

SPLENDID CHRISTMAS EXTRA!

The

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LIBRARY

20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

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DEFEAT OF GORDON GAY & CO.

(A Stirring Incident from the Magnificent Long Complete School Story inside.)

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

Half-a-crown is paid for all contributions printed on this page.

AT THE BAZAAR.

As a young man was passing a stall at a bazaar the stallholder asked him to buy a cigarette-holder. "No, thank you; I don't smoke," said the young man. "Then buy this penwiper." "I never use one." "Then at least have a box of chocolates." "I don't eat sweets." But the lady was not beaten. "Sir," she said firmly, "will you buy this cake of soap?" He bought it.—E. Hussey, King Street, Colyton, Devon.

VERY TRYING.

Mr. Jones was chopping firewood in the yard, when a piece of wood hit him in the eye and did not improve his temper. At that same moment Mrs. Jones appeared in the doorway. "Oh, John," she said, "are you chopping sticks?" "No!" replied the exasperated husband. "What should make you think that? I am in the drawing-room playing the piano!"—A. G. Wilding, 6, Lausdowne Gardens, Jesmond, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

CERTAIN OF IT.

Old Lady (standing in the middle of the tram track): "Where do I catch the car, my man?" "In the small of your back if you stand there, ma'am."—Clifford Webb, 112, Richmond Street, Barton Hill, Bristol.

THE DISASTER.

Mother: "What are you hitting your little brother for, Willie?" Willie: "Well, you see, mother, Johnny drank all the ink, and now he won't eat any blotting-paper."—J. K. Dugdale, 195, Bolton Road, Pendleton, Manchester.

DEEPER AND DEEPER.

A professional violinist went to assist an amateur orchestra in a country town. During a break in the performance, the violinist said to a flautist: "I don't reckon much of your soloist. Her time is not good and her voice is weak." "She is my sister," said the flautist. "Oh, well," said the violinist, trying to modify matters, "I dare say the conductor is a little to blame. I don't think he has his hand under proper control. And the bald-headed fellow over there, playing the double bass, plays far too loud—almost drowned the singer's voice." The flautist looked grim. "The conductor is my brother," he said, "and the gentleman playing the double bass is my father." Then the band played again.—Jack Hackett, 12, Wellington Terrace, Morecambe, Lancs.

SARCASM.

Staggering along the street shouldering a grandfather clock, a man collided with a neighbour, who, when recognised, asked if the other were moving. The clock-carrier replied: "Moving? No! We've got no matches at our house. I am carrying this to the nearest lamp so that I can see the time!"—Arthur A. Willson, c.o. F. D. Huntington, Limited, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire.

A SHARP RETORT.

An American and an Irishman happened to be riding past a gallows. "Where would you be," asked Jonathan, "if the gallows had its due?" "Riding alone, I suppose," said his companion.—Miss O. Laskey, 33, Edithua Street, Stockwell, S.W. 9.

NOTHING.

A farmer paid a visit to a country school, and the teacher, wishing to show the smartness of his pupils, told the farmer that he was at liberty to ask the boys any question he wished. "Well, boys," said the visitor, "can any of you tell me the meaning of the word 'Nothing'?" "Yes," replied a small boy, who knew the farmer, having had dealings with him, "it's what a farmer gives a boy for holding a horse."—W. Martin, Millbrook Farm, Murcott, nr. Broadway, Worcs.

HOW HE DID IT.

Two men were walking down a London street when they met a small boy who looked as though he had not been washed for a week. "How old are you, sonny?" asked one. "Seven," replied sonny. "Surely you are more than seven?" said the questioner. The boy shook his head, and the man who had expressed astonishment turned to his friend. "Do you think it possible that the youngster could have got so dirty in seven years?"—E. Bateman, 81, Mill Road, Caerphilly, South Wales.

THE DIFFERENCE.

An American and an Irishman were having a chat in a train. "My house is so low," said the Irishman, "that I have to bend double to get in." "Ah," said the American, "but my house is better than that. It is so high that when I whitewash my ceiling I have to go up in a balloon."—W. Ford, the Post Office, Yelvertoft, nr. Rugby.

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The judges will be Douglas Fairbanks and Edward Knoblock, whose decision will be final.

The photographs of the winners of the first three prizes will be published in the daily papers.

[Advt.]



A Grand Long Complete Story of the Boys of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. Routing the Grammarians!

"YOW-WOW!" Monty Lowther was responsible for that remarkable utterance.

He and Tom Merry, Manners, Blake, Herries, Digby and D'Arcy were strolling back to St. Jim's from Rylcombe. They had spent the half-holiday at the local cinema, and had tea in the village. That was the best thing to do on a snowy afternoon, when footer was "off."

Winter had taken its grip on the countryside, and for two days past had been covering it with a thick white mantle of snow. The leafless trees, their branches covered with snow, loomed up gaunt in their white surroundings. There was snow everywhere, and in some parts of the Rylcombe Lane it was several inches deep.

The chums of the School House at St. Jim's had been plodding along through the snow, when Monty Lowther stopped suddenly and gave vent to that howl:

"Yow-wow! What silly ass threw that?"

A large snowball had burst in Monty's ear with startling swiftness.

Tom Merry & Co. wheeled round and beheld a party of grinning Grammarians, headed by the redoubtable Gordon Gay, bearing down upon them. The two Woottons, Frank Monk, Tadpole, Carboy, and Mont Blong were there. Each of them had his hands full of snowballs.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The awful nerve! Let's scalp the cheeky rotters!"

Whiz! Bang! Thud!

Gordon Gay & Co. had the advantage of being first to the attack, and they showered a swift hurricane of snowballs all over their St. Jim's rivals.

Jack Blake staggered as one of the missiles crashed upon his nose, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fairly shrieked when another whizzed along and sent his topper flying. Manners danced like a dervish when a particularly large snowball struck him forcibly in the nape of his neck and proceeded to disport itself down his back. Tom Merry, Digby, and Herries were also overwhelmed by the sudden fusillade.

The St. Jim's juniors could easily have sought shelter behind the hedge, but it was not their way. To beat a retreat before that avalanche of snowballs would be to acknowledge the supremacy of Gordon Gay & Co.

And that, of course, would never do!

Tom Merry & Co., therefore, dived quickly into the snow and proceeded to gather ammunition. This was done under considerable difficulty, for the Grammarians were pressing to the attack.

"Sock it to 'em, boys!" yelled Gordon Gay, letting fly with a snowball which burst in Blake's eye.

"One for his nob!" chorled Tadpole, taking aim at D'Arcy's beautifully brushed hair and drenching it with a snowy missile.

"Bai Jove!" screeched Arthur Augustus. "Yon howwid wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whiz! Bang! Wallop!

The Grammarians attacked hotly.

But Tom Merry & Co., despite the hurricane fire, began to repulse the attack right nobly. Just as Gordon Gay & Co. came nearer, they turned and directed a strong barrage against them. Gordon Gay & Co.'s advance was arrested

swiftly. They roared and howled as that torrent of snowballs smashed into their midst.

"Yarooooogh!" yelled Harry Wootton, as a large-sized snowball struck the side of his head. "Wow-ow!"

"Ocooogh-gerrugh!" gurgled Frank Monk, catching a hard ball of snow in his mouth.

"Back up, you chumps!" exclaimed Gordon Gay warmly. "Don't let those measly St. Jim's worms lick us! I—Yoooooop!"

A snowball, hot from Tom Merry's hand, caught the Grammarian leader squarely under the chin, and he sat down in the snow with a jolt.

"Huwway!" cried Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, utterly regardless of his beautiful clobber as he pranced about in the snow, flinging missiles to right and left. "This is where we get our revenge, deah boys! Keep it up, bai Jove!"

Whiz! Wallop! Biff! Thud!

The air was thick with whirling snowballs, as the two rival parties flung ammunition at each other.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry. "We're getting the better of them now! Give the beggars socks!"

"Charge!" roared Jack Blake. "We've got 'em at our mercy! On, Chester, on!"

Gordon Gay & Co.'s defence was weakening. They had held their own for a time with easy assurance, but now the pace was getting too hot for them. The St. Jim's juniors discharged a perfect volley of snowballs, and the Grammarians were scattered like chaff before the wind.

"Stick it!" cried Monty Lowther excitedly. "Let's pay 'em out for having the cheek to go for us! After the bouncers!"

"Up, boys, and at 'em!" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry & Co. meant business. They dashed down the lane in pursuit of the fleeing Grammarians, and drove them across the snow-laden fields.

The tide had turned, and the St. Jim's juniors were carrying all before them. They did not relax the offensive for one moment. They meant to teach Gordon Gay & Co. a lesson that would not easily be forgotten.

Howling and yelling dismally, the Grammarians tore and stumbled across the fields, and, reaching another narrow country lane, made their way with hot haste towards the Grammar School.

A mighty cheer burst from the lips of the victorious St. Jim's juniors as the last Grammarian scuttled out of sight.

They had beaten Gordon Gay & Co. utterly, entirely, and hopelessly!

CHAPTER 2.

A Good Turn.

"HALLO!" said Jack Blake. "Looks like a row!"

"Hold on a bit," said Tom Merry. "I don't like the look of this!"

The seven School House juniors, feeling rather battered and wet, but flushed with victory, were making their way down the lane after their encounter with Gordon Gay & Co., when they came upon a scene that caused them to stop and frown portentously.

At the door of a tiny little cottage a frail-looking woman was standing holding a tiny baby in her arms. Another

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chubby-faced youngster, looking quite scared and frightened, was clinging to her apron. Before them, a large, burly, over-dressed man was standing. He had a brutal expression on his flabby face. Diamond rings glittered on his fat fingers, and a heavy gold watchchain extended across his expansive waistcoat.

The cottage garden was filled with articles of furniture, humble enough and cheap in themselves, but all spotlessly clean. The rough-looking bailiffs were in the act of carting furniture out of the cottage and depositing it in the garden.

Tom Merry & Co. strode forward until, from behind a clump of bushes, they could hear and see all that was going on. What they heard caused their faces to harden and hot anger rise in their souls.

"Please, Mr. Carrington, cannot you allow me a little longer to pay?" the poor woman was saying between her sobs. "Wait until my husband comes out of hospital and can go to work—"

"Work! Bah!" snapped the man, with a contemptuous snap of his fingers. "There is no work for anybody! Fat lot of chance your husband stands of finding work when he comes out, after being six months looking for a job before he went in! I must have my rent, and I've waited long enough! I gave you warning months ago! You were told that unless you paid what was owing you'd be turned out! No words could have been plainer!"

"Have you no mercy, sir? Would you turn me and my children out into the snow, with no money, and no home?" cried the unhappy woman, flinging out her arms appealingly to the landlord. "Just let us stay here a little longer! Oh, for the love of Heaven, Mr. Carrington, have a little pity!"

Such an appeal from a woman's anguished heart would have touched anybody but a monster. But the landlord's florid face did not relax its harsh sneer. The little girl began to cry piteously, and ran forward to the man at the gate.

"Please don't turn us out, sir!" she cried in a frail voice. "Mummy isn't well, and we've nowhere to go!"

"Get away, confound you!" snarled the rascally landlord, and thrust the girl roughly away from him. "It's no use trying to work me round! Business is business, and I want either your money or your room! If you've nowhere else to go, the workhouse is the best place for the likes of you!"

Tom Merry clenched his fists hard, and gulped away a curious lump that had risen in his throat.

"I say, this is rotten!" muttered Jack Blake hoarsely. "That rotter is turning the poor woman out into the snow! He can't have a spark of decency or human feeling in him, or he wouldn't think of doing such a thing!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his monocle glimmering with indignation. "What a howlid, disgustin' wretch! I'm goin' to chip in, deah boys! A D'Arcy nevah finched ffrom doin' his dutay when a lady was in distress!"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry, striding forward.

Mr. Carrington wheeled round, and glared at the St. Jim's juniors as they came up.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

"May I ask why you are turning this lady out of her cottage?" asked Tom Merry, as politely as he could.

"Because she hasn't paid her rent—that's why, young perky!" snarled Carrington. "And, now you know, just run away and mind your own business!"

"We wufuse to wun away!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly. "I wegahd it as a wotten, mean twick, to turn a lady with her children out into the snow; Your conduct, sir, is uttably unworthy of a gentleman, bai Jove!"

The rascally landlord looked at D'Arcy as though he would have liked to eat him. Probably if Tom Merry & Co. had had their way, they would have liked to have seen Mr. Carrington himself eaten, though not wishing to tackle the task themselves.

"Clear off, you little whelps!" he exclaimed angrily. "This has nothing at all to do with you!"

Tom Merry flushed.

"Look here!" he said. "We're jolly well not going to see this poor lady victimised! You're a heartless, callous scoundrel to want to do a thing like this! This is our business—it's the business of every decent person to see fair play! Will you order these men to return the lady's furniture, and leave her in peace, if we pay you what we can?"

The landlord gave a leer.

"Over twenty pounds is owing!" he said. "Do you school kids think you can raise that between you?"

Tom Merry bit his lip.

"We—we might," he said, "if you waited till—"

"Bah! Don't be a young fool! Mind how you go with that piano, Belling!"

Mr. Carrington moved away, and rapped out orders to his

assistants. Tom Merry exchanged a glance with his chums. They were trembling with indignation. Come what might, they were not going to allow the rascally landlord to turn the poor woman out into the cruel snow!

"Rough measures succeed where kind words fail!" said Tom Merry. "Are you fellows backing me up?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Pitch into him, then!"

Mr. Carrington had his back turned to the St. Jim's juniors. Tom Merry led the attack with a giant snowball, which scrunched on the side of the landlord's bowler hat and sent it spinning into the air.

"Why, what—what—" ejaculated Carrington, wheeling round. "You little rascals! Oooooooh!"

Mr. Carrington broke off abruptly as a well-aimed snowball struck him in the mouth. Next minute a perfect maelstrom of whirling missiles crashed all over him. Tom Merry & Co. were reckless now, and they felt that they were justified in being so. They flung snowballs thick and fast at the rascally landlord.

"Ow-ow-ow! Yah! You little scamps! Yaroooooh!"

Mr. Carrington fairly danced.

Before that fusillade he simply could not hold his own, so, ducking and darting from side to side, he staggered out of the cottage garden into the road.

"Drive him away!" roared Tom Merry. "Back up, boys!"

Whiz! Thud! Wallop!

Mr. Carrington had a sorry time of it.

He retreated in an undignified fashion down the lane.

Tom Merry & Co. then eyed the bailiffs grimly.

"Clear off!" rapped the Shell captain sternly. "If you remove any more of that furniture, we'll treat you the same as we've just treated Carrington. Savvy?"

The men scowled, but it was apparent that they "savvied."

"Look 'ere, young gent! We don't want to 'ave any row with you!" said one of them, shifting uneasily. "Our horders woz to come and turn these things out, unless Mrs. Robinson paid 'er rent, or gave us somethin' wot woz due!"

"Oh!" said Tom Merry. "Then, to save further dispute, we'll pay you a lot off the account, for Mrs. Robinson's sake. We've got some tin! Now, how much can you fellows raise?"

