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SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

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1922.



THE RIOT IN THE THIRD FORM CLASS-ROOM!

(An Amazing and Exciting Incident from "The Fags' Rebellion!" - The 20,000 Words School Story Inside.)



My Readers' Own Corner

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TUCK HAMPERS AND MONEY PRIZES AWARDED FOR VIT! (If You Are Not a Prizewinner This Week, You May Be Next.)

All Attempts in this Competition should be Addressed to: The GEM, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.

THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER!—

ROUGH ON ROBERT!

A policeman, walking along the canal the other day, saw a youngster crying. He walked up to the little lad. "What's the matter, sonny?" he asked. The youngster pointed to a hat which was bobbing up and down in the middle of the canal. "My brother—" he sobbed. "In a flash the courageous constable plunged into the water. He rose to the surface again, but with the hat only. "Can't find him!" he gasped. "Where was he standing when he fell in?" "He didn't fall in," the boy blurted out. "He is over there. I just wanted to tell you that he threw my hat into the canal, but you wouldn't let me finish."—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to Miss M. Cumming, 11, Summer Hill, London Road, Carlisle.

AN INFORMING FACE!

Form master (lecturing class on the rhinoceros): "Now, boys, I must have your undivided attention, otherwise it will be impossible for you to form any idea of this hideous animal unless you keep your eyes fixed on me."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Silk, 7, Port Royal Street, Southsea, Portsmouth.

HE KICKED!

One day a gentleman bought his five-year-old son a donkey to amuse himself with. The youngster got on all right with it at first, but one day he came in crying; the donkey had kicked him. "You must have been annoying the poor brute," said his father. "No, I wasn't," replied the sobbing boy. "I was only trying to cut my name out on its tail."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. D. Richardson, Kilgobbin, Sandford, Co. Dublin.

THE LAST STRAW!

The young cyclist was fighting against a strong head wind, and wondering what unhappy thought had prompted him to venture so far from school. It was getting darker every minute, and rain was beginning to fall. Soon it came down in a deluge, and the poor fellow got drenched to the skin. To make matters worse, his tyre was then opened by a piece of glass in the road. With a moan, he jumped from the saddle and commenced to repair the damage. Up came a benevolent old gentleman, and on seeing the upturned cycle and repair outfit and the perspiring youth in the mud, he inquired: "Had a puncture, my friend?" The boy, looked up and swallowed his feelings with a huge gulp. "No, sir," he replied, "with a magnificent effort of sarcasm, 'I'm just changing the air in the tyres, the other lot's worn out, y'know!'"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Roy Hudson, 123, Fitzgerald Street, Bradford.

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The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided between the following two competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

R. Coverer, 41, Nugget Street, Oldham.
Charles H. Morton, 8, Brunton Terrace, Howarth, Street, Sunderland.

The ten prizes of 5s. each have been awarded to the following ten competitors, whose solutions contained two errors each:

J. Allison, 2, Forth Street, Chopwell, co. Durham; Tommy Loynd, 17, Clementina Terrace, Carlisle; Arthur Shaw, 41, Pontypidd Road, Forth, Glam.; William Scott, 424, Parliamentary Road, Glasgow; John Diver, 56, Rutland Road, South Hackney, E.9; Stanley C. Davies, 37, Manor Road, Liscard, Cheshire; Robert Carpenter, 5, Strickland Street, Elswick, Newcastle-on-Tyne; Teddy Ogden, 41, Nugget Street, Oldham; S. Ogden, 41, Nugget Street, Oldham; Frances H. Morton, 8, Brunton Terrace, Sunderland.

SOLUTION.

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THE FAGS' REBELLION!

Wally & Co., of the Third Form, Bar Bullying. Read this Rollicking, Rousing School Story.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I.

The Mysterious Stranger!

"LOOK out! Selby—"

"Blow Selby!"

"Yes, but—"

"Rats! Does Selby own the blessed lane?"

"Yes, but—"

Wally D'Arcy of the Third Form at St. Jim's broke off, and substituted actions for words. He grabbed his bosom chums, Curly Gibson and Jameson, by their respective jackets and yanked them into the shelter of the low hedge.

"You burbling chumps!" he muttered. "We can't let the Selby bird see us in this state. Look at my eye—and your nose, Jammy."

"Blessed if I can see it properly myself," grinned Jameson, squinting horribly in an effort to view his swollen nasal organ; "but it feels as if it looks like a squashed tomato. My hat! We'll get our own back on those Grammar School rotters for this!"

"We will; but that can wait. The question is how are we going to get past Selby without his seeing us? If we hang about here we'll be late for call-over."

And the leader of the fag tribe at St. Jim's peered round the fringe of hedge and along the dusky lane to where the Third Form master was standing in deep conversation with a stranger.

Obviously it was a problem requiring thought and strategy. The young heroes of the Third had paid a visit to Rycombe, and now in the dusk of the evening they were returning—very much the worse for wear. Wally D'Arcy owned that promised to be a beautiful black eye, Jameson sported a swollen nose, Curly Gibson nursed a cut lip. And their clothes also had suffered; in fact, they were altogether in a shocking condition.

And yet it was hardly their fault. They had been ambushed by a superior force of Grammar School fags, and their present deplorable state was the result.

But Mr. Selby was not at all likely to take that fact into consideration. Justice was not his strong point. He was a decidedly "hard" gentleman, entirely lacking in sympathy either for the misfortunes of the unfortunate juniors under his control or anyone else's. And he most emphatically was not in sympathy with Grammar School "rags."

In fact, it was as Wally realised, simply "asking for it" to let him see them just now.

"Blow Selby! Let's risk it!" remarked Curly Gibson. "The old lunk's too busy gassing with that chap to notice us. My hat! Wonder who that merchant is? Sounds as if Selby's ragging him no end."

"The old tyrant always is bully-ragging somebody," grunted Wally. "Not our biz, though. Look here, we'll slip through the hedge and dodge past that way. Come on!"

And Wally dived through a gap and led the way cautiously along the inside of the hedge. Mr. Selby obviously had neither heard nor seen them. His harsh, unpleasant tones did not cease. His words also became audible as the fags crept on.

"Once and for all," he was saying, in tones trembling with anger and agitation. "I utterly and finally refuse to help you. How dare you come here at all, I wonder! You are a worthless scamp—a depraved and dissipated rascal!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wally. "Old Selby doesn't half wrap it up, does he?"

"Wonder that merchant doesn't do him on the boko," said Curly Gibson.

But evidently the stranger was used to hard words, though there was more than a suggestion of a threat in his muttered reply to the master. And as the fags drew level, Mr. Selby was speaking again.

"That is enough! I refuse to be pestered by you any longer!" he snapped harshly. "Understand this! Unless you have left the neighbourhood by morning, I myself will see to it that— What was that?"

"That" was the sharp snapping of a twig under Wally D'Arcy's boot. In his haste to get out of earshot of what was obviously a private conversation, Wally had made an incautious step, and the result upon Mr. Selby was amazing.

Full of alarm, he dashed to the hedge and peered through. As his eyes fell upon the startled fags, his acridulated features became convulsed with rage.

"What—what does this mean?" he gasped hoarsely. "D'Arcy, Gibson, Jameson—how dare you! Come out into the lane at once!"

The fags obeyed somewhat sheepishly. They guessed the master imagined they had been eavesdropping, and they did not like the situation. As they emerged into the lane, the stranger had turned as if to bolt, but on seeing they were but schoolboys, he stopped and eyed them savagely.

They glanced at him curiously. He was young and fairly good-looking. His clothes were well-cut, but dusty and travel-stained. But there was a crafty look about him they did not like. At first glance the fags felt instinctively that he was a "wrong 'un."

"You—you young scoundrels!" breathed Mr. Selby, his small eyes glinting dangerously. "So you have now added eavesdropping to your other rascalities, D'Arcy?"

Wally flushed hotly, but did not reply.

