

JACK BLAKE'S HUN!

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



A RAIDER DOWN!

Copyright in the United States of America.

JACK BLAKE'S HUN!

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

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Unparliamentary!

"G

ENTLEMEN!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Bravo!"

"Rats!"

There seemed to be a difference of opinion!

Pepper's barn was crowded with St. Jim's juniors.

Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell, was mounted upon a bench addressing the meeting. He was manfully supported by his chums, Manners and Lowther.

But the harmony of the occasion was somewhat marred by the fact that Grundy of the Shell was mounted upon a tub, also addressing the meeting. Grundy was backed up by Gunn. Wilkins had failed to secure election.

And, to make confusion worse confounded, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth had perched himself upon a box, addressing the meeting, too; and Blake and Herries and Dig, his loyal chums, were resolutely cheering him.

Moreover, Figgins & Co. of the New House had stationed themselves outside the window, and were yelling at the top of their voices, certainly not with the intention of adding to the harmony of the meeting. Figgins & Co. were the Opposition, and seemed to prefer for the present to oppose from outside, probably as being more annoying to the "Government."

St. Jim's "Parliament" was, in fact, labouring under difficulties, and, at this rate, seemed likely to get through even less real business than the genuine article at Westminster.

"Gentlemen!" roared Tom Merry.

"Pway, give me your best attention, deah boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Under the circs—"

"My opinion," boomed Grundy of the Shell, "is this—"

"Shut up!"

"I weepat—"

"Hurrah!"

"Yah! School House duffers!" roared Figgins & Co. at the window. "Go home! Go back to Colney Hatch! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!"

"Rats!"

It was the ambition of Tom Merry & Co. to make the St. Jim's Parliament as like as possible to the respected and revered institution on the banks of the Thames. And, indeed, there was a certain resemblance, inasmuch as the meeting was rich in vociferous voices, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

"I regard these intewwuptuons as bein' in the worst possible taste. Undah the circs—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I appeal to Mr. Speaker—"

"Yah!"

"If honourable members will not keep order, I honourable members will be chucked out on their necks!" roared Tom Merry.

"Wats?"

"Dry up!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Go it, Tommy!"

"Order!" bellowed Grundy of the Shell. "Can't you listen to a chap who's talking sense? Gentlemen, my opinion is—"

"Rot!"

"Piffle!"

"Yah! Go home!" yelled the New House crowd at the window.

Tom Merry looked round in great exasperation.

"Gentlemen, let's clear off those New House bouncers first! I move an adjournment while Figgins & Co. are mopped up!"

"Hear, hear!"

The meeting was unanimous at once. It was felt by honourable members that from the dignity of the proceedings.

Tom Merry jumped down from the bench, and led a rush to the door.

At the same moment the door was flung open from without. A queer figure rushed in breathlessly, colliding with the juniors.

It was Mr. Pepper, the old village miser, from whom the youthful Parliamentarians rented the barn.

Mr. Pepper was breathless and wildly excited.

"Cover!" he panted. "Cover! Oh, gosh! Cover!"

"What is the potty old duffer driving at?"

"Get out, Pepper!"

"You've no business here, you old hunk!"

"Hallo! Here come the New House! Sock in to them!"

Figgins & Co. were dashing in after Mr. Pepper. They looked very excited, too.

"Go for the wottahs, deah boys!"

"Mop 'em up!"

"Fax!" yelled George Figgins.

"Cover!"

"Huns!" shouted Korr.

"Prussians!" yelled Patty Wynn.

"What?"

"It's an air-rat!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

Hostilities ceased as if by magic. The New House juniors crowded into the barn, and Redfern slammed the door.

Tom Merry ran to the window and looked out.

It was a clear, frosty winter day. Overhead the sky was like steel. From above came a dull sound of droning, evidently proceeding from Gotha engines. And from the direction of Wayland Hill there came a sudden, deep roar.

Boom!

"By gad, a gun!" ejaculated Cardew.

"It's the Wayland battery!"

Boom, boom!

"Can you see the beasts, Tommy?"

Tom Merry craned his head out of the window, for the moment forgetful of the falling shrapnel.

In the steely sky several black dots appeared.

One, flying lower than the rest, was clearly visible. Tom Merry knew the German aeroplane at a glance. It was

a daylight raid, and the Gothas were in force.

"There they are!" said Tom quietly.

A dismal howl came from Baggy Trimble of the Fourth, who had no right there, not being a member.

"Yow-ow-ow! We shall be killed! Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo!"

"Shut up, you funk!" shouted Herries.

"You feahfully disgustin' wottah, Twimble, how dare you be afwaid of the Huns?" demanded Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly.

"Bump 'im!" suggested Levison minor of the Third.

"Yarooroh!" yelled Trimble, as two or three indignant juniors seized him.

"Leggo! I ain't afraid! Yow-ow! I'm as brave as a yowp-lion! Oh, crums!"

Bump!

Baggy Trimble descended on the floor with a wild yell; and, as the poet remarks, "The subsequent proceedings interested him no more."

A deep and heavy drone seemed to pervade the air. From the battery of big guns on Wayland Hill the booming was almost incessant. Against the steely sky could be seen the flashes of the bursting shells.

Silence fell on the St. Jim's juniors. They crowded at the window watching the German planes and the bursting shells. The war had suddenly come home to them.

Mr. Pepper shoved his way frantically to the windows.

"Close them shutters, you young fools! Do you hear? Do you want the shrapnel in here? Shut them up!"

"Bai Jove! That's wathiah a good idea, though it is not expressed very politely," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

Tom Merry closed the shutter. It was no use running unnecessary risks. There was a clatter like thick hail on the roof, and they knew what that meant. The danger was close enough.

"Oh, crums!" muttered Mr. Pepper.

"The bounds! Rotters! They'll damage this barn, and who's going to pay for it? That's what I want to know. I'll lay a claim against the Government! If they damage my barn I'm going to be paid for it! I know that!"

"I regard you as a funkay wottah, Mr. Peppah! Day up!"

Grundy of the Shell displayed a knuckly fist under Mr. Pepper's prominent nose, and the old fellow jumped back.

"Shut up!" commanded Grundy.

Mr. Pepper thought he had better obey. There was a breathless silence in the barn, while outside the booming of the guns grew in intensity.

CHAPTER 2.

Shell Out!

CRASH! It was a dull, grinding roar from the distance. The juniors looked at one another with startled faces. They knew that a bomb had been dropped.

"Oh, the rotters!" muttered Blake.

"The howwid wascals!"

Baggy Trimble gave a yell. Two or three boots immediately admonished him that it was no time for howling.

The booming of the guns died down. Tom Merry waited a few minutes, and opened the window again. The German planes had disappeared in the direction of St. Jim's. Far in the distance a dull booming told that more distant guns had taken up the firing.

Mr. Pepper was sitting on a bench, nursing his knees and shivering. He did not show the self-possession of the juniors. Perhaps he was thinking of the possible damage to his property.

Grundy of the Shell was staring at Mr. Pepper, with a thoughtful wrinkle in his brow. The powerful brain of the great Grundy was working. He spoke at last.

"Pepper!"

Mr. Pepper blinked at him.

"What are you doing here?"

"Doing here?" repeated Mr. Pepper.

"I've come in for cover from the beastly Huns, of course, you young idiot!"

"This barn is our property, so long as we pay the rent of it," said Grundy firmly. "You've no right here. You're a trespasser."

"Well, Gwunday—"

"Shut up, D'Arcy! I know what I'm talking about. Pepper swindled us over the rent of this barn," said Grundy. "He let it to me, and then he let it to Tom Merry, and bagged two rents, and left us to settle it between ourselves."

"Well, we've settled it!" said Tom.

"I know that! That don't alter the fact that Pepper swindled us and bagged our money for nothing. Now, Pepper is trespassing in our barn."

"We can't turn him out, fathead!"

"I don't want to turn him out, so long as he pays a fair rent for the use of the barn," said Grundy.

"What?"

"Bai Jove, Gwunday—"

"What a rippin' idea!" exclaimed Cardew. The chums of No. 9, all of whom had been defeated in the elections, had been giving Piggy & Co. their moral support outside. "He's makin' us pay twice over for the barn. Let's make him pay for usin' it!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Pay!" shouted Mr. Pepper explosively. "Pay! Why, you young villains—"

George Alfred Grundy pointed to the door.

"There's your way, Pepper!"

"Do you think I'm going out, with a confounded air-raid on?" roared Mr. Pepper.

"That's your business. You can stay if you like, but you'll pay rent for the use of the barn, if you do."

"Hear, hear!" chorused the juniors. They had almost forgotten the distant booming of the guns in their delight in catching the village miser.

Mr. Pepper had been guilty of the sharpest of sharp practice in letting the barn. Letting the same place to two different tenants, for two rents, was not exactly honest, and it was perilously near offending against the law—if Tom Merry & Co. had felt inclined to invoke the law in the matter.

Grundy had turned it over in his mind. It appeared to him that this was an excellent opportunity of getting even with the sharper, and the other fellows agreed. Wilkins, who had come in with the New House crowd, and Gunn looked at their great leader in admiration. Grundy was most kinds of an ass, but certainly he had a good idea once in a way. This was one such.

"You can pay rent or go, Pepper!" said Grundy decidedly. "Take your choice."

"You young idiot!" rasped Mr. Pepper.

"Pay rent for a quarter or half an hour, p'raps. How much would that be, at ten shillings a week—or a pound, either?"

"Your rent for the use of this barn is ten shillings a minute," said Grundy calmly.

"What?" shrieked Mr. Pepper.

"Ten shillings a minute!"

"Why, you—you—"

"Bai Jove! Isn't that wathah exorbitant, Gwunday?"

"Not at all, considering that he has swindled us right and left."

"Yaas, that's so!"

"But we can't touch the fellow's money," grunted Manners.

"I'm not going to touch his money."

Mr. Pepper's rent for the use of the barn will be paid into the Cottage Hospital box in Ryelcombe."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, that's wathah a good idea!"

Grundy took out his watch.

"The rent commences from this minute," he said. "You savvy, Pepper? Ten shillings a minute for the use of the barn! Take it or leave it!"

Mr. Pepper's face was a study.

The juniors gazed at him in great delight. As a matter of fact, Grundy was doing the best thing possible under an air-raid, by directing the attention of his companions from the danger by occupying their minds with something else. But that was not really what Grundy was thinking of. He was only thinking of justice on the village miser.

"One minute gone, Mr. Pepper! That's ten bob."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Pepper rose from the bench, and took a step towards the door. Boom! came heavily from the distance.

Mr. Pepper stopped as suddenly as if the distant shell had landed under his nose. He dropped on the bench again.

"I ain't going!" he gasped.

"Don't!" agreed Grundy. "You're quite welcome in our barn, so long as you pay the rent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young extortioner!" gasped Mr. Pepper. "At that rate, I shall be handing you back all you've ever paid me, in ten minutes or so."

"Well, why shouldn't you, as you swindled us?"

"Shell out, Pepper!"

"I won't!" shrieked Mr. Pepper.

"A quid now!" said Grundy, looking at his watch. "Pay as you go, Pepper—we can't trust a man like you to settle accounts, and it wouldn't be convenient to sue you in the County Court."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I ain't paying anything!" yelled Mr. Pepper. "That is, I—I'll give you threepence, if you like."

"Are you going to pay your rent, Mr. Pepper, or are you going to be ejected from the premises you are now occupying?" asked Grundy calmly.

"I—I—I—you—you—" stammered Mr. Pepper helplessly.

"Chuck him out!" roared Gore.

"It's only fair," said Talbot of the Shell, laughing. "Pay or quit, Mr. Pepper!"

"How can I quit, with those rascally Huns dropping bombs?" yelled the unhappy miser.

"That's your bizny!" smiled Monty Lowther. "Now, then—is it pay or go?" He took hold of Mr. Pepper's collar. Sidney Clive laid a grip on Mr. Pepper's arm. Herries took him by the ear.

"Open the door!" said Tom Merry.

"I—I—I'll pay!" yelled Mr. Pepper, as the guns boomed again. "I'll pay, you young villains! Oh, dear!"

"Thirty bob!" said Grundy, consulting his watch again. "Look here, we'll go easy with you, Pepper! Two pounds

for as long as you like to stay this afternoon. Can't say fairer than that!"

"I regard those terms as very generous."

"Yes, rather!"

"Two pounds!" moaned Mr. Pepper. "Two whole quids! It's best part of a fortune! Young gentlemen, don't be hard on a poor man—"

"We know how poor you are!" grinned Grundy. "Didn't I show up your hoard, you old hunk? Besides, the money's going to the Cottage Hospital. You ought to be pleased at that."

Mr. Pepper did not look pleased.

"Make up your mind at once," added Grundy. "If you hang it out, I'll make it ten bob a minute all the time you're here, and stick to it."

Mr. Pepper half rose.

Boom! Boom!

Mr. Pepper sat down again hurriedly. The tortures of the Inquisition were mild and pleasant compared with what Mr. Pepper felt when he had to part with any money. But there was no help for it. The miser was fairly caught.

With a deep groan, he pulled out a shabby purse and opened it, his fingers trembling with emotion. Still groaning dismally, he extracted two pound-notes from a wad of others. For a poor man, Mr. Pepper was remarkably well provided with currency notes.

With an expression of anguish, he handed the two pound-notes to Grundy of the Shell. Grundy took an envelope from his pocket, slipped the notes into it, and sealed it. Mr. Pepper watching the disappearance of his ill-gotten cash with sad and mournful eyes.

Grundy addressed the envelope to the local Cottage Hospital, and stuck a stamp on it.

"That goes into the post, as soon as we get out of this!" he remarked. "You fellows agree, of course?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You bet!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Pepper's money is rather too unclean for us to touch, but he ought to pay up, and the hospital gets the benefit. You ought to feel happy about this, Pepper!"

Groan!

The juniors chorused. Mr. Pepper had been fairly paid back in his own coin.

"If there's an air raid to-morrow," said Grundy, "you can use our barn as a shelter at a reduction of rent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bob a minute will be the price, and that's reasonable. By the way, we shouldn't have chucked you out, if you hadn't paid up!" added Grundy.

The expression on Mr. Pepper's face when Grundy made that announcement caused the juniors to yell. The old miser sat plunged in the depths of misery.

Tom Merry looked out of the window again. Across the fields came the sound of distant shouting.

Tom Merry gave a jump.

"One's down!" he shouted.

"Bai Jove! A Hun down! What luck!"

"Come on!"

The firing was still going on, but it was so distant now as to be almost inaudible. The St. Jim's juniors rushed out of the barn.

CHAPTER 3.

Well Hit!

"HURRAH!"

"Well hit!"

"He's coming down!" "Hurrah!" yelled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, waving his eagles frantically. "Well hit, gunnash! Hurrah!"

