I!"

It was the quiet voice of Tom Merry that cut in. The captain of the Shell had come towards the group. His eyes were darkly shadowed.

"I'll never believe it!" went on Tom, in steely tones. "Kildare's true blue, if ever a fellow was!"

"I guess you've said a mouthful!" agreed Handcock grimly.

"Hear, hear!" muttered Manners and Lowther, Herries and Digby, one after another. But each had the same conviction in his tone.

But whatever Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. might believe, St. Jim's as a whole believed as the Head himself did! In the eyes of the school Eric Kildare stood branded as a cheat, utterly disgraced, only allowed to remain at St. Jim's by the generosity of Dr. Holmes; but the captain of the school no more—not even a prefect.

A convicted cheat!

In the darkening quad, beneath the dark shadows of the elms, the tall figure of Eric Kildare was pacing to and fro with haggard face, those words written in his brain as if with fire.

CHAPTER 10.

A Shock for Saville I

"COME in!"

It was later that evening. A tap came upon the door of the Head's study, where Dr. Holmes was sitting at his desk. The headmaster of St. Jim's glanced towards the door as it opened.

Rex Saville stepped into the room.

"Well, Saville?"

The Head's face was lined as he greeted his visitor. He looked older than usual. The affair of Eric Kildare and the captain's supposed roguery in connection with the Hilton Medal examination had been a severe shock to him.

"I wanted to ask a favour, sir!"

Saville's voice was smooth and respectful. His sleek hair gleamed yellow in the lamplight, his handsome face was set in grave lines.

"What is it, Saville?"

"I wanted permission to go to London to-night, sir, in order to visit my uncle at the hospital in the morning. He is hanging between life and death, as you know, sir. I—I would like to see him, in case"—for a moment Saville's voice appeared to break—"in case the worst should happen, sir."

The Head nodded.

"Of course! I understand. I give you full permission."

"This unhappy affair of my cousin's"—for a moment he seemed to hesitate—"of my cousin's lapse; it is very upsetting to me, sir! I utterly fail to understand him!"

The Head passed a hand listlessly across his brow.

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"It is incomprehensible to me as well, Saville. I am utterly at a loss to understand Kildare's behaviour. I would have trusted your misguided cousin implicitly!"

"I always considered him the soul of honour, sir."

"And so did I." The Head sighed. "As you are aware, I had hoped to be able to hush up the whole thing. It is not good for the junior Forms in particular to know of such a disgraceful happening. A terrible example! But, unfortunately, I find that, in some mysterious way, the news has leaked out already. It was bound to do so, I suppose. Mr. Ralton tells me that he has already overheard junior boys discussing the matter in all its details in the corridors."

"Indeed, sir!"

"A sad pity," muttered the Head. "Well, it cannot be helped. No good crying over spilt milk, Saville! But there was another reason why I wished the unhappy business to be kept as secret as possible. Your uncle, Sir Napier Wynter—if by some unfortunate chance the story should come to his ears, I fear it would have a very serious effect upon him in his present dangerous illness. I do not see how he could come to hear of it, I admit. But, with everyone knowing it, there is always the danger—"

"Let us hope not, sir," murmured Saville smoothly. "Naturally I shall not mention the matter when I see him."

"Of course not! I trust you will find that a change for the better has set in, Saville, when you see Sir Napier."

"Thank you, sir! We can only hope for the best."

Saville's face was grave as he left the study. But as he shut the door behind him and moved off towards the Sixth Form passage a faint gleam of evil amusement came into his eyes.

Rex Saville had every intention that Sir Napier Wynter learnt of what had happened at St. Jim's with regard to its ex-captain! It was for that very purpose that he had asked permission to go to London to see his uncle.

The discovery that Kildare was not to be expelled, after all, had come as a blow to him. It had made his visit to the hospital in London a necessity if his evil scheme of influencing Sir Napier into altering his will were to be an immediate success.

Saville turned into the Sixth Form passage and came to a sudden abrupt halt.

He had found himself face to face with the tall figure of his cousin, Eric Kildare!

Kildare surveyed Saville with rather an odd look in his burning eyes. It was a look that caused a swift uneasiness to spring up within Saville's brain. It was with difficulty that the treacherous Sixth-Former kept himself from dropping his eyes before Kildare's steady scrutiny.

"I was looking for you!" Kildare's voice was quiet, but there was a steely ring in it that increased Saville's sudden uneasiness. "Come in here. I want to talk to you!"

They were standing by the door of Kildare's study. The ex-captain pushed the door open. For a moment his cousin hesitated. Then, with a shrug, Saville walked into the room. Kildare followed him and shut the door.

"Well?" muttered Saville.

"You were as surprised as anyone, I expect, to hear that I am supposed to have got the question-paper and copied it before the Hilton exam?" said Kildare slowly. His eyes never left his cousin's.

"Of course!" said Saville. He tried to keep his voice steady. "It—it was a staggering shock to me. I cannot understand what made you do it! You must have been mad!"

"But I didn't do it!" went on Kildare, his eyes still riveted upon Saville's, which shifted beneath that remorseless gaze. "Some other fellow made that copy and planted it on me! Some fellow who was out to see me disgraced—ruined! Whoever he was, he must have come in here and sneaked my typewriter to do it, and then, when he thought I shouldn't see him, he sneaked back here and put it back where he had found it, underneath the settee."

"I—I am willing to believe that," gasped Saville. "But can you prove it? Can you make the Head and the school believe it?"

"No. But for my own satisfaction I have been wondering who that fellow could be. I believe I know!"

"Then—then surely you will show him up!" exclaimed Saville. "He ought to be shown up!"

"I shan't show him up, because I can't prove it. But to my own satisfaction I have settled the question. I know who the fellow was. I happened to come unexpectedly into this study the other afternoon and found him stooping over the settee. I realise now that he had just replaced my typewriter."

"What do you mean?" cried Saville in a low, hoarse voice. "If you are referring to that time you found me in here—"

"I am!" Kildare's voice was suddenly harsh. He took

a swift stride forward, his face ablaze with passion, "You—my own cousin! It was you!"

He raised a shaking hand. The next moment he had driven his clenched fist with all his force full between Rex Saville's panic-stricken eyes.

CHAPTER 11. The Fight!

SAVILLE staggered back.

"You hound!" Kildare's voice was bitter and contemptuous. His eyes were blazing. Saville, half blinded, whimpering with fear, saved himself from falling by clutching the table. He gave a cry of terror as his cousin came slowly towards him.

"Keep off!" he cried chokingly. "It's not true!" "You needn't lie!" Kildare grasped him by the shoulder, jerking him forward. Saville almost collapsed. His knees had suddenly all but given way beneath him. "You hound! You—my own cousin! I can't prove it. I don't care to try to prove it, even. If the Head and St. Jim's choose to believe the worst of me, they may!"

Kildare's voice was harsh. His very soul had been embittered during those last few hours. His pride had risen in full force. Even had it been possible to establish his innocence, his pride would have prevented him making the attempt to do so.

"You hound!" he repeated. His grasp on the shoulder of the whimpering figure tightened like steel. "Oh, don't be afraid. I'm not out to prove your guilt. But I'll tell you this, Saville. I'm going to give you the thrashing of your life!"

"Let me go!" cried Saville hoarsely. "I tell you—" "Come along to the gym," broke in Kildare. His voice was as grim as Fate. "I tell you I'm going to thrash you!"

"I won't!" whimpered Saville.

Kildare jerked him towards the door. The shaking figure of his scoundrelly cousin was like that of a child in the powerful grip of the ex-captain of St. Jim's. Kildare swung the door open and thrust him out into the passage.

"Now," he said quietly, "will you come by yourself, or will you let the school see me drag you there by the scruff of your neck?"

"My hat! What the dickens—"

In Study No. 10 of the Shell, Tom Merry & Co. were busy with their prep when the door crashed violently open and Jack Blake rushed into the room.

"Great Bohunkus!" ejaculated Cyrus K. Handcock, staring at the leader of the Fourth. "What's the big thrill, buddy?"

"Kildare," gasped Blake, "and Saville! They're in the gym, fighting!"

"What?" panted Manners. "My giddy aunt!"

"No one knows what the row is," went on Blake breathlessly, "but they're fighting like a couple of fags! Without gloves! Come along—quick!"

Blake's last words were totally unnecessary. Already the four chums of Study No. 10 were on their feet, hurrying to the door.

It did not take them long to get across to the gym. A huge, excited, silent crowd was gathered there in an impromptu ring, and in the centre of it, beneath the blazing electric lights, two shirt-sleeved figures were fighting fiercely.

It was seldom indeed that St. Jim's had the thrill of seeing two Sixth-Formers fighting in the gym, and it was still more seldom that they saw two members of the mighty Sixth fighting with such savage determination as seemed to be gripping Rex Saville and Eric Kildare.

Saville was an out-and-out coward. But he knew that he could not avoid the fight, and he preferred to stand up to it rather than submit to a thrashing at his cousin's hands, and a kind of desperate courage had seized him.

With bleeding lip and dishevelled hair, Rex Saville looked a very different figure now from his usual polished self. And few fellows would have instantly recognised Eric Kildare in the blazing-eyed, white-faced, violent figure with whom Saville was battling.