The heroes of the School House turned out their pockets at once. Blake discovered half-a-crown, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy produced twelve shillings, Monty Lowther a shilling, Manners, Digby, and Herries two shillings each.

"I've got five bob—that makes twenty-six-and-six," said Tom Merry. "Now, my man, if you take that, do you think that will satisfy his nibs until we can raise the rest?"

"It might do, young gent," said the man, taking the money. "Which I'll give it to 'im at the office, and see—"

"Let's have a receipt for that, please!" rapped Tom Merry, in a businesslike way.

He handed the man a fountain-pen and a sheet of paper from his pocket-book, and directed him to write out a receipt for the money paid on account of Mrs. Robinson's rent. The man did so, and Tom Merry was satisfied.

"You can clear off now," he said. "We'll see that these things are put back into Mrs. Robinson's house!"

The men went, feeling glad that they had not suffered a snowballing at the hands of the schoolboys as their luckless master had done.

Mrs. Robinson turned a tear-stained face to the boys.

"Oh, how can I thank you, young sir?" she faltered.

"You are very kind to do all this!"

"Not at all, ma'am!" said Tom Merry politely. "We couldn't possibly stand here and watch you being turned out by that monster! Do you really owe him all that much? Or has he been piling it on?"

"I—I'm afraid I owe him a lot!" replied the poor woman.

"You see, my husband has been out of work for months, and the unemployment money was stopped long ago. He has tried, goodness knows, and the long hunt for work, without much food and bad clothing, made him ill. He's in hospital now, and—I think he's better off there than we are here. We have nothing to live on hardly, let alone pay the rent which Mr. Carrington demands! If only Bert was well and strong again, and could find some work! Oh, it's cruel—cruel!"

Tears welled into the poor woman's eyes, and the hearts of all the St. Jim's boys went out to her.

"Nevah mind, ma'am!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy a little huskily. "We'll see that things are all right. We'll do our best to satisfy that scoundrel! Wely on us!"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "Don't worry, Mrs. Robinson! You can depend upon us doing our best! Come on, chaps! Let's get these things put back into Mrs. Robinson's place!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors set cheerfully to work, and carried the

furniture back into the cottage from which Mrs. Robinson had all but been turned out.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Blake, and Manners shifted the little piano back into the parlour. Soon all the things were returned to their proper places, and were none the worse for their shifting.

"Well, we must be getting back!" said Tom Merry. "Cheer up, ma'am! Things are bound to take a change for the better soon! And we'll look after you and the kiddies till your husband returns and gets work!"

"Thank you! Thank you so much!" said the poor woman, tears of gratitude streaming down her face. "You are gentlemen—real gentlemen—and I and my children thank you from the bottom of our hearts!"

Raising their hats respectfully, the St. Jim's juniors left the cottage and made their way back to St. Jim's, feeling very pleased with the good turn they had been able to render that afternoon.

CHAPTER 3.

Rough on Gussy

"Bai Jove! That's wathah a wippin' ideah!"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

It was the day after the episode with Mr. Carrington, the rascally landlord. Tom Merry & Co. had raised a subscription amongst the fellows with the intention of making Mrs. Robinson and her family a splendid Christmas-box of provisions and fruit. The subscription had been well responded to, but Tom Merry & Co. were rather disappointed at the result, for the juniors at that period of the term, were not over abundantly blessed with ready cash.

Tom Merry & Co. had been wondering how to raise sufficient funds to be able to pay up Mrs. Robinson's rent, for it was, of course, impossible to expect the poor woman, in her present circumstances, to satisfy the insistent demands of her heartless landlord.

Jack Blake & Co. were seated in Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage, wrestling with a tricky problem in Euclid which Mr. Lathom had given them that morning, when Arthur Augustus delivered himself in the above manner.

Blake, Digby, and Herries were so much engrossed in their problem, that they did not hear D'Arcy speak.

"Ahem!" coughed D'Arcy. "I've got it, deah boys!"

Blake looked up.

"Eh? You've got what, Gussy?"

"The vevy identical solution to the pproblem, bai Jove!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked hopefully at their noble chum.

"That's topping, Gussy!" said Blake.

"We've been puzzling our brains for the last half-hour. Do you mean to say you've got the solution to the rotten puzzle?"

"Yaas, wathah! It's weally a wippin' bwain wave on my part, deah boys!"

"What do you do, Gussy?" asked Herries. "Take the square root of the hypotenuse, and divide by nine?"

"Gweat Scott!" exclaimed D'Arcy, astonished. "What evah are you falkin' about, Hewwies?"

"Perhaps Gussy's done it the other way," said Digby, sucking his pencil. "Didn't you divide up the blessed parallelogram into isosceles triangles, Gussy, and then work out their giddy areas to three places of decimals?"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and looked astounded.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "You chaps must be off your wockahs! My ideah isn't anythin' to do with square woots, or pawvellogwams, or isosceles twiangles. Weally, I fail to see how they come in at all!"

"But you said you'd solved the problem!" howled Blake.

"Yaas; so I have!" replied D'Arcy. "You can play the banjo, Digby, an' Blake can play the piano and clog dance. Hewwies can play the cornet if he's vevy careful over it, and I can sing tenah solos—"

"He's gone clean off his onion!" said Blake, tapping his forehead significantly. "I always did say that Euclid would send a fellow barmy, and it's affected Gussy first. Poor old Gussy! Where do you feel it most, old chap?"

"Bai Jove! You'll feel it most—on your nose, you shwiekin' ass!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I'm not talkin' about Euclid—"

"Oh, oh!"

"Weally, I cannot imagine what made you duffahs think I was speakin' about that wotten Euclid that Lathom gave us. I—"

"Oh, bump the idiot!" said Blake, in exasperation. "He made us think he'd found a way out to the puzzle. Bump him!"

"Yawwoooogh!" roared D'Arcy, as his three chums arose, and whirled him over. "Hands off, you wottahs! Yoooop!"

Bump, bump, bump!

The form of Arthur Augustus rose and fell, and Arthur Augustus roared.

"Yawwoop! You feahful wuffians! Gwoooogh! Oh, deah!"

"Give him another!" panted Blake. "We'll teach him to speak plainly next time!"

Bump!

They allowed D'Arcy to fall to the floor at last, and returned to their problem in Euclid, which seemed as far off solution as ever.

Arthur Augustus picked himself up, and dusted down his rumpled jacket and trousers. He jammed his monocle into his eye and glared wrathfully at his chums.

"Gwoogh! You awful wottahs! I wegahd you as wuffianly beasts, bai Jove! For two pins I would give you all a feahful thwashin'!"

"Shurrup!" growled Blake, reaching out for a dictionary.

"Weally, if you wefuse to listen to me—"

"We do—we does!" said Herries. "Buzz off, Gussy—we're busy!"

"I wefuse to buzz off! I considah—"

Whiz!

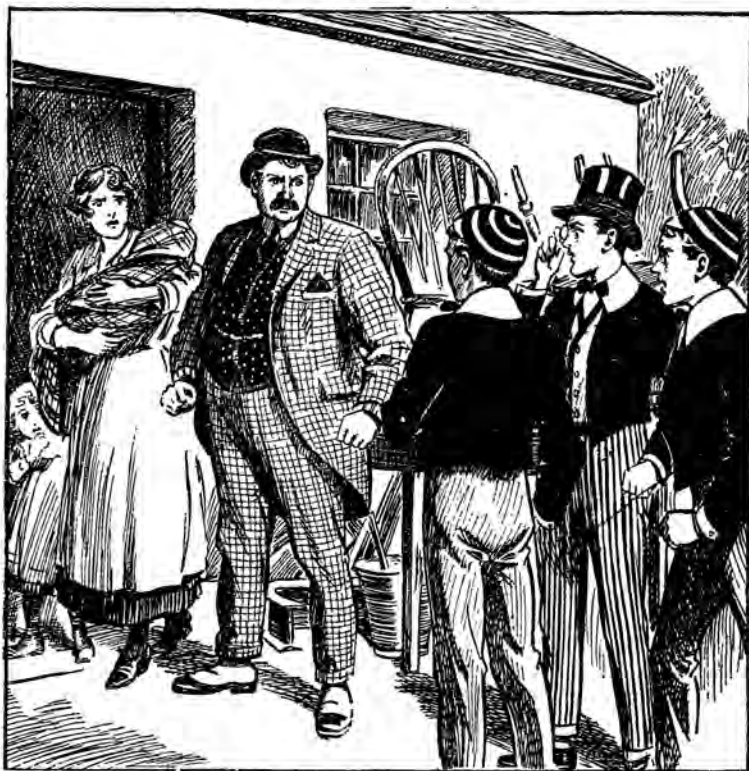
The dictionary, propelled by Blake's unerring hand, smote Arthur Augustus squarely under the chin. He gave a yell and staggered.

"Ooooop! You feahful wuffian—"

"Ring off, Gussy, and let us work!"

Arthur Augustus' monocle glimmered with wrath. He advanced, pushing back his cuffs in a warlike manner.

"Bai Jove! I considah it my painful duty to give you a feahful thwashin', Blake!" he exclaimed. "I wefuse to look upon you as a fwend any moah! Put up your fists!"



Mr. Carrington wheeled round and glared at the St. Jim's juniors as they came up. "What do you want?" he snapped. "May I ask why you are turning this lady out of her cottage?" asked Tom Merry politely. "Because she hasn't paid her rent!" snarled Carrington.

Blake looked up wearily.

"Oh, is that Gussy again?" he exclaimed. "He's determined not to let us work! Stifle him, somebody!"

"Put up your hands, you wottah!" roared Arthur Augustus, prancing round Blake's chair.

Blake, Herries, and Digby exchanged significant glances.

They arose as one man—or, rather, one boy—and grasped the noble swell of St. Jim's. They whirled him, roaring and struggling, to the door, pulled it open, and hurled him through.

Bump!

Arthur Augustus landed with a terrific jolt on the cold, unsympathetic linoleum of the landing.

"Yawoooooh!"

"That's what you'll get again if you come in here worrying any more, Gussy!" said Blake. And next minute he slammed and locked the door of Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus picked himself up, and groped for his monocle.

He found it, and jammed it into his eye.

"Gwoogh! Ow! Bai Jove! The wottahs!" he moaned, pulling back his necktie from under his left ear. "I weseuse to weghad them as fwends until they apologise! Wow-wow! Undah the circs, I shall go to Tom Mewwy with my ideah! Yowp! Pewhahs he will weceive me in a bettah spiwit! Ow-ow! My clobbah is wuined. But nevah mind. Owpl! I'll see Tom Mewwy first!"

And Arthur Augustus limped away, gasping and groaning, and muttering all manner of unkind things concerning his chums in Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 4.

The Wheeze of the Season.

"HALLO, Gussy! Been wrestling with a steam-roller?"

"Have you been in a railway accident, old fellow?"

"Or have you been trying Skimmy's new flying-machine?"

That was how the Terrible Three greeted Arthur Augustus as he limped into Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.

D'Arcy groaned. He felt as he looked—somewhat battered and dusty.

"No, deah boys. Those feahful wuffians, Blake, Hewwies, and Digbay thwew me out—actually thwew me out—of my own studay!" he said.

The Terrible Three chuckled softly.

"Too bad, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "What did they chuck you out for?"

"Just ovah a misundahstandin', that's all!" said Arthur Augustus. "Gwooooh! They were so dense that they did not compwehend my meanin', and when they realised they were wrong, they thwew me out! I shall weally have to weghad them as stwangahs, until they apologise for their wuff twement!"

"Cheer up, Gussy! It might have been worse, you know!" said Tom Merry. "Do you want us to go along to Study No. 6 and commit assault and battery upon Blake, Herries, and Digby?"

"Oh no, deah boys! I've come to tell you my ideah. I should have given it to Blake, so that the Fourth Form could work it all alone, but undah the circs, I have weconsidared my decision, and have decided to tell you."

"Did you tell the wheeze to Blake and the others before they chuckled you out, Gussy?" inquired Monty Lowther sweetly.

"No, deah boy! The wuff wottahs didn't stop to listen!"

"Then fire ahead, Gussy, old chap!" said Tom Merry, grinning. "We're all ears!"

"Especially the person who said so," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Your people will hear bad news about you, Monty, if you don't cheese it!" said Tom Merry darkly. "Get on with the washing, Gussy!"

"Well, I've been thinkin', deah boys—"

"Go hon!"

"Yaas, I've been thinkin' out a solution to the pwoblem of how to help Mrs. Wobinson, and make things all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "The subscription hasn't been a gweat success, because most of the fellahs are wathah short of cash. So another way of waisin' the wind was necessary—and I've thought it out!"

"All out of your own brainbox, Gussy?" asked Monty Lowther innocently.

"Yaas, wathah! My ideah is to start a Chwistmas Glee Club, and go wound Wylcombe and Wayland in the evenin's singin' songs and Chwistmas cawols, and givin' musical selections, in aid of the poor of the neighbourhood!"

The Terrible Three looked astonished.

"A Chwistmas Glee Club—my hat!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas. I considah it quite a stunnin' wheeze, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus earnestly. "There's heaps of talent

in the School House. And we'll let Figgins & Co. of the New House join, if they pwomise not to wide the high horse. It will be an easy mattah to obtain the Head's sanction—as a fellah of tact and judgment, I'll put it to him, and he's bound to agwee. Chwistmas cawols are all wight in their way, but they are fwightfully out of date. This Glee Club ideah of mine is wathah modern. Besides, singin' cawols we'll sing ordinawy songs, and give violin, banjo, and cornet selections. Why, in that way, we'd waise heaps of money, and besides helpin' Mrs. Wobinson, we'd be able to help othah people in Wylcombe, too—and goodness knows, there are many in need of assistance this Chwistmas!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"My word! Your wheeze certainly sounds good, the way you put it, Gussy!" he said. "What do you chaps think of it?"

"Quite a stunnin' notion for Gussy!" said Monty Lowther. "It ought to work out a treat!" said Manners.

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"Of course, it would have to be properly managed for any good to come of it all," he said. "Jolly lucky you came to us before telling Blake of it. He would have wanted to run the whole thing himself, and with you chuckle-headed Fourth-Formers at the head of affairs—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Sorry, Gussy. I mean, unless we all co-operate the thing will come a mucker. Let's go along and tell the Head and get his permission. He's a decent old stick, and it ought to be easy to work him round. Then we'll call a meeting of the whole Lower School and form the Glee Club. If the Head does give us his permission to go ahead, we shall have to start rehearsals at once!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus went upstairs and washed himself and dusted his clothes. Then, looking quite smart and elegant again, he and Tom Merry paid the Head's study a visit.

Dr. Holmes listened in silence whilst between them they outlined the idea of the Chwistmas Glee Club, and expatiated on its various good points and the excellent results they expected to get from it. Tom Merry and D'Arcy, indeed, waxed quite eloquent. The Head smiled when they had finished, and said that, although such a thing had never been done by St. Jim's boys before, he saw no harm in it, and readily gave his permission.

Tom Merry and D'Arcy left the Head's study in jubilant spirits, and a meeting of the Shell and Fourth was immediately summoned in the Common-room.