"I am disgusted—but not surprised," went on the master sneeringly. "It is what I expect from you—listening to other people's conversations, D'Arcy. You—"

"We were not listening, sir," said Wally hotly, stung to answer by the spiteful sneer. "We—"

"That is enough, D'Arcy. You are an incorrigible young liar!"

"I'm not—and you know it, Mr. Selby," shouted Wally, flaming up. "We only heard what we couldn't help hearing."

"Then—then you did hear; you were listening!" almost choked the incensed master. "I—I—I—"

He broke off and glared furiously at the juniors. Whatever he and the mysterious stranger had been discussing, it was evidently something Mr. Selby, at least, did not want overheard.

"I—I have a good mind to lay my stick about you!" he spluttered, his eyes gleaming balefully. "As it is, I intend to make you suffer for daring to spy and pry into the private affairs of a master. You dishonourable young—"

"We've done nothing of the sort, sir! And you've no right to call us such names—master or not. If the Head heard you—"

"Silence! How—how dare you speak to me in that manner, boy!" almost shrieked the tyrannical master. "The Head, you say! I will take you before Dr. Holmes this very evening!"

"I only wish you would, sir," cried Wally recklessly. "We know we can be sure of justice from him, or Mr. Railton."

"Wha-at!"

Mr. Selby looked as if he could scarcely believe his own ears. Wally's chums looked at him aghast.

"You—you dare to infer that I am unjust; that I—"

"Yes, sir," Wally knew he had gone too far to draw back now, and on the principle that he might just as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, he meant to tell the unpopular master a few home truths. "You've never been anything but unjust to me," he went on defiantly. "You've always hated me, and been down on me since I came here. I'm sick of your injustice and spite—"

Wally got no farther. The reckless fag's daring words, and

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the scorn in his steady eyes, proved too much for Mr. Selby's stock of self-control. In a fit of ungovernable passion the master stepped forward and—
Snack!

Wally D'Arcy went spinning across the road and collapsed on the muddy path, his head spinning, his ear and cheek red where the blow had struck.

It was a flat-handed blow; but it was brutal for all that. Even the master himself realised he had overstepped the limit. He stepped forward again—for what purpose will never be known—but he found his progress barred by Curly Gibson and Jameson. Shoulder to shoulder, eyes blazing and fists clenched, they faced the furious master.

"You—you cad!" cried Jameson, through his teeth. "If you hit young Wally like that again you'll have us to deal with."

"What? You dare—" the master spluttered; but he stepped back and his unpleasant face whitened. Before he could continue, Wally D'Arcy staggered to his feet dizzily and clutched Jameson's arm.

"Chuck it, Jammy," he muttered. "This is my affair. No good you letting yourself in for it. I'll pay that rotter back, never fear."

"What's that—oh, indeed. You'll pay me back, will you?" choked Mr. Selby, whose sharp ears caught the words. "Very well. I'll remember that threat, D'Arcy. I'll make you bitterly regret this—this insolence and insubordination." He paused, trembling with fury, and pointed along the lane.

"Go!" he commanded. "If you are not in my study by my return it will be the worse for you. Wait for me there."

The fags turned and went—gladly enough. Not until they had turned the corner of the lane did anyone speak. Then Jameson turned to Wally.

"You—you ass, Wally!" he breathed. "You've done it now. What the thump did you want to cheek the brute like that for?"

"Because I'm fed-up with the old tyrant's bullying," said Wally, feeling his face tenderly. "He's been getting unbearable lately; and I'm not standing it much longer. My only hat, though; the brute nearly knocked my blessed head off."

"He's a cowardly brute, hitting you like that," said Gibson indignantly. "Anyway, let's cut on or he'll have another blessed excuse to bully us. Come on!"

"Blow him! I'm not hurrying, and in any case I've got to see Kildare before—Oh, great Scott!"

Wally stopped suddenly, his bruised face the picture of dismay.

"I've forgotten to post old Kildare's letter—it's jolly important, too. That scrap with the Grammarians knocked it out of my mind fairly. Look here, kids, I'll have to go back."

"But—but what about Selby?"

"Blow Selby—"

"But you silly chump—Selby will rave. And it's already past call—"

"Blow Selby, and blow call-over!" snapped Wally recklessly. "I'd rather disappoint the Selby bird than old Kildare. I'm going. I'll easily dodge the—Here, leggo, you asses!"

"Not much," grinned Curly grimly. "You're in trouble enough, without asking for more, young Wally, my buck! Collar him, Jammy."

"Leggo, or I'll dot you on the nose—"

But Jameson and Curly Gibson hung on, determined to save their reckless chum from further trouble. And as Wally was just as determined to go, a brief scuffle ensued.

But it did not last long. There came the sound of footsteps approaching round the corner, and Jameson gave an alarmed gasp.

"Selby!" he panted. "Cut for it—quick!"

Even Wally realised the folly of waiting, and he bolted after his chums. It was not until they had been running some minutes that the fag discovered he had left his cap behind. He had lost it in the scuffle, and in the sudden alarm he had not noticed the fact.

"You silly asses!" he panted. "You've made me lose my cap now."

"Oh—crumbs!"

"I'll have to go back now, and I may as well make a job of it and go on to Rylcombe," grinned Wally. "If Selby asks for me tell him to go and eat coke."

And with that, the reckless young scamp squeezed through the hedge and set off before his startled chums could raise a hand.

"That does it!" groaned Jameson. "There'll be trouble now, and no mistake."

And Stanley Gibson nodded dismally.

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CHAPTER 2.

Whose was the Hand?

"COME on, Gussy. We'll have to run for it," said Jack Blake.

"My hat, yes! Buck up, Gussy," said Herries. "No time for picking your way like a cat on hot bricks. Run for it."

"I uttably wufuse to wun for it, Hewwies. It is much too mudday for wunning, deah boys."

"Blow the mud! We've already been late for call-over once this week, fathead! Pick 'em up."

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the kind, Jack Blake," replied Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass frigidly upon Blake. "Even at the wisk of being late for call-ovah, I uttably wufuse to wisk splashin' my spats and wuinin' my bags. It is too beastlay mudday for wunnin'!"

"Oh, collar the ass," said Blake wearily. "We'll see if he'll run or not."

"Weally—Bai Jove! Welease me—"

But D'Arcy's chums did not release him. They had over-stayed their visit to the village, and they were yet some distance from St. Jim's. As Blake had said, it was necessary to "run for it." Only the swell of the Fourth did not see the necessity.

But his chums did, and they grasped D'Arcy and began to run. And Arthur Augustus also ran—he had to. With Digby on one side, Herries on the other, and Blake pushing behind they propelled him at breakneck speed along the lane in the deepening dusk, heedless alike of his protestations, of puddles, and flying mud.

"Welease me, you wottahs!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "You are wuinpin' my jacket, and wuinin' my twousers. Will you—stop—"

And quite suddenly they did stop—though not because D'Arcy ordered them to. As they swept round a corner of the winding lane their eyes met a startling scene.

"What the dickens—" began Blake.

"Great Scott! It—it's highway robbery," gasped Herries.

And it certainly looked like it. Ahead under the shadowy trees lay the helpless form of a man. Crouching over him was a second figure—dim and menacing.

"You're right, Herries," snapped Blake. "Come on!"

The four juniors dashed to the rescue. But even as they did so, the man—if man he was—looked up swiftly. He hesitated a brief second, and then he rushed across the lane and dived through the far hedge. They heard him crashing through the wood beyond; but as they arrived on the scene the sounds ceased.

"No good following him now," panted Blake. "Better look to this chap."

He bent over the prostrate figure, and as he did so the man raised himself weakly on one elbow. The juniors saw his face and gasped.

"My hat! It's Selby!" breathed Blake. "What's happened, sir? What—"

Mr. Selby—for it was, indeed, he—sat up, with a groan, and blinked up at the juniors dizzily.

"I—I have been assaulted!" he muttered feebly. "Some—some dastardly scoundrel struck me down from behind. Help me, boys."

The startled juniors helped him to his feet, where he stood, swaying, his hand pressed to his head. Blake stooped and picked up the master's hat, and handed it to him. Digby found his stick a few yards away, and next moment found something else. He gave an exclamation as he picked it up.