Even as Tom Merry & Co., with Blake, joined Herries and Dig and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the crowd, a swinging blow from Kildare's left sent Saville crashing dazedly to the boards.

He writhed convulsively, a battered, whimpering figure. Kildare's blood-flecked knuckles opened as he dropped his hands.

He stared down at the moaning figure of his cousin with pitiless eyes. Then, turning abruptly on his heel in the

deathly silence, the ex-captain of St. Jim's turned to where his coat lay, slipped it on, and strode away out of the gym without a glance at any of the breathless crowd.

The cold air beat upon his face, still flushed and hot, as he strode off through the gloom towards the School House. He was satisfied.

"Kildare!"

He came to a sudden halt as he heard his name called. Glancing round, he saw a shadowy figure hurrying towards him, and recognised Darrell of the Sixth.

"What the dickens—" breathed Darrell, as he came up and halted beside his friend.

"If you're going to ask me why I had to fight Saville, please don't," answered Kildare hoarsely. "I can't tell even you the reason, old chap." His eyes met his friend's with a steady look. "You don't believe what the school believes? You don't believe I cheated in that exam?"

"You know I don't believe it," muttered Darrell huskily. "Of course I don't, old chap."

He held out his hand. Kildare gripped it, with a quivering smile.

"I knew you wouldn't, even though everyone else does. I wanted to see you. I want to ask you to do me a good turn. I hate borrowing money, but it's necessary, and I'll pay you back as soon as I can. It's hard luck that I happen to be short of cash just when I need it. Could you lend me a few quid? I wouldn't ask anyone but you—"

"Of course I will, old chap." Darrell took out a note-case, extracting some pound notes. "Eight quid enough?"

"Heaps." Kildare pocketed the notes with a twisted smile.

"You wonder why I want the money, eh? I'll tell you—I'm leaving St. Jim's to-night—for ever!"

"Good heavens, man—"

"I can't stay on here," went on Kildare bitterly. "How could I, with the Head and the school believing what they do? I couldn't stand it. So I'm going—to-night. When St. Jim's wakes up in the morning it'll be to find the school is well rid of a—a cheat!"

"Don't talk like that!" said Darrell fiercely. "You know you are not a cheat!"

"Anyway, I am going."

Soon afterwards the bell went for call-over. A little later, and the lights in the windows of the dormitories showed that St. Jim's was going to bed. One by one the lights went out.

It was after midnight that a shadowy figure dropped from a ground-floor window of the School House and strode away through the gloom towards the wall by the chapel—swung up on to the wall, and vanished on the farther side.

The hours passed. When morning came it was not long before the whole school knew that its old captain had left St. Jim's unhonoured, like a thief in the night.

CHAPTER 12. Algeria Bound!

"DR. HOLMES, I refuse to believe it!"

Sir Napier Wynter's voice was grim with conviction. There was a steely light in his grey eyes as he met the Head of St. Jim's troubled gaze.

It was weeks later.

After days in which his life had been despaired of by the doctors, Sir Napier had pulled through, though the shock of learning, from Saville's own lips, of Kildare's departure in the night from St. Jim's, and of the ex-captain's supposed rascality, had done a great deal to hold him back in his fight for life.

Saville's hope that his uncle would alter his will, leaving all his wealth to him, had been a vain one. The risk he had run by his villainy had been wasted. From the very first, he had utterly refused to allow his faith in his favourite nephew to waver.

And now, a fit man again, he had come to St. Jim's to see Dr. Holmes.

"I understand your natural refusal to believe the worst of your own nephew, Sir Napier. I can admire you for it. But really—"

Dr. Holmes broke off with another shrug.

"We need not argue further, Dr. Holmes." Sir Napier picked up his hat and gloves. His face was dark and troubled. "I do not blame you for my nephew's complete disappearance. But I shall leave no stone unturned until I have traced his whereabouts. It looks as if he must have gone abroad, but it should not be impossible to find him in the end."

"I wish you every success," said the Head earnestly. "By the way, Sir Napier, you may be interested to know that the school is being temporarily closed down—"

"Closed down?" echoed the baronet in astonishment.

"Exactly. A few days ago a case of scarlet fever occurred in the New House. Yesterday two more cases were discovered—one in the New House and one in the School House. At a hastily called meeting of the governors it was decided that in order to prevent a serious outbreak the school should be closed down for a while, and the boys sent to their homes."

"Good gad!" ejaculated the baronet. "Very worrying for you, Doctor, eh?"

"Exceedingly," nodded the Head. "However, we have every hope that we are acting in time to prevent any serious spread of the infection." He held out his hand. "Good-bye! And believe me, I beg, that I regret perhaps as much as yourself that unhappy affair of your nephew, Kildare."

Sir Napier left the study. After a moment's hesitation he turned towards the Sixth Form passage. A minute later he was knocking on the door of the study occupied by the new captain of St. Jim's—George Darrell.

Darrell was at home. He sprang to his feet at sight of his unexpected visitor, and they shook hands warmly.

"I am awfully glad you have come here to-day, sir!" exclaimed Darrell. There was a note of excitement in his voice. "I have said nothing to anyone as yet—I was thinking of going to the Head, or writing direct to you. This morning I had a letter from Kildare, and I should like you to read it, sir."

Sir Napier drew out the enclosed sheets. They were of poor quality foreign paper, covered with pencilled writing. As he read his face set in startled lines.

The letter held amazing news!

Sir Napier Wynter had, of course, heard of the famous French Foreign Legion—a regiment made up of the world's outcasts, men of all nationalities, many of them fugitives from justice. He had heard of Sidi-bel-Abbes, the headquarters of the Legion, a little, sun-baked Moroccan town on the edge of the burning Sahara Desert. Sidi-bel-Abbes

I will take him. He'll be delighted to know that we have traced Kildare's whereabouts at last, and will be sure to want to come."

Darrell did not reply. He knew well enough that Rex Saville had been on anything but friendly terms with Eric Kildare—that their relationship had not prevented a bitter fight between them, for some reason unknown to anyone but themselves. But he did not mean to inform Sir Napier of that fact. What would be the use?

There was a tap on the door. In answer to a word from Darrell, it opened to reveal the figures of Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. They entered the study carrying sheafs of foolscap, and laid them on the table in a body.

"Our lines, Darrell," explained Tom Merry.

The new captain of St. Jim's had found it necessary to award all seven of them a hundred lines apiece that morning for ragging on the steps of the School House in morning "break."

"Why, Merry!" Sir Napier held out his hand. "Glad to see you!"

The baronet shook hands with the group of juniors, who were old friends. As a rule, they were delighted to see him. But the circumstance of Kildare's recent disgrace and disappearance caused them to face him now with a certain amount of restraint. They had not seen Sir Napier since that affair, and they would have liked to offer their sympathy.

As if reading their thoughts, Sir Napier smiled.

"You will be glad to know, I am sure," he exclaimed, "that my nephew's whereabouts have been traced at last!"

"Oh, good egg!" breathed Blake.

"You know, sir, none of us believe that he was guilty!" put in Tom Merry eagerly.

"Bai Jove! Wathah not! I considah—"

"I guess there's nothin' mean about Kildare!" nodded Cyrus K. Handcock, with conviction. "Not on your life!"

"I am glad to hear you say so, my boys," answered Sir Napier, with a flush of pleasure. He closed the door and

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was the address at the top of the letter he held in his hand now.

Kildare had joined that famous regiment of outcasts! The ex-captain of St. Jim's was now a soldier of the Foreign Legion!

"My heavens!"

Sir Napier's voice was hoarse as he laid the letter down. He sat staring into the fire with unseeing eyes.

"Apparently he went straight to Marseilles after clearing out from here, sir," muttered Darrell, with shadowed eyes. "Then Algeria—and the Legion!"

Sir Napier nodded. His lips were set in resolute lines as he glanced at the new captain of St. Jim's.

"He cannot remain there. I shall not rest until he is persuaded to return to England. It will be possible to buy him out of the regiment—"

"Yes—if he consents," put in Darrell quietly. "But he's got a lot of pride, sir. He may prefer to stay where he is."

"I shall at any rate see him!" Sir Napier crashed a fist down upon the arm of his chair. "I am the chief director of a firm that owns two of the biggest airships in the world, for a transatlantic service. Their second dirigible, the S 1001, is just completed, and has already been out on its first trials. When it goes out again it will be for a long-distance flight, its last test. Its route has not been decided upon, though we have planned to take it somewhere on the Continent. This decides it. The S 1001 shall go to Algeria—why not there as much as anywhere else? I will kill two birds with one stone, Darrell!"

He rose to his feet, with gleaming eyes.

"Yes, the S 1001 flies to Algeria in a day or two's time! And, once there, I shall find my nephew and bring him home!"

"Let me come, too!" Darrell's voice was unsteady with excitement. "The school is closing down, because of the epidemic—I can come, if you'll let me!"

"Certainly, if you wish. And Saville, my other nephew,

turned again to the juniors. "I do not see why you should not know the truth, knowing that I can rely upon you not to let it go any further at present. Eric, my nephew—so we have found—is in Algeria. He has joined the French Foreign Legion."