Blake, Herries, and Digby turned up with the others. They had managed at last to solve their Euclid problem and were feeling quite cheerful.

Tom Merry and D'Arcy told the fellows all about the scheme for forming a Chwistmas Glee Club to sing carols, and to provide other musical entertainments, for the populace of Rylcombe, in aid of the poor of the village.

Everybody voted it a capital scheme, and there was quite a rush to enrol as members of the Glee Club.

Jack Blake & Co. were quite overcome when they learnt that it was Gussy's wheeze.

"Oh, I say, Gussy, we're frightfully sorry, old man," said Blake. "Was that the wheeze you were so keen on telling us?"

"Yaas, Blake, it was," said Arthur Augustus frigidly.

"If we had only known, Gussy!" said Blake. "We should never have chuckled you out on your neck—ahem! We humbly beg your pardon. Don't we, chaps?"

"We do, Gussy!" said Herries and Digby solemnly.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle tighter into his eye. "Weally, you boundahs, I had weseolved not to weghad you as fwends any moah—"

"But an apology from one gentleman to another makes it all right, though, Gussy, doesn't it?" said Blake, cooing like a dove.

"Yaas," said D'Arcy, unbending. "If you fellahs weally apologise—"

"We do!" chimed Blake, Herries, and Digby.

"Then it's all wight!" said Arthur Augustus graciously. "I shall wwestore you to my fwendship."

"Oh, that is ripping of you, Gussy!"

And Blake, Herries, and Digby marched out of the Common-room, with Arthur Augustus in their midst, Blake and Digby each holding one of his arms in quite a brotherly and affectionate manner.

CHAPTER 5.

Too Much Music.

"GOOD!" said Monty Lowther, looking up from the table in Study No. 10 that evening. "That's put the finishing touches to my comic Chwistmas song. I'm going to sing that at our Glee Club open-air concert. It's called 'The Giddy-Old Ghost of Gadzoos Grange.' Would you chaps like me to sing it now, and—"

"No! We jolly well wouldn't!"

That howl of dissent came from Tom Merry and Manners, who were seated round the fire eating chestnuts and scribbling on pieces of paper.

Monty Lowther glared.

"Look here, this comic song of mine will make you roar with laughter!" he said. "Just listen while I—"

"Shurrup, Monty!" shrieked Tom Merry. "If you start warbling comic songs in here we'll roll your head in the coal scuttle! Besides, I'm not sure, yet, whether comic songs will be allowed. They don't seem to go well with Christmas carols, somehow!"

"Oh, rats!" said Monty Lowther crossly. "If only you'd listen to just one verse of my song. It's quite Christmasy, and—"

"I'll buzz a chunk of coal at your head, Monty, if you don't ring off!" said Manners. "Here am I, trying to work out an open-air portable magic-lantern stunt, whilst you are gassing away and confusing me. Pack up, you chump!"

Monty Lowther glared and subsided into silence.

Peace again reigned in Study No. 10.

The idea of having a Christmas Glee Club had caught on amongst the juniors of St. Jim's. Everybody was entering into it with great enthusiasm. All day long sounds of music—and other sounds which could not, by any possible stretch of the imagination, be called musical—had permeated the troubled air in the junior quarters. Christmas songs and carols were being howled and bawled and warbled all over the school, in a variety of keys and discords. Violins, banjos, and all manner of musical instruments had been unearthed from cupboards and practised upon, much to the disturbance of the public peace.

George Alfred Grundy had stated his definite intention of contributing his alleged magnificent baritone voice to the Glee Club singers. Directly tea-time was over he had repaired unto his study with Wilkins and Gunn, his study-mates, and proceeded to practise a few songs. Wilkins and Gunn were very dutiful disciples of the great Grundy, and could stand most things appertaining to him; but they found that Grundy's voice was simply more than any human flesh and blood could reasonably bear. So, to prevent trouble, they had secretly stuffed cotton wool into their ears, and let Grundy "rip." This plan worked splendidly, until Grundy discovered the cotton wool in his study-mates' ears. He regarded that as an insult to him, and immediately buried them out on their necks. Wilkins and Gunn did not attempt to return to their study—not while George Alfred was singing, at any rate. And Grundy did not sing for long after that, for Kildare came along and gave him fifty lines for creating a disturbance, with a threat to cane him if he warbled any more.

Tom Merry was making out a list of singers, and, upon examination, it proved to be quite an extensive list. There were many good singers among the juniors, and all these were included in the list. Talbot and Clifton Dane, Kangaroo, Levison, Kit Wildrake, and Cardew, all had good voices. An orchestra had to be formed, too, and this was a more difficult problem.

Tom Merry was still wrinkling his brows over this, when a weird wail in the room next door caused him to look up with a start.

Manners and Monty Lowther looked up, also.

"Wh-what was that?" gasped Manners, in a faint voice.

"Hark!" said Tom Merry tensely.

From the other side of the wall sounded a heart-rending wail, rising in pitch until it broke off into an ear-splitting shriek.

"What on earth can it be?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Let's go and have a look!"

The Terrible Three jumped up and dashed to the room next door, which was occupied by Gore and Herbert Skimpole.

They flung open the door just as another wail sounded, and looked inside, expecting to see a cat writhing in death agonies, or something equally horrible.

Instead, the only sight which met their gaze was the long, veedy form of Herbert Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, seated on the table with a fiddle perched upon his shoulder, scraping away energetically with the bow.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "What a row! Chuck it, Skimmy!"

Herbert Skimpole set down the fiddle, and blinked round at the Terrible Three.

"Hallo, my dear fellows!" he said. "Have you come in to hear me play my rhapsody? As I anticipated, the mellifluous strains of my composition, penetrating into the passage outside, had the charming effect to your breasts which is attributed to all good music, and caused you to come in, and listen at closer proximity to my instrument. You are bound to like my rhapsody. Listen to this allegro furioso in the second movement—"

"Groooogh!" ejaculated Tom Merry, as Skimpole proceeded to scrape torture out of his fiddle. "Shurrup, Skimmy! Give it a breeze! Do you hear?"

Skimpole blinked at Tom Merry, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Really, my dear Merry, this is hardly encouraging conduct on your part," he said. "I have purchased this violin in order that I might contribute my quota to the Glee Club concerts which are in projection. Although the instrument cost me but a paltry one-and-ninepence, the man who sold it to me assured me that it is a genuine old fiddle. In fact, he produced authoritative proof that this is the identical fiddle upon which Nero played when Rome was burning."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the Terrible Three.

Skimpole blinked at his hilarious Form-fellows through his huge spectacles.

"Really, my dear fellows, I fail to see any cause for ribald merriment," he said mildly. "Age imparts increased beauty to the tone of a violin, you know. Listen to the andante in the third movement of my rhapsody. I am sure it will stir your souls!"

And, shouldering his violin, Herbert Skimpole drew the bow across its strings, and raised a melody that sent cold shivers through the backbones of the Terrible Three, and fairly made the windows rattle.

"Oh, what a row!" gasped Manners. "It sounds like a pig howling for its grub!"

"Hark!" murmured Monty Lowther. "I hear the tread of approaching footsteps, and methinks it is Gore coming. Skimmy's rhapsody will stir Gore's soul, I reckon, when he kicks our tame composer out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Next minute George Gore strode in. The bully of the Shell stood stock-still for a moment when he saw Skimpole



The Terrible Three flung open the door of Skimpole's study, expecting to see a cat writhing in death agonies. To their surprise they found Skimpole seated on the table with a fiddle perched upon his shoulder, scraping away energetically with the bow. "My hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

scraping at his violin. Then his jaws came together with a snap, and he clenched his brawny fists hard.

"Skimpole," he roared, making a dart at his weedy study-mate, and whirling him by the scruff of the neck off the table, "I'll teach you to kick up that row in my study!"

The fiddle clattered to the floor. Skimpole wriggled in the burly Gore's grip.

"Mum-my dear Gore—"

"I'll give you fiddle!" bellowed Gore, picking up the aged instrument. "Why, I could hear you down in the lower corridor! I reckon you won't play this any more!"

Sitting down, Gore thrust the luckless genius of the Shell face downwards across his knees, and, holding the violin by the neck, proceeded to belabour Skimpole with it.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yarooooogh!" wailed Skimpole, as the violin rose and fell upon his person. "Desist, my dear Gore, I beseech you! Oh dear! Yooooop!"

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

At last, when the violin had been battered to fragments, Gore allowed Skimpole to rise. Skimpole jumped up with great rapidity, and fairly tore out of the room.

Gore growled, and hurling the remainder of Skimpole's fiddle to the floor, stamped upon it.

"There!" he said. "I've taken the matter in hand in its first stages. I can be sure now of being able to do my prep in peace!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three, highly tickled.

And they departed, still chuckling over the episode of Skimpole and his violin.

CHAPTER 6.

Base Deceivers.

"I T'S a fact, I tell you!"

Baggy Trimble, the fat, ungainly porpoise of the Fourth, blinked in at the doorway of Study No. 6, where Jack Blake, D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby were all at home. He howled those words at the top of his voice.

Baggy had to howl, for the noise in Study No. 6 was terrific.

Blake was practising a Yorkshire clog-dance on the floor, Arthur Augustus was warbling that good old Christmas ditty, "God bless You, Merry Gentlemen!" at the top of his famous tenor voice, in an effort to make himself heard above the din Herries was raising in blowing his cornet, and the tumming of Robert Arthur Digby, who was seated in the armchair jabbing at his banjo.

Each of the chums of Study No. 6 went on with what he was doing, as if blissfully unaware of the presence of Baggy Trimble.

"It's a fact, I tell you!" reiterated Baggy, raising his voice to a high scream.

Blake ceased to clog-dance, and glared at Baggy.

"Hallo! Is that you, Baggy? Cut off; we're busy!"

Baggy Trimble snorted.

"Busy!" he said. "Why, you're making noise enough to bring the house down! Jolly lucky for you the masters and the prefects are attending the Head's meeting in the Rag! I've come to—"

"Yes—groooooh—we can see that!" puffed Herries, whose efforts at blowing the cornet had rather winded him. "Sheer off, Baggy!"

"It's a fact, I tell you—"

"Which exit do you prefer, Baggy?" inquired Digby. "You have the choice of either the door or the window!"

"Fathead!" sniffed Baggy. "Blessed rotten way to treat a fellow, I must say, who's come to tell you something to your advantage. There's a chap named Carrington in the quad looking for somebody to take him to the Head. He's come to complain about you chaps."

"Whew!"

Jack Blake & Co. looked serious at once.

"Great pip!" gasped Blake. "That old rotter has come to complain, has he? How jolly lucky the Head and all the masters are at the meeting, jawing over the arrangements for after the Christmas vac!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But the old bird will wait till the meeting's over," said Digby. "And then—well, what then?"

"We'd better go along and see Tom Merry," said Blake. "Thanks for the information, Baggy! Just shows how useful you can be sometimes!"

The chums of Study No. 6 found Tom Merry & Co. in the gymnasium. When the Shell fellows heard of Mr. Carrington's visit their faces lengthened.

"Oh, my hat! Now we're in for it!" said Tom Merry. "Where is the old bouncer?"

"In the library, waiting till the meeting's over."

Tom Merry thought for a while, and then his face lit up with a bright smile.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 725.

"Why, I've thought of a way out!" he exclaimed. "The very identical notion!"

"Bai Jove! What is it, deah boy?"

"We shall have to get old Kerr to work it for us," said Tom Merry swiftly. "Kerr, you know, is a dab at acting, and can impersonate anybody. Suppose he were to stick on some false whiskers, and rig himself out in a master's cap and gown, and run into the library to see Carrington? Why, the old bird would take Kerr for a master, and ask no questions!"

"Whew!"

"See my wheeze?" asked Tom eagerly. "He'd complain to Kerr, who would call us into the room, accuse us of snowballing Carrington, and pretend to punish us. We'd get the affair over before the masters' meeting is over!"

Blake drew a deep breath.

"It's a risky wheeze, but it would work!" he said. "There's Figgins & Co. Let's ask Kerr."

George Kerr of the New House listened to Tom Merry's idea with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Why, yes, I'll do it! As easy as rolling off a form!" he said. "I'll just run indoors and make up. It won't take two ticks!"

Kerr ran off, and Tom Merry & Co. looked more cheerful.

The amateur impersonator of the New House had soon disguised himself by means of padding, grease-paint, false whiskers, and a master's cap and gown, to represent a learned old gentleman. He slipped into the School House by the rear entrance, and went upstairs.

He walked boldly into the library, where Mr. Carrington, looking as fat and as sleek as ever, was pacing up and down.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Kerr, in a deep voice. "You have come to lay a complaint, I understand, concerning certain boys in this school?"

"Are you the headmaster, sir?"

"No. Dr. Holmes is absent at a meeting," said Kerr loftily. "But I will attend to any business you may have with this school, Mr.—"

"Carrington," said the rascally landlord. "I have come to complain about the conduct of certain boys of this school, sir. The young rascals snowballed me—fairly pelted me, sir, until I was bruised and drenched through—whilst I was superintending the removal of some furniture from one of my cottages. I demand that these boys be punished severely! If you'll allow me to make a search I shall be able to pick out the boys in question."

"I think I know the lads you refer to, Mr. Carrington," said Kerr dryly. "I have, you see, previously heard something of this matter. I will have them brought here at once!"

Kerr slipped from the library, and sought out Toby, the page. Toby was astounded at seeing the strange "master," but a few whispered words from Kerr soon set his mind at rest. Toby went off to despatch Tom Merry & Co. to the library, whilst the disguised New House junior rejoined the incensed Mr. Carrington.

The Terrible Three, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy came into the library very respectfully, and stood before their "master."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Carrington triumphantly. "These are the very boys, sir! These are the young rascals who snowballed me! You will, of course, see that they are severely punished."

"Most assuredly, Mr. Carrington," replied the pseudo master. "Boys, it grieves me to hear of this blatant breach of discipline which you have committed. Such conduct was not worthy of boys of St. Jim's. I, personally, can sympathise with Mr. Carrington, for I detest the winter sport of snowballing. Merry, will you fetch a cane?"

Tom Merry jumped.

"Wha-a-at?" he gasped.

"Kindly fetch me a cane, Merry!" commanded Kerr, in a stern voice.

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, under his breath.

Tom Merry went away bewilderedly, and returned with a cane he had taken from the prefects' room.

"Now you shall have the satisfaction of seeing these boys punished, sir," said Kerr. "Merry, hold out your hand!"

"Look here," exclaimed Tom Merry hotly, "this isn't playing the game, you know! We didn't expect you to—"

"Silence! Do not argue with me, boy! Hold out your hand!"

Tom Merry looked daggers at Kerr, but had to obey.

Swish! Swish!

Kerr did not spare the rod!

Blake was the next victim, and he received two stinging cuts with the cane. Each of the others suffered likewise in turn, and they were all writhing and wriggling by the time the humorously-inclined Kerr had finished with them.

"Take a thousand lines each and go!" commanded Kerr. "Let this be a lesson to you not to snowball people in the street! Good-afternoon, Mr. Carrington! I hope you are satisfied?"