The juniors had their eyes on the sky as they ran, wildly excited. Overhead THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 514.

the German aeroplanes had disappeared, with one exception. There was one still visible, and that one was in great difficulties.

It was flying so low that the schoolboys could make out the pilot and his companion, and it was swooning down in jerky spirals. One of the bursting shells had evidently inflicted serious damage.

The delight of the juniors was boundless. It was, as Figgins remarked, simply gorgeous to see the beast coming down.

"Bai Jove! He will land with a smash!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "The howlid wotahs will break their Hun necks!"

"Good egg!"

"I could pick off those scoundrels if I had a rifle!" gasped Grundy. "By gad, I'm going to buy a rifle!"

"Jolly glad you haven't one!" grinned Wilkins. "I don't think it's the Huns you'd bring down!"

"Look here, Wilkins—"

"Oh, bother the mist!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

From the distant coast a grey mist was rolling up, and it was dimming the aeroplane from view, low as it was swooning.

The juniors ran down the lane towards the school, keeping the plane in sight, however.

A few minutes before the countryside had been deserted under the hail of shrapnel. But now it had suddenly become alive. Labourers appeared in the fields, villagers from Rylecombe, Wayland people, excited, lads from everywhere. Even Mr. Pepper crept out of the barn to blink up at the misty sky. Even Baggy Trumble was following the track of the sinking Hun plane.

From St. Jim's, as the crowd drew near the school, there came a roar of shouting. The Hun plane, fighting against its fate, was passing over the school.

The quadrangle was swarming; there was a face at almost every window as the stricken aeroplane, struggling like a wounded bird, passed on.

Taggles, the porter, shook a knuckly fist at it. Mrs. Taggles came out of the school shop and stared upward.

German raiders had passed over St. Jim's before, but there had been nothing like this.

There was no pity for the two rascals in the Hun plane. They had come to that quiet countryside to murder and destroy, and there was a fierce satisfaction in seeing them getting justice in this way.

They were doing their best with the crippled plane, but it seemed inevitable that when it landed it must land with a crash; and that meant instant death to the two Huns.

But even the tender-hearted Arthur Augustus could not feel sorry for them. That fate was not so terrible as the fate that had intended for others.

"Bai Jove! They'll buff into the School House wot!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he came breathlessly in at the gates.

But the sinking aeroplane disappeared behind the school buildings.

There was a race round to pick it up again. The mist was growing thicker now. But there was no escape for the Huns. The mist, had it gathered twenty minutes earlier, might have saved the raiders; but now they were hard hit by the accurate gunfire.

In a few minutes Tom Merry & Co. were scrambling through the fir plantation beyond the school, seeking the sky for the raider. But the German plane was not to be seen.

"It's down!" said Tom.

"Yas, wathah!"

"Hark!"

There was a distant crash.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 514.

"Bai Jove! It's landed in the trees!"

"Hurrah!"

The juniors plunged on through the wood. There was a whooping crowd following; but Tom Merry & Co. were first in the field.

"Heah you are!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "Heah are the wotahs!"

"Look out, the beasts may shoot—"

"Oh, wats!"

The juniors panted up.

The aeroplane was down, in the heart of the wood. A shivered tank lay half-buried in the grass. The aeroplane, smashed by the crash in the trees, lay in an almost unrecognisable mass, broken and twisted. Part of the planes hung and tangled round the branches above.

"My hat! What a smash!" exclaimed Blake.

"Where are the Huns?" panted Lowther.

"Bai Jove! We'll capahch them, deah boys—"

"Look out!"

"Phew!"

"Dead!" said Tom Merry.

In the wet grass a still form lay at the feet of the juniors, and they paused suddenly.

It was one of the Germans—either the pilot or the observer they had seen in the sinking plane. He lay crumpled up in the grass, his head at a strange and ghastly angle with his body. It was evident that his neck had been broken by the fall, and that he was quite dead.

The juniors shuddered a little as they looked down on him. After all he was a human being, though a Prussian.

"Poor rotter!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Yas, wathah!" muttered Arthur Augustus.

"I suppose the w'etch wot doin' what he considered his duty in comin' heah to bomb us."

Grundy snorted.

"Jolly good catch!" he said. "But there were two of the rotters. 'Where's the other beast? He mustn't get away!"

The juniors searched round the smashed aeroplane.

But there was no other body to be found. Neither in the wreckage of the Gotha nor in the grass round it was there any trace of the other German airman.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upward, with a perplexed expression.

"He must have come down!" he remarked doubtfully.

"Go on!" murmured Lowther. "Perhaps he's sundred midway, like Mahomet's coffin."

"Weally, Lowther—"

"He's landed safely, the boulder, and taken to his heels!" said Grundy. "This is a job for us! Let's get after him!"

The juniors stared round into the misty fir wood.

It seemed indubitable that the Hun airman had landed unhurt, as he had disappeared from the spot. The desperate rascal was evidently lurking somewhere in the wood.

"Yas, this is a job for the St. Jim's scouts!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"We'll twack the boundah down!"

"Follow my lead!" said Grundy.

"Wats!"

"Fathead!"

"Hallo, here comes the bobbies!"

Two mounted constables dashed up, and drew rein beside the wreck. They dismounted, and waved back the juniors.

"Clear off!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Clear away, please! Now, then!"

"Bai Jove! I object to bein' cleahed off like this! I considah— Pway let go my arm, Blake! I am not leavin' yet!"

"You are!" grinned Blake. "Mustn't argue with giddy authority, my infant! Kim on!"

"But I considah—"

"This way!"

Three or four more constables arrived, and some military cyclists, and the crowd was cleared off.

Tom Merry & Co. returned to the school in a state of excitement and satisfaction. One, at least, of the daylight raiders had been accounted for—one of the fearsome Gothas lay a smashed wreck within two hundred yards of St. Jim's. And that was all to the good.

Grundy stopped at the school letter-box as he went in, to drop in the letter addressed to the Cottage Hospital. That meritorious institution was to benefit to the extent of two pounds, which probably came in quite useful. It was likely that Mr. Pepper would groan for weeks over the rent he had paid for the use of the barn, but nobody minded Mr. Pepper.

In the junior Common-room that evening Tom Merry had an announcement to make. He mounted on a chair to make it.

"Gentlemen—"

"None of your Parliamentary gas, now!" interjected Grundy.

"Fathead! Dry up! Gentlemen, to-day there has been a daylight raid, and a bomb was dropped near St. Jim's."

"Tell us something we don't know!" suggested Crooke of the Shell.

"Order!"

"Also, one of the Hun planes was dropped near St. Jim's," continued Tom Merry.

"Bravo!"

"I wish to point out that, though the Hun planes are dangerous beasts, we can have every confidence in the anti-aircraft defences. The authorities are not asleep, and our merry gunners are looking after us."

"Hear, hear!"

"Moreover—"

"Good word!" said Blake.

"Moreover," said Blake. "The Boche airmen got away after the plane came down. Probably the bobbies will nail him before long."

"And probably not!" snorted Grundy.

"That's what I'm coming to. Gentlemen, unless we hear by to-morrow that the escaped Boche has been collared, it's a job for the St. Jim's scouts. All the scouts of the School House will be called out, to trail down that Hun, and bag him."

"Bravo!"

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Grundy heartily. "You can depend on me to lead you—"

"Shut up, Grundy!"

"Look here—"

"Gentlemen, you will be prepared for a hunt to-morrow of the Boche hasn't been captured by then, announced Tom Merry. "And not a word outside the House! The School House are going to bag that Hun—not the New House! It would be just like Figgins & Co. to chip in, if they thought of it—you know what cheeky worms they are. But that Hun is our Hun, and we're going to nail him!"

"Hurrah!"

"Yas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

And there was not a dissentient voice.

CHAPTER 4.

Rival Scouts!

TOM MERRY & CO. were very anxious for news the next day.

It seemed most unlikely that the escaped airman would re-

main long at liberty, with the whole countryside alert and looking for him.

But if the police and the military failed to run him down, the scouts of St. Jim's were quite prepared to take on

the task. As a matter of absolute fact, those cheery young gentlemen had more confidence in themselves than they had in the authorities. Indeed, Grundy had often remarked that the war would have progressed in a very different manner with a St. Jim's chap at the head of affairs—Grundy himself, for instance. It was Grundy's fixed opinion that, if he were Prime Minister, the war would be done with in three weeks. Monty Lowther surprised Grundy by agreeing with him on that point, but Grundy was less pleased when Lowther added that the British Empire would be done with, too.

There was news that day—good news! The Hun raiders, fleeing from the gunfire, had been attacked and dispersed by British airmen, and three of them had gone to their last home in the sea. That daylight raid, at all events, could not be called a success. But there was no news of the escaped Hun from the wrecked plane.

Tom Merry cycled down to Ryelombe police-station to inquire. But he only learned that the Hun was still at large.

"Time for us to chip in!" Tom Merry remarked, when he came back from the village. "The St. Jim's scouts are wanted in this act."

"They are—they is!" agreed Monty Lowther. "But I say, it's pretty dark after lessons. Are we going to ask the Head for a special half-holiday, to track down the cheery Hun?"

"I can see him granting it!" grinned Manners.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Better not let on to the Head," he remarked. "Dr. Holmes mightn't think we were up to the job."

"He mightn't—la, ha!"

"In fact, he might order us to keep within gates, if he knew—"

"I rather think he would."

"But that would be rot, of course. The Head's bound to be pleased when we come in, bringing the Hun along with us, a prisoner."

"When?" murmured Lowther.

"The scouts will meet immediately after lessons," said Tom. "But there's no time to change."

"What about tea?"

"Blow tea!" said Tom forcibly.

It was agreed that tea should be blown. Lessons were a bore that afternoon to the enterprising scouts of the School House. Immediately the Fourth and the Shell were dismissed, there was a rush to get ready.

Innumerable patrols gathered in the quadrangle in the falling winter dusk. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wore a thoughtful expression.

"Wait for me, deah boys," he remarked suddenly. "I am just goin' to drop in on Waliton!"

"What on earth on you going to drop in on Railton for?" demanded Jack Blake.

"To bowwow his wevolvah."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Mr. Waliton has a wevolvah in his studay, I believe. You see, that Hun is sure to be armed, and he may cut up vusly when we vun him down. It will be only pvudent to have a wevolvah."

"You-you last word in clumps!" gasped Blake. "Lene catch you with a revolver! There's not going to be any St. Jim's casualties, if I can help it."

"I am wathah a cwack shot, Blake."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ready!" called out Tom Merry.

"Pway wait a minute, Tom Mewwy. Leggo my coah, Blake! I shall stwike you, if you do not welseace my coah immediately!"

"You funny ass!" said Blake. "Railton's not to know anything about this game. He would gate the lot of us."



Blake on the Track!

(See Chapter 6.)

"Bui Jove! 'I nevah thought of that. Howeveh, pewwape I could bowwow the wevolvah without Mr. Waliton's noticin', and weturn it quietly afterwards."

"It would be bound to come out," said Digby.

"Why would it be bound to come out, Dig?"

"Well, Railton 'would be bound to notice it, if three or four of the chaps came home dead," explained Dig.

"You uttah ass—"

"March!"

"But I—"

"Help that idiot along!" called out Tom Merry.

"I wufuse to be called an idiot. Tom Mewwy! I— Yawwoh! If you dig me in the wibs again, Hewwies— Yawwooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"March!"

The scouts swung away, Arthur Augustus in great wrath. His devoted chums were heading him off from the School House with their hands. Baggy Trimble of the Fourth was heading for Dame Taggles' shop slyly. Monty Lowther brought him to a halt by jamming the end of his stick on Baggy's fat waistcoat, and there was a gasping yell from Trimble.

"Why aren't you in khaki?" demanded Lowther. "I mean, where are you going?"

"Yow-ow!"

"Bring that shirker along!" grinned Blake.

"Yaroh! I'm not coming!" roared Trimble. "I-I don't like Huns!"

"March!"

Baggy, enclosed by the scouts, had to march. Several prods helped him along, in a breathless state of rage.

"Look here, you fellows, I—I'll go and change!" gasped Trimble.

"I'm afraid you'd have to be posted as missing, if you did!" grinned Lowther. "Get on! There's some assistance for you!"

"Yarooop!"

"And there—"

"Yoop! Stoppit! Yow-ow! I'm marching, ain't I?" howled Trimble.

And he marched.

The School House scouts reached the gates, and to their surprise and wrath they found another army of scouts marching out in the mist.

Figgins & Co., of the New House, in scout garb, had turned up in great force.

"Hallo! What do you want?" demanded Tom Merry warmly.

"We're after the Hun!" said Figgins blandly. "What are you chaps up to?"

"We're after the Hun, you cheeky boulder!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Figgins.

"You fellows can't track down Huns for tefice!"

"Leave things to chaps who can do them!" suggested Kerr.

"Go home!" was Fatty Wynn's advice.

The New House army swept out into the road. The School House scouts marched out after them, considerably excited.

Tom Merry & Co. started for the fir wood, with the intention of picking up the trail of the missing Hun there. But Figgins & Co. had the same intention, and they started in the same direction.

The rival scouts, exchanging glances of wrath and defiance, arrived at the wood together.

"Look here, this won't do!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We can't pick up a trail with this gang of silly kids hanging about!"

"Just what I was thinking!" said Figgins warmly. "You School House kids clear off! You know you're no good at scouting! You'll admit that yourselves!"

"You cheeky waster!"

"You New House ass!"

"Now, then, clear off!" exclaimed

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 514.

Blake. "That Hun is our Hun, and we don't want any assistance from civilians!" "Civilians!" yelled Figgins, in great wrath. "I'll give you civilians!" yelled Redfern.

"Get off the grass, you New House duffers!" "Clear off, you School House dummies!"

"Look here—"
"Go and eat coke!"
"I tell you—"
"Yah!"
"Charge!" roared Tom Merry.
"Back up, New House!"
"Give 'em socks!"

If the lurking Hun was still in the wood—well, was very doubtful—he had little to fear from the St. Jim's scouts just then. The scouts, in fact, had forgotten all about the Hun for the moment. The old rivalry of the two Houses had awakened, more lively than ever, and a terrific combat raged among the leafless trees and frozen thickets.

"Go it, School House!"
"Back up, New House!"
"Hurrah!"
"Yaroooh!"
In the confusion Baggy Trimble fled, unnoticed. But the rest of the army were engaged in terrific combat, and the wood rang and echoed with the din.

CHAPTER 5.

Kerr is Equal to the Occasion!

FIGGINS & CO. put up a great fight. If they had been engaged in combat with the Huns they could hardly have put more energy into it. But the odds were against them. The School House scouts outnumbered them almost two to one. In spite of their valiant defence, the New House were driven back into the road, with terrific bloodshed—chiefly from the nose!