"Ah, what is that, Digby?" demanded the master swiftly.

"Is it—"

"It's a cap, sir," answered Digby a trifle uneasily. "It—it looks like—"

"Give it to me, boy!" snapped Mr. Selby vehemently. "Doubtless it is the property of the scoundrel who attacked me. It may give a clue as to his identity."

The master snatched the cap eagerly. But even as he did so, he swayed again, and would have fallen but for Blake.

"Hold up, sir. You're not fit to stand yet," he said quietly. "There's a big stone over there."

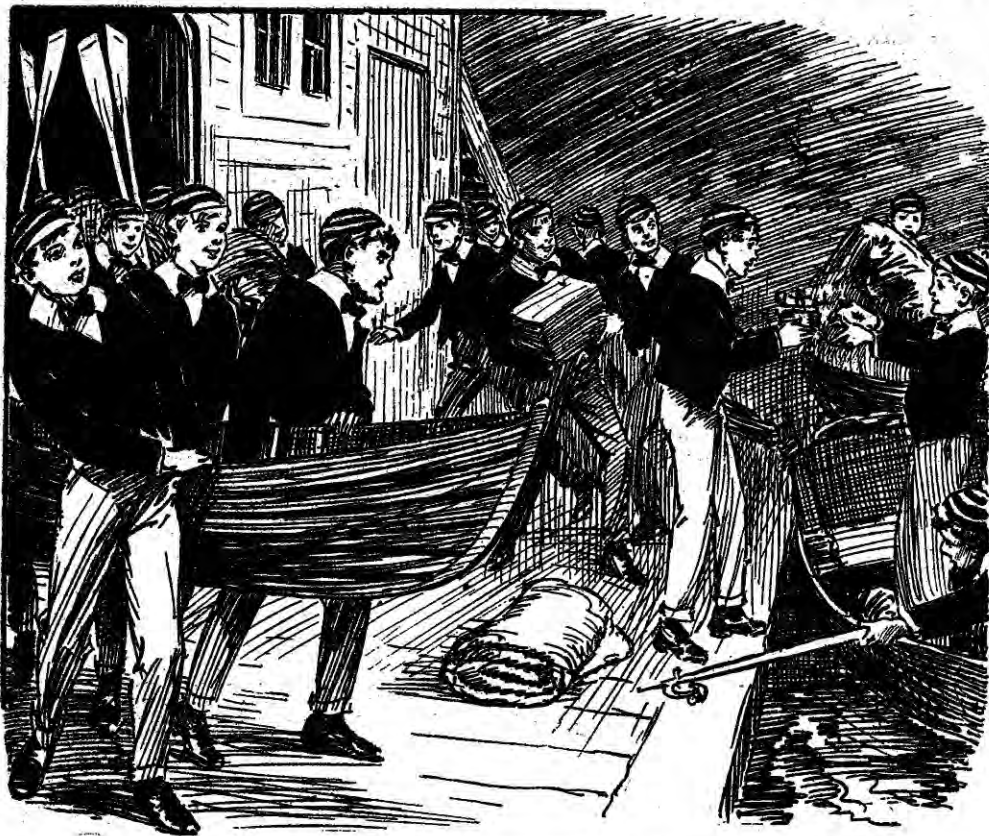
And with Digby's aid Jack Blake helped the injured master across the muddy lane. Upon the grass bordering the roadway lay a large, flat-topped stone; and here the master seated himself.

He had scarcely done so when there was a rustle in the hedge opposite. Next moment a dark figure emerged into the lane. He stood glancing round stealthily, and then—obviously not seeing the group under the trees—he began to scrutinize the ground as though looking for something.

"My hat! Is it—No—"

"It's young Wally!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! Wally, you young rascal—"

As D'Arcy's startled voice rang out, the fag jumped and



The Third Form rebels were wildly excited and enthusiastic, and they worked with a will. One by one the boats selected were carried out and launched, and loaded up with bedding, food, and cooking utensils. "That's it, chaps," said Jameson, "we mustn't forget anything!" (See Page 10.)

wheeled round. Then he saw the group and stepped slowly towards them. He gave a violent start as he saw Mr. Selby.

"Why—what—what is the matter?" he began, astonished. It was Mr. Selby who answered. He staggered to his feet, and his small eyes glittered as they rested on the fag's bare head.

"D'Arcy minor," he almost snarled, "what are you doing here? Is—this your cap?"

Wally's eyes widened, and he nodded. He held his hand out for the cap; but the master withdrew the cap quickly, his eyes gleaming balefully.

"You—you shall have your cap when Dr. Holmes has seen it," he said, in a tone trembling with mingled triumph and excitement. "I—I might have suspected this. You—you wicked and depraved young hooligan! I—"

"Bai Jove, Mr. Selby!" began Arthur Augustus hotly. "You suahly do not mean to insinu—"

"Be silent, boy!" thundered the master. "The meaning of this abominable assault is plain—only too plain—to me now. Less than fifteen minutes ago that wretched boy threatened me—threatened to 'pay me out,' as he expressed it. Little did I dream—"

"But—but, weally, sir—"

"Silence! There is no room for doubt whatever! The finding of his cap on this very spot, and his stealthy return to claim it, alone proves his guilt! And—and—" Mr. Selby hesitated a brief second—"now I remember; I distinctly recollect hearing D'Arcy minor's voice when I was attacked!"

Mr. Selby flushed slightly, and the juniors looked dumbfounded as he made that last statement. It was a lie—and the master knew it. He had heard no voice. But that fact was a detail to the tyrant of the Third. His was a small nature that had more than once stooped to petty deeds, which the unfortunate fags under his charge had discovered long ago to their cost.

But if Blake & Co. were dumbfounded, Wally was much more so. He gazed blankly from the white-faced master to the alarmed Fourth-Formers.

"I don't know what you are talking about, sir," he said sullenly. "If—if you think—"

"You will know soon, then!" snapped Mr. Selby malignantly. "Before Dr. Holmes you will have every opportunity of defending yourself, if you can. Blake, Herries, Digby, you will escort this wretched boy back to school. On no account are any of you to speak to him. And see to it that he does not escape you!"

"Come on, kid!" muttered Blake kindly, in an undertone to the bewildered Wally. "Better come. It'll all come right, never fear. We know you didn't do it; and that rotter will know it soon, too!"

CHAPTER 3.

Guilt!

"COME along, youngster, you're wanted; you, I mean, D'Arcy minor."

"The Head, I suppose, Kildare?" muttered Wally.

"Yes; at once! But what are you two kids doing in here with young D'Arcy?" added Kildare.

The captain of St. Jim's glanced questioningly at Curly Gibson and Jameson, who were standing, red-faced and indignant, with Wally in Mr. Selby's study.

Immediately on arrival at the school, Mr. Selby had ordered Blake & Co. to take Wally to his study, to remain there until sent for. And Blake and his chums had done so—to find Curly Gibson and Jameson waiting there. The Fourth-Formers had, before leaving them there, acquainted the two fags with the nature of the charge against Wally.

"We're waiting for that rotter, Selby; he met us in the

lane and told us to wait here for him," said Jameson warmly. "But look here, Kildare; we're coming to the Head with old Wally. It's all rot; a beastly rotten sham—"

"That's enough, kid!" snapped Kildare, though he looked as if he agreed with the wag. "The Head's waiting. As it happens, the Head wants you kids, too, as witnesses. You may as well come now."

And with that Kildare led the way to Dr. Holmes' study. They found Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, seated there with the Head. With him also was Mr. Selby. He sat with an elbow on the table, his head resting on his hand. His face was pale, and his eyes glittered as the three fags filed in after Kildare.

"Ah! You have brought all three boys, then, Kildare," said the Head gravely. "Very good!"

He motioned Jameson and Gibson to stand back, and then fixed a piercing gaze on Wally's pale face.

"You are aware, of course, of my object in sending for you, D'Arcy minor?" he began.

"Yes, sir!"