"Quite, sir—quite!" said the rascally landlord; and he strode from the room, followed closely by Kerr.

Tom Merry & Co. were waiting for the japer of the New House outside, but they dared not touch him, for he accompanied Mr. Carrington to the gates. Then Figgins & Co. of the New House came up in a crowd, and surrounded their chum.

Kerr chuckled as he divested himself of his disguise.

"It worked like a giddy charm!" he said. "Say, Tom Merry, you don't look best pleased. You ought to be jolly thankful Carrington didn't see a real master. You'd have got four stingers instead of two!"

"You—you spoofer! We didn't tell you to lick us!" howled Blake.

Kerr chuckled.

"Naughty boys deserve to be caned," he said. "Cheer up, you chaps! On second thoughts, you need not do the impots I gave you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins & Co.

Tom Merry & Co. did not laugh.

They felt inclined to bump Kerr, but on consideration they realised that, on the whole, he had done them a good turn, even though he had got "one in" for the New House in doing it!

CHAPTER 7.

The Woes of Waits!

"B R-R-R-R-R!" It's jolly cold!" said Monty Lowther. Snow was falling thick and fast round the members of the St. Jim's Christmas Glee Club singers, who sallied forth one night into the darkness to sing carols, songs, play popular selections, and otherwise regale the people of Rylcombe with Christmas cheer in the form of music.

Baggy Trimble had insisted at first upon accompanying them, to go from door to door and collect the money. But, as Tom Merry pointed out, that was the last job on earth they would entrust Baggy with, for the money, in all probability, would go from door to pocket—Baggy's pocket.

So Baggy had been rolled in the snow and left behind!

There were a goodly number to the party.

Manners' portable magic-lantern idea had to be dispensed with, so had nine out of D Arcy's eleven tenor solos, Blake's clog-dances, and Reilly's piccolo selections, besides other "turns" too numerous to mention.

Tom Merry & Co. had worked hard to bring their band and singers to a state of perfection. Blake had been entrusted with the job of conducting, and he was proud in the possession of a long baton, with which he smote the air, and performed all manner of wonderful evolutions when music was in progress.

"Yes, it is cold; but it's real Christmas weather, and that lends tone to the whole business," said Tom Merry cheerfully, in response to Monty's remark. "We'll stop outside old Farmer Henderson's place here. He's good for ten bob at least. Now then, Blake, you'd better sort out the orchestra."

Jack Blake assembled the instrumentalists round him. Each carried a bicycle-lamp to illuminate the music.

The singers gathered round, too, and in response to the first violent wave of the baton from Blake, a tumult of noise rent the cold, wintry air.

It burst out all of a sudden, with an energetic beating of drums and the preliminary squeaks of three violins. Then Herries chimed in blantly with his cornet, and Digby followed suit with his banjo. Reilly, not to be outdone, blew into his piccolo as though his very life depended upon it, and Kangaroo, who fancied himself as an expert player of the concertina, added to the noise with gusto. Monty Lowther beat the drum as though it were a carpet which badly needed cleaning, and seemed intent upon drowning the rest of the players.

Bim! Bom! Crash!

"Now!" howled Blake above the uproar.

Then a dozen lusty schoolboy voices arose, singing the well-known strains of "Good King Wenceslaus." Unfortunately, they did not manage to keep well to time, and the result was rather bewildering.

By the time the first verse and chorus were finished, both the singers and the players were rather short of breath.

"Stick it, chaps!" said Blake. "Now for the second imings!"

This time the singers got in advance of the orchestra, who made manful efforts to keep up. The result was a race, and a howling discord.

Ta-ra-ra-rrrrrrrrrr!

That loud, discordant roar burst on the troubled air, sounding loud above the carol that was in progress.

"My hat!" gasped Blake. "What on earth was that?" The heavy sound broke in once more, clashing horribly with the music of the St. Jim's Glee Club.

Then a perfect pandemonium of noise arose, coming from behind the hedge by the side of the lane.

It seemed that innumerable tins were being beaten, accompanied by a frenzied ringing of bells, rattling of clappers, crashing of cymbals, and other weird noises.

The St. Jim's musicians stopped and listened in amazement.

Bang! Crash! Whirr-rrr! Bom! Wallop! came from behind the hedge.

"Gug-great guns!" muttered Monty Lowther. "There's a gang behind that hedge trying to muck up our singing!" Those weird noises ceased, and from behind the hedge instead a loud chorus of laughter arose.

"Hallo, you St. Jim's microbes!" came a well-known voice. "Carry on; we'll help!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Gordon Gay!"

"Gwammawian cads, bai Jove!"

The Grammarians behind the hedge gave another selection of crashes and bangs and loud thuds.

Tom Merry & Co. had to stuff fingers into their ears.

"Give it a rest, you rotters!" howled Blake. "Sheer off, and leave us alone!"

"Don't you like the jazz effect, dear boys?" came Gordon Gay's voice through the darkness. "No orchestra is complete without an installation of jazz, you know! Please let us assist you in your carol singing."

"Buzz off and go and eat coke, you blighters!" roared Tom Merry.

"Rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Jim's Glee Club members looked haggardly at each other.

"Let's get on with the third verse!" said Blake, between his teeth. "Sing like fury, chaps, and let the giddy orchestra rip! Ready? Go!"

The baton whirled and the third verse of "Good King Wenceslas" rent the air.

Immediately the Grammarian jazzers broke in with a thunderous medley of crashes and bangs.

The noise must have been heard for miles around.

Crash! Bang! Wallop! Bom-bom!

Tom Merry & Co. fairly howled their song at the top of their voices. Figgins, Kerruish, Talbot, and Lumley scraped away furiously at their fiddles, Reilly blew as hard as he was able into his piccolo, Herries put his full lung-power into the blowing of his cornet, Digby strummed desperately at his banjo, Kangaroo jabbed energetically at his concertina, and Monty Lowther whacked the drum like one demented.

But, for all that, the Grammarians' jazz band sounded loud above them, and made an uproar.

"Hi, you little rascals!"

It was a loud howl from Farmer Henderson's house.

The third verse of "Good King Wenceslas" crashed into a grand finish, and the St. Jim's Glee Club blinked up at the angry farmer who was leaning over his garden gate.

"What are you boys doing? I'll complain to your head-master! How dare you come making that awful noise outside my house!"

"We're frightfully sorry for all the row, sir," said Tom Merry respectfully. "We're not responsible for all those awful crashes and bangs. A gang of rotters—ahem—are behind that hedge, and are trying to spoil our music. You see, we have come to play carols, and collect money in aid of the poor of the village. Christmas is almost here, and there are a great number of people in Rylcombe who would be only too glad of a little assistance. Dr. Holmes has given us full permission, of course."

Farmer Henderson grunted.

"Your motive may be all right. But hang it all, I can't stand that noise!" he said. "Here, take this pound note, and clear off! Move right away from here, and don't disturb me again!"

"Oh, very well, sir! Thanks very much!"

Tom Merry rejoined the other members of the Glee Club.

"Here's a quid to start with, chaps!" he said. "Farmer Henderson gave it to us to clear off!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, that's a good start, anyway!" chuckled the Shell captain. "If everybody follows the farmer's example, we shall collect quite a large sum in hush money!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Before we go any farther, boys, let's get rid of those rotten Grammarians!" said Blake. "They've come out to muck up our performance, that's evident!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The St. Jim's Glee Club laid down their instruments, and waited for the word to attack.

Tom Merry gave the signal, and, with a sudden rush, they all pounded through the hedge, and flung themselves on Gordon Gay & Co., who were on the other side.

The Grammarians had evidently expected this onslaught, for they had constructed a fort out of snow. They met the St. Jim's attackers with a hurricane of snowballs.

Whiz! Bang! Wallop!
"Yaroooh!" roared Tom Merry. "Don't give in, chaps! Rush their fort!"
"Huwway!"

Like Spartans on the warpath, Tom Merry & Co. hurled themselves at the fort, and scattered the snow in all directions. Then followed a hand-to-hand fight between the Grammarians and the St. Jim's Glee Club amongst the snow. The moon came out, and shed its soft radiance down on the scene. The battle was waged with vim and vigour, each side doing its utmost to conquer.

Tom Merry & Co. had the advantage of the attackers, however, for they had from the first half-buried their opponents in the wreck of the snow rampart. They sat on the Grammarians, and rammed them farther into the snow.

"Yerrugh!"

"Ooooooh!"

"Gug, gug, gug!"

These were a few of the weird expressions uttered by Gordon Gay & Co. as the heroes of St. Jim's rubbed their faces in the snow.

"Good! We're top dogs again!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Let's bury 'em, boys, and take their giddy instruments away with us! That will settle their hash!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Gordon Gay & Co. stood absolutely no chance after that. They were all buried in the snow, and left there, gasping and gurgling, and uttering all manner of threats.

Tom Merry and his fellow Glee Club members confiscated the jazz instruments of their rivals, and went their way rejoicing.

"Now for some real carol-singing!" said Jack Blake. "This way to the village, my sons! I don't reckon we shall be bothered by those Grammarians any more! We've nipped their little game in the bud—what?"

"Rather!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "It ended up in a frost, in fact!"

And the others smiled dutifully at Monty's little joke.

CHAPTER 8.

An Unexpected Turn.

"IT'S getting late!"

Tom Merry made that remark, consulting his wrist-watch.

The night had worn on till nine o'clock. The St. Jim's Christmas Glee Club had been very busy in the neighbourhood of Rylcombe, and their takings had mounted up.

"Fifteen pounds nine and tuppence!" said Tom Merry, with satisfaction, looking at the little notebook he carried. "That's not so bad for an evening's work, is it?"

"No, wathah not, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus enthusiastically. "As a mattah of fact, I considah it wathah wippin'!"

They were on the outskirts of Rylcombe Wood, where one or two large houses stood back from the road. It was a lonely, secluded neighbourhood, but the Glee Club had hopes of obtaining some further additions to their takings from the inmates of these large houses.

"This will have to be our last delivery. I reckon!" chuckled Blake. "My arm is getting quite stiff with wagging this giddy baton!"

"Yes, you nearly had my eye out once or twice!" grunted Kangaroo, shifting his position. "Better leave the conducting alone, Blake, and let us get on without you!"

"Oh bosh!"

The Glee Club gathered round, and roared forth a good old Christmas song at the tops of their voices. The orchestra waded in, and soon the tune was well under way.

That finished, Monty Lowther sang his comic Christmas song. His companions were heartily tired of that song, but they bore up bravely under the ordeal. Then the orchestra gave a medley of Christmas tunes, winding up with a brisk piccolo solo by Reilly. After that came another vocal delivery in the form of a carol, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy singing solo in alternate verses. The orchestra again played a stirring march, and the singers chimed in at the end with harmony, whilst Tom Merry went round with the collection-box.

At the first two houses gratifying results in the form of cash contributions to the money-box were obtained. Tom walked up to the door of the third large mansion, and knocked.

He received no reply in answer to his knock. The house was in darkness, and apparently deserted.

"H'm! The people are evidently spending Christmas somewhere else," mused Tom Merry, and he turned away.

As he was walking down the garden-path he thought he heard a rustle among some shrubbery. He peered closely into the dark shadows, and then gave a start.

A man was prowling there! He looked a rough, unkempt

fellow. Immediately the swift thought leapt into Tom's brain.

A burglar!

The man had evidently come to burgle the house in the owner's absence.

What should he do?

Tom acted on the instant.

He dropped the money-box in the snow, and dashed forward towards the shrubbery, with a shout:

"Come in here, chaps! Help!"

Next minute he was struggling on the snow-covered ground with a heavy, muscular man.

The others outside had heard Tom's shout, and they came running up the path to their chum's assistance.

The burglar made a desperate effort to hurl Tom from him and escape, but the plucky St. Jim's junior hung on to the fellow's leg, and brought him hurtling to the ground.

Then the others came up, and the man was completely overwhelmed.

"Got him!" panted Talbot, who was sitting on the rascal's chest. "Who on earth is he, Tommy? A burglar, I suppose?"

"That's about the size of it, I reckon," said Tom, jumping up and seizing a well-filled sack which the burglar had dropped. "Here's the swag, all ready to be carted away. Jolly lucky I spotted him in time—eh?"

"Yaas, wathah! We've caught the wottah wed-handed, bai Jove!"

The outwitted rascal lying in the snow gave a whine.

"You've caught me! Look 'ere, young gents, you let me go, an' I'll keep straight!" he cried. "I'll tell yer why I come to rob this 'ere place to-night. It belongs to Jacob Carrington, the house-owner, and the biggest scoundrel who ever walked in shoeleather. 'E's a robber of the poor, that's wot 'e is! It was really to 'ave a little of my own back on 'im that I come to burgle 'is 'ouse to-night."

Tom Merry looked astounded.

"This is Carrington's house! By Jove! We didn't know that!" he exclaimed.

"Yus, it belongs to Carrington, a bloke wot deserves to be robbed!"

Tom Merry's brain acted swiftly. A novel plan was forming in his head. He turned to his chums with an eager look.

"I say, you chaps, I've hit on a ripping wheeze," he said. "We've got Carrington's things here in this sack. After what we know about him we'll agree that he doesn't deserve our trouble in saving him from being robbed. But we can't let this fellow go, and take the swag. Instead, we'll keep the stuff ourselves, and refuse to return it to Carrington until he releases poor Mrs. Robinson from her debt to him."

The others drew deep breaths.

"By Jove!" breathed Monty Lowther. "Do you think we dare do that, Tommy? It'll be illegal to keep stolen property, you know!"

"But Carrington needn't know we've got it!" said Tom Merry. "We'll send him a letter supposed to have come from a bold, bad burglar, who has taken a sudden interest in the Robinsons. He'll never find out who took the stuff, and he'll have to give in! Don't worry! There are heaps of ways and means of working this idea!"

"Right-ho, Tommy!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm game to risk it!"

"So am I!" said Manners.

"That's settled, then!" said Tom Merry. "We'll keep it in our study!"

"Look 'ere!" exclaimed the burglar on the ground. "Wot about me? You ain't a-goin' to 'and me over to the cops, are yer?"

"No," said Tom Merry shortly. "I believe you only came here to burgle Carrington out of revenge. Here's a pound for yourself. And take my tip, don't try burgling any more for a living—or for settling private grudges, either. It's apt to become dangerous. Let him go, chaps!"

"Thanks, young gents!" gasped the man, struggling to his feet. "I ain't a burglar by profession—really, I ain't! This quid will 'elp me and the missus through Christmas, anyway! You're real sports, an' I thank you again!"

"Mind, not a word about our keeping this stuff!" warned Tom Merry.

"No, sir—I take me davey I'll be as mum as an oyster! I ain't no friend of Carrington, an' I wouldn't do 'im a service by splittin' on you, take my word!"

With that the fellow was gone.

Blake picked up the collection-box, and Tom Merry and Monty Lowther took charge of the bag of swag.

"So much for one evening!" chuckled the Shell captain.

"I reckon we've done jolly well, considering, don't you?"

"What-ho!"