In the road the School House made a final charge, and the enemy were scattered. They went scattering, and Tom Merry's bugle called his followers together.

Many of them were looking considerably damaged. But they were victorious, and they rejoiced.

"March!" was the order.
And the scouts started once more for the wood.

Figgins & Co. gathered in the misty road, in great wrath and chagrin. Figgins was for attacking again; but a good many of his followers had retired to attend to their damages, and it was evidently hopeless.

"No good butting against a brick wall, old chap," said the cautious Kerr.
"We're done this time!"

"Groogh!" murmured Figgins, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. "The cheeky rotters! They'll muck it all up, too! They can't scout!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" muttered Fatty Wynn. "I'm going to bathe my eye!" remarked Redfern.

"Same here!"
The scouts were dropping away; but Figgins was reluctant to retire defeated. He dabbed his nose, and frowned in wrath.

"They'll crow over us no end, if we chuck it!" he growled.
"I say—" began Fatty Wynn thoughtfully.

"Got anything to suggest?" grunted Figgins.

"Well, yes."
"Go ahead. What is it?"
"Let's go and have tea."
"What?" yelled Figgins.
"I'm jolly hungry, you know!"
"You—you—"
Words failed.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 514.

George Figgins. He gave his fat chum a prod that caused Fatty Wynn to sit down suddenly in the road, with a gasp. "Yow-ow!" roared Fatty. "Wharrer you at? What did you do that for?"

"Don't you talk to me about tea!" growled Figgins. "Talk about Nero heddling while Rome was burning! Talk about politicians gassing while the Hun is at the gate! You fat villain, this isn't a time to talk about tea!"

"It's tea-time—"
"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"I think you're a silly ass, Figgins!" grunted Fatty Wynn.

"We've been licked by the School House—"

"That's because we've got such a jolly good leader!" snorted Fatty Wynn.

"Who's at?"

"I'm going in to tea. I know that."

And Fatty Wynn went. Fatty's opinion was that a House licking was bad enough, without missing his tea in addition.

Kerr grinned, but he became serious again as Figgins' wrathful eye turned on him.

"What are you sniggering at?" demanded Figgins gruffly.

"Was I sniggering?" murmured Kerr.

"Yes, you were!"

"Ahem!"

"Perhaps you think I'm no good as a leader!" snorted Figgins.

"Everybody's gone but us, old chap," said Kerr. The two chums were alone in the dusty road now.

"Oh, rats! Let 'em! You can go in if you like!"

"Ahem!"

"We've been downed!" growled Figgins. "They were two to one. But if a chap backed up a chap, instead of grinning like a Hun over a dish of sauerkraut, a chap might be able to do something."

"Ahem!"

"Why can't you think of something?" demanded Figgins aggressively. "What's the good of being a dashed Scotsman if you can't think of anything?"

Kerr grinned.

"I've been thinking, while you've been jawing," he remarked. "I've got a wheeze. Come in."

"I'm not going in!" said Figgins obstinately.

"I'm going to dish those School House bouders somehow."

They're in the fir wood now, picking up the trail—not that they can pick it up, the duffers! They're after the Hun, and there'll be no standing their swank if they bag him—not that they will!"

"Come in!"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"It's a wheeze, you ass! I want to borrow a pair of Taggles' old boots—"

"Eh?"

Kerr linked his arm in Figgins', and marched him away to the school gates.

"What on earth do you want Taggles' old boots for?" howled the amazed Figgins.

"Because they're the largest size at St. Jim's."

"Are you off your rocker, Kerr?"

"Not at all!"

Figgins, in great amazement, accompanied Kerr to the tuck-shop in the corner of the quad. Dame Taggles came out of her little parlour to serve them; but it was not tuck Kerr wanted. He astonished Dame Taggles by asking her if she could lend him a pair of Taggles' old boots.

The good dame smiled.

"Some of your amachoor theatricals, Master Kerr?" she asked. "Yes, I can find you a pair—very old, I'm afraid!"

"That don't matter a bit, ma'am."

Mrs. Taggles found the boots and

handed them over, and Kerr carried them away. Figgins followed him like a fellow in a dream. He had great faith in the sagacity of his Scottish chum. But how Kerr was going to dish the School House scouts by means of a pair of the school-porter's old boots was a deep mystery to Figgins.

The chums of the New House left the school gates again. Kerr taking the boots under his arm. He turned off from the road by a path that led to the fir wood, at a point some distance from the footpath where Tom Merry & Co. had entered it. "Look here, Kerr, what's the game?" demanded Figgins at last.

"Can't you see?"

"No, I can't!"

"You will in a minute," smiled Kerr.

"Listen!"

There was a distant buzz of voices in the fir wood. Tom Merry & Co. were evidently hard at work, though it was doubtful if they had found a trail yet. Trails, certainly, would have been easy to find, as hundreds of feet had tramped round the wrecked aeroplane that day, but not the trail they wanted.

"They're coming this way!" said Figgins.

"That's it!"

"Well, they'll bump us if they catch us here. Are you looking for another licking from the School House?" snapped Figgins.

"Wait and see, old scout!"

Kerr sat on a log, and drew on Taggles' boots over his own. Figgins fairly blinked at him. The porter's boots were quite large enough to go outside the Scots junior's own footgear.

"Wha-a-at's that for?" gasped Figgins.

"To leave a trail, fathead! They're looking for a trail! When they find one made with boots this size they'll be satisfied and follow it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

He understood at last.

"The ground's wet, and it will leave a good trail. The crowd that's been round the Hun plane hasn't been in this part of the wood. When they hit on this trail they'll know it's the Hun's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush! They're getting closer!"

They're bound to find this. You know how thorough Tommy is. He won't leave a stone unturned. Now, then! You walk in front of me, and tread as hard as you can. I'll tread in your steps, and make 'em deeper—and Taggles' size! Go ahead!"

Figgins chuckled spasmodically.

It was a secluded part of the wood, far away from footpaths. There was no doubt that the School House scouts would be overjoyed to discover a trail there—the trail of a big man's size in boots. Kerr dragged down a tree-branch, leaving it drooping, to give an impression that the Hun had been hiding up a tree. He struck three or four matches, and dropped the burnt sticks on the grass. Then he followed Figgins.

Figgins tramped away heavily, taking a roundabout course into the wood, and out of it again. Kerr followed him, crushing down the wet grass with Taggles' heavy boots, and deepening the foot-tracks.

In Indian file the two grinning juniors proceeded, leaving only one track winding through the wood, and that a very well-marked one.

They left the wood at last on the side of the school. Here there was a stretch of the school allotments, deserted, of course, after dark. The New House juniors tramped on in the deep dusk, through wet mud, squelching out a trail, till they arrived at the wall in the rear of the school buildings.

"Up you go!" murmured Kerr.

He bunked Figgins up from behind, and the chief of the New House juniors drew himself on the wall. He leant down and gave Kerr a hand up. The Scottish junior scrambled up, taking care to leave plenty of traces of mud on the wall. They dropped down lightly within.

Kerr kicked off Taggles' boots. "We'll leave these here for them, with a note," he remarked. "I fancy they'll come over that wall simply bursting with excitement at the idea of the Hun taking refuge inside the school walls!"

Figgins gurgled. "And they'll find the boots, if not the Hun!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Figgins. Five minutes later the chums of the New House joined Fatty Wynn in their study. Fatty had tea ready, and Figgins and Kerr enjoyed their tea immensely. They felt that they deserved well of their country.

CHAPTER 6.

On the Track!

"**B**A! Jove, they're guardin' the place, dear boys!"

Arthur Augustus made that remark as the School House scouts arrived on the spot where the Hun aeroplane had fallen.

There was a halt.

The wrecked plane had not yet been removed, and it was guarded by a couple of men in khaki. The body of the German airman had been taken away. Tom Merry & Co. looked at the sentries. One of them made a sign to them to keep back. The place had been swarmed that day by sightseers, and it had been necessary to take care that the Hun plane was not removed piecemeal for souvenirs.

"We've got to keep off the grass," Tom remarked. "Never mind! We couldn't pick up the trail there anyway; there have been hundreds of hoofs over that spot to-day."

"The Hun isn't likely to have stayed very near, either," grinned Cardew.

"Miles away, most likely," remarked Grundy.

"Well I don't think he's likely to be miles away," said Tom. "He's got to keep under cover somehow, and that means keeping to the woods. He's most likely to look for a hiding place somewhere, and not risk being seen on the roads."

"May be only ten minutes' walk from here, in that case," said Clive.

"**Bai Jove!**" Cardew laughed.

"A hidin'-place wouldn't be much good without any grub," he remarked. "Huns can't live on air."

"May have had some German sausages about him," suggested Levison. "Anyway, we know he's hiding somewhere, because he hasn't been caught."

"We've only got to pick up the trail," said Blake briskly. "No good looking for it in the trampled ground here, but farther on—"

"Which direction?" grinned Cardew. "All directions. We'll scatter, and search every corner of the wood, now that those New House bouncers are cleared off."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's the game!" said Tom Merry. "Scatter through the wood, and keep your eyes open, and the chap who discovers 'sign' is to give the Curlew call."

"How are you going to discover sign in the dark?" Cardew inquired.

"Well, Cardew, a good scout ought to be able to work in the dark!"

"But how?"

"I've got my pocket electric-lamp,"

said Tom. "Everybody who's got one has brought it. I suppose?"

"I haven't!"

"That's because you're no scout!"

"Oh!" said Cardew.

Under Tom Merry's directions, the scouts separated, taking different sections of the wood for search. The different patrols scattered; and, as at least one member of each patrol had a pocket-lamp, the search was easy enough.

The juniors ranged through the wood, calling to one another, flashing their lamps on the ground and thrusting into thickets in case the Hun might be lurking there.

It was slow work, as it had to be done thoroughly. Tom Merry's intention was to leave not a yard of the fir wood unexplored. If the Hun had left a trail behind him the previous day the scouts meant to find it. And, as the ground was damp and soft, they had high hopes of its retaining traces of the fleeing Hun.

The search had been going on nearly an hour when a bugle-call came echoing through the dusky shadows of the wood.

Answering calls came from the scouts, as the signal told them that a trail had been found.

Tom Merry & Co. dashed through the bushes. Jack Blake was standing among the wet trees, winding his bigle in great style.

"Found anything?" shouted Tom.

"Yes, rather!"

"What have you spotted?"

"Only the Hun's trail," said Blake, with studied negligence.

"My hat!"

The Terrible Three joined Blake, and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy came up the next minute. More and more scouts gathered round. Jack Blake waved his hand to wave them back. Blake of the Fourth was a most important personage at this juncture.

"Don't muck up the trail!" he called out. "Keep off the grass! Look where you're treading! Mind your hoofs, Grundy!"

"You cheeky fag—"

"Shut up, Grundy!"

"**Bai Jove!** There's weally a twail!"

exclaimed Arthur Augustus, turning his eyes glass upon the well-marked ground in great surprise.

"Didn't you expect to see one when I gave the signal?" snorted Blake.

"I considered it prob' that you had made a mistake, dear boy!"

"Fathedd!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Order!" rapped out Tom Merry.

"Stand clear, you fellows, and let's examine the trail. This looks like real business!"

Tom Merry dropped on his knees in the grass to examine Blake's discovery. They were in a secluded part of the wood, far from the footpaths, and certainly no chance pedestrian was likely to have passed that way.

The trail, deep and well-marked, was evidently made by boots of a large size. Tom Merry's eyes gleamed as he flashed the light upon it.

"The real thing—what?" smiled Blake.

"Looks like it!"

"Dashed if it doesn't!" said Cardew.

"It's the weal thing wight enough, dear boys! The only thing now is to win down that wascally Hun."

"May be twenty-four hours since he passed here," remarked Clive.

"Not necessarily, dear boy. He may have been larkin' in the wood last night."

"Must be the Hun," said Herries. "Nobody ever comes along here—there's no path. It's close on the school allotments, only there's a fence."

"We'll follow it, anyhow," said Tom Merry, jumping up. "Come on!"

"Hold on!" said Blake firmly.

"**Eh?** What is there to hold on for?"

"I fancy I take the lead this time, as it's my trail."

"Your trail?" said Cardew. "Isn't it the Hun's trail?"

"Don't be a funny ass, Cardew! I found this trail, and the credit belongs to Study No. 6."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"All serene—go ahead, Blake! I'll try back a little."

Tom Merry ran back along the trail, with his light on it. He wanted to find the beginning of it, to see where the Hun had started; and, like a true scout, he was quite prepared to suspect that the Hun had walked backwards, in order to deceive possible pursuers. A few minutes later there was a loud shout from the captain of the Shell, and the scouts hurried to him.

"What is it?" exclaimed Blake.

"Look here!"

"Great pip! That settles it!"

A dozen electric lamps gleamed on the spot. The scouts scanned the broken, trailing branch of the tree and the three matchsticks that lay visible in the grass. There was a buzz of excitement.

"**Bai Jove!** He was hidin' in the tree—at first!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"He got down deah to wun for it!"

"And struck matches to see his way!" said Digby.

"Well, this is the start of the trail," said Tom Merry, looking round. "My hat! He must be a heavy bouncer, to drive his footmarks so deep! What a thumping size in feet, too!"

"Germans have big feet."

"That's so."

"Come on!" said Blake loftily. "Follow your leader!"

And Jack Blake led the way, with Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy at his heels. Study No. 6 were well to the fore, as was only fair. After them came the Terrible Three, and Levison & Co., and a crowd of excited scouts. There was keen satisfaction among the School House army. Every "sign" seemed to point clearly to the fact that the missing Hun had passed that way, and they had high hopes of running down the elusive miscreant. And that would be a tremendous triumph for the School House. The New House would have no resource but to sing small and hide their diminished heads. With great eagerness the School House crowd pressed on the trail.

CHAPTER 7.

"With Kind Regards from the New House!"

"**G**REAT SCOTT!"

Blake halted on the edge of the wood, with an exclamation of surprise.

The scouts had followed the trail a good distance, winding through the wood, hardly losing it for a moment, and always picking it up again with ease. It had led them a good way, but it had wound back quite near the spot where it had started. It was evidently the trail of someone unacquainted with the wood, ignorant of its secret windings in the dark—at least, it seemed evident enough to the juniors. The trail left the wood at last, and to the amazement of Blake & Co., it led away across the school allotments to the school walls.

"The rotter's headed for the school!" gasped Blake.

"**Bai Jove!** He can't have gone in," said Arthur Augustus. "He would have been seen, you know!"

"Go on!"

"Weally, Lowthah—" "Follow on!" said Blake.

With his light shining on the ground before him, and his eyes on the deeply-marked trail in the mud, Blake led the way among the allotments.

The old stone walls loomed up ahead at last.

The juniors halted at the wall.

There the trail ended, right under the wall. But the muddy marks on the old, mossy stones showed that someone with muddy boots had climbed there.