"This evening Mr. Selby, your Form master, was savagely assaulted in Rylcombe Lane. Fortunately, his injuries are not serious, the blow failed in its object. But"—the Head's voice became terribly stern—"that does not make the crime any the less serious. Mr. Selby did not see his assailant or assailants; but he claims that he distinctly recognised your voice when he was attacked, D'Arcy."

"Then he is not speaking the truth, sir!" said Wally stoutly.

"What! How dare you speak so of—"

"I don't care!" said Wally desperately. "I haven't touched Mr. Selby, sir! He may be a master; but he's not speaking the truth if he says I struck him! It's sheer spite! He's been down on me—"

"Enough!" thundered Dr. Holmes angrily. "How dare you refer to a master in such terms! This insolence will not help you, boy!"

The Head paused, and his voice took on a softer note.

"My boy," he said quietly. "I do not think you fully realise the gravity of the charge brought against you. Let me warn you that unless you can prove yourself innocent in this matter, I shall be obliged to expel you. Mr. Railton speaks nothing but good of you. It seems incredible, both to Mr. Railton and myself, that you can be guilty of this wicked thing. And yet, the evidence against you is overwhelming. I advise you for your own sake, my boy, to remain calm, and to answer the questions I put to you as clearly and fully as possible."

He paused again, his eyes fixed steadily on the fag's face.

"In the first place," said the Head quietly, "did you threaten Mr. Selby this evening? Did you say you would, as you expressed it, pay him back?"

"Yes, sir," said the fag frankly. "But—but I did not mean anything serious; I hardly knew what I was saying. It was when he knocked me down. I was half-sill—I mean, dazed. He hurt me—"

"What? Knocked you down?" gasped the Head. "What do you mean, boy? Do you—"

"It is false—utterly false!" raved Mr. Selby. "Dr. Hol—"

"It's quite true, sir!" cried Jameson shrilly. "He sent Wally spinning!"

"Silence!" thundered the Head. "Jameson, how dare you! Mr. Selby, pray do not interrupt. It seems to me, D'Arcy minor, that it will be better to allow you to tell your own story. Kindly give a full and clear account of your movements this evening."

Dr. Holmes glanced meaningfully at Mr. Railton, who nodded his approval. Next moment Wally was telling his story. And as he proceeded the Head's frown deepened. When he had finished, Mr. Selby's features were livid. But Mr. Railton, at least, was looking relieved.

"It is false; the boy is lying!" said Mr. Selby hoarsely. "Dr. Holmes, I appeal to you. The boy was insolent and mutinous! I merely boxed his ears—"

"I will discuss that question with you later, Mr. Selby," said the Head coldly. "Now, D'Arcy minor. You have admitted that you threatened Mr. Selby?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you still claim that you dropped your cap when struggling with your chums—"

"And it's quite true, sir—every word of it!" burst out Curly Gibson eagerly.

"Honest Injun, sir," agreed Jameson excitedly.

"It is a mass of fabrications!" cried Mr. Selby. "Don't you see what has happened, sir. They have concocted this story between them, whilst alone in my study."

The Head nodded gravely. He realised that the evidence of Wally's chums was of little value. Had they given their evidence before seeing Wally, the fact that their story agreed in every particular with Wally's would have proved his story of the lost cap quite true.

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But now it was of little avail. And in any case, even had their evidence been accepted, it would not have affected the main issue. Obviously, the deed had been done after Wally had parted with his chums.

"You may go, my boys," he said to Jameson and Gibson. "You will not be required further."

"But—but can't we stay, sir?" pleaded Jameson. "Wally's our chum; we know he couldn't have done such a thing! We want—"

"I am sorry," said the Head kindly; "but your evidence—such as it is—is of little value. Go!"

There was finality in the Head's curt gesture. With helpless glances at their chum, the two fags left the study slowly.

The Head turned to Mr. Selby.

"I think you had better retire now, Mr. Selby," he said. "You are still looking shaken and ill. You may safely leave me to deal with this distressing affair."

Besides finality, there was a faint touch of contempt in the Head's tone; and the master went, his face crimson.

For some moments there was silence. The faces of both Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton were grave. The case now resolved itself into one simple question—who was lying? Either Mr. Selby or Wally D'Arcy was lying—that was obvious. And the latter, at least, had every reason to be. Wally was a reckless young scapegrace, but his character was—or had been—above reproach. And yet the evidence was irrefutable. There was a motive—revenge. There was opportunity. There was the finding of Wally's cap on the scene of the outrage. And finally—this last the most damning evidence of all—there was Mr. Selby's declaration that he had recognised Wally's voice.

It was impossible to suspect Mr. Selby—a master—of lying away a boy's honour; both the Head and the Housemaster were agreed upon that. The thing was too despicable. So that one can hardly blame the kind old doctor for the decision he arrived at.

The Head looked at Mr. Railton. "The Housemaster's face was grave and distressed. But there was no doubting the meaning of the reluctant nod he gave Dr. Holmes."

"D'Arcy minor," said the Head sternly. "I have heard Mr. Selby's story, and I have heard yours. Much as it grieves me to say it—it is impossible for me to believe you to be anything else but guilty. But even now, in view of your good name—your hitherto irreproachable character—I cannot believe you wilfully wicked. I am inclined to deal leniently with you, providing you confess. You will be allowed plenty of time to think it over. If at the end of twenty-four hours you decide to confess, you will be publicly flogged, but not expelled. Should you still persist in denying your guilt, you will be expelled with ignominy. If you have anything to say now—"

"Nothing, sir," said Wally stoutly, though his voice trembled slightly. "Except that I did not do it."

"Very well. Kildare, you will take this boy to the punishment-room. Mr. Railton, you will perhaps make arrangements for his meals to be taken to him there. That will do."

"Come on, kid!"

With Kildare's kindly grasp on his arm, Wally D'Arcy left the room.

CHAPTER 4. Trouble!

"ROTTER!"

That was the almost unanimous verdict of St. Jim's. With the exception of a few—fellows like Piggett of the Third, and Knox of the Sixth—the sympathies of the whole school were with Wally D'Arcy. There was an utter lack of sympathy with Mr. Selby. At the same time, curiously enough, the almost unanimous verdict was that Wally was guilty. They believed like the Head and Mr. Railton, that he had received great provocation, and that he had succumbed to the sudden temptation to revenge himself.

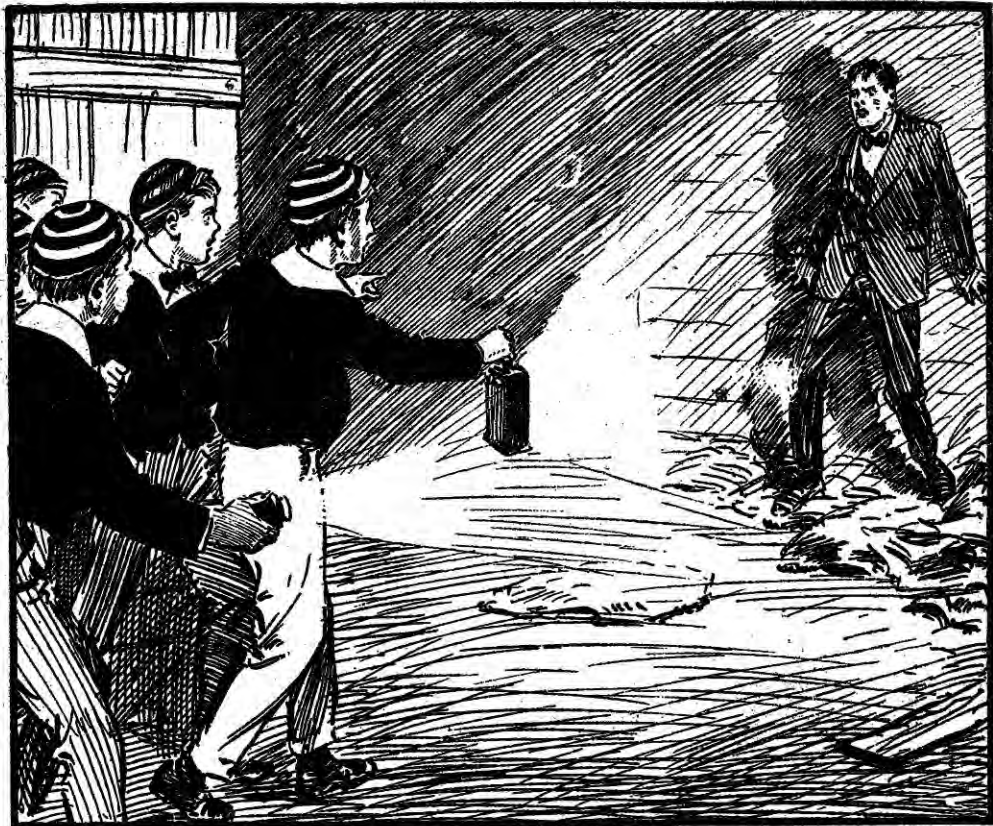
"It's rotten!" repeated Tom Merry, who was discussing the affair with a group of Fourth and Shell fellows after dinner the next day. "I—I simply can't believe Wally did it—he's such a decent kid—and yet I must."

