

A DISGRACE TO THE STUDY

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



CAUGHT IN THE ACT!

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A DISGRACE TO THE STUDY!

A Magnificent, New, Long,
Complete School Story
of Tom Merry & Co.
at St. Jim's.

By
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CHAPTER 1.

Glorious News!

"Figgys!"

"Hallo!"

"I—I say, Figgys—"

Fatty Wynn seemed to hesitate somewhat.

Figgins & Co.—Figgys, Kerr, and Wynn of the Fourth—were chatting in the porch of the New House at St. Jim's, or, to be more accurate, Figgins and Kerr were chatting, and Fatty Wynn was plunged in deep thought.

Figgins and Kerr were discussing a recent House match, in which the School House had been beaten—a very interesting topic. Figgins & Co. maintained that the New House was cock-house in cricket, as in everything else; but it could not be denied that Tom Merry & Co. kept the School House end up on the playing-fields; so the recent victory was a source of great satisfaction to the heroes of the New House.

Fatty Wynn appeared to be listening; but, as a matter of fact, his thoughts were far away. But he chimed in at last.

"Well!" said Figgins, as his plump and rosy chin hesitated. "What is it, Fatty? Thinking of the next House match?"

"Eh?" said Fatty Wynn vaguely. "How long do you think it is likely to last, Figgys?"

"Well, that depends," said Figgins, surprised by the question. "I suppose it depends on the length of the innings. If you bowl as you did last time—"

"Eh? How can the war depend on the length of an innings?" asked Fatty Wynn, surprised in his turn.

"The war?"

"Yes. I asked how long you thought it would last."

"Fatted! I was talking about House matches!"

"Oh, bother the House matches!" said Fatty Wynn. "How long do you think the war will last, Figgys?"

"Blessed if I know," said Figgys. "It's sure to be over before the year 2,000, I should say. You never can tell!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know! What do you think, Kerr?"

Kerr assumed a very serious expression.

"We shall not sheathe the sword, which we have not lightly drawn until the Prussian military domination is wholly and finally destroyed," he replied, in the celebrated words of a great statesman.

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Fatty Wynn crossly.

"But that isn't funny," said Kerr.

"At least, it wasn't intended to be," said Fatty Wynn, how long is it going on?"

"I'm as patriotic as anybody. I've put half my pocket-money in War Savings Certificates. I've punched Clampe's nose for saying it's a case of six of one and half a dozen of the other. I ducked Racke's head in the fountain because his father makes war-profits. I've sworn a solemn swear never to buy anything German as long as I live! But—but—"

"Well?"

"But I do want a study spread again!" said Fatty Wynn pathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fain't a laughing matter," said the fat Fourth-Former reproachfully. "I'm not a greedy chap, like Trimble over the way. But just think of it! A real study spread—lots of grub—lots of all kinds of grub—no end of tuck—just think of it!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"What's the good of thinking of it?" said Figgins, with a chuckle. "It's something to have enough to eat. The Huns don't get that. I've read somewhere that school kids in Hunland are taking to gnawing shoe-leather and things!"

Fatty Wynn shuddered.

Kerr shook a severe finger at the fat junior.

"You're weakening, Fatty! If you keep on like this, we shall have you howling for peace, like Trimble of the School House. It's up to the New House to keep a stiff upper lip, and see it through. We've got to beat the Huns by tightening our belts!"

"I'd rather beat them some other way!" mumbled Fatty Wynn. There must be lots of other ways of beating Huns!"

"Do you want to give in?" demanded Figgins ferociously. "Do you want Hun soldiers prancing down Rylcombe Lane? Do you want a blinking fat German professor stuck here as Head of St. Jim's?"

"Of course I don't, you ass!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn indignantly.

"What do you want, then?"

"I—I want a study spread."

Figgins and Kerr grinned. Fatty Wynn had not turned a hair when the Zephephs came over St. Jim's. He had only growled at Figgins for waking him up for so trivial a cause. If Fatty had been old enough to be in the trenches, he would have gone over the top as cheerily as the cheeriest Tommy in Flanders.

But the grub rules hit him hard. Not that Fatty Wynn was greedy. As he often explained, he wasn't greedy, but he liked a lot. He really didn't care much about food, so long as it was good and there was plenty of it. And the Food Controller, though a very necessary official, appeared somewhat like an ogre to Fatty Wynn.

He would never have dreamed of disregarding the food regulations, but his hunger wandered back incessantly to the fleshpots of Egypt.

Once upon a time it was only a question of being in or out of funds. When a fellow was in funds he could give an order to Dame Taggles for a magnificent pie.

Fatty Wynn often dreamed of the pies of other days—the whacking pies of the dear, dead days beyond recall.

And he couldn't see anything to grin at. The situation was tragic—from his point of view, at least.

"It won't do," said Kerr, shaking his finger at Fatty again. "You're weakening, Fatty. At this rate we shall soon have you joining the stop-the-war party. We shall have you turning into an inconceivable object!"

"You ass!"

"And think what a disgrace that would be to the New House! Why, even Clampe, who's a smoky worm, says we've got to fight it out to a finish!"

"Well, Clampe thinks it will be over before he's old enough to go. He says so!"

"That's got nothing to do with it, fat-head!"

"It may have in Clampe's case!" grinned Figgins. "It won't do, Fatty! The New House at St. Jim's stands solidly behind the boys at the Front, backing them up. You mustn't let your mind wander to study spreads. Tighten your belt, and grin and bear it, and thank your stars you weren't born a Hun. And I'll tell you what we'll do, Fatty—whenever you show a sign of thinking too much about the grub, we'll bump you!"

"Look here—"

"As a friendly warning, you know. Otherwise, you may degenerate into a pacifist. Collar him!"

"Look here, you duffers—" roared Fatty Wynn wrathfully. "Leggo! Yah—"

Bump!

Fatty Wynn sat down on the top step, planted there forcibly by his affectionate chums.

He gasped as he sat.

"Groogh! You silly chumps! Yah! Yow, you asses! Oh, my hat!"

"Still thinking about study spread?" asked Figgins.

"Yes."

"Give him another!"

"Look here, I'll—I'll—I say—"

Yaroooh!"

Bump!

"Oh, crumbs!"

Fatty Wynn struggled up breathlessly, and doubled his fat fists. Figgins and Kerr backed away, grinning, into the quad. They backed into Mr. Blagg, the postman, who was coming to the New House.

"Huh!" grunted Mr. Blagg.

"Hallo, old Blagg!" said Figgins. "Anything for us?"

"For Master Wynn?" said Mr. Blagg.

Fatty Wynn's wrath faded away at once. If it was a remittance, there were possibilities, in spite of the grub rules. There were still edible things upon which the eagle eye of the Food Controller had not fallen.

"Hand it over!" he said eagerly. "Is it registered?"

"It's a postcard, Master Wynn."

"Oh!" said Fatty, disappointed.

Mr. Blagg handed out the postcard, and went on his way. Fatty Wynn glanced carelessly at the card. It was addressed to him in an unfamiliar hand.

But as he turned it over, and looked at the message written on the back, his expression changed, for the written message ran:

"My dear boy,—I am aware that you must find the food restrictions somewhat irksome, and, therefore, I am sending you, per carrier, a hamper. I hope you will enjoy it.

"Your affectionate,

"UNCLE TOM."

CHAPTER 2.

A House Row!

"**B** Al Jove! You look vewy pleased, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth, made that remark as he turned his eyeglass upon the Falstaff of the New House.

Blake and Herries, and Digby and D'Arcy, the chums of Study No. 6 in the School House, had cut across the quad to intercept the postman, in the hope of discovering a remittance. That hope had been, unfortunately, dashed to the ground: there were no remittances for Study No. 6. It seemed to them that war economy, among their relatives, was being carried to really inordinate lengths.

But Fatty Wynn's round, plump face was beaming like unto a full moon.

"Pleased!" said Fatty. "I should say so. It's very odd, but it's very welcome."

"There can't be a remittance on a postcard!" said Figgins, puzzled.

"What is it? Your uncle in the Welsh Regiment got the V.C.?"

"Oh, no."

"Well, what is it then?" demanded Kerr.

Fatty Wynn held up the card, and all the juniors read it.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"A hampah!"

"A hamper in war-time!" ejaculated Blake.

"Lucky bargee!" said Herries.

"Might introduce me to your Uncle Tom," remarked Dig. "I'd like to have a tame uncle like that."

"Isn't it ripping?" said Fatty Wynn joyously. "I was just talking about a study spread, too!"

"You generally are!" grinned Blake.

"But who's your Uncle Tom?" asked Kerr.

"I've never heard of your Uncle Thomas, Fatty."

The fat Fourth-Former looked perplexed.

"That's jolly odd!" he admitted. "I don't know him either."

"Bai Jove!"

"I never knew I had an Uncle Tom," said Fatty Wynn. "Of course, a chap might have an uncle and forget him—"

"Ha, ha!"

"You've got it by mistake," said Kerr.

"No, it's wrongly addressed."

"It's not, it isn't—look at it."

The juniors read the address on the card. It was plain enough: "David Llewellyn Wynn." There could be no mistake about that.

"Must be a hoax, then," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Some chap is hoaxin' Wynn, because he's such a gwoedy boundah," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You stuttering chump!" roared Fatty Wynn. "Who's a greedy boundah?"

"You are, deah boy."

"Hold my jacket a minute, Figgins."

"Weally, Wynn, I trust you are not goin' to deny a fact which is vewy well known to all St. Jim's—yawwooo!"

If there was an imputation which Fatty could not tolerate, it was that of greediness. The swell of the School House had no time to finish his remarks. He was too busily engaged in waltzing round with the New House junior, trying to keep his head out of chancery.

"Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Leggo! You are disawwangan' my tollah! Yawwooh—dwaggimoff!"

Blake rushed to drag Fatty Wynn off, but George Figgins interposed with a sweet smile, and Blake and Figgins joined in the waltz. The next moment Herries and Kerr were pommelling, and Redfern dashed out of the New House with the firm resolve not to leave Digby uncon-



Trimble the raider!
(See Chapter 5.)

pied. School House and New House were generally ready for a row.

It had been quite a friendly meeting two minutes before. Now it was a battle royal.

Unfortunately for Blake & Co. they were very near the New House, and a crowd of the enemy came rushing to join up.

"Kick 'em to the School House!" roared Lawrence.

"Hurrah! Drizzle 'em home!"

"Yaroo!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, bai Jove! You uttah wotters! Yawwooh!"

In the midst of the laughing New House crowd, the School House Four were rushing across the quad.

They were deposited in a gasping bunch on the steps of the School House, and the New House juniors retreated, shouting with laughter.

Three Shell fellows came out of the School House together—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther. They regarded the Fourth-Formers on the steps with great interest.

"What are you chaps doing there?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Groogoh!"

"Taking a nap, Gussy?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yawwooh"

"That isn't your study armchair, Blake, grinned Manners. "Don't you find that stone rather hard for a pillow?"

"Oh, crumba!"

Study No. 6 crawled to their feet. They were looking very untidy. The Terrible Three of the Shell chuckled as they surveyed them.

Why should you join up, you slackers?" demanded Jack Blake indignantly. "It's a House row, you chumps!"

"You chaps shouldn't tackle the New House," said Lowther, shaking his head. "They're above the weight of the Fourth! Leave them to us!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Yaas, wathah—wats!"

"We're jolly well going to tackle 'em again!" gasped Blake.

Fatty Wynn's expecting a hamper of tuck by the carrier—"

"A what?" ejaculated the Terrible Three, with one voice.

"A hamper—in war-time, too!" said Herries.

"We'll jolly well teach the New House bounders to have hampers of tuck in war-time! I mean, we'll teach them not to!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you silly Shell fish?" roared Blake.

"We're jolly well going to raid that hamper!"

"My hat! Ha, ha! But—"

"You can buck us up if you like—but mind, Study No. 6 leads," said Blake.

"I'll call up a lot of the Fourth, and run the rotters when the hamper comes!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But—but I say—!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Are you going to back us up?" roared Blake.

"Not exactly. But—"

"Then dry up!"

"But I say—"

"Oh, ring off!"

And Jack Blake & Co. tramped into the School House to get a brush up, which they badly needed, and then to lay plans for raiding the New House hamper—

—Roland for an Oliver, which was quite justifiable under the circumstances.

Tom Merry and his chums looked at one another grinning.

"They're jolly well not going to raid that hamper!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"The duffers—they don't savvy—"

"Not Wynn's hamper from his Uncle Tom!" chuckled Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perhaps we'd better explain to them, or they'll spoil a first-rate jape," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

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The Terrible Three followed Blake & Co. into the house. They found the four juniors in Study No. 6, brushing down their dusty garments, still in a breathless and wrathful condition. A number of the Fourth had gathered there, too, at Jack Blake's summons—Julian, and Kerruish, and Hammond, and Reilly, and Levison, and Cardew, and Clive, and several others. And they were all evidently keen upon joining Study No. 6 on the war-path.

"We'll jolly well have the hamper, rather!" Levison was saying. "Why, it's beastly unpatrician to have tack-hampers in war-time. We stand up for patriotism in this House."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll jolly well collar the hamper, as a warning—"

"Good egg!"

"And scarf the juck, as another warning—"

"Hear hear!"

"I say!" Tom Merry looked into the crowded study. "Before you kids go on the giddy war-path—"

"Are you alludin' to us as kids, Tom Mewwy?"

"es. Before you raid that hamper—"

"Buzz off!" rapped out Blake. "No Shell-fish wanted here. You're no good against the New House. Slide out!"

"But I want to tell you—"

"Rats!"

"Push 'em out!"

"Yaas, wathah! This is a mattah for the Fourth to deal with, Tom Mewwy. You Shell boundahs wun away."

"But I want to warn you!" roared Tom Merry.

Tom Merry's warning, whatever it was, was never uttered. Study No. 6 made a rush, and the Terrible Three were bowled out into the passage.

"You are all chumps!" bellowed Lowther. "We came to tell you—"

"Rate!"

"That hamper—" shrieked Manners.

"That hamper's ours. Push off!"

"But I tell you—" raved Tom Merry.

"My hat! They're wound up! Take 'em home!" said Blake.

"Hands off, you silly fags! Oh, jiminy!"

A dozen of the Fourth rushed the Shell fellows along the passage, to No. 10 in the Shell. They were bundled into it and strewn upon the floor, gasping for breath. Blake changed the key to the outside of the lock.

"You stay here!" he said. "This is a Fourth Form matter, and Shell bounders can mind their own bizney. That hamper belongs to the Fourth."

And Blake slammed the door, and turned the key—outside.

The three Shell fellows sat up, and blinked at one another.

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom Merry.

"Those cheeky fags want sitting on!" gasped Manners. "Study No. 6 is getting its ears up, and it wants sitting on badly!"

"Come and unlock this door, you cheeky chumps!" roared Lowther, rattling the door-handle.

But Blake & Co. were gone.