"Gwreat Scott!" breathed Arthur Augustus.

"My giddy aunt!" muttered Blake.

"I hope soon to bring him back to England, if not to St. Jim's," went on Sir Napier quietly. "As you know, I have under my control a big commercial airship; you may have seen in the papers lately an account of the building of the S 1001. That is our second dirigible. Well, the S 1001 is off to Algeria in two days' time. I shall be on board, and Darrell as well. We shall visit Sidi-bel-Abbes, the headquarters of the Foreign Legion, find Kildare, and, so we hope, bring him back to England with us."

The juniors surveyed Sir Napier with shining eyes.

They had all heard of the giant airship, the S 1001, that had recently been out on its trial flights. It was sister ship to the one in which they had made their world tour.

Tom Merry drew a quick breath.

"My hat, sir! There's room for fifty passengers on board her, isn't there?"

"That is so," nodded the baronet.

"Then—then couldn't we come, too? The school's closing down. Instead of going home, if we could go with you in the S 1001—"

"Bai Jove! That's a wippin' ideah!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's excitedly. "There'd be heaps of woom, wouldn't there, Sir Napiah?"

"Well, yes," Sir Napier Wynter glanced doubtfully at Darrell. "What do you think, Darrell?"

"If the youngsters want to come, and you have no objection, I think it might be a good thing, sir," answered Darrell eagerly. "They believe Kildare innocent, as we do! To find such a number from the school who have not

(Continued at foot of next page.)



Come on, chums, shoot your questions, and see if you can score! Get one past the Oracle, and the goal is yours!

EVEN the office-boy's dog is looking a bit seedy, chums, probably through eating too much seed-cake, and I've been busy all the morning moving the nuts out of my false teeth. It takes a long time to get rid of Christmas. I was busy doing this, as a matter of fact, when the Editor yelled for me to come into his sanctum.

The Editor picked up a letter. "A reader in Basingstoke wants to know if you know anything more about big-game hunting? He wants to know what the difference is between 'stalking' and 'tracking'?"

"I'll explain that, sir. In hunting certain kinds of game, like red deer in Scotland, where the ground is very open, the huntsman has to approach his quarry very stealthily, crawling from one bit of cover to the next. This requires considerable experience, as the direction of the wind has to be taken into account. That's known as stalking. When the country is full of thick scrub or bush, the huntsman has to proceed through the forest with his eyes skinned, ready to shoot the animal directly he appears. The Americans have a very good name for that kind of work—they call it 'still hunting.' But in hunting big beasts, such as elephants, which herd together, the only way is to follow their tracks patiently. These tracks they leave on the ground, and they are known as 'spoor.' Following the spoor of big game requires a lot of experience also, and that method is called 'tracking.'"

"That's jolly interesting," said the Editor. "Know any more?"

"I should say I do," said I, skil-

fully removing a Brazil from my back teeth. "Some animals have a habit of hiding in dense parts of the jungle, where it would be impossible to approach them without being heard. The only way in which these animals can be brought down by the gun is to drive them out into the open. This is done by a number of natives, and in some parts of India elephants are employed. That's called 'beating.' Sometimes the huntsman hasn't got any men or elephants to help him, and in that case his only chance of bringing off a 'kill' is to wait at some point where he knows the animal will come—either a water-hole, a salt-lick, or a half-eaten carcass. In hunting parlance, this method of trapping the animal is called 'sitting-up,' but it is not reckoned an altogether sportsmanlike method of hunting, and in some countries 'sitting-up' is prohibited by law."

"And quite right, too," said the Ed. "How would you like to be popped off just as you were going off for a bit of lunch? Is that all you know, Whiskers?"

"Indeed not," I retorted. "I told you just now I was bursting with brains. Why, there wasn't a single paper-hat in the crackers this Christmas that would fit me, and that's the truth. There's another method of hunting which might interest our Basingstoke friend. It's known as 'calling.' It is usually used in the hunting of moose, which, as you probably know, is a large species of deer, or elk, that lives in the colder regions of North America. What the sportsman does is to hide somewhere and make a noise like a cow or stag, and this brings the old moose running along towards him. I told a young nephew of mine about that once, and he went out into a field and tried to catch rabbits by making a noise like a raw carrot."

"Is that so? And what did he get, Whiskers?"

"A good hiding, sir, when he came

home, believe me. What's the next puzzler, sir?"

"Can you tell a Clapham 'Gemite,' my lad, how it is that motor-buses are saved from being top-heavy? I've often thought myself that they would turn over pretty easily."

"Not at all, sir, not at all," I hastened to assure him. "When an omnibus is built, it is put through what is called a 'stability test.' The bus is put on to an inclined platform, with the wheels fixed in ledges to prevent the vehicle slipping. With the aid of pulley-blocks the bus is tilted to an angle of thirty degrees, and it will remain without support at this angle without falling. Under the worst conditions, with the top of the bus full and the inside empty, the bus would have to be on a road with a tilt of over twenty-eight degrees before it overturned. When I go on a bus, though, I always go inside, because the great weight of my brain might overturn it, even then."

"I see," said the Ed. "Well, since you've got so much brains, can you tell me, for the benefit of George Perkins, of Plaistow, if whales are always taken aboard the ship after they are caught?"

"Not always, sir. Whales are sometimes towed ashore to a shore factory. In order to do this easily, a sharp, perforated steel tube is inserted into the stomach of the dead whale, and the old whale is pumped up with steam and air. The company flag is then stuck in the body, and off it goes. Sometimes whales are towed home alongside the whaling-ship, in which case the flukes of the whale are removed, to save them wearing the vessel."

"What part of the whale is the fluke, exactly?"

"The flat lobes of the tail, sir. The word fluke has another meaning in sea life; the holding portion of an anchor is called the fluke."

"What is the spouting of whales caused by, Whiskers?"

"By the whale forcing hot air from its lungs when it comes to the surface."

"Well, you can buzz off now, my lad." Just then there was a terrific crash in the corridor. "What ever's that?" shouted the Ed. I looked out of the door. "It's all right, sir," I told him, "it's only the office-boy breaking all his New Year resolutions. Chin-chin."

CAPTAIN AND CHEAT?

(Continued from previous page.)

lost faith in him would mean a lot to Kildare. It might be the deciding factor in persuading him to return to England—even to come back to the school and live down this stain upon his character which we know he has so little deserved!"

"By gad! I believe you are right!" Sir Napier turned to the juniors with gleaming eyes. "Very well, you shall come with us when the airship sails!"

"Hurrah!" yelled Blake, and the cheer was taken up by the other breathlessly excited juniors.

"Say nothing about this, however," instructed the baronet incisively. "I prefer that nothing is known of this, in case our attempt fails. I do not wish my nephew's affairs to be discussed throughout the school."

"We'll say nothing, sir!" cried Tom Merry.

But Sir Napier Wynter—as the Head had done some weeks before, in trying to hush up Kildare's supposed rascality—had reckoned without a certain fat Fourth-Former!

It would have been a shock to Sir Napier to have known that even as he spoke the fat figure of Baggy Trimble, the Paul Pry of St. Jim's, was outside in the passage with his ear to the keyhole!

Baggy had come to the Sixth Form passage, as Tom Merry and his friends had come, with lines for Darrell. But the sound of voices within the study had caused Baggy to stoop to do up his bootlace, as he would have expressed it, outside the study door before entering. He had heard everything.

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

He heard footsteps crossing towards the door, and he straightened his fat frame hastily, and scuttled away as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

Darrell's lines could wait till later, so far as Baggy Trimble was concerned.

Before they were delivered, Baggy had the gorgeous treat in store of spreading through the school, as fast as he possibly could, the amazing news!

It would certainly not be long before all St. Jim's, from the Sixth to the Third, knew that its vanished ex-captain was a soldier of the Foreign Legion—and that Sir Napier Wynter, George Darrell and Rex Saville, Tom Merry & Co., and Blake & Co., were off to Algeria in the giant airship S 1001 to find him!

THE END.

(Will they find Kildare? And if they do will he agree to return to St. Jim's? Don't miss next week's great yarn, "KILDARE OF THE FOREIGN LEGION!")

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YOUNG THUNDERBOLT!

And his Team of Butterflies



By

ARTHUR S. HARDY.

CHAPTER 1.

Snarler Holds His Tongue!

WHEN Clifford Jackson stepped into the witness-box and told a packed and excited court how Snarler had rowed a boat with muffled oars and rowlocks up to the dock shelters in which the Mayfly waterplanes were housed, he thought that he had never seen a more evil-looking rascal than Snarler.

Snarler leant defiantly on the rail of the dock and smiled mockingly as he listened to the evidence, and heard what Cliff Jackson had to say.

Presently, when the tale was nearly told, he interrupted snappily.

"I deny everything that boy says!" he rasped. "And even if it were true I'd say it's nothing more than Mr. Jackson and his son deserved. They robbed me of my job as trainer of the City Football Club. I've a right to live!"

"Silence!" called the magistrate sternly.