"You'd better not let poor old Gussy hear you say that," grunted Jack Blake. "But—but I'm blessed if I know what to think myself! If you'd stop him sneaking out of the hedge, as we did last night, you'd swear he'd done it. And yet I'd swear it was a man's form and not a boy's we saw running away."

"Have you told the Head that?" asked Levison major. "Yes; and old Gussy's seen him about a dozen times. But it's no good. We had to admit it was too dark under the trees to see clearly. All the satisfaction Gussy got was five hundred lines for insolence—the Head called it that, anyway."

And Blake grinned ruefully.

"There were ructions in the Third this morning, I believe," said Manners.



As the light from Wally's torch fell full upon the strange scene in the hut the man lying in the corner moved and sat up. He stared sleepily at the startled group in the doorway for a brief instant, then, leaping to his feet, he crouched against the wall with the look of a hunted animal in his eyes. (See page 10.)

"And I don't wonder," grinned Cardew. "Old Selby looks like a merry old gargoyle with the toothache. I should have thought the dear man would be quite merry and bright this morning, knowing young Wally was going to be sacked. Still—hallo! Here's our young friend Jameson! How goes it, my little man? I hear you were unkind to your dear, fond teacher this morning—or was he unkind to you?" Jameson scowled.

"We gave him a nip—if that's what you mean!" he snorted. "And he'll get more yet. We're fed up with Selby. And we're not having poor old Wally sacked. There's going to be trouble, you see!"

And with that dark threat Jameson passed on, whilst the group broke up, many of them smiling.

But had they noticed the faces of the Third as they trooped into their Form-room that afternoon, they would have taken the sag's threat more seriously than they did. For if ever a Form looked mutinous, they did.

Jameson had only spoken the truth. The Third were indeed, "fed-up" with Mr. Selby, and they were determined that Wally should not be sacked. Wally was the idol of the Form, and they were grimly determined to back him up almost to a man. The Form were ripe for trouble that afternoon—and trouble there was.

They were inattentive—having other things to think of and whisper about than Roman history. And Mr. Selby was in a ferocious mood; a combination of circumstances which resulted in an almost uninterrupted succession of linings and canings all round.

But the real trouble didn't begin until half-way through the lesson. Then suddenly Mr. Selby's voice rang out harshly.

"Gibson, bring that paper to me—at once!"

Curly Gibson, in the act of passing a slip of paper to his next-door neighbour, gave a startled jump. The paper! A note had been written by Jameson, and had been passed from hand to hand until it had reached him. It was calling

a general meeting of the Third to protest against the threatened expulsion of Wally D'Arcy; and Curly had no intention of letting it fall into the hands of Mr. Selby. He pretended not to hear.

"Do you hear me, Gibson?" bellowed the irate master. "Come here at once!"

It was no use pretending not to hear that. Curly Gibson stood up and deliberately tore the note into pieces, scattering them over the floor. Then he clambered from his desk, and approached the master.

Breathlessly the startled Form looked on, waiting for the storm to break. They did not wait long.

"Gibson!" thundered Mr. Selby, his face livid. "How—how dare you? You have defied me openly! I ordered you to bring that note to me. This—is this too much. You rebellious young reprobate! Hold out your hand!"

The sag held out his hand—to receive a vicious cut from the cane. But it was only the first. Four times more the cane came down viciously. It was a cruel caning—brutal, and it brought murmurs from the onlookers and involuntary tears of pain into Curly's eyes. But when the tyrant raised the cane. But it was only the first. Four times more the "Again, Gibson!" snapped Mr. Selby.

The boy—Third-Former though he was—faced him bravely, his features white and drawn with pain.

"I—I won't!" he panted. "You—you've already thrashed me three times to-day. I—I can't stand any more. You can take me before the Head. I don't care. But I won't be caned again!"

"Wha-a-at!"

The master glowered at the defiant youngster; then suddenly his face became convulsed with rage. He gave a snarl, and, gripping the sag he raised the cane aloft.

Lash, lash, lash!

Beside himself with fury, the tyrant brought the cane down again and again on the boy's shoulders. Curly Gibson

writhed and gasped as the cane hit home, but not a cry came from his lips. And then—whether by accident or design would be hard to say—the cane missed the fag's shoulders.

He whistled viciously through the air and struck Curly Gibson clean across the back of his neck above the collar. The ominous sound of the blow striking home made the onlookers' hearts leap. From the hapless Curly Gibson came a cry of agony.

That did it.

"Shame!"

"You brute!"

"You howling rotter!"

From every part of the room the angry cries came, growing in volume. In the midst of the hubbub, Jameson sprang up on to a form, and his voice rang out fiercely.

"Chaps," he yelled, "are you going to stand that? Rescue! Down with the tyrant! Book him! Scrag him! Pelt him! Smash him!"

It was the signal—the spark to start the conflagration.

In less than a moment pandemonium reigned.

Yelling like wild Derivishes the fags sprang to their feet, and the air became thick with flying missiles. Books, blotting-pads, pens, rubber, inkpots, apples—anything and everything within reach of the enraged fags went the same way—towards Mr. Selby. Some of the missiles struck Curly Gibson; but he quickly sprang out of the line of fire, and Mr. Selby had the rest to himself.

A book struck his long nose; an apple knocked his mortar-board spinning; an ink-soaked ball of blotting paper dislodged his spectacles and covered his face with ink.

"Stop! Are you mad? What— Ow! Stop!" he

"Boys," he began huskily, "I am ashamed, disgusted: Never in my whole scholastic experience have I witnessed such a disgraceful exhibition of hooliganism! Mr. Selby, what has happened? What does this mean?"

Mr. Selby staggered to his feet, mopping his nose. He looked a sight. His eyes glittered as he pointed a shaking finger at the alarmed fags.

"It—it means mutiny, sir—rank rebellion!" he said, almost choking with fury and humiliation. "Those boys—those ruffians, attacked me, their master. I have been treated shamefully, scandalously. I merely found it necessary to— to chastise one of them—Gibson—and the whole Form assaulted me!"

"Who are the ringleaders, Mr. Selby?"

The Head's voice was calm now—ominously calm.

Mr. Selby pointed at Stanley Gibson.

"That boy was originally responsible for the whole trouble. But Jameson, Levison minor, Manners minor, and—yes, Hobbs—are equally guilty. They are the ringleaders, with D'Arcy minor, in all disturbances and irregularities in my Form."

"Very well. The boys named will stand out," said the Head grimly.

He picked up Mr. Selby's cane as the luckless five filed out, not very cheerfully. They guessed they were in for a record licking.

"Your hand, Gibson!"

Curly Gibson extended his hand slowly. The Head raised his arm and lowered it again, his eyes fixed intently upon the fag's hand. On the upturned palm showed several bluish-red, wicked-looking ridges.

JOHN MACDONALD, The Crack Left Full-back of

Everton F.C. Read what our Special Representative has to say about him.