CHAPTER 3. The Raiders!

FATTY WYNN took the postcard from his pocket, and read it over for about the tenth time. His plump face was very satisfied.

"Isn't it ripping?" he remarked, also for the tenth time.

Figgins granted.

"All very well," he said. "But I don't know about tack hampers in war-time."

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time. Looks to me like busting the grub rules."

"Oh, that's all rot," said Fatty Wynn. "A chap's uncle wouldn't do that. There are lots of things that are allowed—such as toffee and eggs and honey and cakes and things. And sardines and pickles and—"

"But you say you haven't an Uncle Tom!" said Kerr.

"Well, I don't remember having one," admitted Fatty Wynn cautiously. "but I must have one, as he's sending me a hamper."

"Wrong address got on the card more likely," said Figgins.

"Oh, that's rot!"

"Or it's a jape," said Kerr. "and there isn't a hamper at all. Might be just a School House jape."

"But those School House duffers suggested that—and they wouldn't, if it was a House rag."

"Well, that's so. But—"

"Anyway, we'll see when the carrier comes," said Fatty Wynn. "He's nearly due now. Let's go down to the gates and wait for him."

"Mind, if there's anything against the grub rules in that hamper, it's got to be given up," said Figgins.

"All right!" said Fatty Wynn, with a sigh. "I agree to that. Let's get down and wait for the carrier."

Figgins & Co. sauntered down to the gates. Fatty was in a mood of great anticipation.

"We ought to be getting on with the rehearsal, you know," remarked Kerr.

Kerr was stage-manager and general manager and president, and several other things of the N.H.J.A.D.S.—the New House Junior Amateur Dramatic Society. "The fellows will be getting ready in the Common-room."

"Never mind that now," said Fatty. "We can rehearse any day. Chap doesn't have a hamper every day, in war-time."

"But it's time for the rehearsal—"

"Oh, bother the rehearsal!"

Fatty Wynn was generally a very easy-going fellow. But he could be obstinate, and he was obstinate now.

Figgins & Co. and the rest of the dramatic society were engaged upon a new play, written by Kerr, entitled "The New Boy." It was a school play, founded upon some of their own experiences, and all the New House fellows agreed that it was a regular corker. Kerr played the leading part. Kerr was a born actor. Kerr was more interested in the rehearsal of "The New Boy" than in the expected hamper; but Fatty Wynn had his way, and the three juniors watched at the school gates for the carrier from Rylcombe. Old Cripps was almost due now, and they had not long to wait.

As the carrier's cart came along the road, Figgins & Co. stepped out to meet it.

Mr. Cripps drew his old horse to a halt outside.

"Anything for me, Crippsey?" asked Fatty Wynn eagerly.

"Yes, sir; a hamper," said Mr. Cripps.

"Oh, good!"

Fatty Wynn beamed. There had been a dreadful possibility that the postcard from "Uncle Tom" was a hoax, as Fatty Wynn did not remember any Uncle Tom in his family. But the arrival of the hamper was proof positive.

Mr. Cripps pulled out the hamper, and carried it in at the gates, to deliver at the porter's lodge. Figgins & Co. followed in great spirits. A hamper was an unusual treat in war-time, and in the midst of strict food regulations. And it was a large hamper, and evidently heavy.

And the label on it left no doubt that it was intended for David Llewellyn Wynn of the New House.

"Heah it is, deah boys!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice.

From the cover of the porter's lodge a dozen juniors appeared quite suddenly, all Fourth Formers of the School House.

They made a rush for the hamper as Cripps laid it down.

"School House, cads!" shouted Figgins. "Look out!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Collar the hamper!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwway!" roared Arthur Augustus, waving his eyeglass in great excitement.

Taggles, who had come out of his lodge, was pushed in one direction; Mr. Cripps was pushed in another; Figgins & Co. went spinning before the rush of heavy odds. And half a dozen School House fellows collared the hamper, and rushed it away in the twinkling of an eye.

"My heye!" gasped Taggles.

"Oh, lor!" said Mr. Cripps.

Figgins & Co. staggered up. Blake & Co. were rushing the hamper away at top speed, bumping it occasionally on the ground in their hurry. The New House trio rushed in pursuit.

"Gimme my hamper!" roared Fatty Wynn.

The raiders were not heading for their House; it was scarcely possible to take the hamper there. They headed for the wood-shed, which was safe from the undesired interference of masters and prefects. The hamper was rushed triumphantly into the shed. Figgins & Co. dashed in after it, and were promptly seized and pitched out again.

"Wag them!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Dribble 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three New House fellows fled. The wood-shed door was slammed after them. Blake & Co. gathered in triumph round the captured booty.

"This is where we smile!" chorled Blake. "Easy as falling off a form! Anybody can do these New House asses in the eye!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwway!"

"Better get it open," suggested Cardew. "Figgys will be comin' back with a New House mob in a minute or two."

"Yes, rather! We'll collar the tack, and leave the empty hamper here," chuckled Julian.

"Gimme a penknife somebody."

"Heah you are, deah boy."

Jack Blake jabbed at the cords on the hamper. There was a sudden crash as the window of the wood-shed flew open.

"Look out!" shouted Clive.

Through the window came George Figgins of the Fourth, headlong. The School House juniors rushed at him; but Kerr and Wynn came tumbling in after him, and then Owen and Lawrence and Redfern.

The New House fellows, who had gathered quickly on news of the raid.

The hamper was forgotten for the moment. The wood-shed was the scene of a terrific struggle. Redfern broke loose and threw open the door, and Diggs and Koumi Rao and Pratt and Thompson and a crowd more New House juniors poured in. The odds were against Blake & Co. now.

Fortune had not favoured Study No. 6.

In a few minutes the School House heroes were on their backs on the floor, amid a sea of faggots overturned in the struggle, with New House fellows sitting on them and pinning them down.

"Ow!" gasped Figgins.

"Gwoogh! Gewwoff my neck, Kerr, you bonny boundah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pin 'em down!" chuckled Figgins.

"Sit on 'em! We'll open the hamper here, and let 'em watch us scoffing the tack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! Food-hogs!" roared Herries.

"Bow-wow!"

George Figgins finished uncorking the hamper. Fatty Wynn, with glistening eyes, threw back the lid, and disclosed straw packing within. The hamper was full, under the packing.

"Now we sha'n't be long!" grinned Fatty Wynn; and his plump hands were busy at once.

CHAPTER 4.

Uncle Tom Merry.

"Oh, crumbs! Gewwoff my neck!"

"Get off my waistcoat, Redfern!"

"Oh dear!"

Blake & Co were not enjoying themselves.

Each of the School House fellows was pinned down by a New House junior, who sat on him. From that uncomfortable position they watched the opening of the big hamper. They watched it with feelings almost too deep for words.

That hamper was theirs by all the laws of war! They had collared it! And now it was in the hands of the enemy again, and they were going to be helpless spectators of the New House feast. It was insult added to injury, and Blake & Co. writhed with wrath under their captors. But there was no help for it—the fortune of war was against them.

The New House party, however, were in great spirits. The feast was a feast at any time, especially in war-time, and under the envious and furious eyes of their defeated rivals it had an added zest.

"Hand out the tommy!" grinned Redfern. "Mind you don't break any grub rules; but hand out the tommy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You shall have some of the ginger-bread, Blake, if there's any, Blake," promised Redfern. "I'll give you a little—down your neck."

"And Gussy shall have some jam, if there's any," said Kerr. "I'll give him some—in his ears!"

"Gwooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howdiss ass, I wese to have jam placed in my ears!" roared Arthur Augustus frantically.

"Ha ha! Buck up with that hamper, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn was dragging out the straw packing, with a fat face full of delighted anticipation.

But a change came over his countenance when the straw was removed. He looked startled.

Under the straw was a thick layer of sacking.

"That's jolly queer!" said Figgins. "A blessed old potato-sack! I suppose your uncle hasn't sent you 'tatoes?"

Fatty Wynn dragged the sack-away. Then he gave a yell.

Under the sack was not a luscious assortment of tuck. Far from it. What was disclosed to view was a closely-packed array of half-bricks, chunks of wood, and stones, with a few lumps of clay and some cabbage-stumps. Fatty Wynn gazed at that startling collection with disbelieving eyes.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" he gasped.

Figgins stared blankly into the hamper.

"Wha-a-at?" he gasped.

"What is it?" demanded Redfern.

"Bricks!" said Fatty Wynn faintly. "Chunks of wood! Cabbage-stumps! Oh, crumbs!"

"What!"

"There's something here!" exclaimed Figgins. He drew a sheet of cardboard from among the amazing articles packed in the hamper. A message was scrawled on it in large letters. All the fellows

could read it, as the astounded Figgins held it up to view.

And the message ran:

"Dear Old Porpoise,—I hope you will enjoy this hamper. You can eat all the contents without offending the Grub Controller. Best wishes.

"Your affectionate,

"UNCLE TOM,
(alias Tom Merry)."

"Tut-Tut-Tom M-M-M-Merry!" stut-tered Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

It was the turn of the School House fellows to smile. Blake & Co. understood now why the Terrible Three had wanted to warn them against raiding that hamper.

Fatty Wynn gazed at the hamper with a stony expression.

It was only a jape!

The School House japers were making merry at the expense of Fatty Wynn and his well-known pining for the flesh-pots of Egypt.

"The—the rotters!" gasped Fatty Wynn at last.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cut that cackling, you School House asses!" shouted Figgins wrathfully. "I don't call this a joke! It's idiotic!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wearid it as wathah funnay, deah boy," said Fatty Wynn.

"Pile in, Fatty!" yelled Levison.

"The Food Controller won't mind if you bolt the whole lot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, kick those cackling idiots out!" growled Figgins.

Blake & Co. were bundled out of the wood-shed, still yelling with laughter.

"The awful spoofs!" growled Fatty Wynn. "Must have been Tom Merry sent that postcard, just to raise my hopes, you know. It—it's awful! It's—it's heartless!" Fatty Wynn almost wept. "I—I thought I was going to have a feed! Oh dear!"

"Well, feed away!" grinned Redfern.

"After all, you can eat anything, you know. Your dashed appetite is a disgrace to the House!"

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"And Figgys' was bound to keep those School House Juffers here to see us made to look blessed fools!" said Lawrence.

"Just like Figgys!"

"How could I know what was in the hamper?" roared Figgins.

"Oh, rats!"

"The School House will be cackling themselves to death over this!" snorted Owen. "Fatty Wynn's unearthly appetite is the standing joke of the school already. Lots of fellows say he must be breaking the grub rules, or he wouldn't be so fat!"

"Who's fat?" yelled Fatty Wynn wrathfully.

"You are—fat as a Hun frau!"

"Look here—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Oh, cheese it!" interrupted Kerr, the peace-maker. "Don't begin to rag now! We'll make the School House duffers sit up."

It really looked like civil war among the New House heroes for a moment or two. But Redfern & Co. marched out of the wood-shed, sniffing, and Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were left with the hamper. Fatty Wynn still eyed it mournfully. He had anticipated a glorious feed, and, like Rachel of ancient times, he mourned for what was lost, and could not be comforted.

"Rotters!" he mumbled. "I don't call this a joke! It's like the tortures of Tantalus, you know. Horrible!"

"Br-r-r-r-r!" said Figgins crossly.

"And that silly ass, calling me fat! Trimble's fat, if you like," said Wynn indignantly. "I'm not fat! I'm growing thinner, too. I've often thought I shall fade away since the grub rules came in."

"Yes, you look like fading away!" said Figgins sarcastically. "Look here, Fatty, this won't do! The whole school will be chortling over this. It's all through your blessed appetite! You're always talking about grub, and wondering when the war's coming to an end, and all that, and it won't do. You're getting our House cackled at."

"Blow the House, and blow you!" said Fatty Wynn truculently. "I should think you might sympathise with a pal after a fearful disappointment like this."

And Fatty Wynn marched off, frowning.

Figgins and Kerr shook their heads very seriously, as they followed him. They felt that their fat chum was not grinning and bearing it in a way that became the New House, and Tom Merry's little joke with the hamper put the lid on, so to speak. There was serious danger that Fatty Wynn's pining for the good things of existence might cost a slur upon the patriotism of the New House. It was everybody's duty to accept grub rules as if he loved them, and to munch war-bread as if he liked it.

"We shall have to take Fatty in hand," said Figgins, frowning. "Fancy asking how long the blessed war's going to last, because he wants to study spread. Of course, we all want peace, but not for the sake of a feed."

Kerr grinned.

"Poor old Fatty!" he said. "He feels it more than we do."

Well, a chap's got to take it and smile, said Figgins. "Hallo, you funny-faced curiosities, what are you cackling at?"

The Terrible Three met them in the quad—smiling. They had been let out of their study at last.

"Did Fatty enjoy the hamper?" chortled Monty Lowther.

"Has he thoroughly digested the cabbage-stumps?" yelled Manners.

"Is he going to thank Uncle Tom nicely?" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins and Kerr walked away without replying, leaving the chums of the Shell laughing loudly.

The two Fourth-Formers came into their study in the new House, and found Fatty Wynn there, with a lugubrious expression on his fat face.

"I say, what are we going to have for tea?" asked Fatty.

"Same as usual," bread-and-scrape, and not much of that," said Figgins, gruffly. "Good enough in war-time, too."

"There isn't any sugar," murmured Fatty.

"Is there ever any, fathead?"

"No sardines left!"

"Bother 'em!"

"I say, I'm hungry!"

"P—"

Fatty Wynn sighed deeply.

"I—I say, Figgys, was there anything in the paper to-day about peace?"

Figgins did not reply. He made a sign to Kerr, and they seized their fat study-mate, and bumped him on the hearth-rug. And the unhappy Fatty did not ask anything more about peace.

CHAPTER 5

Trimble on the Track!

"YOU ought to have told us, you fearful asses!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely.

"Oh, you Fourth Form kids would have given the show away!" said THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 432.

Tom Merry. "You know what you are—Gussy, especially!"

"I regard that remark as disparaging," Tom Merrywry."

"Go hon!"

"However, it was really a very funny idea to send Wynn a hamper," conceded the swell of the Fourth.

Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three were talking in the upper passage, when Baggy Trimble of the Fourth came along. Trimble paused to listen. He generally did.

"Fatty Wynn's our game now," remarked Monty Lowther. "Fatty is a relief from war worry. Of course, Fatty is a good sort—not a fat prig like Trimble."

Perhaps Monty observed Baggy out of the corner of his eye.

"Look here, you know!" exclaimed Trimble indignantly.

"Hallo! You there?" exclaimed Lowther blandly. Buzz along, Baggy—nothing to eat here."

"I—I say, what's that about a hamper?" asked Baggy Trimble. "Did you say somebody had sent Fatty Wynn a hamper, Gussy?"

"I refuse to be called Gussy by you, Trimble!"