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at one another breathlessly.

"Well, this beats everything!" muttered Tom. "Whoever made that trail has climbed this wall, and gone inside."

"Yaas, watah!"

"But—but the Hun can't be within the walls of St. Jim's!" gasped Manners. "That's rot! It must be somebody's else's trail."

Jack Blake gave Manners a glare. Blake had discerned the trail, and he was certainly not prepared to admit that it could belong to anybody but the missing Boche.

"You silly ass!" said Blake, in measured tones.

"Well, the Hun wouldn't go inside the school wall," said Manners.

"Why should he?" queried Cardew.

"Why should anybody else, if you come to that?" retorted Blake. "Somebody came along here—somebody who'd been hiding in a tree, and struck matches to find his way in the wood. Who could it have been but the Hun? I don't say I suspected that the Hun would get inside St. Jim's. But nobody else would think of doing it. Why should anybody?"

That was a poser.

Really, it was more likely that the fleeing Hun should climb the school wall in his flight than that a chance pedestrian should have done so. The latter supposition was, in fact, incredible.

"But—but—but—" said Tom Merry, "if he went into the school grounds, he must be there still!"

"G'eat Scott!"

"He would be spotted!" said Julian. Blake uttered an excited exclamation.

"I see it all!"

"What—the Hun?"

"No, ass—his little game, I mean!" Blake was greatly excited. "Don't you see? He knew he'd be hunted for over the open country, and he scudded into the school grounds to hide—at night, of course. There's lots of places within the walls where he could lie low—and, of course, nobody would dream of looking for him there. The old chapel—and the tower, too! Just the places for a sneaking Hun to hide in."

"Phew!"

It was a startling thought that they had slept the previous night with a lurking, savage Hun within the walls of the school.

"I say, that's rather thick!" remarked Manners.

"He wouldn't know there was a place to hide in, would he?" remarked Cardew. "Unless he's an old St. Jim's chap, of course."

"What do you mean, you silly idiot? How could he be an old St. Jim's chap—a filthy Prussian?"

"There have been Germans at St. Jim's, I believe."

"Well, y-e-s," admitted Tom Merry reluctantly. "Before the war, of course. I—I suppose there have been some Germans at most English schools, before we knew what rotters they were. But—"

"If you say that filthy baby-killer is an old St. Jim's chap, I'll jolly well punch your nose, Cardew!" growled Herries wrathfully.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 514.

"Might have been in the New House!" remarked Digby.

"By Jove! That's likely enough!" admitted Herries. "Yes, I shouldn't be surprised at that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyway, he's gone in," said Blake.

"He may simply have hidden among the buildings, and cleared off later, or he may have stayed there. We're going to follow this trail to the end! Give me a bunk up!"

"If we wan him down, Blake, you will be wathah sorry that you did not let me boywow old Walton's wevolah."

"Don't start your funny tain now, Gussy! Give me a bunk!"

"Weally, you uttah ass—"

"Bunk!" roared Blake.

Two or three fellows bunked Blake, and he clambered over the wall. There were more and more bunkings, and scout after scout dropped within the wall. Blake turned the light of his lantern round him, scanning the dusk eagerly. There was a kitchen garden stretching to a considerable distance towards the school buildings at this point. Dim cabbages and beets loomed in the gloom. But the ground was not so muddy here, and the trail seemed gone.

"Lost it?" gasped Tom Merry, as he dropped within.

Blake snorted.

Eat less Bread

"Lost your grandmother!"

"Well, where's the trail?"

"I'm finding it. It puts a good scout out a bit to have questions pelted at him by silly fatheads," explained Blake.

"Bow-wow! There's no trail here!"

"There's some loose mud," said Manners. "The chap went this way! But—My hat! If the trail was made yesterday, or last night, it's queer that this mud is so jolly fresh!"

"Hallo, here's something!" shouted Herries.

They ran on.

"What is it—where—what?"

"Great Christopher Columbus! He's taken off his boots!" yelled Herries, in astonishment.

"His—his boots!"

"Look!"

"Great pip!"

There they were! Tom Merry & Co. gathered round the boots, in blank amazement. A dozen electric torches flashed on them.

They were a pair of very large boots, and very odd, and somehow did not look like the boots a German airman might have been expected to wear. In fact, there seemed something familiar to the eye about those boots.

"Wh—why should he t-t-take off his boots?" stammered Blake.

"Perhaps he was goin' to shin up one of the cabbages, and hide?" suggested Cardew, apparently attempting humour.

"Shut up, you ass!"

"It—it's jolly funny he should take his boots off!" said Blake, eyeing the articles

as if he could scarcely believe the evidence of his sight. "Anyway, that proves it was the Hun. Even Manners wouldn't suggest that a stranger would climb into the school and leave his boots here."

"I don't see why the Hun should," remarked Manners.

"That's because you're a silly ass, Manners!"

"Well, do you?"

"I've no time for jawing—I'm after that Hun! There might be a trick about those boots—an explosive hidden in them, or something. You know those filthy Prussians are full of dirty tricks."

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus, who was about to pick up one of the boots, jumped back quite suddenly. "Oh, deah!"

"Better be careful with 'em," said Digby.

"Take 'em up tenderly, treat 'em with care!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Don't be a funny idiot, Lowther!"

"Excess my bargin in again," said Cardew politely. "But those boots look remarkably like old Taggles' hoof-covers."

"You silly clump!" said Blake witheringly. "Are you suggesting that old Taggles has led us this dance, and left his boots here, and gone to his lodge barefoot?"

"A bootless task!" murmured Lowther.

"Shut up, you funny clump! This isn't a time for fool jokes!"

"Well, let's look at the boots!" said Lowther. "As there may be a bomb hidden in them, Blake had better examine them. I think he mentioned that Study No. 6 was taking the lead in this bizney."

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Blake!"

Blake hesitated. The whole thing was so strange that he had natural uneasiness about touching the boots. If the Hun fugitive had really left them there it was very probable that some cunning and cruel trick was the reason.

"Leave it to Study No. 9!" grinned Cardew, making a step forward.

Blake shoved him back, frowning.

"Keep off the grass, you interfering ass!"

"Well, are we goin' to stay here all night?"

Blake grunted, and strode towards the boots. Then he gave a yell as he bent over them.

"My hat! There's a note—"

"A note?"

"Yes."

"Not a banknote?" asked Cardew.

"You burbling idiot, no! A note pinned inside one of the boots," said Blake dully. "This beats me! That Hun must be a madman!"

"They'll all mad, more or less. Let's see the note," said Cardew. "Jolly polite, for a Hun, to leave us a note along with his boots. Perhaps it's his address, for us to send them on by parcels post."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, ring off, you dummy!"

Blake unpinned the note, and unfolded it. He turned his light upon it, and read what was written, the juniors eyeing him breathlessly.

"Oh! Ah! Oh!" ejaculated Blake.

A startling change came over his face as he read the note. He crushed it in his hand.

"What's in it, deah boy?"

"Show it to us, Blake!"

"What are you crumpling it up for, you ass? Let's see it!" shouted Herries.

Blake's face was crimson.

"It—it's only some rot!" he stammered.

"Let's see it."

"I—I tell you—"

"Hand it over, you cheeky ass!"

The note was fairly dragged from Blake's hand. Tom Merry smoothed it out, and a dozen fellows tried to read it at once. And then there was a gasp. For the note—in a well-known, sprawling handwriting—ran:

"Dear Duffers,—When you've finished tracking down Taggles' old boots, would you mind handing them to Mrs. Taggles? She only lent them to us. With kind regards from the New House."

"GEORGE FIGGINS."

CHAPTER 8.

Down on His Luck!

"Figgins!"
"Oh!"
"Bai Jovel!"
Tom Merry & Co. simply gasped.

They had come to the end of the exciting trail, and they had found—this!

Blake's face was a study. The discoverer of that trail was not feeling so lofty just now about his achievement.

"Figgins!" murmured Levison. "I—I thought these boots looked a bit familiar. Not like a Hun airman's boots."

Cardew chuckled.

"The credit of this discovery is entirely due to Study No. 6," he said solemnly. "I trust that no fellow present will think of disputin' Blake's claim."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No. 9 won't dispute it!" grinned Clive.

"Weally, you asses—"

"I—I—I'll scalp him!" gasped Blake. "The beast must have sneaked into the wood on this side, and—laid the trail for us! Oh, dear!"

"It was wathah bwiht of Figgay; but weally—Oh, deah!"

Blake snorted.

"Bright of Figgay! I'll bet you it was Kerr—that confounded Scotsman! Figgay hasn't the brains!"

"Well, the New House have dished us!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We'd better get in to tea, I think. Must be close on call-over."

"Oh, crumbs! What a sell!"

"Gentlemen," suggested Cardew, "I propose three cheers for Study No. 6!"

"Shut up!" roared Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Some of the scouts chuckled as they dispersed; but some of them looked very exasperated. It was extremely irritating for the trail to end in this absurd fashion. And the worst of it was that they had used up the time in which they might have found the trail of the real Hun—perhaps!

Blake's startling theory that the fugitive Boche had taken refuge within the ancient walls of St. Jim's had ended in—Taggles' old boots!

Arthur Augustus picked up the boots as the scouts dispersed.

"What do you want that rubbish for?" snapped Blake. "Going to hang them up on the wall in the study, as a trophy?"

"I am goin' to return them to Mrs. Taggles, deah boy, as Figgay requests in his note," answered Arthur Augustus mildly. "No reason why a fellow shouldn't be obligin', even if he has been dished owin' to the gross stupidity of his study-leadah."

"What?" stammered Blake.

"Wats?"

The swell of St. Jim's marched off with the boots, which were duly returned to Dame Taggles.

Tom Merry & Co. were a little tired, and very wet and muddy, and not in the best of tempers, when they arrived in the School House.

They found Racke and Croke, and



Taggles is Equal to the Occasion.
(See Chapter 11.)

Melish and Trimble and the other slackers chortling. Apparently they had received information from the New House.

"Here they come!" roared Racke. "Have you caught the Hun? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you find him hidden in Taggles' old boots?" yelled Trimble. "He, he, he!"

"Have you been dished by the New House?" chortled Croke. "What price the School House scouts now? Yah!" The Terrible Three went to their study without replying. They were hungry, and they were late for tea.

Study No. 6 gathered in their quarters with morose brows.

Blake was inclined to lead a raid upon the New House, and scalp Figgins & Co. in their own stronghold, but Blake was quite off as a leader. Even his loyal chums were sniffing. Study No. 6 had to hide its diminished head; there was no mistake about that.

The four Fourth-Formers were sitting at a somewhat morose tea, when the door was opened, and George Alfred Grundy stared in.

"Oh, here you are!" snorted Grundy. "What do you want, fathead?"

snapped Blake crossly.

"I want to tell you what I think of you," said Grundy. "If I'd been leading, we should have captured the Hun by this time! I feel sure of that. You silly chump, you've wasted our time, and the New House are killing themselves laughing about it! Redfern's making up a song about it!"

"Blow Redfern and blow you! Get on!"

"You thumping idiot—"

"I refuse to be called a thumpin' idiot, Grundy! I admit that Blake is a thumpin' idiot—!"

"Oh, do you?" roared Blake.

"Yas, old chap; it's no good denying obvious facts, is it?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently. "But I considah

—yawwooh! What did you throw that howwid kipphal at me for, you wuffian?"

"Shut up!"

"I wufuse to shut up! I considah—"

"Do you want the other kipper?" howled Blake.

"Bai Jovel! I—"

"Precious set of idiots!" snorted Grundy. "Perhaps you'll be willing to take a back seat after this! Perhaps—"

Blake jumped up.

"Lend me a hand," he snapped.

"Wighto!"

"Here, hands off! I'll—yah!"

Study No. 6 seized Grundy of the Shell as one man. They rushed him into the passage, bumped him there, and left him sprawling.

They returned to their quarters feeling somewhat soled. As they sat down to tea again, there came a sound from under the study window in the dusky quadrangle. It was the sound of many voices raised in a chant:

"Has anybody here seen Fritz?"

Has anybody here seen Fritz?

Have you trailed him down,

And done him brown?

Has anybody here seen Fritz?"

Blake rushed to the window and threw it open. George Figgins waved a hand from below in cheery greeting, and the crowd of New House fellows bawled again:

"Has anybody here seen Fritz?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jovel! The cheekay wottahs."

"Pass me the tea-pot!" breathed Blake.

"What for, deah boy?"

"For Figgins' napper, fathead!"

"I wufuse to be called a fathead, and I strongly object to wastin' tea in war-time, Blake."

"You howling idiot, there's only water in it!" hissed Blake.

"Oh, vewy well. But pway allow me THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 514.

to remark, Blake, that I object to being characterized as a howlin' idiot."

"Will you shove that teapot this way?" said Blake, in tones of concentrated wrath.

"Certainly, old chap."

"Wait a tick—I'll put the ink in it," said Digby.

"Isn't that wathah a waste, Dig?"

"Be-r-r-r!"

The teapot, full of water and ink, was passed to Blake. He looked down at the grinning New House crowd.

"Has anybody here seen Fritz?" yelled the New House juniors. Swoosh!

The teapot was inverted over the serenaders, and there was a terrific splashing of water and ink over upturned faces. Blake slammed the window, as a yell of wrath rose on the evening air.

"That settles them," he remarked, with some satisfaction.

The study door opened. It was Racke this time.

Four lurid glares were turned on Racke of the Shell.

"Got out!"

"Only come to inquire," grinned Racke. "How did you get on with the Hun? Have you got him in your trousers' pocket? I—yoooop!"

A cushion smote Racke, and he departed with a crash. Blake kicked the door shut.

"I'm getting fed up with this," he growled. "The next idiot who comes will get a cricket-stump!"

The "next idiot" numbered four—Wally D'Arcy, and Manners minor, and Frank Levison, and Joe Frayne, of the Third. Wally threw the door open, and the four fags grinned into the study. They seemed highly amused.

"Did you find the Hun?" queried Wally.

"What have you done with poor old Fritz?" asked Levison minor.

Blake did not reply. He was searching in the cupboard for a stump.

"You didn't call on the Third Form scouts?" jeered Manners minor. "You'd better have asked us to help. We'd have found something better than Taggles' old boots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake whirled round, stump in hand, and charged. There was a sudden flight of the fags, and Blake chased them in vain to the stairs.

As he halted on the landing, four voices yelled from the landing below:

"Yah! Call yourselves scouts! Where's Fritz? Ha, ha!"

Jack Blake was almost in a suffocating state when he returned to the study and closed the door. He sat down to the table, and laid a cushion ready. The next time the study door was opened the newcomer was to get that cushion before he had time to retreat.