The Glee Club members returned in high feather to St. Jim's, and there recounted to their admiring schoolfellows their adventures of the evening—omitting, of course, to

mention the episode with the burglar in Jacob Carrington's garden.

Dr. Holmes was very gratified when he heard how much had been collected, and added five pounds himself. The St. Jim's Glee Club thereupon assembled in the quad, and proceeded to render their entertainment for the benefit of the masters and boys of St. Jim's.

Mr. Railton gave two pounds, and Messrs. Linton and Lathom a pound each. The prefects good-naturedly contributed, and other members of the school likewise.

By the time the performance was over, sufficient had been added to the evening's takings to bring the grand total up to nearly fifty pounds!

The members of the St. Jim's Glee Club had good cause to congratulate themselves!

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther managed to smuggle the bag of swag into their study without anybody seeing them. It was placed at the bottom of the cupboard and left there.

And that night, before bedtime, a misspelt letter, specially written by Tom Merry in a disguised hand, was sent to Mr. Jacob Carrington, demanding the cancellation of Mrs. Robinson's rent, with a threat that unless that was done the proceeds of the burglary at his house that night would be kept for the "burglar's" own private use.

CHAPTER 9. Bowled Out!

"GREAT pip!"
"Wh-what the dickens—"
"It's Baggy!"
"He's run in!"

Tom Merry & Co. were walking through Rylcombe High Street next morning, when they suddenly came upon a scene which caused them to halt in amazement and utter those astounded ejaculations.

A fat, plump schoolboy, wearing the St. Jim's cap, was being bundled along the High Street in the grip of P.-c. Crump, the local custodian of the law.

There was no mistaking the identity of P.-c. Crump's prisoner. He was Baggy Trimble, the fat youth of the Fourth.

Tom Merry & Co. blinked.
"Oh, great Scott!" said Jack Blake, with a groan.

"This is a show-up, and no mistake! Fancy Baggy being run in! What's he been up-to, I wonder?"

"Perhaps he's been thieving from one of the shops!" said Tom Merry, frowning. "Come on, chaps! We'd better inquire into this!"

The juniors hurried across the road, and went up to P.-c. Crump.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What's Trimble been up to?"

"Nothing!" howled Baggy, almost in tears. "He's nabbed me for nothing, you chaps! Disgraceful, I call it! Yarroogh! You'll tear my coat collar in a minute, you beast!"

"No strugglin', then, you young rip!" growled P.-c. Crump majestically.

"Wot I says is this 'ere. All boys is villains at 'eart! It's just about time I copped one of 'em!"

"But what's he done?" shrieked Blake.

"Wot's 'e done?" echoed P.-c. Crump, with a scoffing laugh. "Ho, I like that! Why, I caught the young rip in the very act of passin' off stolen property on a pawnbroker!"

"It wasn't stolen!" howled Baggy Trimble furiously. "I found it, I tell you!"

"Tell that to the magistrates, young man!" said P.-c. Crump. "Why, that wery watch you was tryin' to pawn is one of a number of missin' harticles which the perlice 'ave been tryin' to find for months! Don't you kid me you found it!"

"How did you get hold of it, Baggy?" demanded Tom Merry quickly.

"I found it in your cupboard, Tom Merry. It came out of your very room!" wailed Baggy. "I—I was feelin' hungry this morning, not havin' had much breakfast, and—thinking you might have some grub in your study cupboard. I opened it while you were out, and had a look.

I found this watch, with a lot of other things, in the bottom of the cupboard! There, that's the truth! I didn't thieve it!"

Tom Merry's brows were knitted with perplexity.

"Did you say, Crump, that this watch has been missing for months?" he asked.

"Which that's wot I said, young man," replied the village constable loftily. "There's been a lot of desprit robberies goin' hon lately in Wayland and round about, and the perlice 'ave been on the look-out for the stolen property and the thief. All the missin' harticles 'ave been reported, and descriptions of 'em circulated to all the pawnbrokers in the county. Immejitly this young villain showed that 'ere watch to Francis, the pawnbroker, Francis recognised it, and called me. Why, look wot I found in the young rip's pockets—joolery and another watch—all of 'em part of the stolen property!"

Tom Merry looked bewildered.

What did it mean?

Those things, of course, were part of the swag taken from the burglar at Jacob Carrington's house last night. It was impossible that the fellow had taken each of those things from the various owners, for, as P.-c. Crump said, they had been stolen a long time previously. There could be only one conclusion to arrive at. The burglar had taken them from Carrington's house, believing them to be Carrington's own property.

How had the stolen things come into Jacob Carrington's possession, then?

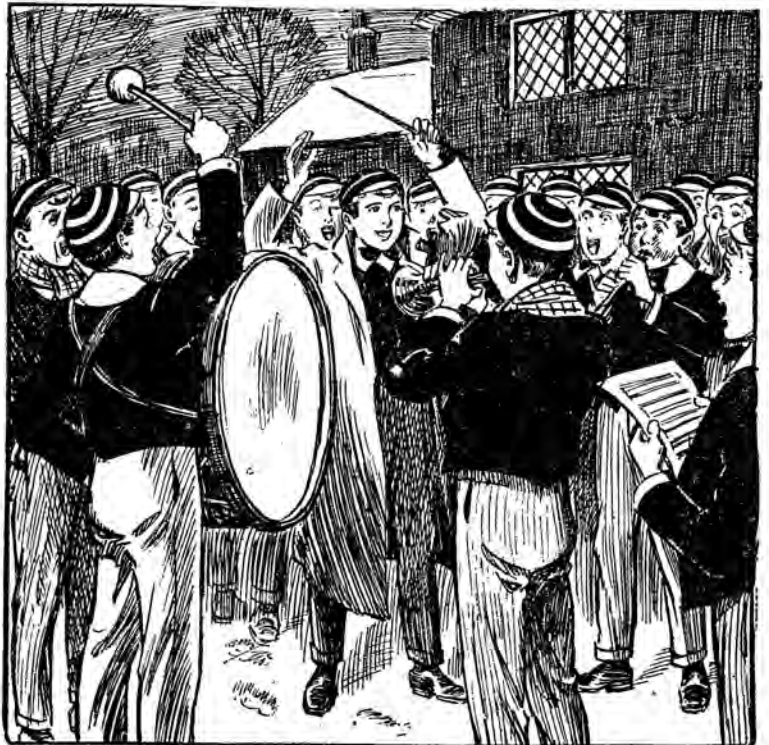
"Here, I think I can solve this mystery," said Tom Merry quickly. "You must be an idiot, Crump, to believe that young Trimble is the fellow who has been stealing these things! He certainly stole them from my room, and—"

"Then 'ow did them things 'appen to be in your room, young man?" demanded P.-c. Crump.

"That's just what I want to explain to the inspector," said the Shell captain. "Let young Trimble go, and we'll all go into the station and thrash things out."

P.-c. Crump refused to allow his prisoner to go, however. He hung on to Baggy like a dog with a bone, and dragged him into the police-station.

Tom Merry & Co. followed them in, after addressing a few words of explanation to the curious crowd that had collected.



Jack Blake assembled the instrumentalists round him, and in response to the first violent wave of his baton, a tumult of noise rent the cold, wintry air. Monty Lowther beat the drum as though it were a carpet which badly needed cleaning, and seemed intent upon drowning the rest of the players.

The inspector was astounded at that schoolboy raid on the station. Still more astounded was he when he heard Tom Merry & Co.'s story.

The juniors explained everything—how they had caught the burglar, and kept the swag which they thought belonged to Carrington, in order to use it as a weapon to force him to cancel Mrs. Robinson's debt.

The inspector realised the significance of the facts at once. He telephoned Wayland, who immediately sent a detachment of constables to Carrington's house.

Baggy Trimble was released, and the juniors all returned to St. Jim's with a plain-clothes man, to whom they handed over the remainder of the stolen property.

The Terrible Three had Baggy before them in Study No. 10 a little later. Jack Blake & Co. were there.

"Baggy, you badly need a lesson!" said the Shell captain severely. "You must be taught that you mustn't burgle chaps' studies—whether for tuck or anything else! You are hereby sentenced to a severe bumping! Bump him, chaps!"

"Hear, hear!"

Baggy was grasped in many hands and whirled over. "Yaroooooh! Leggo! Ow-ow-wow! Hands off, you rotters! Yooooooop!"

In spite of Baggy's wails, and howls, and struggles, they bumped him severely, and then, when that operation was completed, they hurled him from the study and dribbled him down the passage.

By the time Tom Merry & Co. had finished with him, Baggy Trimble was feeling that life was really not worth living!

Later that day the juniors received a visit from a police-detective, who informed them that Jacob Carrington's house had been searched, and undeniable evidence discovered—that he was the head of a gang of clever pick-

pockets and robbers, who had been robbing local residents for months past.

Carrington had been arrested, and much of the stolen property recovered.

Tom Merry & Co. rejoiced when they heard this news.

"How wippin', deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that afternoon, when tea was over. "If it hadn't been for us cawol-singin' outside that wascal's house, we shouldn't have been able to bowl him out!"

"Gussy's wheeze of a Glee Club is responsible!" chuckled Blake. "I reckon we ought to pass a vote of thanks to Gussy!"

"Rather!"

Arthur Augustus graciously accepted the vote of thanks.

Mrs. Robinson was visited by the chums of the Lower School that evening. Her landlord, being arrested, could not extort the amount that had been worrying her. The police authorities had already been to the cottage, and set the poor woman's mind at ease.

Tom Merry & Co., with fifty pounds to dispose of in assisting the poor of Rylcombe, managed to do some very useful work.

Every farthing—and a little more—of the money that had been collected by the Glee Club was expended in good things, which were distributed among the necessitous folk of the village.

So, all things considered, Tom Merry & Co. had just reason to feel worthy of themselves and of their country for the good work they had carried out as champions of the oppressed.

(There will be another grand, long story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled, "THE SHADOW ON LEVISON!" By Martin Clifford. Do not miss it!)

READ THIS! IT WILL INTEREST YOU—AND DON'T FORGET TO TELL YOUR CHUMS TO GET NEXT WEEK'S "BOYS' HERALD."

This is Arundel College:  *known as "The College of Sportsmen"; situated on the Sussex Downs: where Stringer sends Nibby Clink,*  *the mascot of the Norchester football team, to school.*

This is Gerald Browne  *the mystery prefect, and leader of the school bullies.*  *This is the Secret Cave*  *near the Devil's Dyke where their meetings are held.*

This is Jack Gordon  *leader of the Fourth Form, who chums up with Nibby, and helps to make his first term at the famous college as happy as possible.*

This is Tony Jerrold  *a right good sort, who leads the dare-devils of the fourth in their constant "rags" against St. Simon's*  *the rival school. There are lots of other famous characters, and many points of interest in —*

"The College of Sportsmen"
the Great New "Boys' Herald" School Story!

The ST JIM'S NEWS

Edited By TOM MERRY.

Baggy Tells His History.

HIS WONDERFUL MANSIONS.

(For some queer reason, Tom Merry considers that I am the most qualified to sub-edit the following amazing contribution from the pen—and the imagination of our old friend Ananias Baggibus Trimble. It has been a ghastly job to deal with it. For the benefit of anybody who might have so little regard for the value of his time as to waste it in perusing this outbreak of undiluted piffle, I have corrected the spelling and the offences against the rules of English grammar as well as it is possible to do the task. If I am going to have this sort of thing foisted on to me, I shall seriously consider the question of resigning my position on the staff. Well, here is Baggy's article as I have re-written it.—Ralph Reckless Cardew.)

ON several occasions Tom Merry has received letters from readers of the "St. Jim's News," asking for information regarding my ancestral home, Bagley Towers, and he has asked me to write this article, as he thinks that many others would be very interested in the subject. Of course they would.

To begin with, then, I have really two homes, Bagley Towers and Trimble Hall. These two magnificent edifices—absolute palaces, I might say—are situated in different parts of the country. Unfortunately, I am unable to state exactly where they are, as if I disclosed their position I should be simply overwhelmed during the holidays with hosts of St. Jim's fellows taking advantage of my boundless hospitality, and inviting themselves over and spounging on my family. In the last week of term fellows follow me about all over the place fishing for invitations, and toadying to me, and all that sort of thing. But as at ordinary times most of these chaps do not treat me with proper respect—nor even show decent feeling towards a pal by offering, to accommodate me on those rare occasions when I am temporarily short of funds—I naturally give them the cold shoulder.

Besides, my people are awfully particular, and although they would be very polite—being so exceedingly well brought up—to anyone I took pity on and brought home with me, yet they would feel it an awful come-down to have to admit before all our grand visitors that I mixed with the sort of fellows they have at St. Jim's. And, of course, the fellows would be quite lost in such fine company as they would find there—dukes and Cabinet Ministers, and foreign Royalty and Indian rajahs and similar nobles.

Naturally, I am quite at home in this kind of society—in fact, I'm always the centre of attraction when I'm there. Some of the chaps here would stare if they could see me walking about the magnificent grounds of Bagley Towers arm-in-arm with a couple of Cabinet Ministers, giving them tips on how to run the country and all that, you know. Some of the big men of the day come down specially to Bagley Towers—or Trimble Hall—when I'm there, to ask my advice on public matters and affairs of State. Of course, I'm always ready to help them out of their difficulties, and they know that they can always rely on my judgment.

I have a huge collection of silver cups and gold watches and things like that, given to me in token of their gratitude. Thousands of pounds' worth there is, and my pater has to employ four men specially to guard the room in which they are kept. They walk about outside night and day armed with rifles and revolvers and swords. A burglar would stand a pretty poor chance of getting his paws on anything that belonged to me, I can tell you. (That's the first thing Baggibus has said that I can believe. I should say that a giddy burglar would stand a poor chance of finding anything that belonged to him.—R.R.C.)

Bagley Towers—one of the stately homes of England—is built on the top of a whacking big hill, and is entirely surrounded by a moat. (How do they get the water up there?—R.R.C.) The main building is a quarter of a mile long, and about two hundred yards wide. It was built in the year 1074 by the Roman Emperor Julius Caesar, in order to defend himself against the Picts and Scots. Sir Baggibus Trimbleorim was the first of my line to occupy it, and it was given to him in the year 1282 by Oliver Cromwell as a reward for helping him to defeat the Spanish Armada. Sir Baggibus was one of the Knights of the Round Table, and defeated Don Quixote in single combat, gaining the title of *Cœur de Lion*, which is Latin for "One of the knuts." He sold his knighthood for a mess of pottage—whatever that is—and so it has died out in the family, which is a great pity.

There are so many rooms in the Towers that nobody has ever yet succeeded in counting them; several thousand, many of them large enough to hold an Atlantic liner. The whole of St. Jim's could be put inside Bagley Towers and lost.

Servants are sometimes missing for days at a time, wandering about trying to find their way, and we have to keep about fifty more than we need, so that we can always make up for those who are missing, until they appear again. Guests who sleep in some of the rooms have to get up in the middle of the night in order to reach the main part of the building in time for breakfast.