"I don't think chaps ought to have hampers in war-time," said Baggy. "I don't call it patriotic. Look here, you chaps, if Fatty Wynn's got a hamper, we ought to—collar it, as a warning, you know. I don't believe in food-hogging. If you fellows like to back me up—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble was rather late in the day with his designs on the hamper sent by Uncle Tom. But the mere mention of a hamper was enough to make the fat junior's mouth water. Fatty Wynn's appetite, compared with Trimble's, was as moonlight unto sunlight—as water unto wine.

"I don't see what you're cackling at," said Baggy. "Look here, you know, I've been looking for you chaps to back me up. Funds are required."

"Bai Jove!"

"I expect you to hand out something handsome," said Trimble. "You ain't quite so patriotic as I am—"

"My hat!"

"But when it's a question of backing up a chap at the Front, I think you will line up," said Trimble. "I expect you to, in fact."

"You fat duffer, what are you driving at?" demanded Tom Merry. "Lot you care about the chaps at the Front."

"You've heard of old Lomax?" said Baggy unheeding.

"Eh? Yes?"

"He's called up again."

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors knew all about Mr. Lomax, of Rylcombe. Some time before he had come home wounded from the war, and Arthur Augustus had engaged a motor-car to bring him home to his little house, and the car had been decorated with flags and bunting—a reception which had considerably astonished Private Lomax.

"He's gone again," said Baggy Trimble. "They're coming out the old miers now, you know, and Lomax has gone. I saw Mrs. Lomax in the village the other day, and she looked awfully down in the mouth. She was trying to get sugar at the grocer's, and she couldn't have any."

"Wotten!" growled Arthur Augustus. "I heard her telling Sands, the grocer, that she hadn't had any sugar for the children for some time, excepting some that was given her by a kind friend," said Baggy. "I thought it was awfully rotten, you know. Kids need sugar, you know."

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know, to make 'em fat or something. Well, an idea came into my head."

"There was room for it," remarked Blake.

"I thought I'd raise a bit of a subscription for Mrs. Lomax," explained Trimble. "I've been thinking it out. How much can you fellows stand?"

Tom Merry & Co. gave Baggy expressive looks.

"They were very sympathetic towards poor Mrs. Lomax, but they had no intention whatever of handing Trimble cash, to enable him to dodge the food regulations—for that was certainly what the cheerful Baggy intended. Cash handed to Baggy Trimble would have gone as far as the nearest shop where he could obtain something eatable for it, and no farther."

"Well!" said Baggy briskly. "I asked you a question. 'How much can you stand?'"

"I think we've stood about as much as we can stand of you," said Monty Lowther reflectively. "We can't stand any more. Travel!"

"I hope you're not going to be mean," said Baggy Trimble. "Look here, you know if cash is short, suppose we raid Fatty Wynn's hamper, and—and—confiscate it? You fellows can get hold of it, you know, and hand the things over into my charge—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, if you're funky of those New House bounders—Yah! Leggo my ear, Herries, you beast!"

Herries did not let go. He composed his finger and thumb upon Trimble's fat ear, and led him to the stairs, and kicked him. Baggy Trimble travelled down at a great rate.

He stopped on the landing, with a gasp, and shook a fat fist at Herries, who grinned down at him.

"Yah! You rotter! Come down here and I'll lick you!" roared Trimble.

"Right-ho!"

Herries came down, but, on second thoughts, Baggy Trimble decided not to wait. He scuttled down the lower stairs and vanished.

In the quadrangle Figgins & Co. passed him, going towards the gym. Trimble blinked after them. His thoughts were running on Fatty Wynn's hamper.

The New House chums disappeared into the gym, and Baggy, after some thought, rolled off to the New House.

There was a hamper, it would be found in Wynn's study—at least some of its contents; and Baggy Trimble intended to sample those contents.

Baggy was quite indignant at the idea of food-hogging going on in the New House. If there was any food-hogging to be done at St. Jim's, Baggy was quite prepared to attend to it.

Trimble looked round him anxiously, as he scuttled into the New House. It was decidedly a dangerous proceeding to raid the rival House, and Baggy was not a hero. But the coast was clear; and the fat School House junior slipped unobserved into Figgins' study in the Fourth Form passage.

He closed the door after him, and looked hurriedly round the study.

There was no sign of a hamper. Baggy peered into the cupboard. Like the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard's, it was bare. The study seemed as clear of food as if a swarm of Huns had been there.

"Rotters!" mumbled Baggy disconsolately. "Cade! Hidden it away! I know there was a hamper—those other beasts were talking about it. They must have some of the grub here somewhere."

Baggy Trimble was not a very scrupulous youth, and when he was on the track of food, what scruples he had vanished at once. Figgins & Co. being

safe in the gym, Baggy felt that he had time to make a search, and he made it. He turned out the room right and left in search of the supposed supplies.

There was a leather bag in a corner, with the initials, "D. L. W." on it. It was evidently David Llewellyn Wynn's property. Baggy opened it as a last chance, and peered into it.

Instantly he saw there was a paper bag, and Baggy jumped as he saw it.

For the paper bag was full of sugar! Baggy's eyes gleamed.

"My only aunt! Sugar!"

It was long since Baggy had seen so much sugar. But there it was—at least two pounds of loaf-sugar, crammed in the paper bag!

Sugar was very carefully allowed at St. Jim's. Fellows were allowed to have their tea in their studies, if they liked—but they were not allowed to exceed the fixed quantity. Lumps of sugar were told off, as if they had been pearls of great price, by the housekeeper. How did two pounds of sugar come to be stacked in Wynn's bag, in the New House study?

"Hoarding!" ejaculated Baggy.

"Awful rotter! Hoarding sugar when other people are going short! Disgusting! Like those beasts who go round in motor-cars gathering up food."

"I'm jolly well going to confiscate that sugar," Baggy Trimble promptly confiscated three or four lumps by immediately transferring them to his mouth.

He lifted the paper bag up next, and considered how the plunder was to be concealed about his person. And just at that moment the study door was thrown open.

Trimble spun round in alarm.

Fatty Wynn had returned.

The New House junior had come in for his bat. But he forgot all about his bat, as he saw the open bag, and Trimble munching sugar.

"You fat rotter!" roared Wynn.

"Oh! I—I—"

Fatty Wynn rushed at him. Trimble let go the sugar bag as he was waltzed round the study.

"Yaroor!" roared Trimble. "Yah! Hoarder! Leggo! Yawp!"

The School House junior went spinning into the passage. Fatty Wynn, crimson with wrath, followed him there, dribbling Trimble down the passage like a football. The raider went down the stairs three at a time, yelling.

How he got out of the New House Baggy Trimble hardly knew. Fatty Wynn, fuming with wrath, returned to his study. He did not take his bat and join Figgins and Kerr on the cricket-ground. He picked up the leather bag and carried it out of the study. Baggy Trimble, under the impression that Wynn was still pursuing him, dashed across the quadrangle at top speed, and bolted up the steps of the School House, and bolted into Levison and Clive, who were coming out together. The podgy junior smote them like a battering-ram, and there was a roar as they rolled over together on the steps.

CHAPTER 6.

The Hoarder!

"O H!"

"Ah!"

"You howling ass!"

Levison and Co. were quickly on their feet, but Baggy Trimble sat and gaped. He was wondering.

"What do you mean by rushin' into us like that, you fat idiot?" shouted Cardew.

"Grooh!"

"Jump on him!" gasped Clive.

"Yow-ow! Keep him off! That New House beast!" gurgled Baggy.

"There isn't anybody after you, you duffer!" growled Levison.

Trimble blinked round, and was relieved to see no sign of Fatty Wynn. He scrambled to his feet.

"I—I say, I—I've been nearly laughed!" he gasped. "Just because I found him out hoarding, you know."

"Eh? Who's hoarding?" asked Clive.

"Wynn, of course."

"Rot!"

"I found it in his study—no end of sugar!" panted Trimble. "I—I thought he was up to something of the sort, so I—I went to investigate. And there it was—a bag crammed with it—lumps of sugar, you know."

"Rubbish!" growled Levison.

"He went for me like a maniac!" gasped Baggy. "Look here, I've a jolly good mind to go to his Housemaster! He's no right to hoard sugar."

"If you disgrace your House by sneaking, you fat rotter, you'll get a ragging!" said Clive, frowning. "I don't believe a word of it, either."

"I saw it!"

"Rats!"

"I—I've got some of the sugar!" panted Trimble. "Look here!"

Three lumps were still clutched in his fat hand.

"My hat!" said Levison.

The three juniors stared at the sugar. As it was past tea-time, they were quite certain that Baggy hadn't any of his own allowance left. Evidently he had raided those lumps in the New House.

"Just like a New House cad!" said Trimble. "Hoarding, you know! Awful, isn't it? I never had enough sugar, and now this New House bouncer hoarding it. It's actually against the law, you know. Pounds and pounds of it. Heaps, in fact! Stacks!" Trimble's fertile imagination was getting loose. "Stacks of it, you know—stacks of sugar! A big travelling-bag crammed with it! What do you think of that?"

Several fellows were gathering round to hear Baggy's excited yarn. The Terrible Three paused on their way to the cricket-ground. Study No. 6 arrived on the scene. Half-a-dozen other fellows stopped.

Naturally the St. Jim's fellows were down on the mere idea of hoarding, with a very heavy down.

They knew that food-hogs with plenty of money sometimes bought up big supplies for their own use, leaving their poorer neighbours to get on as best they could. But that St. Jim's fellow should do anything of the kind was too rotten. It was a disgrace to the old school.

"Blessed if I'd have thought it of Fatty!" said Blake, with a whistle.

"I wofuse to cwidit Trimble's statement, Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "He is a faithful Pwvssian, as you vewy well know."

"Hear, hear," said Tom Merry. "He's got some of the sugar," remarked Levison.

"Where did you get that sugar, Baggy?"

"In Wynn's study in the New House, I tell you. He's got stacks and stacks of it."

"Bai Jove! There's Wynn!"

All eyes were turned on the fat New House junior, as he was spotted going down to the gates, with a leather-bag in his hand.

"That's the bag!" shouted Trimble.

"That's the bag it was in! He's taking it away to hide it now I've seen it. Stop him!"

"I wofuse to cwidit—"

"Stop him!" howled Trimble.

The School House juniors looked at one another. Trimble's reputation for truthfulness was on a par with the Kaiser's. But his eagerness to have Fatty Wynn stopped was pretty clear

proof that he was telling the truth this time, or as near the truth as it was possible for a fellow like Baggy to get.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry abruptly. "Wynn had better show what he's got in that bag, if only for his own sake."

"Yaas, wathah! But I wofuse to cwidit—"

"Come on!"

The whole party of juniors rushed down to the gates, and overtook Fatty Wynn there.

Fatty stared at them as they surrounded him.

"No larks!" he exclaimed. "I'm going out—"

"What have you got in that bag?" demanded Mellish of the Fourth.

"Fine out!" snapped Wynn.

"Sugar!" yelled Trimble. "He's going to hide it!"

Fatty Wynn flushed.

"All serene, Fatty," said Tom Merry. "This isn't a House rag. Trimble says you've been hoarding sugar—"

"Trimble's a fat liar!" growled Wynn.

"He says you've got it in that bag."

"Oh, rats!"

"Let's look in the bag!" sneered Mellish.

Fatty Wynn's grasp tightened on the bag.

"Look here, Wynn, you'd better open the bag," said Tom Merry seriously. "I don't believe you've got hoarded grub there, but it's better to clear it up. Let the fellows see what's in it."

Fatty Wynn's flush deepened.

"It's my bag, and what's in it is mine," he said stubbornly. "I'm not going to open it. Let me pass."

"E Jee!"

"Fatty!"

"He's going to hide his hoards!" howled Trimble. "Collar him!"

"Look here, Fatty, if you don't open that bag, you know what everybody will think," said Jack Blake.

"Oh, rats!"

"You wofuse to open it, Wynn?"

"Yes, I do."

"Pway allow me to wemark—"

"Will you let me pass?" growled Fatty Wynn.

"No, we won't," said Kangaroo of the Shell colony. "If you're hoarding sugar, at a time when poor people can't get any, you ought to be shown up."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm not, you silly idiot! But—"

"There can't be anything private in the bag, that a fellow mustn't see," remarked Levison. "You haven't been robbing your Housemaster's safe, I suppose?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Then why don't you open the bag?"

"Because I won't! It's not your business!"

Tom Merry knitted his brows. Wynn's refusal could mean only one thing—that there was hoarded sugar in the bag. Every fellow's face expressed the same opinion—that Wynn was taking his hoard away to hide it, now that it had been discovered in the school.

"Collar him," said Blake tersely, "we'll see for ourselves!"

"Yaas, I quite approve, undah the cires—"

"Let me pass!" shouted Fatty Wynn. And he made a fierce rush into the road. The next moment a dozen pairs of hands grasped him. He held on grimly to the bag, but it was forced open. There was a shout as the contents were seen.

"Sugar!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You hoardin' cad!"

"Shame!"

Fatty Wynn was released. With a crimson face, he closed the bag, and

clicked the lock. The juniors stood back. He could pass now.

Without a word, Fatty Wynn tramped away, bag in hand.

"Ain't you going to collar it?" yelled Trimble. "Look here, it ought to be confiscated!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Tom Merry.

Nobody wanted to touch Fatty Wynn's hoard—except Trimble. He was welcome to what satisfaction he could get out of it, now that he was held up to public shame as a hoarder. The juniors went in at the gates with scornful looks.

CHAPTER 7.

A Shock for Figgins.

FIGGINS and Kerr were puzzled. They were at cricket practice, and a crowd of other fellows were there. Figgins, who was not

especially observant, noticed nothing at first; but George Francis Kerr, who was as keen as a Sheffield blade, very quickly spotted the fact that something was on.

The sin of Fatty Wynn was fresh in the minds of the School House juniors. The incident was known to the Governing School by this time, with the exception of Fatty Wynn's special chums. Nobody had cared to mention it to Figgins or Kerr.

Many fellows concluded that they were in it, too. It seemed difficult to believe that hoarding had gone on in their study without Figgie or Kerr knowing anything about it.

But Tom Merry & Co. did not think so.

They were astonished that Fatty Wynn had turned out to be a food-hog; and they would have wanted exclusive proof before believing the same about Figgins and Kerr.

Doubtless Fatty Wynn had kept his hoard secret even from his study-mates. It was possible, at least.

Fatty Wynn's Gargantuan appetite, and his desire for a speedy peace, which would mean the revival of study spreads, had become a standing joke among the juniors. It was well known that he groaned in spirit under the restraints of the food regulations. But it was a point of honour with the juniors to observe those regulations, and Fatty had not really been suspected of transgressing them. Fellows like Trimble and Racke and Crooke and Clampe would do so without scruple. But Fatty Wynn was not a fellow of that sort. At least, it had been believed that he wasn't.