He had not long to wait. There was a step in the passage, and Blake laid down his fork. A tap came at the door, and he grasped the cushion. The door opened, and as it opened the cushion flew, with unerring aim.

Crash!

Bump!

Oh—

"Ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Got him! Oh—ah!—My hat!—Kildare!"

"Bai Jove, you've done it now, deah boy!"

Kildare of the Sixth picked himself up, and glared into the study, gasping. Blake stood frozen. He had certainly not intended to bowl over the head prefect of the School House, but he had done it!

"You—you—you—" stuttered Kildare.

"I—I—G'm sorry!" mumbled Blake. "I

didn't know it was you, Kildare! I—I thought it was some cheeky fag! Oh, dear!"

"You young lunatic!" roared Kildare.

"Oh!"

"I've a jolly good mind to skin you!" growled the captain of St. Jim's. "I came here to speak to you, you young rascals. I hear that you have been out looking for the German airman who escaped yesterday. You're not to go again. Mr. Raiton has heard of it, and it's to stop. You young duffers, the fellow might throttle you if you found him—not that you're likely to. Remember!"

And Kildare strode away, with great forbearance overlooking the incident of the cushion. He proceeded to Tom Merry's study to repeat his announcement.

Blake snorted when he was gone. "That finishes it," he growled. "No looking for the beastly Hun now. We should have found him sooner or later."

Be-r-r-r!"

"Now-ways," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "But pswaps you would only have found some old boots again, Blake!"

"You frabious idiot—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Do you want this cushion on your potty napper?" yelled the exasperated Blake.

"Pway do not wear at me, Blake! It throws me into a fluttah when a fellow wears at me. I considah—"

Biff! Arthur Augustus got the cushion. By the time he had sorted himself out of the fender Jack Blake had departed from the study, slamming the door after him with a terrific slam.

CHAPTER 9.

A Dog with a Bad Name!

"TRIMBLE!" It was the following morning, and the School House juniors had just come down. The voice of Darrel of the Sixth was heard calling for Trimble.

"Not down yet, Darrel," said Levison.

"Fetch him down."

"Right!"

Levison ran up to the dormitory again. Baggy Trimble was generally the last down, as he never turned out of bed till the last possible moment. He was finishing dressing when Levison looked in.

"You're wanted, Trimble."

"What rot!" grunted Trimble. "Breaker isn't ready yet!"

"Darrel wants you."

"Oh, bother Darrel!"

"Shall I tell him that?" grinned Levison.

"Ahem! No! He might be waxy. I'll go if Darrel makes a point of it," said Trimble.

And he went. In the lower passage Darrel dropped a hand on Trimble's fat shoulder.

"Come with me, you young rascal."

"I—I say, what's the matter, Darrel?" stammered Trimble.

"Come along!"

The prefect led Trimble to Mr. Raiton's study, followed by glances from some of the other fellows. It looked as if Baggy Trimble, the champion food-hog of the school, was in trouble again. The Housemaster's face was very stern as the fat junior was marched into his presence.

"Thank you, Darrel! Trimble!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" gasped Baggy.

"Did you leave your dormitory last night?"

"No, sir!"

"Did you descend, and make a forcible entrance into the pantry by the window, and take away a quantity of foodstuffs?" exclaimed the Housemaster sternly.

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Baggy. "I—I never thought of it, sir!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I wouldn't have done it, sir, if I had thought of it!"

Mr. Raiton looked at him searchingly.

"Trimble, on several occasions you have been punished for robbing the larder, in reckless disregard of the food regulations. This offence is even more serious, for the pantry window has been forced from outside, and a large amount of food taken!"

"I—I didn't do it, sir!" gasped Trimble, greatly scared. "I—I never knew the pantry window could be opened from outside, sir."

"It was forced, some instrument being used. Do you assure me, Trimble, that you know nothing about the matter?"

"On my word, sir!"

Mr. Raiton uttered a sound that was very like a grunt. He knew how much Baggy Trimble's word was worth.

"Very well, Trimble. There is no proof against you, at present. If you deny the action, I shall report the matter to the Head for investigation. You understand. I presume, that your punishment will be very severe if Dr. Holmes should discover that you are the guilty party!"

"B-b-but I ain't, sir!" gasped Baggy.

"I—I was asleep all last night, sir, dreaming about Hun raiders, sir."

"You may go for the present."

Baggy Trimble went glady. He fairly gaped as he rolled down the passage. Baggy's reputation in the food-hogging line was bad. He had often run risks to raid the larder, though he was not fond of taking risks, as a rule. He had been kicked out of innumerable studies for raiding the cupboards. And it really looked, this time, as if Trimble was going to suffer for his bad reputation.

"Bai—Jove! What's the row, Twimble?" asked Arthur Augustus, as the dismayed Baggy came away from the Housemaster's study.

"Oh, dear!" growled Baggy. "I'm in trouble! I'm perfectly innocent, of course!"

"You always are!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "What is it you are innocent of this time?"

"The pantries' been burgled, and Raiton thinks I did it!" gasped Baggy.

"Bai Jove! You utter young wascal!"

"Food-hog!" snorted Grundy.

"You fat young rotter!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You'll get a flogging for that, and serve you jolly well right!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But I didn't do it!" yelled Trimble.

"Tosh!"

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wats?"

"I didn't—I wasn't—I never—I didn't even know it had been done till Raiton told me!" wailed Trimble. "I didn't know the pantry window could be busted. Never even thought of it. I've always tried from inside—I—I mean, I've never even thought of robbing the pantry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's a laughing matter!" gasped Trimble. "Raiton's going to report it to the Head, and the Head's sure to think it was me. He's bound to remember one or two little things I've been kicked for—mere trifles—"

"You fat villain!" said Monty Lowther. "You ought to be scaped. Food-hogging in war-time—and robbing the pantry!"

"I tell you I never—"

"Don't tell whoopahs, Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "It is witten enough to be a food-hog, without tellin' fearful whoopahs, like a beastly Pwusian!"

"I tell you——"
 "Wats!"
 "Oh dear!" groaned Trimble.
 "They're sure to think I did it! Even you fellows think so, and you know me to be a perfectly honourable chap——"

"Oh, my hat!"
 "I shall be flogged, I know!" moaned Trimble.

"Serve you right!"
 "You'll be bumped, too!" said Grundy wrathfully. "I don't hold with food-hogs! Collar him!"

"Hold on!" said Jack Blake, who had been listening, with a thoughtful brow, without speaking. "Perhaps Trimble didn't do it!"

"What rot! We know he did!"
 "Who did, it Trimble didn't?" demanded Wilkins. "Somebody did!"

"Give him the benefit of the doubt," said Blake.

"Rot! There isn't any doubt!"

"Weally, Blake, I fail to comprehend why you are standin' up for that wascally food-hog!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

Herries indulged in a snort.
 "Oh, Blake's thinking of tracking down the giddy burglar!" he remarked. "He thinks he can track him down by his boots—or Taggles' boots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Good!" said Cardew. "Let's follow Blake's lead, and we'll trail down the pantry-robbler! After all, even an old porter's boots are valuable in war-time, if Blake makes another discovery with their aid."

Blake glared.
 "You silly, cackling asses——"

"Let's bump that fat burglar!" growled Grundy. "Never mind Blake, Blake's a silly chump! Now, then——"

Blake pushed him back.
 "You come with me, Trimble," he said, and he took the fat junior's arm, and led him into the quad. Trimble was willing enough to go. It was bad enough to have to face the Head, without being hauled by Grundy of the Shell, in addition.

Gundy made a stride after them, but the Terrible Three lined up smilingly in his path.

"Keep off the grass, fathead!" suggested Tom Merry. "Leave it till the Head's been into the matter. Trimble's a dog with a bad name, but he can't be hanged without proof!"

"Rats! I know——"
 "Bow-wow!"

And as Grundy made a rush to pass, Tom Merry & Co. seized him and deposited him on the floor forcibly. D'Arcy and Herries and Dig followed Blake out, wondering, and a little exasperated, by his championship of the food-hog of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 10.

Doubting Thomases!

"TRIMBLE, you fat villain——"
 "Look here, you know——"
 mumbled Trimble.

"Did you rob the pantry?" demanded Blake.

"No!" yelled Trimble.

Jack Blake looked at him searchingly. Certainly Trimble looked as if he were telling the truth. But he often did look like that when he was prevaricating in a manner worthy of a German Kaiser.

Blake's chums joined him in the quad, giving Trimble wrathful and scornful glances. They had no doubt as to the guilty party.

"Look here! Let that fat frog alone, Blake!" growled Herries. "You know jolly well that he's a food-hog, and, of course, he was the chap who sneaked down last night and scoffed the grub. Grundy's right for once!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Honest Injun, I slept all last night without waking up once!" protested Trimble, almost tearfully.

"Wats!"
 "I think he's telling the truth," said Blake delicately.

"He couldn't!" granted Dig.
 "He never has, so far!" said Herries——

which was rather a sweeping statement.
 "Never mind Trimble," said Blake.

"You fellows come with me! We're going to investigate on the spot!"

"And follow the trail?" snorted Herries.

"Yes!"
 "Eed up, old chap!" howled Blake.

"Oh, go and eat cake!" howled Blake.
 "If you want a dot on the nose, George Herries——"

"Peace, dear boys!" interposed Arthur Augustus. "Pwaw don't let your angry passions wise! But, weally, Blake——"

Blake strode away, with knitted brows. His chums exchanged glances, and followed him. Blake was morose that morning, which was not surprising, considering the amount of chipping he had received on the subject of his great discovery in the fir wood.

The chief of Study No. 6 halted under the pantry window, in the rear of the house.

The window was at a good height from the ground, and Blake could only reach the stone sill. He scanned the window very carefully. It was plain that it had been forced from outside, considerable damage having been done. Blake scanned it as if he were a detective engaged on a burglary case, and his chums watched him with suppressed grins.

"Well?" said Arthur Augustus, at last, with great urbanity. "Have you made a discovery, dear boy?"

"Yes!" growled Blake. "Trimble didn't burglar that window."

"But Jove! How do you know?"

"I'm taller than Trimble, a good bit, and I can't reach it. How could Baggy Trimble have reached it?"

"Bai Jove! I never thought of that!"

"Stood on something, I suppose," said Herries.

"Where could he have got a ladder?" demanded Blake.

"Might have stood on anything."

"He hadn't anything here. Do you think he slipped out of a window with the study armchair in his pocket, and brought it round here?" asked Blake, with deep sarcasm.

"Oh, rot! He could have got something—a bench from the wood-shed, Primstane."

"It rained last night," said Blake.

"Trimble wouldn't mind the rain, if he was after grub," said Digby, with a shake of the head.

"I don't mean that. I mean that the rain's made the ground soft, and if there had been a bench here, with Trimble's weight on it, the legs of that bench would have made pretty deep marks in the ground. There's no marks."

The point was well taken, and showed that Blake had not been a scout for nothing. There were vague signs of foot-steps on the spot, but nothing more.

But Blake's followers were fed up, as Herries expressed it, with Blake's scout-

craft. The trailing-down of Taggles' old boots had been too good for them. Three sniffs sounded as one.

"It it wasn't Trimble, who was it?" demanded Herries. "Only a chap in the Sixth could reach that window—and not all the Sixth, either—only a specially big chap. Are you suggesting that Kill-dare or Darrel did it?"

"Ha, ha!"

"I don't think it was one of the chaps at all."

"Oh, a master?" said Herries, with increasing satire. "Railton, perhaps—the Head! Most likely the Head——"

what?

There was a chorite from Digby and Arthur Augustus.

But Blake did not heed.

He was scanning the ground now, evidently in the hope of picking up a trail. His chums watched him, grinning.

The Terrible Three strolled round the house, and found the Fourth-Formers thus engaged.

"Hallo! What's the name of this game?" greeted Monty Lowther.

"Blake's picking up a trail," said Herries, in his new role as a satirist. "He's going to track down the chap who burgled the pantry. He thinks it was most likely the Head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, the Head's tall enough to reach that window, and Trimble isn't," Herries explained. "That settles it, doesn't it? Herlock Sholmes couldn't work out better than that."

Blake rose.

"When you've done your funny turn, Herries, I've got something to say," he remarked.

"Go ahead, old chap! Brekker will be ready soon, and if we're going to trail down Taggles' boots again, we've no time to waste!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yesterday," said Blake calmly, "the idea came into my head that Fritz might have dodged in over the school wall after dark——"

"There's no accounting for the ideas that come into your head, old chap. I should see a doctor about it!"

"It turned out that the New House were spoofing us——"

"Spoofing you, you mean?" said Manners warmly.

"Spoofing me, if you like that better," said Blake, with unexpected moderation.

"But the idea stuck in my head, all the same——"

"It would!" commented Herries.

"The chap hasn't been caught yet——so far as we've heard. If he's not caught, it's because he's lying awfully low somewhere. He can't be wandering about the country, or he'd have been spotted before this. Now, the bobbies naturally think he ran for it when his plane was smashed, but I've been thinking——"

"What with?"

"I've been thinking," went on Blake, unheeding, "that about the safest place for that Hun to lie low, till the hue and cry was over, would be close to the place where his plane came down——if there was a hiding-place at hand. Later on, very likely, when the hue and cry was over, he would be able to scoot off, and perhaps get in touch with some of the naturalised Germans who are spying for Germany in this country. But while the whole place was hunting for him, he would have to lie low. Well, suppose he skulked about in the mist till night-fall, and then sneaked in over the school wall!"

"Pshaw!"

"Lots of places here where he could lie low," said Blake. "He might have thought of getting into a shed or loft

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 514.

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

If you are unable to obtain this publication regularly, please tell any newsdealer to get it from

Messageries HACHETTE & Co.,
 117, Rue Reaumur,
 PARIS.

or something—or he may know the place. I believe a lot of German airmen know England better than we do, from living here before the war and spying. Well, suppose—"

"Anything amiss with your supposer, Blake?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Oh, shut up a minute! I'm only saying suppose," growled Blake. "Suppose the Hun cad did sneak in, and found a deep corner to hide in—about the last thing the police would think of would be to search a crowded school for him."

"Quite right there!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Yaas, wathah! They may be asses, but not such asses as that!"

"If he found a deep corner somewhere, he could lie low for days without being found or suspected," said Blake. "But there's one thing he would need—food."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom.

"And now we find that somebody was nosing round the house last night, and busting in the pantry window and collar-grub."

"Yes—Trimble!" remarked Herries, with a nod.

"Trimble says it wasn't."

"He would!"

"Might have been Fatty Wynn, of the New House," suggested Dig.

"And it might have been the Hun!" said Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake stared angrily at the hilarious juniors. His suggestion was a startling one, but it did not startle his companions. It only caused them to burst into a roar of laughter.

"Bai Jove! That's weally too wick, Blake," gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Couldn't you think of somethin' a little less steep, deah boy?"