"I understand you were paid the money you were entitled to when you were discharged. I have heard enough evidence. The present witness was not alone when you swam under the dock gates, and he caught you red-handed as you were trying to set fire to the waterplanes. Mr. Hanson and other witnesses who were there are in a position to corroborate, and the police evidence is conclusive. As you have pleaded not guilty, I shall commit you for trial at the next sessions."

Snarler laughed defiantly.

"There'll be plenty left to carry on the good work while I'm in 'stir'!" he cried. And, thrusting his hands deep in his pockets, and swinging on his heels, he accompanied the police officers, who had occupied the dock with him, down the steps to the corridor below.

In a large room two detective officers and Mr. Harland Jackson, Cliff's father, were waiting for him.

"Snarler," said the designer and manufacturer of the famous Butterfly airplanes, "you'll get a heavy sentence for what you've done. And I should say that there was

something more than personal spite behind your attempt to burn up my Mayfly waterplanes. Someone interested in the Clipper planes, our biggest competitors, paid you to do it, I suppose? Why not make a clean breast of it?"

Snarler laughed.

"You'll get nothing out of me!" he cried. "You can think what you like. I don't sell my pals."

"Ah! Then I am right! There was something behind the attempt?"

"I never said so. I can't stand you or your jumped-up puppy of a son, Mr. Jackson. You kicked me out of the City club, and I mean to get my own back! That's all there is to it!" His eyes narrowed and his lips tightened. "And let me tell you I've got some good pals who'll do anything in the world for me. You look out!"

Then the 'tocs got to work, putting all sorts of questions to the crook, but they could get nothing out of him; and at last, giving it up as a bad job, they hurried him to the waiting motor police-van which was to take him back to gaol.

In the town it was reckoned that Snarler would get at least five years, and everybody was glad, for there was not even a spark of sympathy for the crook who had first tried to wreck the City Football Club and then done his best to damage the reputation of the Butterfly airplane, the production of which gave employment to thousands.

FIRE AT BUTTERFLY WORKS and then fireworks on the footer field. Young Thunderbolt's cool judgment produces red-hot shots!

CHAPTER 2.

Suspicious!

"CLIFF, my boy," said Mr. Harland Jackson at dinner that night, "I'm afraid we haven't heard the last of Snarler, though he is in gaol. Threats don't worry me as a rule, but I believe he spoke the truth when he hinted that further attempts would be made to damage the Butterfly planes. I have a feeling that we are employing a traitor and spy at the Butterfly Works."

"Snarler's cousin—Garside," answered the boy promptly. "Why don't you get rid of him, pater?"

"I've never sacked a man in my life on suspicion, young 'un. I'd never do it, on principle. It isn't fair. Besides, it might cause trouble in the works."

"All right. Only don't be surprised, guv'nor," the boy answered grimly, "if you're roused one night with the news that the Butterfly Works are ablaze."

Clifford Jackson's father smiled.

"I am fully insured," he replied. Then he changed the conversation. "The weather forecast is bad, Clif. What are your plans for Saturday's away game? Shall you take your team by train to Southchester, or are you going to give the Butterfly another fine advertisement?"

Young Thunderbolt laughed.

"We're going to fly there, of course," he cried. "And the worse the weather the better the advertisement. I've had a talk to Hank Parsons about it. We're going to fly there in a fleet of Minor planes—unless somebody burns 'em all up before then."

"I've doubled the night guard. They ought to be safe. All the same, Clif, I can never forget that it would be worth thousands to the Clipper firm to damage our reputation. I believe Snarler was paid handsomely for what he did—and he says there are others mixed up in the game."

After dinner Clifford Jackson walked to the windows and pulled the curtains aside. Rain was sheeting down and the wind was howling round the lonely house. He had a look at the barometer and saw that it had fallen catastrophically. His pater was right; the bottom had dropped clean out of the fine weather, and things looked black for the week-end.

But Clif, who played centre-forward for the Butterfly team, which wore the City colours these days, did not mind. The worse the weather the greater the risk, and the greater the risk the more fun there was to be got out of flying!

When Clif, who had just left St. Clemen's School, where he had earned for himself the nickname "Young Thunderbolt," because of his great goal-scoring feats, went to the Butterfly Works in the morning, the rain was still lashing down and the wind was strengthening to a gale.

The roads were full of puddles, and the great aerodrome or testing-ground at the Butterfly Works was almost under water. Clif could scarcely see the great hangars, in which many of the best planes were housed, through the curtain of falling water which screened them.

He saw Hank Parsons staring gloomily at the desolate scene from the windows of the huge show-rooms, where Hank had been talking to Sandy McFarlane, the show-rooms manager.

"Mr. Jackson," said Hank, "it'll be suicidal to fly to Southchester on Saturday, and so, if you've no objection, I'll nip along to the town station and arrange for a special to take us along."

Young Thunderbolt caught Hank by the sleeve.

"Oh, no, you won't, Hank!" he cried. "As long as the country isn't blotted out by fog we're gonna fly; and if it is there won't be any need to go to Southchester, because the match will be called off."

"H'm! Mad!" muttered Hank. "What'll we fly in, then, laddie—Butterfly Minors?"

"Of course!" answered Clif, whose eyes were twinkling merrily.

Fancy Hank wanting to travel by train if there were a chance to fly by air! Clif knew Hank. In spite of his seeming indifference and caution, there was not a more reckless or daring pilot alive.

"Hank," Young Thunderbolt added, "what's on your mind? Are you afraid that the planes will be tampered with?"

Hank's rugged face softened.

"That's just it, Mr. Clifford," he answered. "The weather's chronic rotten. It can't mend by Saturday. Snarler warned us to look out, I'm scared. If you were to take the football team up in a fleet of Butterfly Minors that had been tampered with, and they all crashed, killing the whole blinkin' lot of us, it would mean death to the Butterfly plane, and good-bye to the City Football Club. So—I say—let's go by train to Southchester."

Sandy McFarlane had been listening restlessly. At the far end of the show-rooms he could see Crook Garside, so called because his nose had been smashed flat years ago, polishing up the shining metal of a giant Albatross Butterfly plane. Sandy Mac had had Garside transferred to the show-rooms because Crook was Snarler's cousin; he suspected him, and wanted to keep an eye on him.

"Cut that air trip out on Saturday!" he cried. "Gang by train, Master Clifford!" Then he shouted to Garside, and Crook came up, his ugly face like a mask. "Crook, what did you think o' Snarler being commected for trial?"

Mac put the question to try and draw the man, but Crook did not turn a hair.

"If he did what they say he did, he deserves all he's gonna get, sir," answered Garside.

"If? Do you doot it, mon?"

"Snarler was always a bit mad," said Garside. "All the same, I think it's wise the works should be doubly guarded. You never know, Mr. McFarlane."

Garside strolled back along the line of planes which shone and glistened on the show-room stands.

"It's nae use, Mr. Clifford," said Sandy Mac, through shut teeth, as he watched Crook go. "I'm suspicious of that mon. He's a cunning rascal! If anything should happen at the works we shall know wha tae look for, d'ye ken?"

All day long the rain teemed down, and the wind howled. Clifford left the works with his father; the wind almost blew their car to a standstill on the way home. They found tiles littering the drive, and a chimney-pot had crashed down through the domed roof of the big conservatory in which Clif's father grew the tree camellias of which he was so fond. The rain ceased after dinner, but the gale reached hurricane force. Friday's weather was almost as bad, torrents of rain falling between the wind-storms, and at night the ground was rendered dangerously slippery by a silver frost. When Clif looked out of his bed-room window before turning in, he found the grounds enveloped in an impenetrable curtain of fog. For the first time he held doubts as to whether they would be able to fly to Southchester to-morrow, and wished that he had taken Hank's advice, and arranged for a special train. But there would be time to do that in the morning if he found flying conditions impossible, he thought, as he drew the bedclothes up to his chin, snuggled down, and shut his eyes.

CHAPTER 3.

"Fire!"

SOME time after midnight Clif awakened and sat up. He could hear the telephone bell ringing downstairs outside his father's study door. The insistent buzzing drew him out of bed. Slipping on a dressing-gown he raced downstairs, to find his father sitting at the desk speaking at the telephone. A spatter of rain drove hard against the window-panes.

"I'm coming over now," he heard his father say, as he thrust the receiver back on its hook. His father was wide awake, and looking very serious. "Clif," he added, as he rose, "the hangars are on fire down at the works. I'm going over—now!"

The boy swung himself into socks and a suit of tweeds, put on his boots, and grabbed a mac and cap from the hall cupboard. He had opened the garage with a key, and got the car out, by the time his father came down. Clif drove at top speed over the slithery roads and through the driving rain, and he knew by the glare in the sky that the hangars were burning madly. The Butterfly Minor planes he had intended to use in the morning were housed in them.

Near the works they drove on through a running crowd. Behind them clanged a motor fire-engine. Beyond the works gates they could see the hangars white hot, and belching smoke and flames.

Half the engines of the town brigade were hurling streams of water on the burning sheds, and on the far side of the testing ground Clif could see a crowd of men pushing some of the big passenger planes to safety.

He ran the car out of reach of the fire, and raced with his father up to a group of helmeted brigade officers, who were directing the efforts of the firemen. With them was Sandy Mac.