The Head of St. Jim's had been reluctant enough to restrict his boys; but the Food Controller's orders left him no choice. Most of them could afford to exceed the rules, so far as money went; but the manifest unfairness of wealthy people eating their fill while poorer people went without made very few of them desire to do so. Strict rules had been laid down; and, to a great extent, it was left to a fellow's sense of honour to obey them—though there was punishment if a "food-hog" was found breaking them.

Masters and prefects could not always be nosing into a fellow's study to see whether he was exceeding. Such a system of miserable espionage was a little too Prussian. But the fact that they were not watched and spied upon made it all the more necessary for fellows to play the game of their own accord.

Most of them did. And though Fatty Wynn was given to grumbling on the subject, he had not been expected of anything more than grumbling. All the fellows naturally wanted to see the end of the terrible war that brought grief and bereavement into every household. But Fatty's longing for peace because it would mean study spreads was taken

humorously. They knew that Fatty had three relations at the Front, and that he thought a great deal more about them than about study spreads. His outbreak as a hoarder surprised everybody—it was not like old Fatty at all.

"It has weally astonished me fearfully," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy confided to his chums. "I should have expected it of Trimble or Wacke, or Cutts of the Fifth. But Wynn was always decent. I suppose he got fearfully hungry." "That's no excuse," growled Blake. "If everybody did the same, it would mean people with money mopping up all the grub, and nothing at all left for the poor. And as the poor wouldn't stand it, that would mean trouble—and the food-hogs getting their plunder taken off them by force. That's the kind of thing that leads to hunger riots."

"They've had hunger riots in Germany, through rich pigs mopping up what grub was going," remarked Digby. "Taint quite good enough for us." Arthur Augustus shook his head sadly. Fatty Wynn's fall from grace was a painful surprise to him; but he regarded Fatty more in sorrow than in anger.

And, as the subject was uppermost in the minds of the juniors, it was easy for the keen-eyed Kerr to see that something was wrong, and he drew Figgins' attention to that fact.

"The fellows are jawing over something," said Kerr.

"Let 'em jaw!" said Figgins.

"Something about us."

"Wondering why we're jawing instead of fielding, perhaps."

"There's something going on, fat-head!"

"Let it go on, then!"

Kerr called to Monty Lowther.

"What's up, Lowther?"

"Lether colouring. He did not want to be the one to enlighten the New House chums as to Fatty Wynn's back-sliding."

"Up?" he repeated, to gain time.

"Yes; what's up?" demanded Kerr sharply.

"Prices," said Lowther, after some thought.

"Oh, don't be an ass. What's going on, I mean?"

"Profiteering."

"Look here—"

"That's why prices are up!" explained Lowther blandly; and he strolled away. Figgins knitted his brows.

"Why don't the chump explain, then?" he exclaimed.

"Come on!" said Kerr abruptly.

The chums of the New House left the cricket-field, and bore down on Blake & Co., who were chatting outside the pavilion after practice. Study No. 6 became quite silent all of a sudden.

"Seen Wynn?" asked Figgins.

"Saw w-wynn!" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"Yes. He went in for his bat, and he hasn't come back. Have you seen him?"

"Ya-a-a-s."

"What are you stammering about?" demanded Figgins, in astonishment.

"As I—stammered, dear boy."

"Yes, and you are now! Where's Wynn, if you've seen him?"

"He—he's gone out."

"The ass!" exclaimed Figgins. "I told him he was to do some batting!"

"Never mind Wynn," said Kerr quietly. "Suppose you fellows explain what it is that's being jawed about up and down the field?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, nothing," said Blake uneasily.

"He, he, he!" That cachinnation came from Baggy Trimble, who was near at hand. "Why don't you tell 'em, Blake? They ought to know!"

"Well, they'll know soon, anyway," said Herries.

"Know what?" roared, Figgins, his temper beginning to rise. "What's all the silly dashed mystery about your ows?"

"He, he, he! It's about Wynn!" cackled Trimble. "You, too! You're in it."

"In what?" snapped Figgins.

"Yah! Hoarders!"

"What?" shouted Figgins and Kerr together.

"Shut up, Trimble, you fat wotah! I refuse to believe that Figgy or Kerr knew anything about it."

"Rats! How could Fatty Wynn hoard grub in their study without their knowing!" sneered Trimble. "Too thin!"

"Hoard grub in our study?" repeated Figgins. "Who's been hoarding grub in our study?"

"He, he! Fatty Wynn has—Yah! Oh! Ah! Yah!" roared Trimble, as Figgins' grasp closed on his collar.

"Shake, shake, shake!"

"You fat scoundrel!" Figgins' voice trembled with anger as he shook Trimble till the fat junior quivered like a jelly.

"You rotter! You slandering cad! If you weren't a measly, fat, unfit slacker and a cringing worm, I'd make you put your paws up, and lick you till you couldn't crawl!"

"Gug-gug-ug!"

Figgins shook Trimble till his strong arms ached, and then tossed him contemptuously aside. The fat junior rolled in the grass spluttering. Then Figgins turned a glittering glance upon the School House juniors.

"I suppose you fellows don't believe that fat brute's lies about Wynn?" he asked, between his teeth.

There was a pause. But Figgins had to be answered, and Blake answered him quietly.

"It's true, Figgins!"

CHAPTER 8.

Trouble in Figgins' Study!

GEORGE FIGGINS came towards Blake, his fists clenched, and his eyes gleaming.

Blake quietly put his hands in his pockets.

"You say it's true?" said Figgins thickly.

"Yes. I'm sorry, but there you are! It's been proved."

"That's a lie!"

"That's it, Figgy!" murmured Kerr, catching his chum by the arm.

Figgins glared at the Scottish junior.

"I say it's a lie!" he roared.

"It isn't, Figgy!" chided Kerr.

"Don't be an ass! It's a mistake. Now shut up while I do the talking! What you fellows mean by saying that Wynn has been hoarding grub in our study? He hasn't, or we should know it, and we don't know it."

"As if Fatty would do anything of the sort!" burst out Figgins. "You School House cads—"

"Shush! Speak up, Blake, as you seem to know about it."

Blake reluctantly explained. He was not feeling angry at Figgy's violent words. He knew how Figgins must be feeling that stain on the honour of his study.

Kerr listened quietly. The Scottish junior was never cooler than in a time of trouble or excitement. Figgins listened, fuming. But even Figgins' excitement died down as he heard what the juniors had seen.

"The sugar was in the bag, right enough," concluded Blake.

"We wouldn't take Trimble's word. We there it was—much as is allowed to one chap in a month, at least. I didn't

see anything but sugar. But Fatty Wynn had that, and a dozen fellows saw it."

"Xaos, wathah!"

Kerr looked keenly at the juniors. He had been as angry at first as Figgins, though more quiet in his anger. But it was impossible to doubt facts. The hoarded sugar had been seen in the bag, that was clear.

And how had Fatty Wynn come by a quantity of sugar, unless he had observed it secretly in excess of the allowance? That is to say, unless he was a hoarder? Figgins' angry flush had paled now.

"I know it's rotten," said Blake. "We looked into it at first, as much to clear Fatty as anything. Trimble's was a lying Prussian. But there it was!"

"Wynn feels the westwictions more than we do," said Arthur Augustus charitably. "I wecommend speakin' to him vewy severely. I am suah it is Wynn's first offence, and he will not wepent it."

"Here's some mistake," muttered Figgins.

He was not angry now, but he looked worried and miserable.

"There wasn't much room for a mistake," said Dig. "It was sugar, and at least two pounds of it. I suppose we know lumps of sugar when we see 'em?"

"I can't understand it. How could Fatty hold sugar or anything else without us knowing it? Even if he would, and he wouldn't!"

"Yah!" Trimble sat up in the grass.

"Yah! Food-hogs! You're all tarred with the same brush! You knew it all the time! Yah!"

Figgins did not even glance at Trimble. He turned and walked away with his hat.

The chums of Study No. 6 were left looking and feeling very uncomfortable.

"It's wotten!" said D'Arcy, quite distressed. "A fellow playin' a mean trick like that digwaffles his studay. But, affah all, it was only once—"

"Tot!" snorted Trimble. "It's a regular habit of Wynn's, of course. He's a food-hog, and he ought to be shown up!"

"Weally, Trimble—"

"I'm not going to overlook this!" said Trimble loftily.

"You're not!" snapped Blake, contemptuously. "Who are you, you fat owl!"

"I'm a patriotic chap! I'm down on food-hogging. I'm jolly well going to let everybody hear about this!" said Trimble.

"I'll make an example of him! He called me a fat beast the other day—me, you know! I'll give him fat beads!"

"Look here, Trimble, you can let it drop—"

"I'm not going to let it drop!" said Trimble triumphantly. "As a patriotic chap, I'm bound to make those New House rotters sit up for this. And I'm going to!"

And Trimble walked away.

"Well, it can't be helped!" said Blake. "I'm sorry for Figgy; but, after all, if a chap's a food hog he must expect to be jeered at. Let's go back to the nets!"

Meanwhile, Figgins and Kerr had gone to the New House, expecting to find their chum there. They were very anxious to hear what Fatty Wynn had to say on the subject.

But the fat Fourth-Former was still absent.

The fact that he had gone out, when he had been supposed to leave Little Side only to fetch his bat, looked suspicious in itself. Even to his chum he looked as if he was hiding something.

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But the fat Fourth-Former was still absent.

Figgins and Kerr looked round their study, to see whether there was anything else in the nature of a hoard.

They found a single lump of sugar on the carpet, evidently where it had been dropped by Trimble. It added proof of the wretched story.

"I can't understand it, Kerr!" said Figgins. "I can't believe it of Fatty. He will be able to explain, of course."

"Of course!" said Kerr. "You think so, Kerr, don't you?"

"I—I hope so."

There was a step in the passage, and Redfern looked in. Redfern was looking perturbed and exasperated.

"You chape heard?" he exclaimed. "I suppose it's all over the school!" said Figgins bitterly. "It's not true; there is a mistake somewhere, somehow."

"Doesn't look like it!" snapped Redfern. "A dozen fellows saw Wynn carting sugar about in a bag. He must have been buying it up secretly."

"He hasn't!" roared Figgins. "Where did he get it then?"

"How should I know, fathead?"

"Fatty can't have had a hoard of sugar," said Kerr. "He never has sugar in his tea, even. Well, hardly ever. He's fond of sugar, but if he had a hoard, he wouldn't take tea without sugar."

"He certainly had a hoard, because a dozen fellows have seen it," said Redfern. "We'll give him a chance to explain, if he can, and if he can't, he will be sent to Coventry by the House."

"Look here, Redfern—" began Figgins hotly.

"And you can't back him up, Figgys," said Redfern quietly. "You can't back up a food-hoarder in breaking the rules."

"I wouldn't!" growled Figgins. "But it isn't so. Give a chap a chance to speak before you're down on him."

"Hullo, here he is!"

Fatty Wynn, looking warm and dusty after his walk, came into the study, with a bag in his hand. He tossed the bag in a corner—evidently empty. Then he looked inquiringly at the grim facts of the juniors.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"Yes," growled Figgins. "What have you been taking out in that bag?"

Fatty Wynn flushed.

"Oh! Those School House idiots have been jawing to you, I suppose?" he exclaimed angrily.

"It's all over the school!" said Redfern. "It's clear enough that you had a lot of sugar in that bag, Wynn. You've taken it out of the school because that fat cad Trimble nosed it out. What have you done with it?"

"That's my tea, Redfern!"

"It's our bizney, too, if you're a food-hoarder!" said Redfern angrily. "It's a disgrace to the House."

"Why you rotter—" Fatty Wynn pushed back his cuffs.

"Where did you get the sugar?" demanded Redfern.

"That's enough!"

Redfern left the study. His face was grim, and his mind was evidently made up. Fatty Wynn's plump, rosy face became a little pale, as he looked at Figgins and Kerr. His eyes gleamed.

"So you think I'm a food-hog, do you?" he exclaimed.

"I never thought so before," said Figgins glumly. "We had no sugar to-day for tea, and it seems you had pounds of it stacked away in a bag. You couldn't spare a lump for your own pals!"

"I—I— You don't understand!" faltered Fatty Wynn.

"No, I don't understand a chap acting like that," said Figgins bitterly. "I'd never have expected it of you. I know that cad Trimble goes about to shop after shop when he's in funds, look-

ing for grub. I never thought that a chap in my study would do it!"

"So you think I've done that!" roared Wynn.

"Oh, don't shout at me!" said Figgins savagely. "Do you want me to believe that lumps of sugar walked here of their own accord, and stacked themselves in your bag?"

Fatty Wynn compressed his lips. "I never expected this!" he said.

"But if that's what you think, think it and be hanged! I don't care what you think!"

And Fatty Wynn stalked out of the study, and closed the door after him with a slam that rang through the New House.

reason. Grundy of the Shell joined up, too, for better motives. Grundy was indignant, and Grundy meant to make his indignation known far and wide. Baggy Trimble's idea was to demonstrate—a public demonstration that would make the New House fellows simply cringe. And Grundy of the Shell assented, and calmly took the leadership of the affair into his own hands.

The following day, after morning lessons, Grundy started in as the Shell fellows came out of the Form-room.

"Meeting in the Common-room!" sang out Grundy.

"Hullo! First I've heard of it!" said Tom Merry.



An insult to the New House.

(See Chapter 10.)

CHAPTER 9.

The Demonstration!

TOM MERRY & Co. had determined to let the incident of the sugar drop. It was an unpleasant subject, and they considered that the less said about it the better. It was bad enough—but it was not nearly so bad as Baggy Trimble's endless dodges, for instance, for avoiding the grub rules. Baggy's indignation was quite out of place. They thought, too, that Fatty Wynn's House fellows would probably deal with him severely enough for bringing shame on the New House.

Most of the School House fellows agreed with Tom. They were at war with the rival House; but they did not want to take a mean advantage. But there were some fellows who did not agree.

Baggy Trimble was determined to make the most of it. As a rule Baggy was a nobody, and was quite disregarded. But he found backers on this occasion. Racke and Crooke of the Shell, finding that Tom Merry & Co. were against taking the matter up, determined to make as much capital out of it as they possibly could, in a spirit of opposition. Melish of the Fourth joined in for the same amiable

"I'm calling the meeting," said Grundy loftily.

"You can attend it, too, old chap, and applaud your own speeches," said Monty, Lower.

"Mind you don't bore yourself to death!" remarked Manners. "You're rather long-winded, you know."

And the Terrible Three went out into the quadrangle, quite regardless of George Alfred Grundy and his meeting in the Common-room. Grundy snorted.

"Roll up, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "It's an important meeting. We're going to make the New House cads sit up for grub-hoarding."

"I thought that was going to be dropped," said Talbot.

"Well, it isn't."

"Better let it drop," urged Talbot. "It's only Wynn, anyway—and he's only done it once."

"I know best, Talbot!"

Talbot laughed, and walked on. The Shell fellows went their way, much to Grundy's indignation. Only Racke and Crooke and Scrope remained with him. Even his own study-mates—Wilkins and Gunn—dodged out into the quad, and did not seem to hear Grundy's voice calling them back.