We have a staff of over four hundred servants, including thirty butlers, all in gorgeous liveries, with powdered hair, and butts made of real gold with our crest, and the initials "B.T." on, in diamonds. Of course, these do not include the out-servants, who number another three hundred or so, the majority of them being gardeners. All the garden tools and implements are made of solid silver, and there are several miles of glasshouses and conservatories. There is also a big lake, on which we keep a steam-yacht.

The old stables have been converted into garages, and accommodate the huge fleet of Rolls-Royce motor-cars. It takes a small army of men to look after these—I have ten mechanics to attend to my own private run-about, a little thing of 2,000 horse-power that my pater gave me for a birthday present. And I don't half order them about and tell them off if everything isn't absolutely to my liking. I spend a lot of time in the holidays dashing about the countryside in the car, killing chickens on the road, and running over dogs and cats. I am trying to persuade the pater to buy me an aeroplane, and then I can fly over people's houses and drop things on them.

Of course, we have some horses as well, as we do a lot of hunting. In fact, being rather fed-up with the car last midsummer, I spent most of the time in the hunting-field. (What did you hunt in midsummer, Baggibus—cats?—R.R.C.)

My own suite of rooms in the Towers is the last word in luxuriousness and princely magnificence. My boudoir has walls of rose pink silk, and the furniture is all upholstered in purple tapestry. The lamp-shades are yellow and crimson, and a magnificent thick Turkey carpet of green, with a design on in blue covers the floor. The ceiling is painted sky-blue, and all the woodwork is gilded. Well-known artists have visited it, and they always stand spellbound in the doorway. (I should imagine they would—if it existed.—R.R.C.) The bath-room is of marble, I think, and I have been told there is a very fine bath there. I think that one of my valets keeps the coal in it.

I have five valets and several footmen, and they wait on me hand and foot. That is why I feel so lost at St. Jim's, having to do everything for myself.

The best part of my quarters, however, is the private dining-room. When I am in the house I am usually to be found here. It is a splendid apartment, with a kitchen adjoining, where two cooks are constantly at work making pies, jellies, puddings, cakes, toffee, blancmanges, trifles, doughnuts and so on. I have a first-rate laboratory where I work out ideas and invent new things to eat. Real, useful inventions, they are, not like Bernard Glyn's idiotic notions that do nobody any good. I invented a new kind of rabbit-pie last holiday. I shot the rabbit myself—anyway the gamekeeper hit it, but I was with him at the time, so it comes to the same thing—and I think you enjoy things more when you have all the labour of getting them yourself.

(There is a lot more of this kind of thing, and Baggibus goes on to spin yarns about "Trimble Hall," but I think there is enough here for one dose. I have therefore cut the article in two, and am reserving the second portion, dealing with Trimble's other ancestral tower, for a future issue of the "News."—R.R.C.)

Towser.

By George Herries.

SOMEbody or other always seems to be making a fuss about my dog Towser. If it isn't one ass, it's another. I know that Gussy doesn't like him, and that Ratty positively hates him. But I reckon that being disliked by Ratty is a recommendation to anybody. And as for Gussy, if he's got nothing more to grumble about than a few pairs of bags, a couple of dozen rotten toppers, some fancy waistcoats, a few bob's worth of neckties, two or three collar boxes, a lot of mouldy-looking socks, several pairs of shoes, hat-boxes, gloves, spats, handkerchiefs, and a silk football shirt—and that's about all that Towser's ever chewed up for him—well, he's making a soug about nothing, that's all I've got to say.

He can't expect Towser always to behave like an angel, and he ought to be jolly proud that he's got the chance of being on speaking terms with such a dog. It isn't everyone who has such an opportunity, I can tell you. (It isn't everybody who wants it!—T. M.)

And then, of course, there are cads like Melish and Racke and Crooke and Coutts—they have a lot to say about him, and they'd ill-treat him if they got the chance. But if Towser wasn't ten times a better specimen of a dog than they are of human beings, I'd drown him!

All that jaw about his being savage and bad-tempered is so much bunkum. He's as

gentle and mild as a kitten. Mind you, if anybody tries to take a rise out of him he shows them what he's made of, and some times, I admit, he shows me what their clothes are made of. That's one thing Towser always does; if he bites a chap, he saves the piece to show me afterwards, so that I shall know who the chap is, and be able to go and punch his head for interfering with my dog. And if any rotter started to set about me while Towser was there, he'd pretty nearly throttle the chap. I've often tried to get one of the fellows to give me a tap—in fun, you know—just to show what Towser would do to him, but for some reason nobody will do it.

When he growls, silly asses back away and get the breeze up about it, not knowing that it's just playfulness. So long as they treat him properly, he won't hurt them, only they don't seem to see it; and when he stands up and makes his chain rattle, they swear it's because he's trying to get at them. If he is, it's because they've been teasing him, and then it would serve them jolly well right if he did.

The other day I let him off the lead for a little while in Rylcombe Woods, and he suddenly darted off, and after about five minutes he came back with something in his mouth. At first I thought it was a rabbit, but when young Wally D'Arcy and Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne came bursting out from among the trees on to the path, yelling like a tribe of Indians, I discovered it was that rotten mongrel of young Wally's.

Towser came up to me wagging his tail like anything, and then the Third Form fags came rushing along. Wally was howling blue thunder, and trying to hit Towser with a piece of a tree-branch that he'd picked up. I soon stopped him at that, because Towser, having his mouth full, was not in a position to defend himself. And the job I had to get that blessed dog away from him! The fags were slugging me all the time, although I pointed out to them that it was D'Arcy's own fault for not keeping his dog in order.

I expect Towser took him for a bone—that's about all he looks like. Why, the poor old boy might have hurt his mouth on the mangy little brute—he's got a jolly tender mouth, you know. But Wally didn't have the decency to worry about it. All he could think of was his own mongrel, and he never even asked whether Towser was hurt. In fact, he even said he wished Towser would fall into the Rhyl and get drowned—that just shows how bitter they all are about him. That's the sort of thing that happens, and makes Towser get misunderstood.

But some day he'll have his chance. You mark my words. Tom Merry or somebody will get kidnapped, and then they'll have to come to me and ask my dog to track him. He's a splendid tracker, though nobody seems to realise it. Of course, he isn't a bloodhound, and no sensible chap would expect him to be quite as good, but there are some scents he can follow. A red-herring, for instance, or anything like that, and if only the chap who gets kidnapped has the gumption to shove a red-herring in his pocket, you'll see what Towser will do.

(Apparently Herries expects me to carry decaying fish around with me on the off-chance of being kidnapped. I'm afraid I shall take my chance of being rescued by some other means, if ever that happens to me. I'd sooner trust to being tracked down by something more likely to accomplish the task—white mice, for instance! I have had to cut Herries' article short at this point, as from here he goes on to give a list which he claims is Towser's pedigree, proving that he's a descendant of the original bulldog that chased King Charles up an oak-tree. It's about as interesting as one of Skimmy's articles on Balmisism.—T. M.)

Correspondence.

SYLVIA MULLNE (South Africa).—Thanks for answering my questions. You don't appear to have got any favourite characters at St. Jim's on the quiet. Monteith was certainly an "out and outer" in the days which Ethel Cleveland is describing. He is still somewhat cold and selfish in temperament, but quite straight-going now.

W. STOKOE (East London, South Africa).—I feel very pleased with answers to my queries. Will you please write again and ask some questions? Tell me your opinion of the "News" and its contents.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 725.

ALBERT WILLIAM LAMBERT (Bournemouth).—Many thanks for your kind wishes. What do you think of my latest idea, to run both the "News" and my "Weekly"? So you think Cousin Ethel's article the best feature I have yet published. Then may it always adorn the pages of the "Gem." So you think the next "Special" should deal with Harry Noble. Perhaps it will. What do you think of his football reports? By now you will have seen the cricket averages. What did you think of them? Cousin Ethel used to go to a college called St. Freda's. I have something up my sleeve concerning Doris Levison and a girl's public school.

MISS NANCY BAKER (Hythe).—Many thanks for answering my questions. I would like you to write again, and give me a long criticism on the Christmas Number.

"ADMIRER OF YOUR HUMBLE" (Mortlake).—A large number of the boys at St. Jim's play tennis. But tennis-balls have now given place to snowballs. Baggy Trimble came to St. Jim's in No. 114 of the "Gem," "The Bounder of St. Jim's." There are about three hundred boys at St. Jim's. I really couldn't say whether any of D'Arcy's friends have got dogs. My thoughts dwell in a slightly higher sphere than that, old sport. Ernest Levison had to leave Greyfriars through vindictive Harry Wharton of something of which he himself was guilty. Mr. Ratcliff has got a sister and a rascally young nephew. Dr. Holmes has still got his wife. His daughter is called Cecelia. Some more questions are always welcome.

C. P. C. (The Chinese Protectorate, Fed. Malay States).—Monty Lowther's name is called by the Shell fellows with the "ow" pronounced as in "cow." Arthur Coutts, the new fellow in the Shell is called "Coots." I might add, Grundy has started to call him "Cunning Coots." Gussy's name is correctly pronounced Dar-see (two syllables); Wildrake is pronounced correctly Will-drake, not Wild-rake. I don't believe Dr. Holmes is related to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous Sherlock. And we haven't got the pluck to ask him. Yes, he is the Rev. Richard Holmes, D.D., M.A. There has been a new Form invented at St. Jim's commonly known as the Higher Sixth. Grundy says it is the last Form before the "Upper Ten." It is, however, for fellows who wish to remain at St. Jim's for gaining the 'Varsity knowledge, but are not desirous of entering Oxford or Cambridge. Please write again; your questions are most interesting to answer.

More Christmas Party Articles.

(Continued from last week.)

Dinner.

By **FATTY WYNN.**

I was disappointed! I don't mean with the dinner—oh, dear no! I mean with the scene which ensued with the rabble of kiddies who charged out of the hedges. They numbered about three dozen in all. There were three or four of about fourteen, while the remainder were all about seven, eight, nine, or ten. Anyhow, we dispensed with the whole giddy collection in about ten minutes.

Of course, they put up a fierce scrap to begin with. Gussy caught six cannon-ball-size snowballs with his noble visage—awfully funny thing how Gussy's face attracts things, isn't it?—and the rest of us were a bit splattered with broken snowballs; but that was all.

The girls stayed at short distance behind, and Levison and this child quickly made up some ammunition and charged pell-mell. As you all know, without any undue flattery, Levi-

son and myself are rather good at bowling. I can assure you that our ability came in very useful in despatching an effective volley. The unfortunates we hit must have concluded that avalanches had descended upon them. Those we didn't hit decided to mizzle before they shared the same fate. In ten minutes there wasn't an Easthorpe left on the horizon!

Exactly an hour later we sat down to Christmas dinner at Eastwood House, on Sunday, December 25th, 1921.

And dinner—such a dinner! I'd never had an equal before. Oh, it was scer-rumptious!

An Afternoon at Skating.

By **KIT WILDRAKE.**

Gee, I reckon the D'Arcy ranch is sure some place!

Of course, it was Christmas Day and Sunday, but nobody objected to a short period of skating on the lake. Lord and Lady Eastwood went over to their next-door neighbour, Duncan Sloane, the millionaire, to spend the afternoon. Although they were next-door neighbours, their mansions were over a mile apart. That is something like things are in British Columbia.

I guess the ladies skated superbly. I was really a trifle surprised. Lord Eastwood's boys provided some laughter all the time. Arthur A. D'Arcy tried his best to "cut ice" with Miss Cleveland. I guess there was nothing doing for Higgins monopolised her. He cut ice in the true sense, however, when the younger child D'Arcy slid between his legs to make something really funny occur. I guess he sorter succeeded! Miss Levison honoured me with her delightful company for over a quarter of an hour. During that time I made her move round that lake in a manner which left her fairly breathless. Cardew is a real live dab at figure-skating; but he chuckled that up when he saw Miss Doris was unengaged. From then till the end of the afternoon he was her companion.

D'Arcy minor and Levison ditto dragged out an old sleigh from somewhere towards the end of the skate. The antics they cut was far funnier than any old cinema film. When it got too dark for skating we sat on the bank and watched them carry on with their performance. When at length they couldn't tell each other from the trees on the bank, we packed up and went off in.

This vacation at Eastwood House is my first Christmas in England. And I reckon the time I spent there will take some beating.

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(Continued from last week.)

The Queer Case of Dr. Brutell

Written by Professor Hector Gordon, Science Master of St. Jim's.

"A sear-faced prospector came by on a horse a short time ago, and told us to be expecting a parcel of outlaws."

The sheriff listened to the old man's explanation, and there was a good-natured smile playing around his features.

"That must have been that bandit chief," he said; "he's full of tricks like that. Never mind, it might have been much worse. It is a good job no damage has been done yet."

Then the two rival leaders shook hands, and peace was declared. There was no time to be lost. The sheriff was determined to round up the gang, and after a brief exchange of greetings, they were ready to set off on the chase once more.

On the Track.

THE villagers gave the sheriff a brief description of the man who had set the trap for them.

"That's the fellow we're after," returned the law officer. "It's Scarface Bender, the outlaw. Come on, boys!"

Then, like a flash, the little party of cowboys dashed away on the chase again. The sheriff was fortunate in finding a number of clues, and presently they came upon a deep canyon. Away in the distance was a small camp, and a fire was burning beside the main tent.

"Looks as if the Black Circle have decided to stay here for the night," muttered the sheriff. "We'll take the winding road down to the valley and see if we can give Messrs. Hammer and Pinchers the surprise of their lives. Go easy, boys; we don't want to arouse their suspicions too early, or they might even yet succeed in getting away from us!"

The sheriff led the way, and the party moved on towards the camp of the Black Circle situated in the canyon below. The sheriff's men took every precaution to hide their presence, but unfortunately for them the eagle eye of the man on guard caught sight of the stealthily-approaching figures.

He quickly gave his comrades the alarm, and in an instant all was activity in the little camp. The villainous members of the gang sprang upon their horses, and set off like lightning.

The sheriff gave the order to his men to open fire upon the retreating figures. The gang replied to the volley. But the distance between the opposing forces was rapidly increasing, and it looked very doubtful if the sheriff would be successful in capturing a single member of the Black Circle on this occasion. Luck certainly had been against them.

Just a few minutes longer, and they would have been within fighting distance of their foe, and then Hammer and Pinchers & Co. would have had to fight hard for their liberty or be captured.

Every second now took them farther away from the danger-zone, and under cover of the darkness they eventually succeeded in making good their escape.

Presently the sheriff saw that further pursuit was hopeless, and he gave the order to his men to pull up their horses. They were all a little disappointed at being beaten, but this only increased their determination to keep on until the villainous Black Circle were completely in their power.

Meanwhile, Dr. Brutell and the staff of the Stanton ranch-house had not been idle. Brutell had organised a party of volunteers who were willing to assist in the round-up of the gang.

It was the doctor's idea to set off on another route, and in this way the whole of the surrounding district would be thoroughly gone over. Jack Regan, the popular ranch foreman, and a selected band of his toughest cowboys had joined the party, and were thoroughly enjoying the exciting chase.