"Thanks for ringing me up, Sandy!" said Mr. Harland Jackson. "When did the fire start?"

"A few minutes before I rang you, sir," answered Sandy. "I felt a wee bit uneasy in ma mind, and so I rigged up a wee bit bed and slept in the show-rooms. A quarter of an hour before I sent the night watchmen round on a prow, and they reported naething wrong. Then the heat in the number one hangar must hae melted the connection and set the fire bell ringing. I at once informed the brigade, and then phoned through to you, sir."

"Good work, Sandy!" Clif's father saw a roof crash in, and knew that the whole range of shelters which he had had put up at a cost of many thousands of pounds was doomed. With sparks flying right over the work-rooms, they would be lucky if they saved the main buildings and the offices. "This is no accident, Mac."

"It isna, sir," Sandy's dour face hardened, and his lips set. "I did anither thing, sir. I rang up the police, The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,195.

and they were at Crook Garside's lodgings almost as soon as the outbreak."

"Ah, you think it might have been Crook Garside who started the fire?"

"He's Snarler's cousin," answered Sandy cautiously.

The roof of another hangar crashed in, flames roaring a hundred feet high, and then the firemen began to get a hold on the conflagration.

Suddenly the crowd, gathered outside the railings, parted, the main gates were opened, and a police car raced through. It was filled with officers, who brought with them one civilian. It was Crook Garside. Crook was wearing an overcoat over his clothes, wore no collar nor tie, and looked half asleep.

Stepping down from the car he slouched up to Clif's father.

"I'd like to know, Mr. Jackson, whether it was you who sent the police to my lodgings to wake me up. I went to bed at ten o'clock because I felt a cold coming on, and it isn't fair. You wouldn't like it yourself."

Sandy Mac answered for his chief.

"I sent the police to your rooms, Crook," he informed him. "Somebody set the works on fire."

"And you thought it was me—eh?" Crook stuck his hands in his pockets and grinned at the dancing flames. "Well, if that's what you gentlemen think about it, I'm not sorry the hangars have caught fire. Mind I don't sting some of you for substantial damages."

Police-Inspector Rickett, who had come along in the police car, drew Clif's father aside.

"We raced the car to Crook Garside's lodgings," he said, "and we found him fast asleep. The landlady said he had gone out only once, earlier in the evening, to fetch some beer from the Falstaff. I confirmed that through the landlady, while Sergeant Dawson was talking to the man. The fellow has put up a perfect alibi, and he certainly has a cold."

Crook Garside was standing in a puddle, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, and as Clif passed him the boy noticed the look of satisfaction that stretched his evil face.

"You won't be going to Southchester in the Butterfly Minors to-morrow, Young Thunderbolt," he jeered maliciously.

"Glad, aren't you?" said the boy.

Crook laughed.

"I can't say I'm sorry," he confessed. "I don't like a kid like you to throw his weight about so much. I've never had proper treatment in these works, and I know that all of you believe I had a hand in this."

"Somehow I do," answered the boy, looking the man straight in the eyes.

"All right, tell the world, and see what I'll get out of your precious father!" challenged Crook Garside.

The boy spun away. What was the good of talking to the brute? And, of course, they could prove nothing against him.

Clif splashed through the puddles to where Hank was helping some of the mechanics to sheet in the giant Albatross plane which they had run out of No. 6 hangar, which was now enveloped in dancing flames.

"Have all the little air buses been burnt, Hank?" he asked.

"The whole fleet, lad," Hank answered. "We couldn't even save one of the Hawk planes. But we managed to run out a couple Eagles and this Albatross. We haven't got enough Minors in the show-rooms to take the boys over to Southchester in the morning. We'd best cut the flying stunt out to-morrow's football do, Thunderbolt, and charter that special train."

Clif looked around. Beyond the blazing hangars the rain was slanting down through a ground fog. Conditions in the morning would be bad for flying. Nevertheless, he made up his mind that the Butterfly team should fly.

"Listen, Hank!" he cried. "We'll use the Albatross. Tune her up before you go home to-night."

"Who's gonna pilot her?" asked Hank, startled by the boy's nerve.

"You, Hank."

"And where are we gonna land?"

"On the Southchester aerodrome."

"It's miles from the football ground, Thunderbolt. Visibility will be bad for sure."

"It doesn't matter, Hank; we're going in the Albatross." Then, seeing that Hank was still feeling doubtful, Clif added: "It's no good arguing, Hank, we're going up! If you and all the boys refuse, I'll go up in the big plane myself! Nothing shall keep me down! The Butterfly planes will need a good ad. to counteract the effect this fire will have on the public. We're going to make another splash."

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"What'll the chief say?" growled Hank.

"What he says won't matter," answered the boy. "I tell you we're going up!"

Hank slowly nodded his head.

"O.K. for me!" he said.

The glow of the blaze was dying fast. As Clif rejoined his father he brushed past Crook Garside.

"Anybody going to give me in charge?" asked Garside insolently.

"Not yet," replied the boy. "We haven't got the necessary evidence."

"Then," said Crook, as he splashed across a puddle, "I'll go back to bed."

CHAPTER 4.

The Butterflies Arrive.

CLIF assembled the members of the Butterflies team at the Butterfly Works at half-past twelve on Saturday afternoon, after all the hands had been paid off and had gone home. The testing-ground was still half under water and strewn with debris from the burnt-out hangars.

The wind had dropped and fog lay over the town. Somewhere up above the sun was shining. Hank had got the great Albatross, the biggest Butterfly plane the works made, ready for the flight, and a group of eager mechanics were standing by. Salvage men looked on from the burnt-out hangars.

The Butterflies team lined up, and Clif Jackson called the roll: Bunny Coote, goal; Biffer Soanes and Irish Kelly, backs; Stony Mason, Dribbler Hanson, and Tom Selwyn, half-backs; Skimmer Shaw, Dapper Dawes, Clif Jackson (Young Thunderbolt), Bobby Roberts, and Shrimp Martin, forwards. Then Hank Parsons, trainer.

They were footballers and pilots all, and each player showed his football kit before they climbed up into the great plane and settled down in their seats, while Hank took his place behind the joystick and controls.

Inside, the giant plane was as comfortable as a drawing-room. All the lights were on, and Dribbler Hanson, who took charge of the wireless, reported, just before the take-off, that Southchester Aerodrome had just announced poor visibility and bad flying conditions.

"Much better have chartered that special train, young 'un," said Hank grimly, as he prepared to give the great plane a run. "There's fog down here, and we may not be able to find the sun above. Looks as if we shall miss the Southchester Football Ground by the width of a county!"

Clif's lips tightened.

"Can't help it, Hank," he answered. "We've got to take a chance!"

"Where's your dad? Strange he hasn't come to see us off," commented Hank.

And Young Thunderbolt laughed.

"The pater thinks we've gone by road," he replied. "He had important business in Newcastle, and left by the seventy-three mail train."

Still Hank hung fire, a rare thing with him, for he was hundred per cent pluck right through.

"I've a hunch we're gonna make a mess of this trip, kid!" he cried.

"Never mind! Let her go!" ordered Clif; and, as Hank set the great plane running over the puddles, Dribbler flashed the message through the ether, informing the station at Southchester that the Butterflies team had started on their trip. "Further information reporting progress follows," Dribbler sent out as the Albatross soared above the ruined hangars and nosed into the fog.

In Southchester, as crowds of eager football fans crowded the streets leading to the football ground, newsvendors, bawling themselves hoarse and carrying newsbills which announced "Flying Footballers Lost!" sold as fast as they could hand out the papers and take the pennies.

One could scarcely see the length of the football pitch, and the huge crowd which swayed upon the banks and packed the stands sang to the strains of a brass band, whilst they wondered whether there would be any play or not.

After all, you can't play a game of football with only one team, and wireless news stated that the Butterflies team, which had left the Butterfly Works by air, had vanished in the all-prevailing fog.

Just an hour before the kick-off the gates were closed. Thousands of people, left outside, passed the time by reading accounts of the blaze at the Butterfly Works—the act of an incendiary, it was believed—which had resulted in the loss of a whole fleet of Butterfly airplanes.

Now a huge Butterfly Albatross plane had vanished, with the Butterflies football team, and might have crashed; which was pretty bad for the reputation of the Butterfly planes.

There were hundreds of thousands of people in Britain who now believed that the Clipper was the better air-bus, in spite of the sensational advertising the Butterfly had derived from running a works team in the City colours and taking their football team from ground to ground by air.

That was Young Thunderbolt's — Clif Jackson's — idea, and, after all, Clif was only a kid. How could a kid hope to vie with grown-up men? Mr. Harland Jackson, Clif's father, must be mad to allow a boy to run a football team and help to run a great industrial concern like the Butterfly Works.

Gradually the fog began to lift. The grey above changed to a silver blue, shot with the sun's rays. And half an hour before the kick-off a sudden drenching of many engines drew every head upwards.

"Here come the Butterflies!" yelled a football fan, whirling a rattle round and round excitedly. "Give 'em a cheer!"