However, Mellish and Trimble joined up when the Fourth Form came out. Grundy found himself with five followers—and, as a matter of fact, they were the five fellows he disliked most in the School House—"smoky cads," as he called them himself. It really was hard lines that a leader like Grundy could not rake up a more respectable following than that.

Such as it was, however, he had to make the best of it. He led his flock into the junior Common-room.

Trimble, apparently under the impression that he was leader, mounted on a chair to address the far from numerous meeting.

"Gentlemen!" he began. Grundy stared at him.

"What are you up to, fatty? Get off that chair!"

Look here, Grundy—yahl! Oh! Grundy unconcernedly pitched Trimble off the chair, and mounted it himself. There was no arguing with Grundy.

"Gentlemen!" said Grundy. "This is an indignation meeting."

"Hear, hear!" roared Racke.

"St. Jim's fellow has been guilty of food-hogging. We're down on it. As a matter of fact, all you fellows have been caught food-hogging—"

"Ek?"

"I've whopped you for it myself, Racke—"

"You silly ass!"

"But I'm glad to see you're backing me up to put it down. We're going to demonstrate," said Grundy. "The New House have been hoarding. We're going to hold a demonstration under their windows, and let 'em know what St. Jim's thinks of them!"

"Bravo!"

"Follow me!" said Grundy, jumping down.

He led the way to the quad, and the meeting followed him. As they marched across the quadrangle Tom Merry bore down on them.

"Join up!" said Grundy.

But the captain of the Shell had not come to join up.

"Look here, Grundy, if you're going to rake up that affair about Wynn—"

he began.

"We're going to hold a demonstration against food-hogs," said Grundy loftily.

"Well, you've got a gang of food-hogs with you, if you come to that," said Tom. "Wynn's in trouble in his own House, I hear. Let it drop."

"Rats!"

With that Grundy marched on, and his followers, with defiant looks at Tom Merry, marched in his wake.

The demonstration arrived at the New House, and halted under Figgin's study window. Whether the Co. were at home they did not know. But that did not matter. Their demonstration was certain not to pass unnoticed.

"Now, then, all together," said Grundy. He raised his powerful voice to a roar. "Yahl! Food-hogs!"

"Yahl! Food-hogs!" roared his followers in turn.

"Yahl! Hoarders!"

"Yahl! Hoarders!" repeated Racke & Co.

There was a sudden rush from the porch of the New House. Figgins, Kerr, Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence came dashing out with angry faces. The demonstration, curious as it was, had stirred up the New House fellows.

The New House juniors did not trouble to speak. They charged.

"Back up!" roared Grundy truculently. "Down with New House food-hogs!"

Grundy put up a terrific fight. But his followers broke and fled at the first on—

set, yelling as the New House juniors chased them across the quad.

Grundy of the Shell was left to fight the battle on his own.

He was not quite equal to the task.

Three or four New House fellows seized him, and he was swept off his feet, and rushed away to the big fountain.

Splash!

Head and shoulders Grundy went into the fountain. He came out again spluttering and gasping.

"Grub! Hoo! Yoooh!"

Bump!

Figgins & Co. sat him down on the step of the fountain—hard—and left him. Grundy rubbed water out of his eyes and his hair, and blinked about him dazedly.

His followers had vanished. Grundy picked himself up, gasping for breath, and streaming with water.

"Oh, my hat! Oh, crumbs!" gasped Grundy. "Rotten funks—ow—groogh!"

A bowl of unsympathetic laughter greeted Grundy as he made for the School House to look for a towel.

"Hallo! Have you demonstrated?" yelled Tom Merry.

"Hullo! You look wathah wet, Grundy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why didn't you back me up!" roared Grundy. "Now I've been ducked in the dashed fountain—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling idiots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy, snorting with wrath, tramped into the School House, leaving the juniors howling with laughter. Grundy's demonstrations were over.

CHAPTER 10.

Divided Chums.

THERE was a grim silence in Figgins' study at tea-time.

Figgins and Kerr looked very grim.

Fatty Wynn looked morose.

For once there was a rift in the lute. The friendship of the chums of the New House was under a cloud.

Tea was frugal, as usual. There was no sugar.

Figgins and Kerr did not care much whether they had sugar in their tea. There were worse troubles than that in war-time. But they could not help thinking of that hoard of sugar which Wynn had taken out of the school, after keeping it, without their knowledge, in their study.

Even a food-hoarder might have been supposed to be willing to whack out a little among his pals—not that Figgie or Kerr would have touched anything in excess of their rights.

The two juniors felt bitterly the disgrace that had been brought on the study. They had always held their heads high. Now, fellows like Clampe hinted that Figgins hadn't hoarded without his study-mates knowing it. Neither could he, if they had ever suspected him of anything of the kind. But they hadn't suspected.

How could anyone suspect a chum of a mean thing like that?

For it was mean—wretchedly mean!

There was poor Mrs. Lomas in Rylcombe, for instance, who could not get enough sugar to provide her children with that necessary article. She was a soldier's wife, and her husband was at the Front again. And while the poor woman could not get what was essential, a miserable hoarder had more than he needed!

It wasn't playing the game. And Figgins' study had always prided itself, above all, upon playing the game.

The two juniors felt ashamed. A mean thing like this was, in a way, worse than a crime. Surely, in war-time, every fellow ought to be willing to take his whack, and nothing more! To take ad-

vantage of the accident of having money, in order to get more, was horribly mean.

What was chiefly exasperating was Fatty Wynn's unrepentance. He didn't look shame-faced, or even sorry. He only seemed exasperated himself, and indignant!

That was really too thick—that Wynn himself should feel indignant at the attitude of his House-fellows on the subject.

Grundy's demonstration had been absurd enough, and it had ended disastrously for Grundy; but it had stuck the New House juniors. Black looks had been cast at Fatty Wynn on all sides.

He was already in Coventry.

Nobody wanted to speak to a hoarder. Moreover, the fellows could not help thinking that if he hoarded sugar, he hoarded other things. He might have a big supply of food hidden away somewhere, to which he paid surreptitious visits. Why not? A fellow who would grab greedily at one thing, would grab greedily at another. Clampe declared in the Common-room that if Figgie's study was searched, no end of grub would come to light.

Strange to say, Fatty Wynn hadn't any sugar with his tea, any more than his study-mates had. It was odd, for Fatty had a very sweet tooth, and he missed sugar, perhaps, more than anything else.

So far as they remembered, Figgie and Kerr had not seen him take sugar for a long time—even when there was the regular allowance handed out. Fatty Wynn had not been seen consuming his share. Apparently he kept it for private gorging.

But Kerr had been thinking about that. Kerr was given to rather deeper thinking than most of the fellows. And he suddenly broke the silence at the glum tea-table.

"Fatty!"

His fat study-mate glared at him without replying.

"Where did you get that sugar, Fatty?"

"Find out!"

"Have you been saving up your allowance?"

"Find out!"

Figgins started.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "Perhaps he got it that way. Did you save up your sugar allowance, Fatty?"

"Find out!" retorted Fatty Wynn, for the third time.

Fatty's usually good-humoured and sunny face was hard and uncompromising. He did not look friendly.

"Of course, a chap's allowed to save up his allowance if he likes," said Figgins. "No harm in that, if he chooses to go without. But what's the good of saving it up?"

Fatty Wynn grunted.

"No good saving it up, to bolt all at once, that I can see," said Figgins.

"And if a chap saves up his sugar, he ought to whack it out when the stuff goes short. No good saving it up otherwise."

Grunt.

"What have you done with it, Fatty?" asked Kerr.

Grunt.

"Isn't you answer?" snapped Figgins.

Fatty Wynn pushed away his empty plate, and rose, with a bitter look on his face—a look that was very uncommon there.

"Don't talk to me!" he said. "I'm a food-hoarder, ain't I? I take the grub out of the mouths of the poor, like those rich rotters in the West End. Who went round in motor-cars gathering up grub before the Food Controller put his foot down. I ain't fit to be spoken to, am I? I'm the kind of chap that causes hunger riots through being a hog, you know!"

"Look here—"

"I'm a fat worm!" went on Fatty Wynn, with increasing bitterness. "I'm a sneaking rotter piling up grub I don't want, while kids are starving in the back streets, you know! That's what I am! Yah!"

And with that unexpected wind-up, Fatty Wynn tramped savagely out of the study.

Figgins and Kerr looked at one another.

Fatty Wynn's outbreak had taken them quite aback.

"I'm afraid there's a bloomer somehow," said Kerr.

"But the sugar!" said Figgins. "He had it! He's got it now, hidden away somewhere!"

Kerr nodded.

"Yes; that beats me. Still, he might have saved his sugar allowance. We know he hasn't had any sugar in the study for weeks and weeks."

"I suppose he must have saved it, as he didn't scold it," said Figgins. "I never noticed specially. But it's as you say. But—but why should a chap save up his allowance, and keep it in a bag? He can't have intended to have a feed all by himself on lumps of sugar. That's rot! Still, if he has his own allowance, saved up, he's got a right to it. But why can't he say so?"

"Because he's got his back up for being called a hoarder," said Kerr.

"The other fellows won't believe it. There's no object in saving up sugar in a bag. It's too steep."

"I believe it, though," said Kerr.

"Well, so do I, if you do," said Figgins, who generally relied on his Scottish chum's judgment. "But the other fellows won't."

"I'm afraid they won't, unless Fatty can give a reason."

"And he can't do that."

"It seems not."

Figgins and Kerr finished their tea in a glum mood. They went down to the Common-room, where some of the New House fellows were discussing the intricacies of Fatty Wynn. They explained their view of the matter, which was received with scoffing.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Thompson. "Anybody found with hoarded grub could say he had saved it out of his allowance."

"Wynn hasn't said so—"

"Well, if it's true, why can't he?" "Why should he save it up?" asked Redfern. "There's no sense in it. What reason could he have for putting his sugar in a bag instead of into his tea?"

And to that question Figgins and Kerr could find no reply. It beat them hollow.

They wandered out into the quadrangle, not feeling in much of a humour for cricket, or anything else. Suddenly Figgins halted, his eyes blazing as they were fixed on a placard stuck on one of the old elms. There was an inscription daubed on it with a brush to the following effect:

WHERE ARE THE HOARDERS?
IN THE NEW HOUSE!
WHERE THE FOOD-HOGS?
IN THE NEW HOUSE!

Figgins gritted his teeth.

"That's some School House cad!" he exclaimed, tearing down the placard. "My hat! I'll find the rotter who stuck that up there, and make him eat it!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Kerr, as Figgins strode towards the School House.

"Rats!"

Figgins strode on, his face dark with anger, and Kerr followed him. Kerr was exasperated by the taunt, levelled at the whole House for the fault of one member; but he did not quite see how two fellows were to deal with all the School House at once. Figgins was too excited to think of that.

He strode into the School House, the crumpled placard clutched in his hand, his eyes glittering. Blake & Co. were in the hall, and Figgins marched up to them, and thrust the offending placard under their astonished noses.

"Who did that?" he roared.

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm ready to lick him, whoever he was, or a dozen of him!" roared Figgins. "I'm ready, unless he's a funk as well as a liar! Now, then!"

CHAPTER 11.

Brought to Light.

GEORGE E. FIGGINS' powerful voice rang far and wide.

Fellows looked round from all quarters.

"Hallo! New House worms!" said Tom Merry. "Kick 'em out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins glared at the juniors gathering round. Figgins feared no foe, especially when his stumper was up.

"I've come here to look for a lying funk!" he shouted.

"Better look in your own House!" suggested Monty Lowther. "Lots of them there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As well as food-hogs!" sniggered Trimble.

Figgins brandished the crumpled placard in the air.

"I want to know who did that! I'm going to lick him!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Was it you?" shouted Figgins.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy extracted his eyeglasses from his waistcoat pocket, put it in his eye, and surveyed Figgins scornfully.

"I refuse to answer," he said. "I do not like bein' woreed at in that mannah, Figgins."

"You silly ass—"

"If you chawactewise me as a silly ass, you wotah!"

"Was it you, you tailor's dummy?"

"Bai Jove! Will you hold my eyeglass, Blake, while I give Figgins a fearful twhashin'?"

"Look here, Figgins—" began Tom Merry, interposing.

"Perhaps it was you!" snorted Figgins. "If it was you, come out to the gym, and put up your hands!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tom Merry testily. "It was most likely Trimble or Racke, I should say. But New House cads can't roar at us in our own House, so you had better elide out."

"I'm not going till I've found the cad who wrote this!" said Figgins. "Some sneaking School House funk—"

"Wats! If you have food-hogs in your House, Figgins, you must expect to be weminded of it!" said D'Arcy warmly.

Figgins made a jump at the swell of St. Jim's. The next moment he was struggling in a dozen pairs of hands. Kerr rushed to his help, and was collarred at once.

"Frog's march!" shouted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hurrah!"

In the midst of a shouting crowd, Figgins and Kerr were frog-marched out of the House. Kildare of the Sixth was coming up the steps, and he stared at the excited procession.

"Stop that!" rapped out the captain of St. Jim's. "You disorderly young rascals; what game are you playing?"

"Only frog-marching a pair of New House bounders," said Manners. "It's all right, Kildare."

"Quite all right, dean boy."

"Put them down at once!"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Do you hear me?" rapped out the St. Jim's captain.

Figgins and Kerr, breathless and dishevelled, were set upon their feet. They panted, and glared defiance at the School House fellows.

"Now, what's all this about?" said the prefect sharply.

"Rotten funks!" gasped Figgins. "I'll lick the whole lot of 'em, one at a time—two if they like! Ow!"

"I'm your man!" said Jack Blake promptly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Shut up!" exclaimed Kildare. "If you New House kids have come over here to look for trouble—"

"We came to look for a sneaking funk!" howled Figgins. "He's afraid to show himself! Just like a School House cad!"

"Bump him!"

"Kick him out!"

"Be quiet, tell you!" exclaimed Kildare angrily. "Figgins, if you want me to take you in to your House-master—"

"I don't care!"

"Well, if you don't care, I think I'll do it," said the captain of St. Jim's grimly. "You can't talk to a prefect like that, my son. What's that in your paw?" His eyes fell on the offending placard. "Oh! Give that to me."

Figgins savagely handed it over. Kildare knitted his brows.

"Is that what you came here about, Figgins?"

"Yes, it is," growled Figgins.

"This kind of thing isn't a joke," said Kildare. "This is an insult! I want to know who wrote this placard."

"Chance for you, Trimble," grinned Cardew, pushing the fat junior forward.

Baggy Trimble did not seem anxious to meet Kildare's eye. He wriggled behind Tom Merry as Cardew pushed him.

"Who was it?" rapped out Kildare.

"Come now!"

"I won't mo!" squeaked Trimble.

"Oh, it was you, was it?"

"No; I said it wasn't!"

"No need for you to speak at all, if it wasn't," said Kildare. "Come here! Did you write this placard, Trimble?"