IN recent seasons the management of the Everton club has gone to tremendous expense to build up the side. It might be suggested that several of the players thus secured have scarcely proved to be worth the big transfer-fees paid for them, but the regular attenders at Goodison Park are convinced that left full-back John Macdonald has already been worth the three thousand pounds which was paid to obtain his transfer. Indeed, it would not be going too far to say that at the present moment there are few more reliable defenders in the country than the Everton stalwart, and he has the additional qualification of being able to play just as well at right full-back as he can on the left.

As the name suggests, Macdonald is a Scot, and his play is typical of the land of his birth, for he is no mere hefty kicker who cares not where the ball goes so long as it travels away from his goal. Rather does he take the view that it is the business of a full-back to get his own forwards in motion whenever he can possibly do so, and also that it is his duty to keep the ball in play.

Of course, he played football from his earliest days—all Scottish boys do. When he left school he threw in his lot with the junior side of Shots United, in the Lancashire League, and it was principally as a left full-back that he rendered valuable assistance. A step up the ladder of fame was made when he joined the Dykehead club, and while there he helped his team to the Final Tie of the Scottish Qualifying Cup.

From Dykehead, Macdonald went to Motherwell, but it is said

that his new club thought so little of him that they did not give him a regular place in the side, so he returned to Dykehead. Then he passed on to the Airdrieonians, and with this club he moved over to the right full-back position. His advancement was steady, and after the war he was honoured with a place in the Scottish League team which met the English League in a Victory match. In the following season, too, he was again singled out as one of the best defenders in Scotland by being chosen for the Scottish League against the Irish League, and there were some people who thought that he might have been given a real international cap that season.

However, he did not rise to this height, but, all the same, the directors of the Everton club were duly impressed by his possibilities, and by paying a transfer-fee of three thousand pounds the Toffees secured his services in time for the 1920-21 season. Immediately he settled down as an extremely effective defender, and during his first season at Everton he was only absent from the League team on four occasions. At Goodison, too, he has reverted to his original position at left-back, and last season he was honoured with the captaincy of the team.

He is a player always ready to take risks in going out to tackle an opponent, but there is nothing of the reckless in his make-up, and rather does he succeed because he has the art of anticipation, so useful in a full-back, developed to a marked degree. He stands five feet ten inches, and weighs eleven stone ten pounds, so he is built on splendid lines for a full-back.

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shrieked wildly. "I command you—I order you—I appeal—I entreat—Help! Oh, you villains! Stop! I— Ow!"

Mr. Selby's frantic voice ended in a yell, as, doubled up like a pocket-knife in his vain efforts to ward off the bombardment, he staggered backwards into the easel. Next moment easel, blackboard and all came down upon the luckless master.

Crash!

Whiz! Thud! Wallop!

A perfect hurricane of miscellaneous articles rattled round the head of the terrified master as he sat on the floor, amid the ruins of the blackboard and easel.

"Yah! Give him socks!"

"Yes, rather! There's one for old Wally!"

The uproar was at its height when the door opened suddenly. Framed in the doorway was the figure of Dr. Holmes. He stood as if transfixed, gazing at the scene in horror and consternation.

"Boys!"

It was like the rumble of thunder; but it came too late. A stray book whizzed through the air, missing Mr. Selby by yards. It struck the Head full in the chest. The old gentleman staggered and almost fell.

"Oh crumbs! That's done it!" breathed Frank Levison.

It had. There was a sudden silence. The storm fell as suddenly as it had arisen. Though it must have been a severe shock to the old Head, he quickly pulled himself together. He stooped, and, picking the book up, entered the room closing the door behind him. Then, amid an ominous silence, he placed his book on Mr. Selby's desk, and faced the Form, his kindly eyes blazing. Never had they seen him look so terrible—so awe-inspiring.

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"What is the matter with your hand, boy?" he demanded sharply. "Who—?"

Curly Gibson was silent. But a dozen eager voices answered for him.

"Mr. Selby did that, sir!"

"That's what started it, sir!"

"Ah!"

Dr. Holmes frowned darkly. He gave Mr. Selby a look—a look which nearly shrivelled that gentleman. Another brief hesitation, and then he flung the cane from him.

"Go to your places!" he said harshly. "For the moment your punishment as ringleaders in this disgraceful affair is postponed, until I have gone further into the matter. But I will make the general punishment known at once. During the next six weeks the whole Form, without exception, will be gated, and all half-holidays stopped. In addition, Mr. Selby will keep you for an extra hour's lessons every day. Mr. Selby!"

"Sir!"

"I think you had better retire to your room for an hour to rest. Afterwards I should like to speak to you. I will arrange for Kildare to take charge in your absence."

Not until the Head had gone did the full extent of the punishment dawn on the minds of the fags. Then they eyed each other aghast. They had expected heavy punishment, but they had not dreamed of this. Gate, and all halves stopped for six weeks, and an extra hour's work a day into the bargain! It was too thick!

There was no further trouble in the Third that afternoon. Kildare was surprised to find them surprisingly quiet and docile. But it was the calm before the storm.

They were quiet when they trooped out at last, though a

close observer would have noted that a great deal of whispering went on. He would have noted, also, that not one of them stayed indoors. In little parties they drifted out, and, curiously enough, they all drifted to the same place—the woodshed. Within five minutes there wasn't a fag to be seen anywhere outside that dilapidated building, but inside they were packed like sardines in a box.

"Chaps," cried Jameson, glancing round at the circle of white faces, dimly seen in the gloom, "this morning I made a suggestion to you—a suggestion to save old Wally from expulsion."

"Good old Wally!"

"We're not jolly well going to let him be sacked!"

"No jolly fear!"

"Very well," went on Jameson grimly. "I suggested that we made a protest—a jolly strong protest, too. Some of you were keen, and some not so keen. But after what's happened this afternoon, I reckon you'll all be keen enough on my idea. Think of it! Six blessed weeks in prison—no halves, no nothing; and an extra hour on lessons. The question is, are we going to stand it?"

"No jolly fear!"

It was a yell from every throat, and they meant it.

"Then listen to me. The Head's a good sort," he thinks he's being just, but he doesn't know the facts. It's no good telling him so, though," said Jameson, with a grin. "We've got to make him see it in another way. And there's only one way—"

"And that is?"

"A barring-out!"

"A—a whatter?"

"A barring-out," said Jameson grimly. "It's the only way to make the Head see reason. It's the only way to save Wally, too. We'll hold a barring-out, and we won't jolly well surrender till the old chap agrees to let Wally off, and to cancel the punishments for what happened this afternoon. The Fourth had one some time ago, you know, and they won the day. There's no reason why we shouldn't win."

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Jameson paused, and there was a silence. The daring scheme had almost taken their breath away. At last Teddy Trimble spoke.

"But how's it going to be wangled?" he asked slowly.

"Leave that to me," said Jameson confidently. "I've got several ideas—jolly good ones, too. But first of all I want to know who's in favour of the barring-out and who isn't. Hands up those in favour."

At once every hand in the room went up—even Piggott and Watson and Hankey put their hands up. For once the Third were solid. There was no doubt about that.

"Good!" said Jameson. "And now what about a committee? I suggest Curly, Reggie Manners, Frank Levison, Hobbs, and Trimble—the last named to look after the grub. That's six with me. Remember, though, that the leaders will get it hot if we fail. So if anyone wants to back out they can do—now. Any objections?"

There were no objections, and the selection, after a little discussion, was agreed upon.

"And now the sooner we get to work the better," went on Jameson. "No need for the rest of you to stay any longer or to bother about it until after lights out. You can leave the committee to think all details out, and we'll have everything out and dried by bed-time. So the sooner the rest of you make yourselves scarce the better, or someone will be spotting something. 'Nuff said!"

And the rank and file of the Third left it at that. They knew that they could leave the details of the plan in the capable hands of Jameson and his trusty lieutenants. A moment later they were trooping out of the woodshed in an excited, breathless swarm, leaving the six committee men alone to discuss the details of the great rebellion.

CHAPTER 5.