"This beats Taggles' old boots!" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake did not laugh. He frowned wrathfully.

"Well, I think it's possible—in fact, probable—"

"Probable! Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I'm going to search every corner of the place," said Blake grimly. "You fellows can stand here and cackle, if you like."

Blake marched off, his nose in the air. Tom Merry & Co. chortled, but they followed him. Blake on his new trail was quite entertaining, as Monty Lowther remarked.

"Poor old Blake!" sighed Arthur Augustus. "He is wath ovah comin' such a nuckah yestahday, you know—that's why he is playin' the giddy ox now! But give him his head, deah boys!"

And the juniors cheerfully gave Blake his head!

CHAPTER 11.

The Finding of Fritz!

JACK BLAKE'S steps led him in the direction of the old tower, at a considerable distance from the school building. Save by "sporting" fellows who retired to that secluded spot for a smoke, the old tower was seldom entered. It was more than half in ruins. Blake strode into the dilapidated old building with knitted brows.

Possibly it was a desire to wipe out the deed of the previous day that made Blake so determined on his new theory. It was certainly rather steep, and yet it was quite possible, if the escaped Boche had had the cunning and resource to reason the matter out quietly and calmly. Certainly, he was hiding somewhere—and certainly he was not searched for in the school grounds, and nobody

dreamed that he had lingered so near the scene of his disaster. He would probably be safer there than anywhere else—if he was there.

It seemed quite probable to Blake. Perhaps the wish was father to the thought. The robbery of the pantry in the night came to Blake's mind as proof, for the Hun, if he was there, could not live without food. It did not seem like proof to the other fellows, who were pretty well satisfied that Trimble was the guilty party. If the food-thief did not belong to St. Jim's, they surmised that it was some hungry tramp. They followed Blake into the old tower, grinning.

"Pway take care of those steps, deah boy!" chirped Arthur Augustus. "They are wathah wisky!"

Blake paused.

"If he's here, it will be a bit difficult tackling him with our bare hands!" he said slowly.

"My dear chap, if he's here, I'll eat him," said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake snorted, and began to mount the steps. It was a long, spiral flight, that led to the summit of the old tower, and the steps were in a decidedly shabby condition. But Tom Merry & Co. followed in Blake's footsteps, still grinning. The loopholes in the old walls let in a dim, misty light. Blake peered into every room he passed, but there was no sign of Fritz. But, as he had nearly reached the summit of the stairs, there was a sound in the circular room at the top of the tower.

"Hark!" muttered Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Somebody there!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Some chap in want of exercise, should say, to climb all these blessed stairs before brekker!"

"Bai Jove! The brekkah-bell will be goin' in a minute or two!"

"Blow brekker!" snorted Blake.

"Come on!"

"Oh! All right!"

Blake strode up, with knitted brows. There was certainly somebody in the top room of the tower, but who? Fellows sometimes climbed the tower, though seldom; and on a misty winter morning there was no view to tempt a climber. Blake set his teeth as he tramped up to the top step.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

Blake had thought—at least, hoped—that the German airman was hidden within the precincts of St. Jim's. But he stopped, and stood rooted to the stone step at the sudden and startling confirmation of his surmises.

For a burly figure loomed before him—a savage-faced man, in thick garb, with eyes of pale-blue that gleamed and glistened at the intruders.

Blake stood, almost stupefied, for a moment.

"The—the Hun!" he panted.

There was a laugh below on the stairs. Tom Merry & Co. could not see what Blake saw.

"Pile it on!" chuckled Digby.

"Pway, don't try to pull our leg in that ridiculous mannah, Blake!" chided Arthur Augustus. "It is weally too steep, you know!"

"Come on!" yelled Blake desperately.

"Wats!"

The German airman, with a face like a demon, was striding at Blake. He had been discovered, and his hiding-place was a hiding-place no longer. He muttered savage German curses between his teeth as he strode at the junior. He was thinking only of renewed flight now, and a schoolboy was not likely to be able to stop him.

"Help!" shouted Blake, and, with the

courage and determination of a bulldog, he leaped at the burly Boche.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from below.

Crack!

With one sweep of his powerful arm the Prussian swept Blake aside, and the junior rolled and fell on the stone floor. The Hun rushed down the steps, his teeth set, snarling like a wild animal.

"That you, Blake? My hat!"

A yell burst from the juniors on the stairs as the gigantic Boche rushed down on them.

The sight of him astounded them too much for them to be able to move a finger. They could only blink at him, frozen.

The burly ruffian charged through them, scattering them right and left on the narrow stair.

In a twinkling he was through, and speeding down the lower stairs.

Tom Merry staggered up.

"The Hun! Oh, my hat!"

Blake came tearing down.

"You silly idiots! Why didn't you stop him?" he yelled. "After him!"

"Bai Jove! I—I weally—" stuttered Arthur Augustus.

"It's the Hun! After him!"

Tom Merry & Co. rushed after Blake down the stair. It was the Hun, right enough, and they were after him with a vengeance.

But the German airman had a start. He streaked out of the tower like a hunted fox, and ran. Blake & Co. came streaming out after him, yelling.

"The Hun!"

"The Prussian!"

"Stop him!"

"It's Fritz! Stop him!"

There was a roar of voices from all sides. The Boche, uncertain of the way, ran into the quadrangle, where a yell of amazement greeted his appearance.

"Stop him!" roared Blake. "It's the German airman! Kildare—stop him, Kildare!"

Kildare was crossing towards the School House. The breakfast-bell was ringing. He stopped, as if suddenly rooted to the ground, at the sight of the racing Boche, with the frantic juniors tearing on his track.

"Stop him!"

"Stop thief!"

The Hun swerved to dodge Kildare; but the captain of St. Jim's, recovering from his amazement, headed for him. Fritz eluded him, and ran for the gates, with Kildare speeding on his track. From the direction of the New House, Montie of the Sixth came speeding up. Taggles had just opened the gates; the wide road and the open country lay beyond, and the Boche was straining every nerve. Taggles, the porter, stood petrified at the sight. But as the big Boche came sweeping up to the gates, Taggles recovered his presence of mind, and hurled his big bunch of keys at the German.

Click! Crack!

The keys smote Fritz full in his red, furious face, and he reeled. Before he could recover, Kildare and Montie were upon him.

With a roar like that of a wild beast the Boche went down in the grasp of the two powerful Sixth-Formers.

"My heh!" gasped Taggles. "My lonely heh! A blinking 'Un! Jump on 'im!"

The Hun was struggling madly on the ground. Tom Merry & Co. came racing up, and they piled in promptly.

The ruffian had dragged a revolver from his belt, but a kick from Tom Merry struck it from his hand, and the Hun yelled with pain. His fingers had taken most of the kick.

Kildare's knee was on his chest now.

"Surrender, you scoundrel!" he panted.

The Hun still struggled. But there were too many hands on him. He had no chance. A few minutes more and his strength was exhausted, and he lay panting and gasping in the grasp of his captors.

"Got him!" trilled Arthur Augustus. "Got the wascal! Bai Jove, he has nearly flattened my nose! Ow! But we've got him!"

"Hurrah!"

"In Heaven's name, what is this?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, striding on the scene. "Who—who is this man?"

"The Boche, sir!"

"The baby-killer!"

"The dirty Hun!"

"It's Fritz, sir! We've frizzed him!"

"St. ass, watah!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the amazed Housemaster. "Silence, please! Hold that man securely, Kildare! One of you boys fetch a cord from somewhere; he must be tied up! Silence!" rapped out Mr. Railton, as a stream of savage German curses poured from the thick lips of the prisoner. "Silence, you scoundrel!"

The Boche lay muttering.

"How did you find him, Kildare?"

"Suddenly spotted him streaking across the quad, sir! I think these juniors routed him out from somewhere."

"Bless my soul!"

"It was Blake, sir!" said Tom Merry at once. "Blake suspected that he was hidden about here, sir! He guessed that it was Fritz who burgled the pantry——"

Mr. Railton started.

"Ah! Doubtless that was the case. And you, Blake, discovered that the man was hidden here?"

Blake blushed.

It was a great moment for the chief of Study No. 6.

All eyes were upon him.

Half St. Jim's had gathered about the spot, and every eye was fixed upon Jack Blake of the Fourth. Arthur Augustus pushed him towards the Housemaster.

"Buck up, dear boy! Go it!"

"Bravo, Blake!"

"Well, I did spot him, sir!" confessed Blake. "And we routed him out of the old tower, sir! It—it was nothing!"

"It was uncommonly well done, my boy!" said the Housemaster kindly. "You

are responsible for the capture of this dangerous rascal. You have shown great cleverness, Blake, and great credit is due to you!"

"Oh, sir!"

And Mr. Railton shook hands with Blake, filling the cup of his elation to the very brim.

"Three cheers, dear boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

And the cheers rang through St. Jim's from end to end.

The captured Boche went behind barred wire. But he was not soon forgotten at St. Jim's. Study No. 6 plumed themselves on the capture—which was rather cool of three of them, at least. But Blake was forgiving, and in the hour of his triumph he forbore to rub it in. Like a true hero, he bore his blushing honours, thick upon him, with becoming modesty.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"RIVALS IN SPORT!" by Martin Clifford.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"RIVALS IN SPORT!"

By Martin Clifford.

This is a story of the rivalry between the School House and the New House, and it tells of a series of sports contests between them, engineered by a gentleman who for his crime acted as *locum tenens* for Mr. Ratcliff. You could not quite imagine Ratty out of your mind, and a Marathon, and all that sort of thing, could you? But Mr. Grenville is quite another sort of person. One fellow does not like him, however, and the story turns in part on this dislike, and tells how it was overcome. The sports which have been clamouring for another sports yarn should be more than satisfied with this!

FRAGMENTS OF "GEM" HISTORY.

"Miss Priscilla's Peril" told of a visit paid to St. Jim's by Tom Merry's dear old governess and guardian, who, for all her queer notions, is quite one of the best. "The Terrible Three's Test" was a sequel to this, and chronicled a visit paid to Huckleberry Heath by the Terrible Three, the chums of Study No. 6, Skimmy, and Kanagaroo. "The D'Arcy Cup" was a water-polo story. A little later the chums visited Paris. Then there was "Christmas, 1909," "Double Number—" "The Terrible Three's Christmas Party"—in France, this, and full of exciting happenings at the Chateau Cernay. "Skimpole the Third" told of the rival inventions of Skimmy and Bernard Glyn, and was full of mirth and merriment. In "Honour Bright" and "The Swell of the Circus" was told the story of Arthur Augustus' bolt from the school. "Glyn's Great Wheeze" was a mechanical howler. "Raiding the Raiders" told of a schoolboy kleptomaniac. "The Scallawag of the Third" was a Wally yarn. The next big feature was the introduction of Lumley-Lumley. We do hear much of him in these days, but for a time he played a very prominent part in the stories. The title of that in which he made his appearance—"A Rank Outsider"—tells of a story of which he was part it was. Among other yarns dealing with him were "Lumley-Lumley's Luck," "The Outsider's Chance," "Lumley-Lumley's Rival," "Lumley-Lumley's Return," and "A Shadow in the School." The "rank outsider," having redeemed himself, lay at the point of death in that. Afterwards he was away for some time and bore "Lumley-Lumley's Return" came. "Levison the Schoolboy Detective," which appeared in a Christmas Number, "Tom Merry's Fix," "The Search for Tom Merry," "Tom Merry's Resolve," "Mr. Merry," and "Tom Merry's Return," to St. Jim's, a series of titles which suggest the stories to which they belong—a fine series.

To attempt is made here to tell of every story. Only some of the more striking ones are indicated, especially those in which

characters who have since become popular first appeared.

In this connection I may mention some queer mistakes which are constantly being made by readers who send in back number notices. Most of those I can recall at the moment are "Magnet" ones; but they will serve as illustrations of what I mean.

Two stories frequently asked for are "Billy Bunter's Love Affair" and "Billy Bunter's 'Order'." "Order" is a story of many such stories! "Surprising the School" was the title of that in which Bunter first met Miss Cora Quelch. "The Great Postal Order Conspiracy" is doubtless the other one meant. Then "A Race to the Tuckshop," which, I fear, appeals to the instinct of greed, is often asked for; and the other day a boy correspondent said that he had read the "Magnet" since that fine story "The Race to the Tuckshop." But there was no such story, and the game (after the style of the old fox and geese, obstacle races, and other games with double ends) appeared in the GEM, not in the "Magnet."

By the way, it would be possible to insert more back number notices if senders would give numbers of the paper wanted instead of titles of stories. A dozen notices can be got into a line; a dozen titles make a long notice. But I observe that my readers, for all I have said on the subject, are disposed to act as though "Hungerford" and "Gladstone" were unlimited. On the contrary, it is very limited indeed, and it may be months in some cases before room can be found for any particular notice!

NOTICES.

Back Numbers, etc., Wanted.

By A. E. Hamblin, 4, Prospect Road, Hungerford, Christmas Number of "Magnet," 1914. Any other dates, numbers of "Magnet" or GEM—offers ad. each.

By Cyril L. Miller, 58, Capri Road, near Crofton—"The Snob of the Remove." "The Hungry Hunter," "The Hero of Highgate," "Reign of Terror," "Fall of the Fifth," "Photo Prize," "Patriotic Schoolmaster," "Match With St. Jim's," "Pomsony's Plot," and "Bunter's Day Out." Offers 2d. each.

By James Stewart, 33, Mount Street, Glasgow—"Talbot's Christmas," "Figgins' Flag-Pudding," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Boy Without a Name," and any stories in which the Boulder plays a principal part.

By Laurence Connolly, Gurnea, Dublin, Kilsheelan, Clonmel, Co. Waterford—"Magnet," Nos. 248-260, and "Shunned by His Return."

By W. Thacker, 37, Queen Street, Lincoln—"GEM" and "Magnet" issues before Christmas, 1914. Please state price.

By A. Lee, The Grange, Utley, near Keighley—"Figgins' Flag-Pudding," "Bob Cherry's

Barring-Out," "Schoolboys Never Shall be Slaves," "Bunter the Boxer," "Bully's Chance," "Wun Lum's Secret," "Fishy's Egg Agency," "Great Postal Order Conspiracy," "Ad. each offered." "Worst House at Ravenhill" and "The Black House" ad. each offered. "Slackers' Eleven," "Magnet," and "Boys' Friend"—good prices given.

By Alexander MacIntyre, 18, Windsor Street, Glasgow, N.W.—"GEM Christmas Nos. 124 to 1914; also all the 'Rivals and Chums' and 'School and Sport'—clean."

By Reginald Hirst, 9, Victoria Terrace, Dudley, 1/- each offered for "Great Postal Order Conspiracy," "Jumbo's Marvelous Mixture," "Slackers' Eleven," "Bunter's Bust-Up," "Fall of Fifth," "Figgins' Polly," "Figgins' Flag-Pudding," "School and Sport," "Boy Without a Name," "Rivals and Chums," "After Lights Out," and "Cousin Ethel's School-days."