"It—it's true," said Trimble. "It's true, Kildare. They're food-hogs. There's no end of grub stacked in Figgins' study. I've seen it—"

"What?"

"Well, there was some, anyway," amended Trimble. "Wynn's taken it away; but all the fellows know it was there."

"You rotten sneak!" muttered Figgins.

"Well, you shouldn't come here kicking up a row, if you don't want it known," said Trimble defiantly. "You shouldn't be a food-hog!"

Kildare's brow darkened.

"Is there anything in this, Figgins?" he exclaimed.

"No!" growled Figgins. "If anybody calls me a food-hog, I'll punch his head!"

"Has there been any food in excess of the allowance, stored in your study?" demanded Kildare. "You know I'm bound to look into this, as a prefect."

"You're not a New House prefect," said Figgins sulkily.

"No!" growled Kildare. "If you prefer to explain to your Housemaster, it's quite within your rights. I'll see that you do. Come with me to Mr. Ratcliff, both of you."

Figgins and Kerr followed Kildare across the quadrangle. There was no help for it.

Blake whistled softly.

"It's all out now," he remarked. "Well, it was bound to come out. Wynn will get a licking, and it will serve him jolly well right!"

"Twimble is a wotten sneak, all the same."

"Yes, rather! Bump him!" But Baggy Trimble had already disappeared.

"After all, it's like Figgins' cheek to kick up a row," remarked Levison. "There is a food-hog in his House, after all."

"And he's going to get it in the neck, when Ratty is put on the track," said Blake.

Meanwhile, Kildare marched the two dismayed juniors into Mr. Ratcliff's study in the New House. He briefly explained the matter, and Mr. Ratcliff turned two very sharp eyes on the juniors.

"A very serious matter," he said. "What have you to say, Figgins?"

"Nothing, sir."

"And you, Kerr?"

"Nothing, sir."

"You admit that you have acted in contravention of the food rules?"

"No, sir."

"And what of Wynn? Has he done so?"

Figgins and Kerr were silent. They did not intend to give evidence against Fatty Wynn.

"Ah!" Mr. Ratcliff compressed his lips. "I think I see, Wynn is the guilty party apparently. Thank you for bringing the matter to my notice, Kildare. I shall inquire into it very shortly."

Kildare left the study. "Now, Figgins, kindly explain to me precisely what Wynn has done!"

Figgins closed his lips hard.

"Do you hear me, Figgins?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, answer me!"

"I've nothing to say, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes glittered.

"Where is Wynn?" he asked.

"I think he's gone out, sir."

"Very well. When he comes in, bring him to my study—all three of you. You may go now!"

Figgins and Kerr went.

"The fat's in the fire now, Figgys," murmured Kerr, as the Housemaster's door closed.

Figgins nodded. There was no doubt about that. The food-hog of the New House was booked.

CHAPTER 12.

All Serene!

TOM MERRY & CO. wheeled their bicycles down to the gate. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stopped in his graceful saunter in the quad, and greeted them.

"Goin' out, deah boys?"

"Payin a visit," said Tom, with a smile. "We're going to see a lady."

"Bai Jove!"

"You'd better come along, Gussy," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "With your fascinating manners, you know—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Besides, you know the lady," said Tom, laughing. "We're going down to the village to call on Mrs. Lomax. That fat idiot Trimble says her husband has been called up again, and we're going to offer to help with the allotment. As you're a wonderful gardener, Gussy, you can come along, and we'll give you directions while you do the digging."

"Bai Jove! I shall be verry pleased to come, deah boys. I'm wathah a good hand at hacin up potatoes, you know. Wait till I get my jiggah."

And the swell of St. Jim's ran his machine out, and pedaled away with the Terrible Three to Ryelcombe. Figgins and Kerr were in the gateway, looking very glum, waiting for Fatty Wynn to come in.

"If you see Wynn, tell him he's wanted," called out Kerr.

"Right-ho!" The School House juniors rode away cheerfully. They reached the little cottage close by the village, and jumped off their machines, leaning them against the fence. They assumed their brightest smiles as Tom Merry knocked at the cottage door.

It was opened by Mrs. Lomax. The patrician-looking woman smiled as she saw the four cheery boyish faces.

"Good-evenin', madam!" said Arthur Augustus, raising his cap gracefully. "May we have the pleasah of helpin' with the potatoes?"

"Please come in!" said Mrs. Lomax smiling. You are very kind. You have come to help Master Wynn?"

"Wynn!" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"Did you not know he was here?"

"Bai Jove! No."

The juniors passed through into the big garden behind the cottage. A fat youth was bending over the potato-patch, hoe in hand, with perspiration trickling down his face, which was crimson. His Eton jacket was hanging on a clothes-line near at hand.

"You here, Fatty?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Fatty Wynn spun round.

"Hallo! What do you School House boudners want?" he demanded gruffly.

"We've come to work. We heard from Trimble that Lomax was gone," explained Tom Merry.

"I knew that weeks ago!" grunted Fatty Wynn.

"Well, we didn't! You'd better hand me that hoe. You're wanted at the school."

"Blow the school!"

"You'd better go," said Tom seriously. "Figgys' waiting for you. The fact is, there's a going to be some trouble, Wynn. It's come out about the sugar."

Fatty Wynn snorted.

"May as well know what to expect," said Monty Lowther. "You've got to see Ratty, and he's got on to the sugar being stored in your study. Sorry, but you really shouldn't have done it, you know."

"Snort!"

"Is Master Wynn in trouble at the school?" asked Mrs. Lomax anxiously.

"I am so sorry!"

"It's nothing, ma'am," said Fatty Wynn. "Only a silly mistake of some silly fool!"

But the good lady looked anxious.

"You spoke of the sugar, Master Lowther. I hope there is no trouble about Master Wynn bringing it to me."

"About what?" yelled Monty Lowther.

"Master Wynn saved up his sugar allowance, and brought it for my children," said Mrs. Lomax. "It was very kind and generous of him, and I am sure he did not know there could be any objection."

Fatty Wynn's face was scarlet.

"It's a night, ma'am!" he gasped.

"It isn't that! Don't—Here, leggo, Tom Merry, you see!"

But Tom grasped him by his plump shoulders and shook him. A light dawned upon his mind.

"Was that it, you fat duffer?" he shouted.

"Was it your own allowance that you were saving up for Mrs. Lomax?"

"Find out!"

"I'm jolly well going to!" said Tom.

"Mrs. Lomax, Wynn has been accused of hoarding sugar. It's supposed that he's bought it secretly, against the rules."

"Shut up!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Rats! Wynn's going to get a jolly

good licking for it, Mrs. Lomax, so—"

"Will you dry up?"

"He took a bag of sugar out of the school yesterday, after it had been nosed out in his study," said Tom. "That's what's the matter."

"But he brought it to me, for the children!" exclaimed Mrs. Lomax. "It is the second time time he has done so. I wouldn't have let him, only the children—they need it so much, and I could not get it, and—and the dear boy was so pressing, that I could not refuse."

"You fat fraud!" shouted Manners.

"Why couldn't you tell us?"

"Go and eat coke!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Well, we shall jolly well tell all the fellows now!" said Tom Merry.

"I'll punch your silly head if you do!" growled Fatty Wynn. "It's not their business or yours, either."

"Rats! We'll get back with Wynn now, Mrs. Lomax, and come to-morrow to work, if you don't mind. We've got to get Fatty out of a scrape. The silly ass has let himself get suspected of hoarding, while he was hiding his giddy light under a bushel."

And the four juniors crammed Fatty Wynn's jacket on him, and rushed out. They walked their machines home, Fatty Wynn growling wrath and threats all the way, apparently more alarmed at the prospect of his good deeds becoming known than that of a licking from his Housemaster.

But Tom Merry & Co. did not heed Figgins and Kerr were still at the gates when they arrived at St. Jim's.

"Hear him!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Found out!"

"What's he been doing now?" growled Figgins.

"Saving up his sugar allowance and taking it away for a soldier's kids."

"What-a-at!"

"And he bowled him out!"

"And he chuckled Arthur Augustus. "And we're jolly well going to tell everybody—"

"You're not!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Fatty," exclaimed Kerr and Figgins together breathlessly. "You fat fraud! Why didn't you tell us?"

"So I would have told you, when it came out that the sugar was there, if you hadn't called me a hoarder!" growled Fatty Wynn. "Why shouldn't I follow save his sugar allowance if he likes? I suppose those kids want it more than I do, don't they? Yah!"

"Sorry, Fatty—"

"We ought to have guessed it was something like that," said Kerr. "Sorry, Fatty!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

But though Fatty Wynn said "Br-r-r-r!" his chums linked arms with him to march him to Mr. Ratcliff's study, and the Terrible Three and D'Arcy went with them to explain.

Mr. Ratcliff greeted them with a sour face.

"But when I heard what the juniors had to tell him, even Mr. Ratcliff's sour face melted into a sort of crusty smile. He condescended to give Wynn an approving look."

"I am glad to see, Wynn, that you are capable of self-sacrifice," he said.

"Very commendable—very commendable indeed," said the juniors.

And Fatty Wynn went.

Outside, Figgins and Kerr and the Terrible Three seized him, and shouldered him into the cage, Fatty expostulating frantically from his perch on their shoulders. But he could not help himself. There was a crowd of boys around them, and the juniors explained the discovery that had been made—amid angry snorts from Fatty Wynn.

"By gad!" ejaculated Cardew. "So Wynn wasn't a hoarder—only a dear, nice good boy, hidin' his good deeds—"

"Lemme get at him!" roared Fatty Wynn furiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme get at the rotter! I'll pulverize him!"

"Hurrah for the Good Boy of St. Jim's!" sniggered Racko of the Shell.

Three or four fellows collared Racko and bumped him on the ground, and Racko's snigger was heard no more. Then Fatty, in spite of his breathless fury, was shouldered round the quad. It was necessary to get him right in the eye of the fellows who had misjudged him, and that was the most effective way.

Fatty Wynn escaped at last, and fled to his study. And when Redfern & Co. came along to say they were sorry, he hurried a cushion at them which bowled Reddy over like a skittle, and followed it up with a stream of ink—and after that he was left in peace.

Concord reigned once more in Figgins' study in the New House, and Figgins and Kerr were proud of their chum. Fatty Wynn forgot that he had been offended, and all was calm and bright.

And when at tea-time next day he asked Figgins and Kerr how long they thought

the war would last, and whether they thought there was any chance of an early peace, his chums forbore to bump him. For though poor old Fatty could not help dreaming of the *hemphots* of Egypt, he had proved that his heart was in the right place.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—**"KILDARE OF THE GREAT HEART"** by Martin Clifford.)

The Editor's Chat.

For next Wednesday:

"KILDARE OF THE GREAT HEART"

By Martin Clifford.

The Shell and Fourth are the Forms at St. Jim's upon which interest mainly centres, but the occasional stories in which the doings of the fags of the Third or the great men of the Sixth are chronicled have always plenty of admirers. I have no doubt whatsoever that my readers will appreciate next week's yarn, wherein Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, shows himself the great-hearted, plucky fellow that he is, and Knox once more reveals himself as a rotter. Monteith comes into the story, too. The parts played by the Terrible Three, Blake & Co., and the rest of our friends of the two Forms may be smaller than usual, but I do not fear that anyone will grumble at this.

A LETTER FROM CANADA.

And a very nice letter, too—the kind of letter it does one good to receive! "B." writes thus from Montreal:

"Dear Sir—I am not going to apologise for taking up your time with my epistle, for I am one of your oldest readers, and I think I have a right to a few minutes. I have read the GEM from the start. More than that, I knew some of the leading characters before the GEM existed, for there were

stories of Jack Blake and Figgins and their rivalry in the old 'Pluck Library,' and I will remember the coming of D'Arcy. With the GEM came Tom Merry, but at Clavering the GEM came Tom Merry. I must own that I was inclined to regard Tom Merry as a bit of an interloper when he was transferred to St. Jim's, and my old favourites lost some of the *linehug* in consequence.

"Yours is a very good work, and Mr. Clifford knows how to depict fine types of boys—and men, too. Any father would be proud of a son who was like the best characters in the stories. The parents who forbid their children to read the GEM must be very narrow-minded, or very badly prejudiced. The majority of those I have known who have run them down have been forced to admit, on examination, that they have never read them. I tell you frankly that I should want a lot of consoling if my GEM or 'Macnally' were 'topped,' and not even the keenest youngster can look forward to them more than I do. I think the stories might be made a little more educational—in the way of useful knowledge, I mean. Now and then, for instance, something is said in French, and the English of it is given. That sort of thing sticks in a boy's mind, and may prove useful later on. It has proved so to me in this city of French people."

"I have two brothers with the Canadians. They get my papers sent on weekly, and enjoy every word of them. Carry on with

the good work, dear Editor! I, for one, shall always be ready to put up a good word for your papers, and I am proud of the fact that I have got quite a lot of new readers for them, alike in the Old Country and out here. Please convey my appreciations to your author, and thank him for hundreds of pleasant hours spent in reading their yarns. Your devoted reader, "B."

On behalf of Messrs. Martin Clifford and Frank Richards, as well as on my own account, I thank my correspondent. A reader from the first, and as keen as ever after more than ten years! What bigger compliment could an author ask?

I, too, remember "Pluck" in the old days, when the first story in it was always a school yarn—of St. Jim's one week, of some other school the next, then still another, and then St. Jim's again. Not many of my readers go as far back as that, I suppose. But I have a double link with those who do, for a good many of those school stories—not the St. Jim's ones—were my work.

Your Editor

FRIENDLY EPISTLES OF CUTTS AND BANKS.

By MONTY LOWTHER.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The authenticity of these letters is, to say the least, doubtful. The supposed handwriting of the two parties bears a distinct resemblance to Monty's own, but that may be mere coincidence. I don't think Cutts will be pleased when he sees this page. But that is Monty's funeral, not mine!—T.M.]

"Greyfriars.

"Dear Mr. Banks.—Yod say Deadbeat is absolutely sure to romp home with the Codham Cup? Then, for goodness sake, put me a couple of quid on the gee-gee! You will find my I O U enclosed with this letter."

"But that dark horse you let me on to, Spavin, was only just mentioned as an alien ram! That makes me owe you five quid, ram! If there's any fun in Deadbeat gets his place."

GERALD CUTTS.

"Green Mann."

"Dere Mr. Cutts.—Yuv maid zee a little mistake in yer reckoning. Itz seven quid yer owe me. Corse, He admit it may look like a five on the I O U, but I believe me itz a five. If there's any fun in the matter, or if yud like to raze any objekshuns, I can place the slip before yore headmaster, and see what he make of the digger. I'll be Sorry. Ennyways, I am goin too put the I O U before him, whether or no, if the munny isent paid in three days."

J. BANKS."

"Mr. Banks.—You're the biggest swindler I ever came across! For any sike, don't let the Head see that I O U! I will pay the money somehow."