The cheers rang deafeningly as a whole fleet of airplanes came in sight, flying low. There were eight of them, beautiful little planes, which flew with the ease and grace of swallows. Hats and caps were waved and fireworks let off in the football ground as the planes swept overhead. And then a shout of dismay drowned the cheering, for the long yellow streamers which trailed out behind the planes bore this legend: "Clippers! The world's best airplanes!"

The Clipper planes circled round and round. Some of the pilots performed hair-raising stunts. The crowd gaped up in silence.

The Clippers had arrived in place of the Butterflies. The Butterflies team was lost in the fog. The Clippers were going to get a rousing big advertisement out of this, and the Butterflies would become a laughing-stock. Sixty thousand football fans, who were being robbed of a match after paying at the gates, would have some hard things to say.

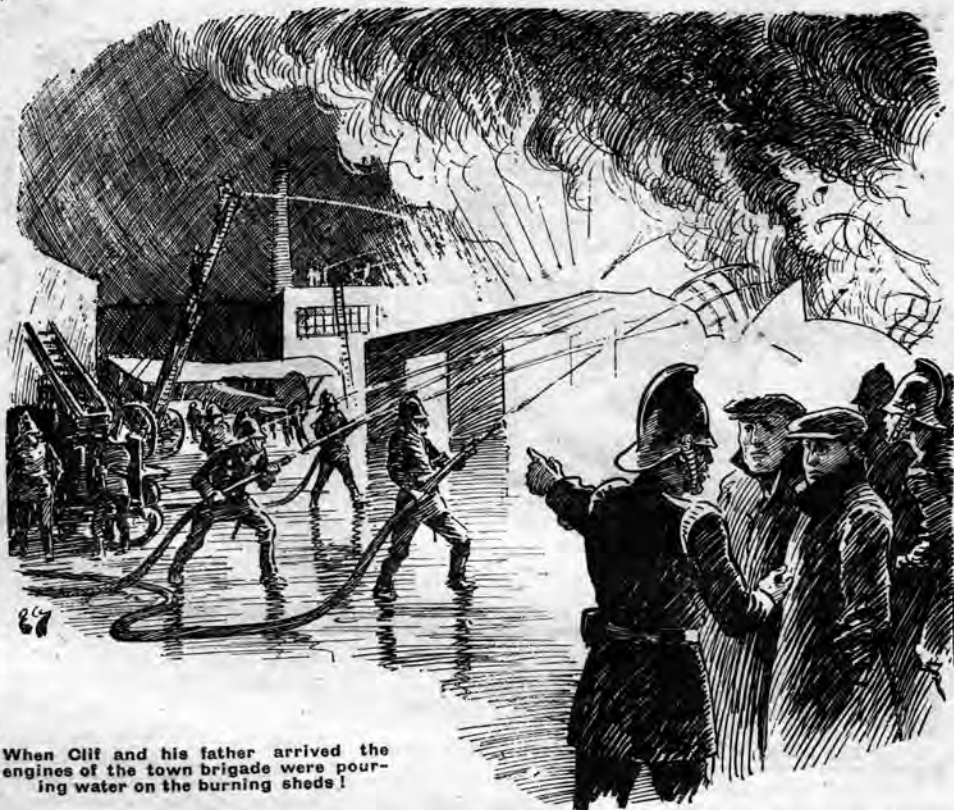
Suddenly, above the lighter drone of the Clipper planes, rang a deep booming hum. What was that? A second later the crowd knew. Out of the silver mist came the biggest air-bus the Southchester crowd had ever seen. She carried a legend, too. "The Butterfly is the Best!"

Once again the crowd began to cheer and to wave. But it wanted only twenty minutes to the kick-off, and the Southchester Aerodrome was miles away from the heart of the town. The Butterflies team were up there in the big plane, but they would never get down in time for the match, and the Football League and the Football Association would have some hard things to say—leaving out the Southchester Club.

Up in the air Hank drove his great air-bus clean through the fleet of Clippers, forcing the little rival planes to give way.

Long ago Dribbler Hanson, who now left the wireless equipment to its own devices, had put through a message, which had been transmitted from the air station to the biggest garage in Southchester, asking for a fleet of cars to wait at the gates of the Queen's Park.

Once the great air-bus circled overhead, then off she flew,



When Clif and his father arrived the engines of the town brigade were pouring water on the burning sheds!

rising higher, and as she went, before the rising wind the astonished crowd saw a figure drop down out of her, followed by another, and a third, then a fourth, a fifth, and so on, till eleven men had fallen from the giant plane into space.

And as they came down the parachutes which were strapped to them opened out like mushrooms. They drifted onward, falling steadily. As they neared the ground the crowds that filled the streets saw that each figure had a bag strapped to its shoulders.

Hank had steered a perfect course. He and Clif had judged the strength of the wind to a nicety. One after the other the members of the Butterflies team drifted down on to the close-mown grass of the Queen's Park; whilst Hank, up above, having noted their safe landing, changed his course for the Southchester aerodrome.

To Clif and the boys their run to the park gates, after their fast and thrilling journey through the air—for they had twice lost their bearings in the fog, and only picked them up again as the fog cleared—seemed like a snail's crawl.

They got to the gates just as the fleet of cars flashed up.

On the way to the football ground they changed in the cars. And right on the nick of time Clif led his Butterflies team got out on to the football pitch, to a roar that could be heard a mile away.

As he set the ball in motion, after winning the toss, Clif saw the last of the Clipper planes beating it for home.

Time to celebrate that!

Young Thunderbolt scored his first goal from a penalty, after having been tripped as he was dashing through.

"Dribbler," he said to his chum Hanson, "Clippers paid to have our fleet of Butterfly Minors burnt up, for a million! That's why they sent their planes along to steal our thunder. I'll bet Crook Garside lit that fire at the Butterfly Works!"

"If he did we'll get him soon," answered Hanson. "And, Clif, old scout, you've wiped the Clipper off the map this afternoon. Why worry?"

(Who is out to ruin the Butterflies? Young Clif is determined to find out, and he's a sticker! Another great story of "Young Thunderbolt!" in next week's GEM.)

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THE
RANGERS'
RECRUIT!

By

HEDLEY SCOTT.



With a snort of rage, Bill leapt forward, and with all the weight of his poised body behind it, his blow sent the sneering Buxton crashing to the boards!

"Thief!"

BILL HARTLEY smiled an acknowledgment.

"What do you think of him, Sandy?" whispered the major.

The trainer's face assumed its customary dismal expression.

"Humph!" he grunted.

The major gave him a sly dig in the ribs and bustled out knowing that Sandy was well pleased.

In less than twenty minutes Bill presented himself in the board-room again. Having stated his willingness to turn professional, he was given various papers to fill up, having done which, he could, subject to the formality of the Football Association's acceptance, consider himself a full-blown member of the famous Cashton Rangers.

Like a fellow in a dream, Bill returned to the dressing-room. He hardly heard the congratulations of his fellow-players, and certainly did not observe the twinkle in the eyes of old Sandy Ferguson. It all seemed too good to be true. Only the day before he had been on his beam ends, with but twopenny 'twixt him and starvation. Now—the Cashton Rangers!

He became conscious of a diminutive figure surmounted with a shock of unruly hair the same colour as his own poking him in the ribs.

It was the outside-right who had played for the Whites.

"Give us your paw, Bill!" came a boisterous Cockney voice, and, looking down, Bill saw a rugged, friendly face in which two blue eyes twinkled mischievously.

That was the beginning of a friendship that was destined to pass through many troubled waters. "Tich" Freeman, five feet five of electricity and audaciousness, provided a striking contrast to the massive figure of Bill Hartley; but that five feet five of electricity and loyalty was to stand between the success and failure of many an unscrupulous scheme directed at Bill.

"Where do you dig, Bill?" Tich asked the question when the morning's work was over and the players were preparing to depart for their homes.

Bill started. In the excitement of it all he had never given a thought to such things as lodgings. But obviously he had to live somewhere. Without waiting for a reply, Tich guessed the situation.

"If you care to dig in with me—"

Bill's face expanded in a grateful smile.

"Tich, I'd like it no end. You see, the fact is—"

"Never mind the facts!" snapped the Cockney. "Stone me up a gum-tree, but I would be proud if you'd come along o' me. I've got a place of my own at Chelsea, and it's that lonesome for one—"

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Bill gripped him by the hand.
"It's a go, Tich, and I'm jolly thankful!"

In company with Tich, Bill arrived at the club the following morning and reported for training. Old Sandy Ferguson, a stickler for punctuality, noted, with a brief croak of satisfaction, that the newcomer was on the spot a quarter of an hour before time.

"Good-morning, Mr. Ferguson!"—from Bill.

"Humph!"

"'Mornin', misery!"—from Tich.

"Humph!"

As Bill was pulling off his shoes, Tich whispered across to him:

"Don't you 'mister' 'im, Bill. He don't believe in it. It fair gets 'is rag out. 'Sssh!"

The dismal-faced trainer sauntered over to Bill. For a full minute he stood staring down at the newcomer as if bent on a quarrel.

"I'm Ferguson, Fergy, or Sandy to my friends, ye ken!" he barked. "Shake!"

Mechanically Bill thrust out his fist, and once again he sampled the Herculean grip.

"That's very nice of you, Mis—er—Sandy!" he stammered.