Football—Matches Wanted by:

ST. ALPHONSUS JUNIORS—15-5 mile radius.—St. Lewis, 129, Great Morrey Street, Kirkdale, Liverpool.

PARK UNITED—16-4 mile radius—ground, Tottenham Marshes.—Wheatman, 211, Park Lane, Tottenham, N. 17.

CLAREDALE JUNIORS—13-15-5 mile radius.—F. Carrington, 4, North Street, Barking.

MCCLENT UNITED—15-17-5 mile radius.—A. T. Ross, 46, Brunswick Street, Stamford Street, S.E.

WATSON'S ATHLETIC—17-15-5 mile radius.—C. Weatherley, 5, Queen's Road, St. John's Wood, N.W. 8.

SILVER STAR—16-11-5 mile radius.—H. L. Lynder, 14, Burver Road, New Barnet.

CARLTON RANGERS—15-7 mile radius.—C. Lane, Westholme, Geddington, Notts.

ALDERSON'S JUNIORS—15-16-5 mile radius.—E. Hulme, 160, Lawrence Road, Watney, Liverpool.

CLAPHAM ATHLETIC—16-6 mile radius.—F. Tajor, 5, Jeffreys Road, Clapham, S.W. 4.

BRIXTON RANGERS—15-16 mile radius—four good players also wanted.—F. J. Lees, 7, Suffolk House, Rushcroft Road, Brixton, S.W.

CITY OF LONDON ELECTRIC LIGHTING CO. (Southwark)—15—anywhere in London.—Sec. 56, City Road, London, E.C. 2.

HAMILTON ATHLETIC—16-5 mile radius.—Thos. Bond, 67, Scott Street, Warrington.

T. Welsh, 13, Monmouth Street, Salford, Manchester, wants to hear of two places in team within 3 miles—any position except goal.

Upon Editor



THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA

Our Great New Serial Story.



THE CHIEF CHARACTERS OF THE STORY.

PHILIP DERWENT	The twins from Tasmania—Philip (Flip) at Highcliffe, Phillips (Flap) at Cliff House.
PHILIPPA DERWENT	The leader of the Highcliffe nuts.
PONSONBY	One of the nuts, and Flip's enemy.
GADSBY	Another of them—an empty-headed swell—hand in glove with Gadsby.
VAVABOUR	Yet another—sulkily—disposed to the Gadsby faction.
MONSON MINOR	Two more of the nuts—chums of Flip's—they share No. 6 Study with him.
MERTON	Captain of the Fourth at Highcliffe—a fine fellow.
TUNSTALL	His chum, known as the Caterpillar.
FRANK COURTENAY	For further information see the "Magnet"
RUPERT DE COURCY	Cliff House girls and friends of Flip.
THE GREYFRIARS FELLOWS	A little, red-headed Cliff House junior—knows Merton at home.
MARJORIE HAZLEDENE	Knows the girls would rather not have Ponsonby as one of their guests, and Gadsby manages that the posterity of her letter, in which she says this, reaches Pon instead of Flip. Pon contrives to persuade Flap that Flip has shown him this, and gets on something like a friendly footing with her. On the way back he and Merton quarrel.
CLARA TREVELYN	(Now read on.)
PHYLLIS HOWELL	
MOLLY GRAY	

Ponsonby insists on being one of a Highcliffe party which is going to tea at Cliff House. Flap lets her brother know that the girls would rather not have Ponsonby as one of their guests, and Gadsby manages that the posterity of her letter, in which she says this, reaches Pon instead of Flip. Pon contrives to persuade Flap that Flip has shown him this, and gets on something like a friendly footing with her. On the way back he and Merton quarrel.

(Now read on.)

Flip the Peacemaker.

"G O sly, Derwent!" said Pon warmly. "We're good chums, but you can't lead me by the nose, you know."

"Never," thought, replied Flip. "But it ain't because it's not big enough, Pon, old scout. There's nothing of the Bunter button kind about your illustrious conk."

Tunstall laughed, Merton didn't; he did not feel like laughing.

Pon did not know whether to be angry or not. But, on the whole, he decided that it was best not.

It was no good trying to treat Flip as he treated Gadsby and Vav and Monson. Flip did not take orders. He was an equal, not an understrapper.

Pon was not even quite sure that Flip regarded him as a leader.

Certainly he never accepted leadership if it ran counter to his own notions.

And yet Pon had a big hold on him. And Pon knew it, and meant to keep it.

"This ain't any dashed time for jokin', old man," he said. "Merton's insulted me, I'm going to put him through it for that."

"If you can't," growled Merton.

"I don't see that he insulted you, old chap. You offered no opinion, that's all. For the matter of that, neither 'tin nor I agree with you. You might as well say we've insulted you."

"Oh, by god! Perhaps you didn't hear the chap call me a cad; and before that Greyfriars crew, too!"

"Well, he didn't mean it."

"I'm not going to call you a liar, Flip. I know you could lick me, though that's not the only reason. But you're not tellin' the siddy truth now, by Jupiter! I did mean it, an' I stick to it!"

"There's nothing more to be said, Derwent; you must see that by gad! Perhaps Merton will apologise after I've thrashed him within an inch of his life!" snarled Pon.

"An' perhaps Merton won't!" said Algy bitterly. "That's the not fashion, I know; but I'm sick to death of your nutty gang, Ponsonby! What do you amount to, anyway? You're funks, takin' the thing largely, though you can show a spark of spirit once in a way. You're no better than card-sharps. You'd be bullies if you got a chance. You loaf an' swear an' slack an' brag, an' think you're the goods. Well,

you're not! I can see that now, an' in future I've done with you!"

"That's where you're off it, Merton! You haven't anywhere near done with me yet!" said Pon, in tones of concentrated venom.

"I'll keep you at arm's-length, anyway, by Jupiter!"

"But don't fancy you'll do a dashed lot of that, d'you know? I rather think I can get inside your guard, dear boy!"

Was there a double meaning in Pon's speech?

Tunstall thought so. Merton thought so. But Flip failed to see it.

"Makin' up your great mind, Tun?" sneered Pon.

"No! It's made up. I stick by Algy. We've been chums too long to go different ways now. You an' I have been pally, too, Pon. I'm not goin' to say much about your little ways. I don't know that mine have been a heap better. But I'm with Algy, an' I'm dashed well goin' to second the boulder when he starts in to thrash you. An' I hope he'll make a good job of it, by Jupiter!"

The four stood there in the darkness that made each of them see the others' faces as mere white blurs, and anger raged in three hearts of the four. Tunstall was hardly less hot than Merton, though he had taken longer to get up steam.

But there was no anger in Flip's heart; only dismay and something that would have been consternation had he been less plucky and less hopeful.

He did not want to quarrel with any of them. He liked Frank Courtney and the Caterpillar, but not as he liked Merton and Tunstall.

Frank and De Courcy might have been his chums. But these two were his chums, tried and true. It was but a short time, but in it they had shared grub and jokes, chuckled at Cocky's sayings in friendly concert, been rude to one another with impunity, as only good chums can afford to be—in short, had come very close together.

But there was Pon!

Flip could not see Pon as those two seemed suddenly to have come to see him.

He did not believe that Pon would cheat at cards. Pon gambled, of course, but there was a long way from gambling to cheating, so Flip thought.

And a funk! Why, the thing was absurd!

Flip could have felt angry with Merton for that taunt.

Who had fought harder than Pon in the battle on the sands? No funk would have touched him that!

Who was it that had jumped after Flip when Gadsby had hurled him and Cocky out of a moving train?

Why, Pon, those fellow Merton called a funk!

In his cock-sureness Flip forgot how much more Merton knew of Pon than he did. Pon could have told tales of Merton that Flip would have found it hard to credit, but the tales Merton could have told of Pon would have made Flip gasp with amazement.

For quite a minute they stood there in the darkness without a word.

It had come to the parting of the ways. Which way would Flip take?

There was no double-dealing in his mind, but he wanted to take both ways.

To him it seemed but a temporary split that would soon be over.

But Merton and Tunstall knew it for something very different from that.

Pon would never forgive them, and they did not want Pon's forgiveness.

It was Tunstall, less shocked by rage than Pon or Merton, who spoke.

"Algy an' I are goin' on or waitin' back a bit—just which suits Ponsonby. He can take his choice. What's yours, Flip?"

The question was friendly for all its abruptness; and Flip took it as friendly, and did not realise how much hung on his answer.

"Go on, you two silly asses!" he said lightly. "I'll trot along with Pon, and within a couple of hours I shall expect to see you shake hands with him."

"You won't see that," said Tunstall. "Good-bye, Derwent!" was all Merton said.

But the simple words had a queer, hollow ring in Flip's ears.

What did the silly clump say "Good-bye" for? It wasn't any sort of thing to say at such a time to a pal whom you would be meeting again within twenty minutes.

Into the darkness Tunstall and Merton vanished, and Flip was left alone with Pon. "That does it!" said Pon. "I'm sorry in a way, but more for your sake than my own. Flip!"

"Can't see it. 'Tain't me that's going to put up my fists with Algy. Not that I should

tunk him, of course. But I can tell you he's come on above a bit lately. There's no duffer about Algy now."

"It means they'll out you in future, unless you cut me," by gad!"

"But! There isn't going to be any foolery of that sort. See here, Pon, you took a tunc they didn't like. Come to that, I wasn't gone on it myself. I know it was only your silly way—you don't mind compliments, do you? And Merton called you a cad. He may have meant it at the moment, but he won't when he's cooled off."

"But I shall dashed well mean what I said to him!"

"Thrashing him within an inch of his life—ch? Not be potty, old chap! You haven't got it in you to do it. You're the better man of the two, I fancy, but not by near such long chalks as that comes to."

"You'll see, by gad!"

"No, I shan't! You two are not going to fight if I can help it."

"You can't help it, Derwent!"

"Can't I? We're pretty good pals, Pon. Won't you do something for me? I suppose I'm too much to ask Algy to apologise; but if he meets you next time the same as usual—"

"He'll get a thick ear on the spot, that's what I shan't! I don't want any more to do with him except for giving him the hiding he's asked for!"

"Oh, hang it all! There's something behind all this. Surely you and Algy haven't gone and got spongy on the same girl? Being spongy is not any way; and if Algy's taken with the complaint, I'm dashed if I know which girl it's with. And as for you—why, I'd never have believed it of you, Pon!"

"It's not that, Flin. It's—dashed if I like to tell you!"

Pon's crafty mind had seized on a new device.

He had used that postscript to get on friendlier terms with Flap.

Why should he not use it to embroil Flap with Merton?

He felt sure now that it was Merton who had put it on the mantel-shelf for him to see. Had Merton had been so much more bitter than Tunstall—until the last moment, anyway. Tunstall then had been nothing undecided about Fred.

Tunstall then had had always had more decision than Merton.

Pon was sure Flap had not been guilty. He never even thought of Gadsby, the real culprit.

"Oh, hang it! Speak out, man!"

It was a dashed, dirty, low trick of Merton's, letting me see that P.S. to your sister's name—married Pon.

"What are you drivelling about? What note? What P.S.?"

"The note your sister wrote you about our visit this evening, of course."

"But there wasn't any P.S. to that, duffer!"

"You're wrong. There was. It's in my pocket now!"

"But—My word, Pon, that's a bit too blunt! I can't follow it."

"I thought you were about to say that you can't understand my havin' it. But I can easily explain that. An' I think I've a right to fasten on to it, considerin' I found it stuck on to the mantel-shelf in my den."

"But there wasn't any P.S. to that, Flin!"

The letter was on one side of a half-sheet of paper. Nothing round the corner at all."

"You may be satisfied now that there wasn't. You won't be seeing it. I tell you, as soon as we get in, I'll put an end to all this schemin' an' plottin', by gad!"

Pon was quite virtuously indignant about the scheming and plotting, such low deeds being, of course, out of the line of Cecil Ponsbury.

"But it ticks me to the wide, Pon. Who could have put it there? And how could anyone have got a post-script from a letter that I'll swear hadn't one when I read it?"

"I think I can explain that. I tell you, I dashed well put my finger on the sneakin' hound who played us both false!"

"If you mean Merton or Tun, all I've got to say is that I wouldn't believe it of either of them. All Highcliffe swore blind they were guilty. They couldn't be such cad."

"You're too innocent, old chap. You don't know what cads fellows can be."

That was true—in which it differed from most of the things Pon said.

But Flap was to learn, though not through Merton, that through Tun was the nightmen-ent to come.

No Hope of Peace.

"Well, did you say 'Good-bye!' to Flap, Algy?" asked Tunstall, as they walked on together.

"Because it is 'Good-bye,'"

"Oh, rot!"

"You'll see."

"He shan't see that, Algy."

"Bet you you will! Pon's got him; there's no help for it. I don't know that Pon can make a motor of him. Flap's well, you know he's not a Gaddy or a Vav."

He's a dashed long way to go before he could get down to their level; not bein' dirt, like them."

"He never could, old chap!"

"I hope he won't. I'm not the praisin' sort, but I could almost pray for that. But things will never be the same again, Tun. Study Number Six is busted. Cocky's gone, an' Flap will go, next. He has a right to his choice. I'm not grumblin'."

"You don't know that he has chosen. I'm sure he didn't mean that."

"An' I think I did, Tun. But if he hasn't he will. Trust Pon for that!"

"By Jupiter, I wish—I wish—"

"What, old fellow?"

"That we'd do up chummy with him; that Pon never had. Flippy would have fitted in with Courtenay an' De Courcy like—oh, like anything—an' he'd have been all right—how the dickens!"

"Well, we haven't done him much harm, Tun, have we? I don't seem to remember it, anyway. He's kind of improved us a little bit without any of us thinkin' about it. I see that now."

"But Vav's got no kid. After all, he may shake Pon off. But he's shaken us up already, by Jupiter!"

"If he has—"

"No, I don't see, Tun!"

"Yes, there is. But if he has, it can't be helped, an' we owe him no grudge. We'll peg along somehow. But what a dashed rotten highcliffe he's Algy!"

They had no thought of throwing in their lot with the Courtenay brigade. And that was not mere pride. To both of them it seemed plain that they had not the right to do so.

Pon and Gaddy and Vav and Monson—they could part company with those four and never regret it. Drury and Blades and the rest of the nuts—well, they meant precious little to them. They could ever mean much, and Drury was sure to be on Pon's side, they thought.

They were silent all the rest of the way. But they walked arm in arm, and perhaps they had been better chums than that.

They had lost for ever the fellow who had drawn them closer together.

But they settled down to it grimly.

Meanwhile Flap and Pon had reached the school, and had gone straight to Pon's study. Gadsby and Vavavav had started prep.