"Deadbeat hasn't won the race after all! You told me he was a dead cert, but he's as bad as Spavin. I'm in sore straits, I can

tell you, dealing with a villain like you. Meet me in wood at 5 p.m. to-morrow, and I will pay you in full."

GERALD CUTTS."

"Friarideal Infirmary."

"Master Cutts.—Dra yer! I've yer neer didd for me in the wood with that grate stick. I'm in the ospital now, with me head almost burstin. But yer'll be sorry for it after long! The perlice are on these way to the skewl, so take yer lars, longin' look at it."

"H.M. Prison."

"Banks, you rotter!—Confound you! Those measly bobbies arrested me, and I've been in prison now over a week. I'll be out of it in a week, though. I'm to be hanged to-morrow for killing a beastly warden who wouldn't let me smoke and play pitch-and-toss in the cell. Of course, I did it actually mean to kill the sweep, but accidents will happen. I wish I'd killed you, you scoundrel! It would have been better than hanging for a poor beggar of a warden!"

"GERALD CUTTS."

"Wayland Lunatic Asylum."

"Master Cutts.—I open this will reach you afore the end. Bein as you are the friend of me life, I should like to comfort you as much as I can. But I ear as how itz very unpleasant to stand on the scaffold, feeling the noose tightenin' around yer neck and the trapdoor wobblin' under yer feet."

"Me own time is very high spent. Neat brandy bein no real use to me, I took to medathered spirits. I've had the D.T.'s twice, and me brane's been affected, and ere I am in a lunny house. The dokter has calikulated me to die in twenty minutes, so I order of fuder commonicalshuns to Wayland Semitery."

J. BANKS."

My Comic Column.

By MONTY LOWTHER.

A Dutch paper says that trainloads of German dead have been taken to the blast furnaces to be cremated. It is just like the Huns to make light of grave sacrifices in this way.

THE WAIL OF THE REJECTED.

A poor chap in Category Z5 sends us the following pathetic plaint:

I shall never march with banners

Gaily screaming in the breeze;

I shall never help in bringing

Kaiser Bill down on his knees;

I shall never have a look-in,

When they're handing out V.C.'s.

But a chap home from the Front says that the rejected Johnny ought to have put it more like this:

I shall never share a billet

With a thousand thousand fags;

I shall never stand with water

Swishing icy round my knees;

I shall never for the maw now

In my backbone slowly freeze.

German soldiers are said to regard being sent to the home front as equivalent to a death sentence. But, really, it is quite certain that they will "go West."

Baggy Trimble and other prize porkers have been bemoaning the shortage of sugar and sweetsstuffs. But let them take comfort. You can get used to doing without these things. I find my teeth don't attract me as they once did, and even ice-cream leaves me cold.

EXTRACTS FROM

"Tom Merry's Weekly" & "The Greysfriars Herald."

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR. By Ernest Levison.

TRIMBLE of the Fourth had been talking too much.

He generally does. So long as Trimble talked about the glories of Trimble Hall—which none of the fellows had ever seen—or about the wonderful things he could do at cricket—if he liked; or about the way he would have mopped up the Huns—if he were only old enough—it didn't matter.

A fellow has a right to gas as much as he likes in a free country. But Trimble had been talking too much about old Kalliton; and that put the lid on.

It isn't Mr. Railton's fault that he has a cousin who figured as a "conscientious objector." Besides, the man has changed his mind, and joined up since. Most of the fellows agreed that it was an unpleasant subject, and that the least said the soonest mended.

But that wasn't good enough for Trimble. It was a tit-bit for him, and he wouldn't let the subject rest, especially after Railton had canned him for exceeding the grub allowance about a dozen times.

Trimble talked about that conscientious objector, and about the way it reflected on Railton, and on the school generally, no end—which was cool of him, as he is a well-known funk, and would be looking for somewhere to hide if he were old enough to be taken to scrap with the Huns. Being well on the safe side of eighteen, Baggy Trimble felt that he could talk as much as he liked, before he was old enough to go.

That was why Monty Lowther put on his thinking-cap, and thought the matter out. He came into his study with a grin on his face one day, and Tom Merry and Manners said together:

"Mercy!" They thought it was one of Lowther's jokes coming.

"Fathead!" said Lowther. "I've been thinking about Trimble! I'm fed-up with his gas."

"Same here," said Manners.

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry.

"To hear him talk, a fellow would think he was yearning to have a go at the Huns," continued Lowther. "Now, if they lowered the age to fifteen, instead of raising it to forty-five, what do you think Trimble would do?"

"Hide in the coal-cellar!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Or up the chimney!" chuckled Manners.

"Exactly." Now, I don't much like conscientious objectors myself," said Lowther. "I don't understand their point of view, and I don't specially want to. But even if a conscientious objector is as bad as a war profiteer, his relations can't help it, and Trimble's got to ring off the subject of Railton's cousin. Old Railton's done his bit, anyway, and got a gammy arm. I've thought of a few ideas for shutting up Trimble!"

"Good egg!"

"Blasphemy! I see how you'll shut up that gasbag!" said Manners. "Trimble's like the little brook—he goes on for ever!"

"Suppose the military age was lowered to fifteen?" suggested Lowther.

"Oh?" It couldn't.

"Why not?" If they're going to raise it and scoop in old fogies, why shouldn't they lower it and scoop in brisk young fellows like us? I've often thought that I could run things a bit better at the Front if I were there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But they're not going to, surely?"

"Well, I can't say. I know anything about it," admitted Lowther. "I don't—ahem!—think it likely myself. They don't seem to realise what they're missing when they leave us, and I dare say it won't dawn on them till too late. But that's the wheeze!"

"Oh? What is?"

Monty Lowther proceeded to explain, and Tom Merry and Manners stared at first, and then chorled.

"Mind you back me up!" concluded Lowther.

"Yes, rather!"

"And not a word outside this study!"

"Not a great syllable!"

And the Terrible Three chorled in chorus.

The next afternoon there was cricket, and Monty Lowther was out of gates.

After the cricket a good many fellows assembled at Dame Taggles' tuckshop, in the corner of the quad, to discuss the game, and ginger-bread, and the one or two things that weren't limited by the Food Controller. Baggy Trimble was there, of course, looking for somebody to stand him a ginger-pop. He tried Tom Merry, and Manners, and D'Arcy, and Blake, and Talbot, one after another, and they all told him to go and eat cake.

Baggy wasn't popular. Then, chiefly to make himself obnoxious, he began talking about Railton's cousin, as usual.

If I had any conscientious objectors in the family, I'd squash 'em," Baggy was saying when Monty Lowther looked in at the doorway. "My opinion is that Railton ought to resign from the school. It's too bad! All my relations of military age are in—"

"America?" asked Manners.

"No, you ass! In—"

Switzerland!

"No," yelled Baggy Trimble, as the fellows chuckled. "In khaki, of course! If I were only old enough—"

Then Monty Lowther burst in.

"Glorious news!" he roared.

"Hallo, what's up?" asked Blake. "Germans over the Rhine yet?"

"Kaiser hanked himself?"

"No, somebody hanged him!"

"Better than that!" trilled Monty Lowther.

"What do you think of the military age being lowered to fifteen?"

"A great Scott!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Is that true?"

Monty Lowther didn't answer the question. He pirouetted round the tuckshop in a state of exuberant delight.

"Fifteen!" he chorled. "Think of it! Now, then, roll up! Who's coming this afternoon to the recruiting-office at Wayland?"

"Bai Jove! I'm coming!"

"Same here!"

"Hurrah!"

"Sure, I'll wait till I see it in the papers intircly," said Reilly of the Fourth, with a suspicious look at Monty Lowther.

Lowther did not heed.

"Come on, Tom! Come on, Manners! Let's be the first!" he shouted. "Come on!"

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry caught Trimble by the arm. Trimble was standing quite still, looking as if he had been suddenly rooted to the floor.

"Come on, Trimble!"

"Oh?" gasped Baggy.

"You're coming with us, of course?" said Manners, taking his other arm. "We four will set the example!"

"Buck up!"

"Leggo!" shrieked Trimble. "I'm not coming!"

"Do you want to wait till you're combed out?" demanded Monty Lowther. "Or are you going to set up as a conscientious objector?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther of the fellows had tumbled to it by that time; but Trimble didn't tumble. He was in such a blue funk that he hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels.

His fat jaw had dropped, and his round eyes were nearly bulging out of his fat face. Monty Lowther seemed overjoyed with the

news he had brought, but Trimble didn't seem to see any occasion for joy. And he was too scared to stop to think how jolly unlikely it was that the military age should be lowered to fifteen.

He wriggled like a fat rabbit as the Terrible Three marched towards the door. He caught hold of the doorknob, and clung there, yelling.

"Leggo! I won't come!"

"Go, then, Trimble!" chirped Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, I'll join up if you do, dear boy. You've been tellin' us what you'd do if you were old enough—"

"And now you're old enough!" chorled Blake.

"I—I—I—is it compulsory?" gasped Trimble.

"Oh, no!" said Lowther. "Nothing compulsory about it!"

"Then I won't go!"

"Why not?" demanded Tom Merry sternly.

"Are you afraid of the Germans?"

"Nuts!" gasped Trimble. "I'm as brave as a lion!"

"But—but—I don't want to kill anybody! Yow-ow! I—I couldn't kill a rabbit, let alone a man! Yow! I don't want any nasty blood about me! Groogh!"

"Perhaps you won't kill anybody," said Lowther consolingly. "You may simply figure in the casualty-list!"

"Yaroorh!" roared Trimble.

He seemed to think that that would be worst still.

"Look here, Trimble, you're coming!" The fellows look to you to set them an example!"

"Yaroorh! Lemme go!"

Trimble was jerked away from the doorknob, and the Terrible fellows rushed him out into the quadrangle.

They had him down to the gates in a twinkling, and a crowd rushed after them to see them off.

Baggy Trimble was yelling for help as they started for Wayland. Everybody else was yelling with laughter.

Down the lane they went, Baggy wriggling and struggling. But Tom Merry and Manners had an arm each, and Monty Lowther walked behind, helping Trimble on with the top of his boot.

Baggy had to go.

"I—I say, leggo!" he pleaded, as they turned into the footpath to Wayland. "I—I don't want to enlist, you know!"

"But we're going to if you do," said Tom Merry. "That means four recruits, and the country needs every man who can crawl!"

"The country be blowed!" gasped Trimble.

"My hat! I must say that sounds patriotic!" said Lowther. "Don't you understand that slackers will be combed out, Trimble?"

"I—I'll get my pater to send me to Switzerland!" wailed Trimble. "Yow-ow! I wish I'd gone there last year, and—stayed there! Oh, dear! I won't come!"

"Buck up!" said Lowther; and he let out his boot again.

And Trimble yelped and toddled on.

Trimble isn't a good walker, but Tom Merry & Co. are, so they did the walk through the lanes at quite a quick rate.

Baggy Trimble was gasping and perspiring when they came out into the Wayland Road.

He clung to the last stile, and yelped.

"I—I say, I—I never understood, before. You can go and enlist if you like. I—I've got an objection. I—I don't believe in war!"

"Hallo! A conscientious objector—what?" yelled Lowther.

"—Yes," said Trimble desperately. "I—I can see now how—how right they have been all along. I—I—I never understood, before. Now I come to think of it, I—I have a very strong conscientious objection to all warfare!"

"Too late!" said Manners. "Besides, we know you haven't any conscience. You've

never shown any signs of having one before."

"Yes! I have!" shrieked Trimble, hanging on to the stile. "I'm against the war! Yoo-hoo! I'm not going to be killed! Leggo! I—I don't like trenches! Leggo! I—I'm going to join the stop-the-war party! Yoo-hoo-ow!"

"Why, you went to hiss the peace meeting in Wayland last week!" said Tom Merry.

"I—I was an ass!" groaned Trimble. "What I really meant was that I believe in peace by negotiations, and all that. I—I think the war was ought to end, you know, and let the chaps come home—I do really! Leggo!"

"Trimble was unhooked off the stile, and the Terrible Three walked him on to Wayland."

"The fat junior had hardly enough breath left in him to yelp when they came into Wayland High Street. He limped and dragged among the Terrible Three, gasping."

"Now pull yourself together!" said Tom Merry, encouragingly. "The recruiting-office is only a dozen yards up the street. Look a man, you know, when you go in!"

"I'm not going in!" moaned Trimble. "You are; and you're going to see you enlist before we—ahem!—enlist ourselves!" said Manners. "Be a man, you know. Remember all the nice things you've said about cotton-wool. Do you want people to talk about you like that?"

"I—I don't care! I—I want to go home!" wailed Trimble.

"Think of the honour of St. Jim's!" urged Lowther.

"Blow St. Jim's!"

"Think of the old flag, and the glory of war, and the drum, and the music of the cannon's throat!" said Lowther eloquently. "Think of making the Hun run! Think of charging the machine guns—"

"Yoo-hoo!"

"Facing a hail of bullets—"

"Groo!"

"And getting perforated all over—"

"Goo!"

"Think of the bursting shells, and things like that! It will buck you up!" said Lowther encouragingly, as they came up to the recruiting-office doorway. "Think of your legs going off! Hallo! Hold him!"

As by accident, the Terrible Three let go of Baggy Trimble just as they reached the doorway of the recruiting-office. A looker-on who was standing there stared at them—no guessing, very likely, that they were recruits.

But the sight of khaki just then gave Baggy Trimble an awful shock. He tore himself away, and found he was loose, and ran for it.

"Come back!" shouted Lowther.

But Baggy Trimble didn't even look back.

He went down the street like a motor-bike, the Terrible Three trotting on his track at a more easy pace.

Baggy looked back from the lane when he reached it, and saw them in the distance, running in pursuit. He raced on again, with perspiration streaming down his face, and vanished into the wood.

It was a good run home to St. Jim's from Wayland, and Baggy wasn't an athlete. But he must have kept on the run all the way, for in a wonderfully short time he showed up at the school gates again. A crowd of fellows spotted him as he came staggering in, perspiring and covered with dust.

"Hello, Joe! Hello!" yelled D'Arcy.

"See the conquering hero comes!" yelled Levinson.

"Have they given you the two-and-nine, Trimble?"

"Why ain't you in khaki?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Trimble didn't answer. He just pumped on to the School House, and staggered in. He had just strength enough left to stagger into the Common-room, and there he collapsed on a sofa."

When the Terrible came in, half an hour later, they found him still there, breathing like a crampus.

"Baggy sat up when they came in, and holed."

"Yah! Keep 'em off! Yah! I won't go! I'll yell for a perfect—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, old son!" said Monty Lowther.

"So you've got home! You ought to enter for the mile, Baggy. You'd win hands down, if you thought you was a recruiting officer after you!" By the way, why did you bolt from Wayland?"

"Yoo-ow-ow! You rotter! I'm not going to enlist! I object! I've a strong conscientious objection!"