Madeline also was determined not to be left out of it. She was a very clever rider, and was always with the foremost horsemen. At first Dr. Brutell endeavoured to persuade Mr. Stanton's pretty daughter to stay at

home, but she would not listen to this argument. She declared that after all said and done it was just as dangerous for her to stop at home as it would be with the party.

If the gang learnt that the ranch-house was deserted, they would most certainly pay it a return visit and capture the girl again. There was a good deal in this point of view, and so with a smile Dr. Brutell told Madeleine of his willingness to let her accompany them on their thrilling expedition.

For a long time they rode along without catching the slightest glimpse of their enemies, and they came to the conclusion that the gang must have eluded the sheriff and got clear away from the district.

It was certain that they could do no more that night. It was quite dark now, and so they decided to make a camp and settle down for the night. They had taken the precaution to bring a good supply of refreshments with them, and it was a very good thing that they did, for they were too far away from home now to get back.

It was quite a merry party which gathered around the camp-fire that night before retiring to rest. They arranged quite a good little feast, and everything went off right royally until it was discovered that nobody had brought an instrument to open the lemonade-bottles.

But this was where Dr. Brutell once more proved his resourcefulness. No doubt a simpler method of removing the stoppers from the lemonade-bottles could have been devised after a moment or two's thought, but the doctor did not wait for this.

Seizing hold of the bottles, he placed them up against a tree a few yards away from the camp. Then he got hold of his gun and aimed at the top of the first bottle.

There was a sharp report, and then it was seen that Brutell had shot away the patent stopper.

He repeated the performance until the whole of the bottles had been opened in this novel way. Jack Regan looked at the doctor in amazement.

Regan himself had a great reputation as a crack shot, but Brutell had certainly performed a wonderful feat. It came as a greater surprise to the foreman because on a previous occasion the doctor had made the remark that, "he was not much of a shot!"

This must have been a joke, for very few men could have removed the tops from the bottles in this way without shattering the bottles.

The doctor's exhibition was greeted with a round of handclapping. Soon after this the party returned to rest. They all had a rather tiring day, although none the less a very enjoyable one, and they wanted to be on the trail early again the next day.

It was a perfect night, and the gathering could be relied upon to make themselves as comfortable as could be. Sleeping out was no hardship to these rugged men of the West, and to Madeleine the experience was a thoroughly enjoyable one.

The men rigged her up a hammock made from blankets which they had brought with them, and in her own tent some little distance away she was quite at home.

Early the following morning the party broke camp, and Madeleine went off in advance, while the cowboys were packing up their belongings. She thoroughly enjoyed her ride, and little did she dream that disaster was about to overtake her. Indeed, danger was the last thing to enter her mind at that moment.

With the knowledge that Dr. Brutell and Jack Regan and his men were a short distance behind her, she felt as confident as could be. But the Black Circle gang had reason to believe that their enemies were in the vicinity, and it was to be the fate of the unsuspecting girl to fall into their trap.

(To be continued.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 725.

THE VALLEY OF SURPRISE

Read this magnificent story dealing with the adventures of three chums in a strange country.

By REID WHITLEY.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Hobby Tarrant and Tony Matthers, with Billy Kettle, a trusted negro servant, are on an expedition in the Andes. A volcanic eruption, causing a tremendous tidal wave, carries their canoe into the Valley of Surprise. The party explore the valley, and meet many weird and wonderful animals, and experience many adventurous times. Reaching a village, they are confronted by a race of strange, primitive men, who show great hospitality, and make friends. But Maxla, the medicine-man, hates the newcomers, and through a dastardly scheme which he hatches, they very nearly lose their lives. For this action the Ariki lose faith in him. He succeeds in making friends with the Mangas, and with the assistance of these semi-human brutes, he captures Tony, whom he imprisons in the hollow of a large tree. Later, a rope is made fast round Tony's body, and he is hauled out to meet his doom.

Tony's Ordeal.

WITH the infamous Maxla leading, Tony was hurried along the ledge to a spot where the lake washed the foot of the cliff. Above this place the Mangas clustered thickly, hanging to jutting crags or squatting in jostling lines upon the tiers of shelving rock.

Men, women, and children, they were all there, and all desperately eager for the beginning of the new amusement Maxla had promised them. Seldom before had they taken a prisoner. Usually they contented themselves with killing their enemies at once. They had not enough intelligence to conceive of the fun that might be enjoyed from torture, but they were willing to learn.

Maxla halted on a little promontory, the perpendicular sides of which dropped into shallow water. He spoke to the two stalwarts who conducted Tony, and at once they lifted him up so that everyone could get a clear sight of him.

A roar of hoarse, silly laughter rang along the cliff; then silence fell as something moved in the water beneath. Tony saw a huge, slime-covered bulk heave itself up from the mud, its terrible jaws opening expectantly.

It was an alligator, of the same breed as the one he and his friends had encountered on their first morning in the valley, when they crossed the river, but a great deal larger. It might have been the father of all the alligators. It was old, but not feeble. For generations it haunted the waters of the lake, holding its own against all comers by virtue of its strength and cunning.

Doubtless it had often snapped up some unfortunate Manga, for it was greeted with cries of rage and derision, that died into expectant silence as Tony was swung from the rock and slowly lowered towards the gaping jaws, garnished with horrible, yellow teeth.

The reek of the brute swept sickeningly across Tony's nostrils as he dropped nearer, nearer. He braced himself for the cruel pain. He hoped that he might find strength enough to be silent, for he knew that every shriek of agony would be pure bliss to Maxla and his brutish friends.

He wondered if Hobby and Billy would ever know how he died. He felt certain that they and Lalo would avenge him. Hobby would invent something by which they could

leave the valley, and perhaps his uncle would learn of his fate.

Nearer, nearer, he came to those reeking jaws. The alligator bellowed impatiently, lifted himself clear of the mud, took a waddling step forward, and rose upon his hind legs. And then, as his snout almost touched Tony's dangling feet, Maxla shouted, the rope was hauled in sharply, and the great jaws clashed only a few inches short of their prey.

Again the alligator bellowed furiously, but his roaring was drowned by the gusty laughter of the Mangas. They slapped their thighs, tears ran down their hairy faces, they rolled against each other, till more than one lost his seat and was only saved by hastily clutching at his neighbours.

They shouted hoarse approval of Maxla, the man who had provided this unheard-of treat. With gestures that could not be mistaken, they bade him do it again.

The men at the rope obeyed. Once more Tony was lowered towards the alligator, which was now in a raving fury. Its tail beat the mud and water madly, sending showers of slime slashing against the rock face. It hauled itself on till it stood upright, bellowing continuously. This time it was on the alert. As Tony neared it, it made a sudden leap upwards. Only in time did he draw his legs under him, and even then he felt the snout graze a heel.

Again the laughter rolled out across the still waters as he was hauled aloft to the rock, leaving the alligator to prance in baffled fury. But Tony knew that the respite could be but short. He saw Maxla turn and glance anxiously towards the forest, then shout something to the Mangas.

Without knowing a word of Maxla's speech, Tony understood what he said. Morning was come. The Ariki would soon be on the trail again. It was time to finish the sport, to reward the alligator for his pains.

At the thought that his friends might even now be close at hand, a red flame of fury swept through Tony's veins. For the moment he stood alone. Maxla was some three paces away, talking and gesticulating as he persuaded the reluctant mob that it was best to conclude the fun. The two stalwarts who had handled the rope were standing on the brink of the rock, looking down at the furious alligator's vain attempts to climb the scarp.

In that instant Tony saw red. He hopped one pace forward, his bound hands shot out, took one of his tormentors full in the back with a force that sent him reeling against his mate.

A dreadful howl of fear from two throats, a gasp from the onlookers, then, locked in each other's arms as each sought to save himself, the pair staggered from the narrow plateau, and fell with a thud upon the alligator!

It whirled upon them as they rolled into the mud. Swish! Thud! Its huge tail swept round like a scythe-blade mowing grass, and crashed against the head of one, and the ribs of the other. A leap of incredible swiftness, and its horrible jaws had closed over the legs of both. A heave, a muffled roar, a long-drawn, slithering splash—and the pair were gone for ever!

For the space of three long gasps there was never a sound from the Mangas. They stared stupidly at the ripples spreading from the place where their comrades had disappeared. Then, like a breaking wave, a tumult of execration burst upon Tony. Those who could began to move towards him; Maxla drew his jagged knife.

Tony shouted, one long, wild yell of exultation. He was about to die, but at least he had taken toll of his foes, and he would die fighting. A big stone lay at his feet. He stooped, lifted it with his bound hands, and as Maxla leapt at him discharged it full on the medicine-man's chest, sending him reeling back against the foremost of the oncoming mob of Mangas.

They reeled against each other on the narrow space, steadied, and, passing Maxla back to the ledge, came on again. The foremost paused, lifting his broad-bladed

flint weapon—and dropped in a crumpled heap at his intended victim's feet, while high and clear above the racket of yelling rang the crack of a rifle.

Again, again, again, in quick succession came the shots, and with each one of the Mangas nearest to Tony fell, while, echoing along the cliffs, came the shrill war-cry of the Ariki, the bull-like bellowing of Billy Kettle, and a frantic, cracked yelling which Tony recognised as Hobby's.

Down from a high ledge poured the rescuers. Arrows whizzed, bullets sang and thudded home against hairy bodies; the heavy reports of Billy's big revolver boomed through the tumult.

The Mangas, taken entirely by surprise, fled yelling, though a few whose retreat was cut off turned to make a last stand, and fell riddled with shafts.

But before the last arrow had found its billet, while the roar of the Ariki braves still leapt from cliff to lake and back again in oft-repeated echoes, Hobby came recklessly leaping down the last steep ledges and stumbled over the writhing fallen to Tony's side.

"M-m-my d-d-ddear ch-chap!" he stammered excitedly. "W-we've had the d-deuce of a time. We got after you as quickly as we c-could, but we lost your trail. The Mangas had broken down the main ledge, and we got stuck on the cliffs in the dark, trying to find a way round. We couldn't m-move till it began to grow light. Then we heard the noise, and saw you at last. Y-you t-toppled those chaps over in fine style! I m-made a good shot at that fellow who was going to brain you, didn't I?"

"First-class!" agreed Tony, and as Hobby cut away his bonds, he sagged down on the rock, wearied out by his long-drawn torment.

"That's right," said Hobby, taking off his ragged coat and throwing it round his friend's shoulders. "Have a rest. Where's Maxla? I saw him, but I couldn't pot him without risking hitting you. I saw you give him one with a stone. Did you settle him?"

"No such luck," replied Tony wearily. "I think the Mangas carried him off with them. Here's Billy."

Billy, wildly excited, came prancing out upon the promontory, waving his batonet. "So dere you are, Marse Tony!" he bawled. "Is you hurted? No? Den dat's all right. We've give 'em a hiding, Marse Tony. Dem gone scooted, but we've killed a heap. Dat Lalo can fight mighty well. Now, den, hold up!"

But it was no use. The fatigue, the bruises, all that he had undergone, seemed suddenly to overwhelm Tony. The red glow of the sunrise upon the cliffs swam before his eyes, and he sank unconscious.

When he recovered, he was being carried in an improvised litter along the tree-top road. Before and behind marched the Ariki, singing a song of triumph, while Hobby and Billy walked beside him. Soon he was swung across the gap to the village, where he was put to bed, and quickly forgot all he had gone through in a deep sleep that was fortunately dreamless.

All through that day and the following night he slept, to wake on the morrow fully restored to his old vigour. Hobby greeted him as he woke.

"Better, old top? That's good, for I want your help. That brute we drove off is still wandering round the forest. It can see a bit with one eye, and Lalo is afraid it may come back and do more damage. So I thought we'd set about fixing up that catapult as soon as we could. I got all the wood cut for it yesterday. Billy has explained the notion to Lalo, and he wants it tried."

"What, before breakfast?" chuckled Tony. Hobby had the grace to blush.

"Of course not, old chap. Go ahead. Only—well, you see, I felt a bit peckish, so I've had mine, though I'll keep you company."

He did, devouring as much as Tony. The meal over, they sallied forth, to find Billy

alking with the chief. As Hobby had said, the chief liked the catapult notion, and had put all hands to work on the needed wood. It lay ready to put together. It only remained to decide on the best spot to place it. Lalo suggested the end of a sort of lane between the great trees, not far from the village. If the monster beast could be tempted to enter this it would be unable to turn aside, for the trunks stood thick on either hand.

"I've going to do de tempting, Marse Hobby," said Billy, with a broad grin. "You sets your contraption at one end of de road, and I trots in at de other wid de big fellow trotting after me. Den I pops out de way, and you shoots off. Reckon youse get him dat way."

"Reckon we will," agreed Hobby. And, with Tony, went to inspect the spot.

They found it would suit admirably, and everybody got to work on the machine at once. Hobby had based his idea on the memory of a Roman war machine. It was simple. Two short arms, working horizontally, were set in a stout frame. Strong springs of twisted ropes were made fast to their ends, a rope which was to serve as bow-string connected them. When the string was drawn back and made fast to a wooden trigger, the springs were at high tension. When it was released, it would drive an immense arrow a considerable distance with great force.

Thanks to the handiness of the Ariki, there had been no great trouble in making the machine, but when it came to moving it, difficulties began. If they could have handled the thing in pieces all would have been well. But since it had to be set on the ground, it had to be as nearly complete as possible, no one being anxious to spend much time in danger of lurking beasts.

With all hands on the ropes, it was swung from tree to tree until it hung above the selected spot, when it was lowered to the ground. At once the warriors made ready their bows, while a small party accompanied Tony and Hobby to earth.

Swiftly they hauled and tugged, slowly the bow-string was drawn back till it was caught by the trigger. Then the long, thick arrow, its point hardened by fire, was set in the groove of a long plank. A rope, by pulling on which the weapon could be discharged, was then led up a tree, and all was ready but the target.

Lalo had had men watching the creature since it had made its attack. It had not gone far, and he judged that it would be easily persuaded to pursue a man if once it saw him. He talked very earnestly with Billy, who was impatient to be off.

"He reckons as I'se going to be caught," explained the darkey. "I ain't. If he comes too close I'se going to scoot up a tree, or dodge in where he can't come. I'se orright, gemmen. Don't you be feared. Ta-ta!"

With a wave of the hand he swung gaily off, accompanied by Lalo, and was quickly out of sight. For a while there was silence. Then a long hissing snort rolled down the forest aisles. Again and again it was repeated, each time nearer than the last.

"Stand by!" whispered Tony, and Hobby tightened his hold on the trigger-rope.

They stared down the long, open lane. Flooded with green light, flecked here and there with sunshine which fell through some break in the foliage high overhead.

A big wolf, disturbed by the noise, trotted out of a covert, halted, and stood at gaze. Tony nodded to the bowmen above him, and a flight of shafts winged their way to the grey flank. Over rolled the wolf with a yelp, picked himself up, staggered a few steps into the timber, and there dropped dead.

And then Billy came in sight. He was running easily, his head turned. He looked very small and lonely against that background of giant timber. A moment later he looked even smaller, for the monster had come into view, a towering bulk that would have dwarfed a man of twice Billy's stalwart six feet.