But they looked up with interest as the two came in.

"You chaps had better clear out!" growled Pon.

"I'm dashed if that ain't pretty cold!" returned Gadsby. "This is as much our study as yours, Pon; an' if you want to talk secrets with Derwent, you can go an' do it in Number Six, by gad!"

"Vavavav," said Vavavav, though a trifle tremulously. "Bucking against Pon did not suit the dandy Adolphus."

As a matter of fact, we can't," said Flap civilly.

"Well, that ain't our dashed affair! We don't see bein' turned out as if we were nobodies!"

"Pon was along to the Common-room, Flap," suggested Pon. "There won't be anyone there; an' that little bouncer Mobby won't interfere with me—confound him!"

"I don't see much for that. It don't suit me to be protected from Mobby by anyone—not even you, Pon. And if he caught me in prep time he'd have a handle against me at once."

"Oh, dash it all! Look here, Gaddy an' Vav can be trusted. I'll answer for them. Let's thrash the bizney out here."

Flap did not like that either. But to refuse would have looked as if he shirked an explanation.

He nodded.

Pon took a half-sheet of paper out of his pocket-book, and handed it to him.

Flap glanced at it. It was easy to take in those few words at a glance.

They were in Flap's writing beyond all question. And it was not at all to be wondered at that they had incensed Pon. It is

not a nice thing to gather in this mysterious way that one is complimentary to not persons grata in a quarter where one would like to be so.

"There isn't any dashed doubt about that—what?" said Pon.

"No, there isn't any doubt," answered Flap.

He was looking very keenly at the carefully-cut edge of the paper. And Gadsby, out of the corner of an eye, watched him.

Vavavav was, of course, in the dark. But Gadsby knew what was going on, and he did not feel too comfortable.

It was not working out quite as he had expected, either. Pon and Flap still seemed friendly.

"Only one chap could have got hold of that, y'know," Pon said.

"I don't see that," Flap answered. "The letter was tampered with before it reached me. I know that. You don't. You've got no proof that it wasn't me."

"Rot! I don't need any proof of that, Flap. You wouldn't do such a dashed dirty thing!"

Gadsby scowled. He could not help it. Simple faith in the suspicious Pon was surely enough to make any plotter scowl. Who would have dreamed that he would take it this way?

"I certainly wouldn't," answered Flap slowly. "But no more would other fellows. There's no need to draw names, Pon."

Neither had noticed Gadsby's scowl. They were looking straight at one another. Pon believed Merton guilty, and his eyes were not shy, as they usually were.

But Vavavav had his eyes on Gadsby, and he saw something that made him feel sure that Gaddy knew more than he did about this affair.

"Oh, don't there, then! I'm not goin' to spare the rotter! Merton did it!"

Gaddy breathed a sigh of relief. So Merton had done it! That proved Gaddy hadn't—

which suited Gaddy very well indeed. There was an error in the proof somewhere, but Gaddy did not mind about that.

"I'm not going to listen to that sort of thing before these fellows," snapped Flap, lowering his temper for the first time that evening.

"It's no odds, dash it all! The whole Form, if not the whole school, will know! I'm not goin' to keep it dark, by gad!"

"You're better, every way," Flap said, beginning his lecture. "I shouldn't say myself that it's the kind of thing that any fellow has a right to drag out for all Highcliffe to chuckle over. It's not fair to—other friends of ours. And—well, see here, Pon, you don't get much change out of it if it is made public, do you?"

Pon's eyes flashed. He knew what Flap meant. It would not be pleasant for him that Highcliffe should know of his friend's affair, himself into the company of girls who said plainly they didn't want him.

"If I don't say anything about it, Merton will, hang him!" he snarled.

"Merton won't. Why on earth should he?"

"He was dead against my goin'. Dashed rotten jealousy, of course—"

But he had been a bit out of place, too, all things considered," Flap said.

That was a direct hit. But Pon chose to disregard it.

"Merton was dead against my goin'. He wanted to stop me, dash him! Pon said doggedly. "So he—"

"Oh, drop that! It wasn't Merton, and you simply haven't a scrap of proof against him."

"It was either Merton or Tunstall," Pon persisted. "I know which—the chap gave himself away!"

"Rot!"

"It must have been one of them—"

"It couldn't have been. It might have been me—or Gadsby here—"

"Keep your seat! You don't know it," snarled Gaddy, going crimson.

"Or Vavavav," went on Flap, faying no heed to Gadsby. "Or—oh, anybody! Anybody that's mean enough—but Merton ain't!"

"Do you mean I am?" snapped Gadsby. Flap looked at him critically.

"I don't know. I shouldn't think so," he said slowly. "But I don't think better than I'd believe Algy was. I never saw him kick a chap's shins in a fight, anyway!"

"I've known him do worse things than that!"

"Oh, absolutely!" said Vavavav.

"Shut up, you two!" cried Pon fiercely. "This is no affair of yours. Flippy—"

"I've had enough of Derwent's dashed

insolence? Either he goes out of this room, or I go!

It was not a very awful threat. It made Flip smile.

"There's the door, Gaddy," said Pon, and Flip's smile became a broad grin.

But he was not grinning when he made his way to No. 6 a few minutes later.

That was not because of Gaddy. The wrath of Gaddy was merely amusing. It had not occurred to Flip that behind Gaddy's wrath lay fear—fear of being found out!

It was because of Pon. There was no hope of making peace—that was certain.

Pon was taking this hard. His self-pride had been wounded, and he meant to avenge the wounds upon Merton.

Is this the End?

TUNSTALL looked up when Flip came in. But Merton went on with his prep.

"Pon still wantin' to kill Algy?" asked Tunstall, trying to speak lightly.

"That's just about what he does seem to want," answered Flip.

"He's wakin' me up, too—if he can!" growled Merton. "Two can play at t' game, by Jupiter!"

"But it isn't worth playing, Algy," said Flip quietly.

Now Merton looked up.

"This is a nasty affair, you chaps," said Flip, plunging into the matter without waiting to pick his words. "Pon's raving about it and I won't say that he hasn't got some show of excuse."

"Don't see it," said Tunstall bluntly.

"Pon's been called a cad often enough. Pon is not a cad, come to that. It don't make any more pleasant for him to get it checked in his face, I dare say; but—"

"It's not that," said Flip.

"What on earth is it, then?" demanded Tunstall. "That's what Pon was on his ear about, y'know."

"Not really. He didn't like it, of course. But there was something behind."

"I guessed if he understood, Flip?"

"You wouldn't, Tun. You haven't the clue. It's about the post-script to my sister's letter."

"Hang it all, Merton isn't responsible for the anyway!"

"Didn't even know there was a postscript," said Merton, looking puzzled. "You showed us the letter—there wasn't anything private in it."

"There wasn't any postscript, by Jupiter!" said Tunstall. "I could swear to that. I turned it over. Half-sheet of paper—"

"The P.S. was on the other half," said Flip.

"But we didn't know there was another half."

"I didn't till just now, Tun. Then Pon showed it to me."

"Dash it, old scout, don't talk riddles! How could Pon—"

"Especially when you opened the letter when you saw Pon came up a little."

"I checked it across to you, if you remember, an' said: 'Miss Prim's cried off, I'll bet!'"

Involuntarily Flip frowned. It had been so; and to anyone with faith less strong than his, it might have seemed a suspicious circumstance.

Beyond all dispute Merton had handled the letter before it came into his hands. There was nothing to prove that he had not done what Ponsonby accused him of having done.

Nothing at all! But Flip asked for no proof. Merton would have done it. He knew that. That was good enough for him.

"Well, there was a P.S.," he said. "Pon has it. Some rotter got it, and stuck it up on his mantelshelf."

"But what in the wide world for?" asked Tunstall. "You sent a letter to you hadn't anything to do with Pon."

Flip grinned. He would much have preferred that Pon should not have seen that P.S. But he could not help seeing the humorous side of the matter.

It was a nasty shock to the elegant and fascinating Pon to get so very plain a hint that he wasn't wanted.

"But it had to be," he said. "Flip—of course, she never dreamed he would see it—told me that the girls didn't cotton to Pon, and would much sooner we brought Drury, or anyone else, instead."

"Who?" said Tunstall. "I wonder Pon was mad?" said Tunstall. But he, too, could not help cringing.

Merton's face was still grave.

"You're sure it was your sister's writin', Derwent?" he said.

"Yes, started."

"You don't mean that—Oh, come off it, Algy! That's too thick! Pon would never—"

"Never what? I didn't suggest that Pon had done anything!"

"You were going to, though, if I hadn't clipped in."

"Well, what do you think I meant?"

"You thought like Merton's tone. It was rather hostile."

"You know what you meant. I'm not guessing riddles," he said.

"What did you mean, then?"

"That rather cornered Flip, and he felt that he was being cornered unfairly. He began to speak with less coolness."

"I'm not in any sort of temper to be cross-examined," he said.

"By Jupiter, d'you think I am?" snapped Merton.

Tunstall tried to fill the growing breach.

"You too jump down each other's throats, you two asses," he said. "I know what you both mean; an' I s'pose Algy believes it. An' I know Flip don't. I don't either. An' why not? Because the thing ain't sense. Whatever Pon might forge, he wouldn't forge that particular screw. He's not a lunatic—give the boulder credit for that much!"

"You've no dashed right to suggest that he'd forged anything at all! It's rotten thing to say, Tunstall," said Flip hotly.

Tunstall groaned. It was all no use, he thought. The trouble was that Flip did not know Pon at all, but was quite sure he knew him well. The other two did know Pon; but anything they told about him would only be fuel to the fire of Flip's rising anger.

He would think they were liars and slanderers! Merton's face went pale. A new thought had seized him.

"Derwent," he said, and all the friendly faces had gone out of his tones now. "You said Tunstall hadn't the clue. Do you mean that I—"

"Great Scott, no! What an ass you are!" snapped Flip. "I don't go about accusing my pals of dirty tricks!"

"You're just a rotter if they do dirty tricks, and that's all there is to it!"

"You mean—"

"Just what I say!"

"You mean you're fed up with us," put in Tunstall. "He had been into Merton's speech that Flip had broken."

"He means more than that! He means that I—"

"Oh, chuck it, Algy! Derwent may be an ass, but he isn't an ass of that size!"

"But I might have done it. I handled the letter first."

"What's that to do with it?" snapped Flip.

"When I want to accuse you of anything I shan't hint at it. I shall speak out straight. I don't any more believe you'd play a trick like that than I do that Pon would be guilty of the sort of thing you're chucking at him."

"If you faith in me hasn't any better foundation than your faith in Pon, I don't regret the whole problem. Gaddy was right!" said Merton fiercely.

And Tunstall could understand that. But for the life of Flip he couldn't.

They were all his pals—Pon and Algy and Tun. He had them all for faith. That was his simple creed. He might believe too easily; but it came hard on him when two of them were in direct conflict, and both could not be right.

He saw but one solution. They must be mistaken, both of them.

Unfortunately that was a long way from solving the whole problem. Gaddy was the real answer to the equation. But Flip never even thought of Gaddy in connection with it. He was slow to think evil of anyone.

"I can't understand you, Merton," he said.

"I'm as though you wanted to pick a quarrel with me because I don't care to throw over you, seems to me. Well, I think that's pretty rotten!"

"When you know Pon—"

"Hang it all, Tunstall, it wasn't yesterday I was friendly with him, was it? You fellows didn't warn me before that he was such a bad lot as you say he is now. How can you expect me to believe it now?"

"I don't care a hape whether you believe it or not," replied Merton.

But he did. Both he and Tunstall were regretting that things had been so that they had found it impossible to choke the growing friendship between those two.

"All right," said Flip. "I'll clear out of here."

In silence he gathered together the books which he needed for his prep work. In silence he went.

"We've driven him into Pon's arms, by Jupiter!" said Tunstall bitterly.

But the address was not for Merton. Even as he spoke Fred Tunstall's hand dropped on the shoulder of him who was an older clown than Flip, after all!

Merton's face was buried in his hands. He sat motionless.

The same thought was in the minds of them both.

Was this the end?

Fighting it Out.

IN the dim light of a winter's morning Merton and Ponsonby faced each other in the gymnasium.

Neither had wanted to delay the fight; but it was Tunstall who had suggested, on Merton's behalf, that it should take place before breakfast.

Monson minor, whom Pon had chosen to second him—another fellow had refused—had demurred at first. It was a bit too tight, fighting without gloves before brekker, he said. A chap couldn't be expected to stand that.

But Tunstall had retorted that Merton reckoned himself fit to stand all that Pon could give him before brekker or at any other time; and when Pon heard that from Monson he agreed.

Merton glanced round.

He was looking for a face that was not there.

Flip was absent. It was not easy to stay away; but he had made up his mind that it was best.

He had not gone to Pon's study the night before, as Merton and Tunstall had thought. He had gone down to the cold Form-room; and when Mr. Mobbs had driven him out of that, under the pretext that light must not be wasted, he had taken refuge in Study No. 1.

There he had waited, and Monson made him welcome and asked no questions.

Smithson and Yates had looked in from No. 2. They had been surprised to see Flip there, but could not make out anything that—

But just before bedtime Pon had found Flip, and had asked him to be his second.

"Can't!" was Flip's brusque reply.

"Then you've promised the other chap, by gad!"

"I haven't." "I'm not going to be there. The whole thing's rot, and if you can't see it I can't."

Flip was all. Pon did not like it; but that could not be helped.

Not many were there. The nuts were in full force; but at the start there was only a sprinkling of the rival section of the Form, and the only senior present was Monson major, who had been asked to referee.

Merton looked pale, but very resolute. He had slept little. But it was no dread of Pon that made him so.

Pon was very much his usual self. He might not have been if he had properly realised what he was up against.

But Pon was not a man to come to see that Merton was hardly the lazy slacker of old. He had bucked up, especially since the fight with Greyfriars, and Flip had given him boxing hints that were to stand him in good stead.

"Five to one on Pon!" said Gaddy, leaning.

"Ten to one," amended Vavasour.

"Don't you think Vav's quids?" answered Drury unexpectedly.

"Oh, I say, Drury, you ain't battin' against old Pon, are you?" asked Vavasour, who had not expected this.

"What you expect someone to, didn't you, you dashed fathead? An' you couldn't have counted on Yates or Smithson or Benson—they're too jelly precise! An' ten to one on that sort of thing sportsmen bound to catch at when it's offered here. You don't get ten to one in a two-horse race every day in the week!"

"Anybody who expects you wanted Pon to be beaten," growled Gaddy.

"Dare say I shall when Vav's booked my bet," replied Drury coolly. "Shall we say twice, Vav? Or three times? Thirty quids would be a pretty little whack, an' if Pon should pull it off—well, I've got three to pay with."

(To be continued next week.)