The Die is Cast!

WALLY D'ARCY woke with a start. What had awakened him he did not know. He sat up and blinked with heavy eyes around the bare, dimly-lit walls of the punishment-room. Through the barred, uncurtained window a shaft of silvery moonlight glimmered across the floor. Through the still night boomed the solemn strokes of midnight.

Midnight! So he had been asleep less than an hour! He remembered listening to the strokes of eleven as he lay, tossing and turning, his mind full of bitter thoughts. On the morrow, unless a miracle happened, he was to be expelled—he was to leave St. Jim's for ever, in disgrace, for a crime he had not committed. No wonder sleep had not come easily! But since then he must have slept. But what had awakened him?

And then, as he sat peering into the gloom, listening intently, he understood. Someone was knocking gently on the door. Then came a soft whisper.

"Wally—Wally D'Arcy!"

Wally recognised the voice, and his heart leaped. The voice was Jameson's. But what could his chum want with him at this time of night? Next instant he had slipped from bed and was at the door.

"That you, Jammy?"

"Yes. Keep your pecker up, old son. We're going to rescue you. Get dressed as quickly as you can."

"But—but what—"

"No time for questions. Slip your things on—quick. I know where the key is, and I'll be back in a tick with it!" There was a soft chuckle beyond the door. Next instant Wally heard the patter of receding footsteps. Only for a moment did Wally hesitate. What the game was he hadn't the faintest idea. But he had abundant faith in his chum. He turned suddenly and began to dress himself quickly, feverishly, his eyes gleaming with new life.

He had scarcely finished when the lock clicked, and the door opened to admit Jameson, fully dressed. He grinned cheerfully at Wally.

"Good! Now come on—there's no time to waste. Follow me, and not a word!"

Wonderingly, the fag obeyed. Boots in hand, he followed his chum along the silent passages and down the stairs. At a side door on the ground floor Jameson paused and motioned his chum to put his boots on, doing the same himself.

"Bit of a lark this—eh?" whispered Jameson, with a chuckle.

Wally did not answer—he was too utterly bewildered by the mystery of it all to speak. Next moment he found himself out in the quad with the cool night air blowing on his face.

And then he got another surprise. All around him, in the shadows of the old ivy-clad wall were dim, ghostly figures. Each of them was loaded up with bundles and packages, and they looked like a mob of burglars in the gloom. But Wally recognised them for all that.

"My hat, you fellows! Wha-at's the meaning of it? What—"

"You'll know soon enough, old man!" chuckled Curly Gibson. "The fact is, we've not waited for the Head to sack you—we've sacked you ourselves—temporary, at least. And we've sacked ourselves, too!"

"You—you mean—"

"It's a barring-out!" grinned Curly. "We're leaving St. Jim's, and we're not returning until—"

"No time for gassing, chaps!" warned Jameson's voice. "Ready all?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then come on!"

Next moment the ghostly army were moving. In single file they crept on, taking advantage of every scrap of shadow and shelter from the moonlight until the school wall was reached. One by one, helping each other with packages and bundles, they clambered over and dropped into the lane beyond.

Even then Jameson did not permit any dallying. A few words of command, and, like well-trained soldiers, the daring Third-Formers formed fours and began to march.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

In a very few moments the dark, silent pile of St. Jim's was left behind. Then Jameson fell into step with Wally. "We can talk safely now!" he grinned. "My hat! I never expected everything to go off without a hitch like this! What do you think of it, Wally, old son?"

"It fairly takes my breath away!" breathed Wally. "But—but I hope you chaps are not taking all this risk for me?"

"Partly for you, and partly for our giddy selves!" grinned Jameson. "Since you've been in durance vile quite a lot has happened, old chap."

And in a few brief sentences Jameson outlined all that had taken place since he had been in the punishment-room. When he had finished Wally gasped.

"Great Scott! No wonder you decided to rebel!" he said grimly. "But where are we bound for—what's the programme?"

"We're bound for the boathouse, old son. We're going to commandeer a few boats, and then we're going to commander Abbey Island up the river. It's ideal for the purpose. And the programme is to stay there until the Head gives in—until he cancels our punishments and drops that rotten, unjust charge against you. And we've left the old chap an ultimatum to that effect, too. I bet he'll fairly tear his hair when he gets it."

"My hat, yes!"

"Anyway, that's the programme; and there's going to be no surrender, Wally. But what do you think of the wheeze?"

"Think of it! Great Scott, it's ripping!" gasped Wally, his eyes dancing. "What about grub, though—"

"Don't you worry about that," grinned Curly Gibson. "While you've been snoozing we've been busy. We've raided the kitchen and pantry, and we've enough grub to last at least two days. We've also brought blankets and bedding and lots of useful things; and we've got a fair amount of cash, too. Anything more we want we can buy from the village, and—Hullo, here we are!"

At that moment the low buildings of the boathouse loomed up ahead, and the word was given to halt. The doors were locked, of course, but Joe Frayne soon overcame that difficulty by climbing through a window of the visitors' dressing-room at the back. In a couple of minutes the huge double doors were opened from the inside.

Then the electric light was turned on—there was small chance of its being seen—and soon a scene of great activity was in progress. All the fellows were wildly excited and enthusiastic, and the work went on with a will. One by one the boats selected were carried out and launched, and loaded up with bedding and food and the cooking utensils, which included a couple of spirit stoves. Nothing seemed to have been forgotten by the Third Form Revolutionary Committee.

"And now, you fellows," said Jameson briskly, "what about the giddy old fire-engine?"

"The—what?" gasped Wally.

"The fire-engine," grinned Jameson. "You realise, of course, Wally old bean, that the blessed island will have to be defended. When the Head hears where we are, there'll soon be a swarm of prefects and seniors buzzing round to capture us."

"Yes, of course," said Wally. "But there'll be mud and chunks of wood and things like that we can use for ammunition. If we can't—Oh, my only hat! I see what you mean. You mean—"

"I mean to requisition that old fire-engine in the shed here. It's still in good order, you know."

"Great pip!" said Wally. "What a jolly fine wheeze. Why, there are at least four hoses, and with them we ought to keep a blessed army and navy at bay. Good egg!"

"Then come, you chaps!"

And Jameson led the way to the back of the boathouse. Here, housed in a lean-to shed was an old discarded fire-engine belonging to the school. It was a rickety old hand-worked apparatus, but in quite good working order for all that, the school having been recently provided with a larger and more up-to-date machine.

In a couple of minutes the thing was hauled out of its retirement. Then the seats were taken out of the largest boat, and the engine was, with great difficulty, lifted in. It rode the water safely enough; but to prevent the risk of accidents, two other boats were tied on either side. Then, when all was ready, the lights were extinguished and the doors closed, and the word was given to start.

One by one the boats moved out into the moonlit river, until the whole flotilla was sailing steadily upstream.

"My hat, this is great!" chuckled Teddy Trimble. "If only the Head and Selby could see us now they'd have several blue fits."

And a chorus of answering chuckles rippled over the silvery water. The excitement—the adventure of it all appealed strongly to the rebels. They were enjoying the whole business immensely. Progress was slow, because the boat containing the engine proved difficult to handle. But at last the island loomed up ahead, dark and shadowy with trees, and a muffled cheer arose from the rebels.

"Steady, you chaps!" called Jameson.

Jameson's voice steadied the excited fags, and the work of disembarkation went on orderly and steadily. Soon

everything was ashore and the boats secured for the night—or rather, morning.

"Here we are at last, boys!" cried Jameson, smiling round at the excited fags. "This is our island stronghold, and we're going to fight to the last gasp to hold it. And now for the hut. Those chaps with lamps had better lead the way."

Many of the fags had lanterns and electric-torches, and these led the way through the thick trees, sending ghostly shadows on the tree-trunks and bushes as they advanced. For a couple of minutes they pressed on. Then suddenly they emerged into a clearing, and their destination appeared in view.

In the centre of the clearing was a hut—a large, low building, eerie and forbidding in the moonlight. It was to be their new home.