Seen from above, it had been tremendous enough. From the place where they hung, little more than twenty feet above the ground, both Tony and Hobby were almost overwhelmed by its terrible magnitude. For the first time doubts assailed the proud inventor. Could that arrow, big as it was, possibly hurt such a gigantic horror?

"D'you think it'll stop him? If it doesn't—" he began.

"If it doesn't we'll have to move rather

quickly, that's all," replied Tony. "Be ready."

Above they could hear the Ariki stealthily climbing higher, but they gave no heed to them. All their attention was concentrated upon the tiny figure racing towards them and the monstrous one strolling along behind at what looked like a crawling walk, but which, in reality, carried the creature along at a great rate.

It was gaining on the darkey. He saw this, and spurred. The monster turned its head round so as to bring its one useful eye to bear, located its prey, and put on another few knots of speed. Again it drew up, but by now Billy was near.

His eyes sought and found the trail of creepers which he had knotted to mark the place where he was to turn aside.

"I'se going to dodge!" he shouted, and leapt for the close-set trunks bordering the open lane.

He reached them only in time, dodged through, and, reaching for a dangling liana, began to climb. The long, evil, half-blinded head shot out after him, only to bring up with a thud against a great bole.

But though the creature saw badly its sense of smell was in good working order. It halted, sniffing, swung round so that its bulk reached clear across the open way, and threw up its head, scanning the trees.

"Broadside on! You'll never get a better chance! Let her rip!" breathed Tony—and Hobby pulled the trigger-string.

With a boom and a whang the mighty weapon went off; the whirling arrow sped down the lane and plunged deep into the monster's side, so deep that it was almost buried.

At that dreadful and mortal wound it staggered, flung itself up on its hind legs, fell over, then, rising again, dashed blindly at the nearest tree, to crash against it with the sound of a ship being shattered upon a reef.

Down it went, rolled over, tried to rise, and failing, sank slowly till its head dropped upon the ground. For a minute more its tail swept madly to and fro, ploughing great furrows in the hard earth; then, gradually the motion ceased, a shudder rippled down the whole length of the brute, and it was still. After long years of tyranny it had fallen by the hands of its puniest and least considered enemies—men.

Fire—and Water.

AS the great brute shuddered its last, a rattle of cheers swept down the glade, and the Ariki came sliding from aloft, all eager to secure a slab of their ancient enemy before the beasts of the wild should gather to the feast.

In a short time they were running all over it, their choppers and knives hacking at the tough, scaly hide, and in a few minutes chunks of the flesh were being hauled aloft and carried to the village by the women who had waited above for the outcome of the experiment.

But this could not long continue. Though they had kept prudently out of sight till now, there were many creatures in the undergrowth. Swiftly and mysteriously they learned of the great kill, and came hurrying to take their share. A shrill call from Lalo sent his people scurrying aloft as a couple of bears rolled out of the cover to throw themselves upon the carcass, while a pack of hyenas raced to snatch a meal ere their betters drove them off.

But the Ariki had made good use of their time. What though tiger and bear fought and snarled and tore each other in their fierce animal greed? The Indians had secured enough for a really satisfactory feast, and soon the fires smoked under cooking-pots, while children turned lads spit before the flames.

Though they never starved, the people rarely had more than enough. They seized the opportunity whole-heartedly, and soon every single person was busily bloating his or her interior.

Only the three, who had turned with loathing from the musky-smelling flesh, were left in condition to move with ease and comfort.

Even Lalo, ordinarily so prudent and cautious, filled himself till he could not walk, but was fain to lie groaning. And where the chief gave such an example of gluttony the people were not slow to follow. By nightfall not one of the Ariki could move.

"Disgusting pigs!" said Tony. "Look at 'em lying around, not able to help themselves. If the Mangas were to turn up now we'd have the whole job of defending the

village. Better try your emetics on some of 'em, Hobby."

But though Hobby offered his services, they one and all declined when Billy made them understand what he proposed to do. Waste good food? Never! Everything was well. The Mangas had received such a lesson that they would never dare come near the village for many a long day. They were beaten to the earth and quite harmless.

"And that means we'll have to keep watch most of the night," grumbled Tony. "One of us is not enough. I'll take this side. You, Hobby, take the other, and Billy will patrol between us. If we talk and laugh, that will give the notion that we're wide awake."

The others agreed. Hobby took his post; Billy began to promenade, while below them, at no great distance, all the beasts of prey that had gathered from every quarter of the valley kept up a continuous uproar.

Wherever the Mangas had stowed themselves they could not fail to hear the noise. It was likely enough that they might venture from their hiding-places to see what caused it. And if they came near the village, it was probable that they would try to do some mischief in revenge for their signal defeat.

Time, which had gone so quickly in the morning, crawled away as the watchers sat, or walked to and fro, talking loudly to each other. The Ariki sprawled about the platform. Most of them had not even had the energy to crawl into their huts. One and all snored, and the sound of their nose music mingled with the snarls and roars and growls of the beasts of the night.

It was nearing midnight. A breeze had sprung up, and was freshening to a gale. Tony welcomed it, for the reek of cooked fats and the rank muskiness of the fragments of the feast were anything but delicious. Then, as it swept over his face, he started, and peered into the darkness.

For a single moment he had had a whiff of the sweet-scented smoke that rose from the slow-burning wood the Ariki carried when on a journey away from home. None burned in the village, for it was only used when travelling. Besides, he sat on the outer or windward side, so that all the village smells were blown away from him. The scent came from the forest.

Were any of the Ariki absent from the village? No. Only the traitorous knave Maxia could be prowling somewhere near, and if he carried a fire-stick, it could only be with an ill purpose.

"Billy," called Tony softly. "All this stuff would burn easily, wouldn't it?"

"It'd puff up in a wink, Marse Tony." "Then go and rouse Lalo. Make him move, even if it half-kills him. Tell him that Maxia is somewhere near, that he has a fire-stick, and that he may be going to try to set fire to the huts."

"Gorramighty, more trouble!" growled Billy, and made for the chief's hut.

Lalo lay across his threshold, snoring with the best. He grunted as Billy shook him, but did not awake until the darkey had rolled him over several times. Even then he was but half-awake, and listened dully as Billy began to speak.

Meanwhile, Tony ran across to Hobby, and told him what he suspected, then hastened back to his post barely in time to see a spark glint for an instant among the trees. So swiftly did it come and go that he would have thought it a firefly if the odour had not warned him. Now it was stronger than ever.

Also it seemed to come from several quarters. Was the village being surrounded? The Mangas, despite their losses, still greatly outnumbered the Ariki. Were they about to make a desperate attack, trusting that surprise would make up for their inferiority in weapons?

"Hurry, Billy! Make Lalo wake up! Kick some of the others! Ah!"

The exclamation burst from him as, from a score of places behind the screen of ferns and creepers which had masked preparations, a score of torches soared and flew, showering sparks and spouting flame as they dropped among the huts. At once the grass roof of one caught fire. As the ruddy light flashed up, Tony saw something move amidst the boughs beyond the gap and fired. A yell and the rending crash of a heavy body falling through the branches told that his aim had been true.

In reply came another volley of torches, curving high above the open, to fall where

they would do most harm. But by this the Ariki were stirring. Billy raged among them, kicking mercilessly, lugging men and women to their feet, while Lalo, roused at last to the peril, moved heavily but effectively about the same job.

Yet already it seemed that they would be too late. The men stared dazedly for an instant, then, lifting water-pots, strove to quench the blaze, or tore down flaming roofs, and cast them to the ground.

But still fresh torches continued to fall, though Hobby and Tony fired whenever they saw a mark. The Mangas were learning by experience. They took cover behind trunks and branches. Though several were wounded, no more were put out of action, and from some safe place close behind them Maxia egged them on to fresh exertions.

The village was on fire in a dozen places. Women screamed, children ran to and fro, adding to the confusion. A few of the men had taken their bows, and were shooting more or less at random, while Billy and Lalo were everywhere at once, hacking away burning timbers, trampling out the beginnings of new fires.

Yet it seemed as though all their efforts would avail nothing. A few minutes more and the flames would be quite beyond control. They would be driven from the staging to huddle, perhaps, on a few boughs on the windward side, exposed to the attack of the Mangas, who might swing themselves across, and work havoc at close quarters.

And then, with a dramatic suddenness, the situation was saved. The wind that had threatened their destruction proved their saviour, since it brought with it clouds. Without any sort of warning one of these broke, and the whole forest was deluged with a tropic shower—the sort which drops a lakeful of water in a few minutes.

With a hiss the fires were extinguished. The rain beat and hammered upon the leaves, upon the platform. It drummed upon the few sound roofs that remained, it ran in little rivers down the trunks and from the branches, to form great pools upon the ground. The sound of it falling on the lake resembled the noise of surf beating upon reefs.

Huddled under what shelter they could find, the Ariki waited, thankful for the unlooked-for deliverance, alert for an attack. But none came. Maxia knew when he was beaten. In some dim fashion the Mangas ascribed that sudden downpour to the strange beings who shot deadly lightning.

Though he urged them to make one final effort to overwhelm their enemies by a sudden onslaught, they would not. At first by twos and threes, then in a body, they hastened away, and Maxia was compelled to follow.

The rain poured down for nearly an hour. Then it ceased, but only for a little. Cloud after cloud drifted over the vale, to discharge its burden, and thereafter the down-

pour was nearly incessant. When morning came the sun was hidden.

All day rain fell steadily, but the Ariki worked persistently, repairing damages, while the women dried wood before the few fires that could now be kindled. As for the Mangas, they had completely vanished, and for the moment all danger of attack was at an end.

Lalo, however, at Tony's suggestion, had the creepers cleared from the nearer trees, so that another surprise was made almost impossible.

Meanwhile, the waters of the lake rose steadily, encroaching upon the forest, until the ground was entirely under water. A few persistent scavengers were still busy upon the enormous remains of the dead monster, while the catapult that had slain it floated near at hand.

Hobby seized the opportunity to have it towed to the village, and hoisted out of harm's way, remarking that it might be useful another time.

"Why not make a smaller one, and put it on wheels? We might have some practice against the tigers," suggested Tony laughing.

But Hobby shook his head, and gravely pointed out that the tigers might be base enough to get behind the artillerymen.

"Anyhow, I've been thinking of something else," he continued. "We can't stay here for ever. I'd like to get out, and return with a properly equipped expedition. The problem is how to do it. I had thought of a balloon, but we have nothing to make it of, and no gas to fill it, even if we had. But it might be possible to make a kite big enough to carry one of us to the cliff top. Then he could make fast ropes for the others."

It was Tony's turn to shake his head as he gazed at the towering cliffs. It seemed to him barely possible that a kite could be persuaded to rise to such a height.

However, since the rain continued to fall at frequent intervals, and getting wet meant the risk of fever, he had no objection to helping Hobby construct the kite. Perhaps, even though it might not surmount the cliffs, it might rise high enough to land a rope-end at the head of the gap through which they had been carried into the valley.

There were plenty of materials close at hand. Long canes provided the framework, and for covering there was an ample store of the paper-like inner bark of a tree, which the Ariki often used, instead of leaves for roofing. Though thin, it was very tough and light. Sewn together, it made an excellent covering for the kite, which was of the box pattern.

For more than a week, during which the rain continued to fall with only short intermissions, Hobby, assisted by Tony and Billy, worked on the thing; while several of the Ariki women made light but strong rope from the tough creepers that abounded on the upper levels. A light, strong basket, large enough to hold a single passenger, was also constructed. This was to be fastened to the line at some distance below the kite. In it Hobby hoped to make an ascent.

At length a day dawned clear and fine, with a steady breeze blowing down the



A roar of hoarse, silly laughter rang along the cliff, then silence fell as the Mangas saw Tony lowered. Suddenly a huge, slime-covered bulk heaved itself up from the mud. It was an immense alligator, and its terrible jaws opened expectantly.

valley. This was of no use for attempting an ascent of the cliffs or to the gap by which they had entered, but Hobby thought the opportunity excellent for a trial trip.

The kite was got aloft without any great difficulty, and carried the basket, loaded with a weight equal to Hobby's, in excellent style. Having thus proved that his notion was quite practical, the proud inventor lost no time in going aloft himself.

"Where's the danger?" he demanded. "There's a steady wind, and you've seen how well she behaves. If it gets too gusty I'll wave, and you can all tail on, and haul me in. I'll be as right as rain!"

And, since he would not be denied, Tony gave in. With a cheery grin to his friends and the whole assembled tribe, he entered the basket. The rope was let out foot by foot, and, drawn by the tug of the huge kite, Hobby soared slowly above the tree-tops, and out over the lake.

(Another instalment of this grand adventure serial next week.)

The Boys' Friend 2



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EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—

It is only a plain statement of hard fact when I take leave here to point out to all and sundry that the forthcoming stories in the "Gem" will surpass anything yet given. The "Gem" these days has a name for splendid stories, and it is going to keep it.

Mr. Martin Clifford's new tales will be distinctive, and characterised by just that rush of brilliant novelty which everybody

looks for. It is a treat to read him, and an encouragement to know that his theme is inexhaustible.

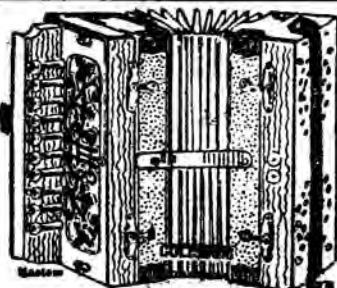
Some readers think that the author has explored the innermost recesses of Baggy Trimble's capacious mind. Not at all. There is always more to be discovered, and it is not merely so with Mr. Bagley Trimble. In the New Year, "Gem" readers will have heaps of pleasant surprises. There are stories coming along which will throw more light on the interesting group of Third Form fags. We want more about these hefty youngsters. The more or less obscure characters who come in occasionally are also full of interest.

The recent barring-out series was the best yet. That is the opinion handed

in from numerous readers. It is mine as well. The night attack was most skilful, and the artist was most happy in his masterly sketch of the great little Mr. Ratcliff. Every action he took, every word he spoke landed "Ratty" deeper in the mire. The defenders of the New House served out just what the unpopular Head of that House deserved, but Mr. Ratcliff is not one of those people who can be crushed entirely. We shall hear more of the genial, nice-minded gentleman in the future. Also, look out for our wonderful Gordon Gay series.

Well, here's good luck to you all in the New Year, and plenty more for the "Gem."

YOUR EDITOR.



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HOW THE ST. JIM'S BOYS SPENT NEW YEAR'S EVE.

Top Row : (First figure) Gussy sings one of his famous solos; (Second figure) The Clown, Monty Lowther; (Third figure) Baggy Trimble. Centre Group: A happy New Year's Eve party at the Junior Reception Room at St. Jim's. The boys, reading from left to right, are : Dick Roylance, A. A. D'Arcy, Figgins, Macdonald, Jack Blake, Kerr, and Wynn. The girls are: On the left, Phyllis Macdonald, and, centre, Joyce Digby. Bottom Row: (On left) Herring giving Towser a treat; (Right) Constance Owen, sister of Leslie Owen.