"Humph!" The trainer walked away.

Tich grinned.

"He's taken a fancy to you, Bill. Old misery is the real goods, despite 'his face."

Always do what he tells you, chum, an' you won't go far wrong. He's an old Scottish international, with more caps in his cupboard than I have pounds in the bank."

Sharp to time, the rest of the Rangers swarmed into the dressing-room, and for the next hour the players indulged in ball practice, physical jerks, and running round the track, under the watchful eye of Sandy Ferguson. Perspiring freely, the players underwent massage treatment, Sandy's deft fingers manipulating bruised joints of old standing before he dismissed each player for the customary cold shower.

"That's all for to-day, boys," wound up the old trainer. "Most of you will be wanted for to-morrow's match, so go easy 'wi' the smokes, ye ken."

While he spoke, the club secretary entered the dressing-room.

"Here's the list for to-morrow's match!" muttered Tich. "I'll bet you a packet of fags you're down, Bill!"

Tich won his packet of fags. Bill's name was down in the eleven to meet Chelsea at Stamford Bridge, so was Tich Freeman's. But in the excitement of seeing his own name amidst such a formidable array of football talent, Bill

WHO'S HOTTER THAN MUSTARD?

Bill Hartley, the Rangers' Recruit!

Strong as an Ox, Brave as a Lion,

HE'S MUSTARD—AND GINGER AS WELL!

received a shock that was comparable to a douche of cold water.

"Great Scott!"

"What's bitin' you, Bill?" demanded Tich, craning his neck to read the list.

Bill pointed to the centre-forward's name for the Rangers—Marchant Buxton!

Could it be the same man? Was it possible that the Marchant Buxton he had punched into the puddle in the presence of Irene Marshall was the same Buxton down to turn out for the Rangers on the morrow?

"Buxton!" muttered Bill. "Marchant Buxton!"

Tich Freeman grinned.

"Eyeglass Buxton, we calls him," he volunteered. "No end of a swell, you know."

In those words Bill learned the worst. It was the same Buxton!

"He's what you call an 'igh-class hamateur," continued Freeman. "No end of a good player, when he likes; but I, personally, don't give him any marks. Too much swank for me!"

"Indeed!"

Unnoticed by either Tich or Bill, the subject of the former's derogatory remarks had strolled into the room, but as Bill heard that familiar voice he wheeled sharply.

The surprise was mutual.

Marchant Buxton's eyeglass dropped from his eye as he beheld Bill.

"Good gad!" he gasped. "And where have you sprung from? The last time I saw you you were propping up a seat on the Embankment—"

Bill's fists tightened spasmodically. All his old loathing and dislike of the fellow came surging back in a flood. Buxton's first surprise turned to supercilious scorn.

"So you're the new forward Carstairs was telling me about, eh?" he drawled unpleasantly. "Never thought for a moment that it was the Hartley."

Bill breathed hard. The players grouped about him were silent, looking from Buxton to Bill interestedly.

"Does Carstairs know why they bunked you from Oxford?" asked Buxton insolently.

Bill made a movement forward, but Tich's restraining hand brought him to a standstill.

In the meeting with Buxton all the sunshine had gone out of his life. Certainly in the happy atmosphere of the Cashton Rangers F.C. he had never expected to meet Buxton, had never dreamed that he would play alongside him.

"He doesn't know apparently," sneered Buxton. "Well, boys—turning to the players—"take a tip from one in the know, and keep your money in a safe place."

The words were hardly out of his mouth than Bill, with a ramping snort of rage, hurled Tich aside, and leaped at Buxton with the ferocity of a tiger.

Smack!

With all the power of his poised body behind it, a blow, flush to the jaw, sent the sneering Buxton crashing to the floorboards.

"You worm!" breathed Bill furiously. "You sneering mischief-maker! Get up, and I'll smash you!"

But Marchant Buxton showed no inclination at that moment to accept the invitation. He felt his jaw tenderly, and if looks could have helped him, the venom in his eyes would have stretched Bill lifeless.

"By thunder, I'll make you sorry for that!" he hissed. "I'll make you wish that you had never set foot in this club!"

The players watched, appalled. Although Buxton was an amateur and somewhat given to airs, he was fairly popular. On the other hand, Bill was an unknown quantity. Buxton's words came back in a welter of recollection—"Keep your money in a safe place!" That could only mean one thing. Faces expressive of condemnation confronted Bill, with but very few exceptions. Bill's sensitive nature read the unuttered thoughts well enough, and, snatching his hat, he strode out of the dressing-room, leaving a buzz behind him. Tich Freeman followed him and caught him up.

"Easy up, old pard," he said lightly. "You don't want to get your rag out over old eyeglass. He's talking through his hat. I don't believe a word—"

He broke off as Buxton's high-pitched voice carried plainly to his ears.

"I tell you the chap's a thief! He was pitched out of Oxford for helping himself to the games' funds!"

A Frame-Up!

FOR quite a minute Bill stood and stared at Tich Freeman challengingly.

"Well," he said at length, "you've heard what Buxton said. What are you going to do now?"

Tich Freeman's unusually sober expression twisted into a grin.

"Cart you home, Bill, and watch you make rings round a steak. I don't care two hoots of a saxophone what Mister Bloomin' Buxton said! Reckon we all have our ups and downs, anyway."

Bill's grim features relaxed. He gripped Tich's fist.

"You're a good pal, Tich," he said. "But what Buxton told the fellows just now is true—or partly true. I'll tell you the story as we go along."

"That you won't!" snorted Tich, breaking into a rapid stride. "Bed-time stories before lunch spoil my appetite. But I'm mighty glad you socked that window pane merchant one on the jaw. I've always wanted to try me luck on him myself."

"He's a bad egg," said Bill, adapting his pace to his diminutive companion's. "He's got plenty of money, and a passion for spending it in the wrong direction. He well-nigh ruined a pal of mine up at the 'Varsity."

"Did he?" grunted Tich. "Well, he'll ruin himself if he runs up against those hefty mitts of yours again. Leastways, he'll spoil his facial beauty parlour. But seriously, Bill, don't let him put you off your game to-morrow."

Bill laughed.

"That's not likely. I'm going to play my best to-morrow, old bean. You and I will give the Stamford Bridge crowd their money's worth."

"Bet your sweet life!"

By the time the two chums had reached their flat the disquietening scene of the dressing-room had been practically forgotten. But Marchant Buxton had not forgotten. As he surveyed his damaged features in the looking-glass in the privacy of his West End flat, a fit of ungovernable fury possessed him.

"The hound!" He spat the words venomously. "I'll settle his hash once and for all. Either I go, or he docs! There's not room for the two of us in the Rangers!"

"It's a bad habit to talk to yourself, Marchant."

Wheeling, Buxton saw before him a tall, foppishly-dressed young man smoking an expensive cigar.

"You gave me quite a shock, Adolph," said Buxton, forcing a smile.

Adolph Haverswood shook a reproving finger at the Rangers' star amateur.

"Now, what's the trouble?" he asked languidly. "Tell your uncle. Who's been rubbing you up the wrong way?"

"Hartley!"

The languid air dropped from Adolph Haverswood.

"Hartley?" he ejaculated. "What's he doing? Where can—"

"He's the new inside-forward the Rangers have signed on," growled Buxton. "Hartley, the man who spoiled our game up at the 'Varsity. The hound who spoiled our—"

"Steady!" remonstrated Haverswood. "Walls have ears. Let's squat and chin things over quietly."

He crossed to the door of the sitting-room, opened it, and peered up and down the passage. Satisfied that no third party was at hand, he returned and plumped into a chair. For the next five minutes Buxton and he conversed in low tones, and the subject of their talk was Bill Hartley.

"You leave him to me, Marchant," said Adolph, in conclusion. "You keep out of the limelight. You were a fool to set the boys on him the other night. There are other ways, my friend."

Buxton smiled.

"I'll leave him to you," he said. "But get busy. Somehow, I don't feel any too safe while he's around. He smashed our last coup, the meddling hound! How's the leg? I noticed you still walk with a limp."

Adolph Haverswood fumed softly.

"Still gives me jip," he confessed. "But I'm deuced lucky to be alive at all after that smash. That's one I owe Hartley. Well, I'll be getting. See you to-night as arranged?"

"Sure thing! Good luck!"

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

BILL HARTLEY, a six-foot edition of brawn and muscle, with a head of flaming red hair, is "sent down" from Oxford. On arrival home, Bill quarrels with his father and leaves for London to find work. En route he falls foul of Marchant Buxton, a wealthy man about town, who was really behind the plot that resulted in Bill's dismissal from the 'Varsity. Buxton swears revenge for the knockdown blows Bill dealt him. In London Bill finds himself an unwanted unit in the labour market. With twopenny in his pocket he wanders along Regent Street, when suddenly there is a smash-and-grab raid by two bandits in a car. Accompanied by a policeman, Bill "borrows" a Bentley car and gives chase. When it seems that the bandits will escape, Bill steers the Bentley into a deliberate crash, completely wrecking both cars. At the police-station Bill meets Major Carstairs, owner of the Bentley, and an old friend. Carstairs, who is chairman of the Cashton Rangers F.C., offers to give Bill a trial with the eleven. Bill strikes his top form, and in consequence is sent for by the directors.