"But you can't enlist," said Lowther, in surprise. "You're not eighteen!" Baggy Trimble blinked at him, as the fellows yelled. He began to understand at last.

"You said the military age was lowered to fifteen!" he shrieked.

"I fear ass, I didn't!" said. "What do you think of military act being lowered to fifteen?" said Lowther calmly. "That's quite a different thing—simply asking a question in a general sort of way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then—then it isn't?" gasped Trimble.

THE ICE-CREAM MERCHANTS.

By GEORGE HERRIES.

"I SAY, Gussie!"

"What is it, dear boy?" Arthur Greyfriars asked, generally upon his minor. But the beam faded, the famous monocle was jammed into place, and Wally was subjected to severe inspection.

"Well, father, what's the matter? Am I looking extra fascinating—what?"

"Extra glibly and very untidy!"

"Oh, rats! Look here, Wharton of Greyfriars wants me to write him a yarn for the 'Grass'!"

"Silly ass! Why can't he get his own chaps to fill up his blessed 'Herald'?"

"Really, dear boy, you cannot consider it an honour to be invited to write for 'Herald'."

"Herald, though I admit I should see why Wharton should ask a fag."

"Come off it, Gus! You ain't the only chap clever enough to write. I didn't know what to write about at first, but now I've got a jolly good idea."

"Well, what's the idea?"

"In story, Gus. I'm a five bob."

"Good gracious, Wally! What have you?"

"What connection is it, then, that can be between a yarn for the 'Grass' and a five bob?"

"What a chap you are to waste gas! You ought to know better in war-time. Are you going to lend it or not?"

"My dear kid, I am quite on the works till a week-and-a-half."

"All right. I'll ask Tom Merry." And away ran the fag, paying no heed to Arthur Greyfriars' remonstrance.

Tom Merry and his chums, Lowther and Manners, were just coming up the stairs.

They halted, and Wally made his request.

"Can we manage it, Monty? I suppose there's some money in celebration among the fags," said Tom Merry.

"And the three overhauled their pockets, and among them raked up the amount."

"Thanks awfully, you chaps!"

"Wally darted off to his chum, Frank Levinson."

"Look here, Frank, old man, I've just got a jolly good idea, and I want you to help me."

"What's the notion?"

"Well, you know what a lot of ice-cream the chaps wolf at the tuckshop? My idea is to buy a machine, and make a stack of the stuff ourselves and sell it. Then I mean to write all about it, and send it to Wharton at Greyfriars. He asked an article from a St. Jim's fag, and he might be useful to Greyfriars fags."

"Like his check to ask us to educate Greyfriars. But I don't mind, and we can teach them a thing or two—what? We can give prizes to the Red Cross, you know."

"But don't ice-cream machines cost a lot? How are we to get one?"

"I've got five bob. I saw one outside a shop in the village, and it was only seven-and-six. We ought to be able to raise that and enough for some stuff to make the ice-cream. How much have you got?"

"Oh, one-and-six. I'll make a tale to lend me half-a-crown. That will be enough for a start, won't it?"

"All serene! Hop off and get the tin, and we'll sort 'em up to the village directly after tea, and buy the machine."

Tea over, they made for the village, and, after inspecting the freezer as it lay among an assortment of pans outside the shop, they entered.

"An ice-cream machine, young gentlemen? Why, yes, I have; and, of course, I will show you how it works. This one is quite simple, and easy to use."

"The contraption was bought, as were the necessary ingredients."

"Certainly not!"

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble looked at Lowther as if he would like to eat him. The fellows were all laughing like hyenas. Baggy realised that he had had that awful run home all for nothing, and his feelings were too deep for words.

Trimble wasn't very sensitive to ridicule as a rule. But this was too much for even him. He limped out of the Common-room without another word, leaving the fellows howling. And it was a long time before the St. Jim's fellows looked Trimble as "The Conscientious Objector."

THE END.

The two fags paid careful attention to the instructions for the use of their new possession. But this was too much for even him. He limped out of the Common-room without another word, leaving the fellows howling. And it was a long time before the St. Jim's fellows looked Trimble as "The Conscientious Objector."

"Hallo, young D'Arcy! What's the game?" shouted Manners and Manners as they came in. "You keep 'em off! Frayne and Jameson, you may come and help, if you like; and the rest of you can buy the ice-cream when it's made!"

Wally assumed an air of superiority that rather riled the rest of the Third-Formers. But they wanted to see the ice-cream made, so they stood round while Wally and Frank spread and plaited the parcels.

"There's the freezing-machine. Those are powders—"

"Ugh! Keep your old powders!" grunted Gander.

"Fathead! Vanilla and raspberry ice-cream powders are all right, you bet! That's salt in the brown paper, and that's ice in the pail, and there's a tin of Nestlé's, and that's all!"

Wally and Frank surveyed the collection proudly, and when Jameson volunteered to make the custard Wally graciously consented.

"The man said the best ices are made of cream and eggs, but these are cheaper to make, and eggs are messy, so they get 'em in your clothes," said Wally.

"I'll make the milk thick, and it will be as well as cream," said Frank Levinson, as he ladled the milk out of the tin and carefully added water.

He put the little saucepan on the fire, while Jameson proceeded to mix the powders according to the directions read out very speedily and plainly by Joe Frayne.

Wally was busy packing ice and salt as directed by the man who had sold them the machine.

On a sudden there was a splutter as the milk boiled over. Frank had been so intent on watching Wally and listening to Joe that he had forgotten his own department. Jameson made a wild grab at the handle of the saucepan, dropped it with a yell, and began to hop round and caress his burnt fingers.

"You howling young ass! Now you've done it!" shrieked Joe Frayne, who rescued the blackened saucepan, and Frayne hastily opened the window to get rid of the overpowering fumes of burnt milk.

In the rush to fire and to window no one had noticed the door. Gander was improving the shining hour by scooping out milk from the tin with his fingers, and sucking the said fingers with great relish. A shock from Joe Frayne and a shove which sent Gander flying in one direction and the almost empty tin in another put an end to his bliss.

"You greedy young pig! You'll jolly well have to pay for that tin of milk!" yelled Wally.

"No, I shan't!" It was nearly empty, anyway. And you can't make your beastly ice-cream, for the tin is holed and the powders are burnt. Yah!"

Gander stalked off, followed by all but Wally and his aides.

They surveyed the wreck with dismal faces. But fags don't stay long in dumps.

Frank laughed.

"I say, Wally, old scout, I think you had better write to Wharton and tell him all about this. It will read all right."

"Blow the reading! We have wasted curd, and not got a cent for the Red Cross Fund."

"But we will, Wally!" chirped Jameson.

"We still have the machine, and can have another shot at being ice-cream merchants."

ON THE ROOF.

By PETER TODD.

WE four were sitting in our study at my old school.

Then, as the Duffer—whose correct name is Barnes—Thompson, Gilbert, and myself.

It had been pouring the night before, and the turf was like a quagmire. Cricket was distinctly off, though the pitch might have been all right for water-polo.

The Duffer was reading, Thompson was yawning, and Gilbert was asleep, with his enormous mind wide open.

I was making ink pellets, and taking pot-shots at the aforesaid mouth, but couldn't get the range properly.

Suddenly Thompson had an idea.

"Look here, you chaps, there's nothing else to do! Let's rag Blount!"

Blount was a giddy ass whom Fate and our Housemaster had wafted into the next study to ours.

"Right first shot!" said the Duffer; and he added, with a brilliant inspiration: "Let's sawbag his chimney!"

We yelled approval of this smart suggestion.

One or two of our chaps had just recovered from flu, and the matron had ordered that fires should be made up in their studies. Blount was one of these luxurious bouncers.

"Why not stick your face down the chimney?" said Thompson. "That will drive back the smoke, and it can't spoil your face; nothing could!"

All we wanted to bag the chimney, but the Duffer was very decided on that point.

"Look here, you chaps, the idea was mine, and I'm going to bring it off. Anyone who objects will get it in the neck!"

As the Duffer weighed two stone more than any of us, and had got arms like the village blacksmith—iron bands, you know, and all that—we let him have his way, though we felt sure he would make a mess of it.

We got an old stick and crept along to the end of the corridor, whence a trap led through to the roof.

When we were all up safely, the rest of us waited by the coping while the Duffer crawled along the leads to the chimney.

We were about eighty feet from the ground, and I was just speculating as to whether the best climber in the school could negotiate a swarm down the drain-pipe, when Thompson remarked, grinning:

"Someone's getting peevish!"

"Somebody certainly seemed upset. Sounds of coughing came up to us, and we heard a window jigg beneath being thrown up.

From somewhere below us a thick black trail of smoke streamed out. We were almost choking with laughter, when suddenly a sound at our feet sobered us. "Someone was coming up the ladder to the trapdoor!"

We scudded for the chimney-stack. The trap opened, and a begrimed figure burst through.

Then we did gasp with horror, for "someone" was—not the pale, bespectacled Blount, but Palmer!

Palmer, the captain of the school! Palmer, the chap whose thrashings put people off sitting down for a week the next day! The Duffer must have lost his bearings somehow, and got to the wrong chimney.

The Duffer simply fled for his life. Palmer, almost beside himself with rage, gave chase, but as he was rounding a corner the prefect's foot slipped. He staggered a moment, and disappeared over the side of the roof. There came a sudden crash, and then silence.

We ran to the edge, but could hardly serve up courage to look down. "Hurrah! By a miracle Palmer had been saved from instant death. A part of the building ran out at right angles from where we were standing, and he had landed somehow on an ivy-clad buttress jutting out near one of his windows. But, even so, there seemed very little chance of saving his life, for he was unconscious, and we could see that he was gradually slipping down over the strands of the ivy.

The window beside the buttress must have been about four feet away from him, and ten feet below where we were standing. From that it would have been possible to reach Palmer; but the wing stair was in another part of the house, and before we could get there he would be lying dead, shattered to pieces on the asphalt seventy feet below!

The Duffer turned on his heel, and took a

few steps away. Then, before we could guess what the beggar was up to, he swung round, fished past us, and jumped out towards the distant window.

Before we could get our breath back he had landed on the sill, and gasped the top of the window!

It was something like a miracle that he should have achieved that perilous jump safely, for the ledge on which he had landed could not have been more than six inches broad.

Just as the Duffer landed Palmer came to himself, and made a desperate clutch at the ivy above him.

It broke away in his grasp, and he rolled right over the edge. But even as he rolled the Duffer's long arm shot out, and plucked him for a moment to the buttress.

None of us could have begun to do what he did then. How he got Palmer through the window remains a puzzle; but the village blacksmith muscles helped, of course. It was done, anyway, and no sooner was it done than, overcome by his terrible ordeal, the Duffer fainted clean away.

Nobody else ever knew the whole story of what happened. But from that day we three never called Barnes the Duffer again, and we discouraged others from doing so in the most practical way we knew of—which, of course, involved taking off jackets!

Palmer behaved like a brick. He kept the secret and withstood the aspland.

THE END.

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NOTICES.

Correspondence Wanted.

Miss Mabelle I. Carlisle, Pretoria North, South Africa—with girl readers—exchange picture postcards.

George Burchill, 28, Leeuwport Street, Boksburg, Transvaal, South Africa—with boy readers interested in stamp collecting.

I. Brinton, National Mutual, Collins Street, Melbourne, Australia—wants to form Stamp Exchange Club—stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Miss D. Taylor, 129, Alderney Street, South Beravia, London, W.—with girl readers, 19-22.

G. F. Stockbridge, care of Messrs. Street & Cresser, 79, Hamlet Court Road, West-cliff—with boy reader in U.S.A.

Leo Smith, 4, Trafalgar Street, Radford, Nottingham—Combined Companions League wants more members. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Cricket—Matches Wanted by:

Grosvenor—average age, 17-18; week; eight-mile radius of Westminster.—H. B. Finall, 111, Tachbrook Street, Westminster, S.W.1.

Liscard Juniors—15; four-mile radius.—J. Egginton, 12, Liscard Crescent, Liscard.

Springfield—16; three-mile radius.—S. G. Henley, 50, Lealand Road, Stamford Hill, N.

Stone's Junior—15; in district.—W. Marshall, 31, Stanley Street, S.E.8.

Answers to Correspondents.

From "Tom Merry's Weekly."

G. A. G.—I agree with you that keeping the best player in the Lower School out of the junior cricket team through sheer jealousy would be scandalous; and it seems no end good of you to feel so concerned about it as it cannot possibly affect you personally.

"Anti-Humbag."—You demand to know the name of the author of the "heavily doggerel" which has appeared in our pages under the heading of "St. Jim's Limericks." You add that there is no fellow in the school named "A. M. Adman." Quite true! And yet there are one or two—or more—St. Jim's fellows who. But it is unwise to say too much! Take the assumed name and play round with it a bit. Try it backwards, dissect it, put it down in paper without any capital letters, and guess again.

"Literary Student."—No; Johnny Milton did not write "The Lay of the Last Minstrel." You are also in error in your conjecture that the song must have been written by you. You read Willie Wordsworth's "Idiot Boy." I should confidently recommend it as being suitable to your case.

"Literary Student (Second Letter)."—Have you no idea as to when a boy joke has been sufficiently used? Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome" were not so very good!

"Dad."—Tom Merry is between 15 and 16; Wym is eighteen stone, or less; Crooke is a rank outsider; Skimpol is an unappreciated genius; Blake is 15; "Daddy Arcey" will never see six again; Racker is a better not to say, lest the law of libel be invoked; Mellish is usually off-side; D'Arcy major is off his rocker, but means well; Tabbot is all right; Buggy Trimble is all wrong; Gore is 15 and some months; Levison is a jolly good forward; Clifton Dane is a Canadian, Noble an Australian, Clive a South African, and Scrope a Boerster; the writer of this is fed up; and the chap who asks all these questions is a well, see above!

B. T.—This query will be answered free of charge; if you send any more, you will be good enough to enclose a half-crown postal order with each. Lord Devonport meant what he said—21lb. of meat per week. You are the first person who has suggested that he must really have intended 2½ stone!

G. F.—Try again! Your latest effort has some merit. The part I like best is the second half of the third page. As the story finished half-way down that page, I am making use of it for these replies. Must be economical in war-time, you know. End up higher next time.

G. G. (Shell).—You begin your letter with an absurd misstatement of fact, which has completely choked me off reading further. The first two words in it are, "I think."

When did you begin to do that, and what do you have to do with it?

H. S. (Shell).—Receipt of 50,000 word essay on "Dynamic Intelligences" gratefully acknowledged. If it is not already illuminating I dare say it is, but I have not read it—doubtless it will help to illuminate the future. Next term we shall need fires in the studios. By the way, the Editor-in-Chief reads the title "Dynamic Interferences," and another member of our staff says it is "Dinosaurs in the Stone Age." Write larger and more plainly; we can do with the paper, especially if the price of waste-paper continues to go up, up, up!

To Mr., Newsagent.

Please keep for me a copy of the
GEM LIBRARY each week until further
notice.

(Signed),