(Now read on.)

Adolph Haverswood donned his hat carefully and departed. Buxton sat staring after him. Through a wreath of tobacco smoke his face appeared strangely fiendish. None would have recognised then the Marchant Buxton the footer fans and football scribes were wont to idolise.

All unconscious of the evil thoughts that coursed through the minds of Buxton and his crony, Bill Hartley took a sharp walk through Chelsea after tea that day. Tich Freeman had taken himself off to the "talkies." On his return to the flat Bill found a letter awaiting him.

Wonderingly, he opened it.

"Dear Bill" (the missive ran),—"Will you meet me without fail outside No. 14a, Eaton Square, at seven-thirty sharp? Will explain when we meet."

"Yours,
"CARSTAIRS."

Bill's brow puckered in thought as he perused that vague message for the third or fourth time.

"What the thump can he want?" he asked himself. "And what a place to meet!" Then he glanced at his watch. "By jingo, I shall have to get a move on if I'm to be at Eaton Square at seven-thirty! It's turned seven now."

Still wondering what the letter from his old benefactor really meant, Bill grabbed his hat, reflecting meanwhile that he would be back before Tich returned from the "talkies."

Punctual to the minute Bill arrived at No. 14a, Eaton Square. It proved to be an empty house. As Bill paced up and down impatiently awaiting the arrival of the major,

he caught sight of a figure running towards him. It was followed by another figure, and Bill's idle curiosity sprang into something more substantial when he realised that the second running figure was a policeman. There was no doubt about it next moment, for a whistle shrilled through the quietness of the square.

The pounding footsteps came nearer. The figure loomed large out of the gloom of the night. Then—

Thud!

Like a battering-ram the running man collided with Bill, and sent him sprawling in the gutter. It all happened so quickly that Bill hardly knew what exactly had occurred. Even as he grunted out a protest a heavy fist crashed under his jaw, and well-nigh robbed him of his senses. Then the runaway had leaped to his feet, and scuttled off into a safety curtain of darkness.

"Well—" Words failed Bill.

Half-dazed, he scrambled to his feet, only to meet the sharp glare of a lantern's rays shot full at his face. He heard a gasp of amaze, the light flickered out, and next moment Bill was writhing in a police grip that paralysed him.

"Got you, my beauty!" snapped the panting police officer. "You'll get a packet for this!"

"Steady on, officer!" gasped Bill, his brain in a whirl.

"You're breaking my arm! You've made a mistake!"

"A mistake? Don't you believe it, my buck!" And the police officer laughed.

"I tell you you've made a ghastly mistake," repeated Bill, beginning to lose his temper. "The man you were chasing bumped me over and disappeared."

Between sending out innumerable whistle calls for assistance, the constable sneered.

"Just you keep still, or I'll break your arm! We can't play fair with dirty tykes like you! Ah!"

He broke off into a grunt of approval as another constable came into sight.

"Now we shan't be long!"

"Let go!" roared Bill. "Let— Oh, you cowardly devil!"

His brief struggle for freedom ended painfully. That ju-jitsu grip held him as in a vice.

"You'll be sorry for this, you fool!" ground out Bill.

"I tell you you've made a horrible mistake!"

"Now, then, will you come quietly?" It was the second constable. "What's he done, Harry?"

"Knocked an old gent on the head at No. 6c, and lifted a pile of jewellery," volunteered the first constable.

"Phew! Robbery with violence. He'll be sorry for it when he comes up before the Beak in the morning."

Bill pulled himself together. He realised now that the police officer had acted in good faith in arresting him, and Bill assured himself that it was only a matter of minutes before his explanation would be given and received at the police station, and his liberty restored to him.

Bill decided to go quietly.

As the two constables marched him towards the station they kept up a running conversation.

"I just happened to come along at the right moment," said the first constable. "There was a maid shrieking her head off, and there was this cove hopping it good and hard. He had the nerve to stop and amble along with two other fellows, but when I gave chase he fairly bolted."

"Perhaps the other fellows were in the gang," said the second constable. "I've known 'em to pass the swag on that way, and then swear till all's blue that they're innocent."

Bill laughed to himself, and said nothing. The policeman's next words comforted him.

"Well, the old chap who got a cosh on the head will be able to identify this cheap skate," he remarked, "likewise the maid."

The police station was reached, and Bill was hurried before the sergeant on duty.

"A case of robbery with violence, sir," volunteered Bill's captor.

The usual formalities were gone through, and then Bill was given a chance to speak.

"I tell you the whole thing is a mistake, sergeant," he protested. "The thief, if he was a thief, suddenly barged into me and made off. Not unnaturally, I suppose, this officer has mistaken me for him. But I'm not worrying. The gentleman at No. 6c and the maid will soon prove how ridiculous this charge is."

The sergeant listened grimly. Then he reached for the phone.

"We'll soon see!" he said crisply. "I'll get them here to identify you. Meanwhile, you'll be searched."

"I have no objection to that," said Bill.

Deft hands ran through his pockets. Then Bill stiffened in horror, for, with a grunt of satisfaction, the searcher



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suddenly flashed into view a diamond necklace which he had taken from Bill's overcoat pocket!

The sergeant and the constables exchanged grins.

"Your property, sir?" asked the former sarcastically.

"Certainly not!" thundered Bill, aghast at the discovery. "I've never seen the thing before! This is monstrous! It's wizardry!"

"Oh, stow it!" snapped the sergeant. "Come clean now. The game's up. I expect you thought you'd transferred the whole crib to your two pals—eh? You cheap imitation gangsters fairly make me sick. Take his finger-prints, and put him in the cells!"

"Yes, sir!"

Like a person in a dream, Bill allowed himself to be taken away. His world seemed to be slipping beneath his feet. He told himself that the whole affair was a nightmare; that he would wake up and find it all a ghastly dream. But there was no dream about it as he found his fingers jammed into a sticky pad and rolled on to ten separate sheets of white paper.

His finger-prints. He was ranked as a common crook!

Next his photograph! Horror of horrors, he was to occupy a place in the Rogues' Gallery! Bill's head swam with the shock, and he felt sick and ill. As in a dream he heard the door close on the little cell into which he was roughly thrust. Then measured footsteps—utter loneliness, and despair.

How long he remained in the cell before the door opened again he could not tell. The warder's rough voice woke him from the state of semi-stupor into which he had fallen. "This way!"

Once more into the charge-room. As Bill blinked in the glare of the unaccustomed light he saw about him seven or eight civilians of all shapes and sizes and various stages of poverty and respectability, who had been called in from the street.

The sergeant's voice came faintly through the tumult of noise that seethed in Bill's head.

"Line up with those gentlemen!"

Mechanically Bill fell into line. On one side of him stood a shabby individual with "pick-pocket" written all over his dirty countenance. On the other side was a quietly dressed youth of about his own age, who might have been a City clerk.

"Now call in Mr. Entwistle and the young lady!" rapped the sergeant.

The door opened to admit an elderly gentleman whose head was swathed in bandages. He was closely attended by a young woman, timid, and white of face.

"Now, sir," said the sergeant. "Do you see the man who attacked you?"

"Yes! The scoundrel!"

The bandaged man took a step forward, and his fists clenched. To Bill's horror he was looking straight at him.

"Kindly point him out," said the sergeant.

Up came the man's hand, and he shook a finger that fairly trembled with righteous wrath at Bill Hartley.

"That is the miscreant! The dastard!"

"Thank you, sir!" said the sergeant unemotionally. He was accustomed to these identity parades. "Now you, missie!"



Bill stiffened with horror as the searcher flashed into view a diamond necklace—he had taken it from Bill's pocket!

With eyes that begged a mute appeal Bill saw the maid slowly scan each face in turn. Then timidly, falteringly, she pointed at Bill.

"He's the fellow, sir. I'd know him anywhere by his red hair!"

Bill groaned inwardly. What fate was it that was torturing him so?

"It's a lie!" he yelled. "I've never seen either of these people before! It's a frame-up! I swear by all that's holy that I'm innocent!"

"Shove him in the cells!"

At that, Bill's remnant of control left him. Like a tidal wave, he threw off the detaining hands of the two constables and hit out wildly. The constable who had made the arrest stopped that terrific blow, and for the next two minutes he ceased to take any interest in the proceedings.

"Hold him!"

Like a pack of dogs, the "identity parade" and the police officers fell upon Bill and held him a fast prisoner. Bill's struggles grew less, and when his paroxysm of rage left him he collapsed, weak, and sick at heart. Again the cell door clanged on him, and he was left to bitter solitude and despair. For the nonce, Fate had dealt him a knock-down blow from which it would take a few hours to recover.

And next morning all Fleet Street had the story of Bill Hartley's inglorious escapade. It made a great "news" story, for Cashton Rangers were due to play Chelsea at Stamford Bridge that afternoon, and Bill Hartley had been elected to make his debut in that game.

(Bill Hartley's prospects of playing for the Rangers don't look any too rosy now, do they, chums! Can he possibly clear himself of the accusation made against him? Don't fail to read the follow-up of this powerful sporting yarn in next week's GEM.)

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