"Here we are," grinned Curly Gibson. "Nice cheery sort of place, isn't it—I don't think!"

Wally, who was leading with a lantern, flung open the door and stepped inside. He swung the light of the lantern in a wide circle round the gloomy hut. As he did so he gave a jump.

For the shed was not empty—it was occupied. In one corner was a pile of rags and sacking. On the pile a man was lying, fast asleep.

"What's the matter?"

"Look!"

And Wally shed the light full on the strange scene. As he did so the man moved and sat up. He stared sleepily at the startled group in the doorway for a brief instant. Then he leaped to his feet and crouched against the wall with the look of a hunted animal.

"My hat!"

The sudden exclamation came from Wally, and was echoed by Jameson and Curly Gibson, for they recognised the man. He was the man they had seen talking to Mr. Selby in Rycombe Lane—the mysterious stranger!

CHAPTER 6.

Greeting Visitors!

THE fags of St. Jim's stared at him dumbfounded. To have discovered a tramp there at such a time would have been strange enough. But this man was obviously no tramp. His clothes were good, though dusty and dishevelled; his features, though crafty and dissipated, were certainly not the features of a vagabond. The rebels of St. Jim's felt they had stumbled upon a mystery.

The stranger, naturally under the circumstances, seemed if anything, more astounded than they were. But he was the first to recover himself.

As he realised that they were but youngsters, his alarm vanished, and he stepped towards them threateningly.

"What do you kids want here?" he ground out furiously. "Get out of this!"

Wally D'Arcy grinned at him cheerfully.

"Not much, old bean," he said. "I suppose you haven't bought this blessed island by any chance?"

"Get out, or it will be the worse for you."

"Nothing doing," said Wally. "The fact is, old chap, we're an invading army, and we've commandeered this hut. No need to get ratty though. As you were here first we'll let you stop if you'll behave yourself."

The man eyed them savagely, as if measuring his chances against them. Then he made a sudden rush.

"Back up!" yelled Wally.

And "back up" they did. Evidently the fellow expected them to scatter like leaves before the wind; but if so, he was soon mistaken. Like a swarm of disturbed hornets they closed in upon him and there was a fierce struggle.

But it did not last long.

Many of the stranger's savage blows found a billet, but he went down with a thud on the wooden floor at last, and the fags swarmed over him. With Wally's knee on his chest, Teddy Trimble sitting on his head, and numerous others gripping him where they could, he was helpless at last.

"Now, my tulip!" panted Wally. "We gave you your chance to stay as a peaceful and law-abiding citizen—but you turned it down. Now we're going to turn you down—er, rather, out. Up with him, you fellows."

In the grasp of numerous hands the obstreperous stranger was lifted and borne to the doorway—still struggling vainly. He was swung backwards and forward, and, at a word from Wally, they let go and he went sprawling out on to the grass.

"Now clear, my pippin," called Wally, after him. "It's your own fault, you know—you asked for it. You can finish your sleep out in the woods."

The fellow staggered to his feet, hesitated a moment, and then vanished amid the thick trees.

"That's one way of evicting undesirable tenants," grinned Curly Gibson. "What's the programme now?"



The boat containing the Shell and Fourth Juniors was approaching the island when Wally's voice rang out. "Fire!" The Third Form rebels obeyed the order, and the next moment the air was thick with flying clods. The attackers slowed down under the rain of the flying missiles. (See page 12.)

Wally grinned as he glanced round him. Now he had a good grip of the situation, he began to assume command in the natural order of things as skipper of the Third, with Jameson as his second in command.

"Bed's the next thing," he said cheerfully. "We can do little more now. But that chap's presence on the island settles one thing—someone will have to keep guard. As I've already had a little sleep I'll take first watch. Bustle round, you chaps."

Though tired out, the rebels were in the best of spirits, and they set to work with a will. Branches were torn from the thickets and tied together to make roughly-improvised brooms. With these the old hut was swept and garnished, and rough beds made on the floor. Contrary to expectations, there proved to be room and to spare for all in the hut. The sleeping couches were not likely to prove as comfortable as the beds at St. Jim's; but the rebels were too tired to trouble about that. A lantern was set in the middle of the floor, and they sank down to sleep.

It was a mild night, and Wally D'Arcy seated himself on the step in the open doorway to keep watch and ward. He had little fear of the stranger returning; but he was taking no chances. With chin in hands he sat staring across the moonlit clearing, and listening to the soft rustling of the wind in the trees and the murmur of the river beyond. Now and again he got up and walked about to stretch his cramped limbs.

But the hours passed and nothing happened. When at last the first flush of dawn appeared above the trees, Jameson relieved Wally and he turned in, and was asleep almost before his head touched the pillow.

It was broad daylight when Wally woke again. He sat up and blinked about him in wonderment—until he remembered. Then he grinned and sprang from his rough bed. With the exception of himself and Jameson—who was still sleeping soundly—the hut was empty. But from outside

came a cheery clatter of crockery—and more cheering still—the appetising smell of frying bacon.

Wally hurriedly shoved on a few things and stepped to the door. Over the tree-tops the early morning sun shone down on the glade with a pleasant warmth. Birds were chirruping, and sparkling dew-drops still glistened on tree and thicket. Wally drew in deep breaths of the fresh morning air and felt it was good to be alive on such a morning.

As he stepped to the doorway, Teddy Trimble, who was busy over a spirit stove with a frying pan full of rashers of bacon, looked up and grinned. With the exception of Piggott and Hobbs washing dishes hard by, he was alone.

"Cheerio, captain," chuckled the fat fag. "Your brekker's nearly ready."

"And I'm ready for it," grinned Wally. "Where are all the other chaps, Teddy, old son?"

"Had their breakfasts long ago. They're down by the river. Curly thought the boats had better be dragged ashore and hidden in case of a raid."

"Good. And developments—that merchant turned up again?"

"No; he's cleared out—at least we think so. There's an old dinghy tied to a stake on the opposite bank, and we expect he got over in that. He must have had a boat to get here, anyway."

"Good again," said Wally, not a little relieved.

The leader of the fags wasted no more time. After a good wash in a bucket of water, he finished dressing, and by that time breakfast was ready. Trimble minor and his assistant camp cooks had not yet had theirs and they joined him. They ate their meal with unusual zest and enjoyment, and afterwards Wally started off through the trees to join the rest of the rebels. He found them just finishing their task of hiding the boats.

"Hallo, here you are at last," cried Curly Gibson.

cheerfully. "Well, what do you think about it, Wally? Better than lessons—what?"

"Ripping!" grinned Wally. "Jolly good wheeze of yours to get the boats ashore, Curly."

Just finished that job. Now what's the next?" asked Curly.

In an eager, excited crowd they surrounded their leader. All the fags were in high spirits and were enjoying the novelty of it all immensely.

"The next job," said Wally grimly, "is to make this giddy island impregnable. There's the fire-engine to be fixed up, and ammunition to be prepared, and the sooner we get to work the better. I don't expect anyone will be along until late this afternoon—if then; but we can't afford to take chances."

"You think they'll soon find us then—"

"Bound to. It's a half to-day, and lots of the fellows are bound to visit the boathouse. They'll miss the boats and guess we're up the river somewhere. We'll have old Selby and a swarm of prefects round here to-night—if not earlier."

"Yes, rather!"

A moment later all were hard at work again. The fire-engine had already been lifted ashore, and it was soon placed in a suitable position, and the hoses run out. These latter were found to be, like the curate's egg, good in parts; but they suited the purpose, and the pump on testing was found to be in good working order. Luckily the island was small, and with a hose on each of the four shores the rebels felt confident they could keep an army at bay.

But they were taking no risks. Parties of fags were told off to collect clods in readiness to use as ammunition if necessary, and these were piled up in spots where an attack was likely to be expected. After that sentries were posted on each of the four shores of the island, and each man given his job in case of attack.

By that time Piggott came up to announce that dinner was ready, and in a happy throng they trooped off through the trees towards the camp.

There they found that Teddy Trimble had built a camp-fire, and was tending the huge pot that hung from the three stakes, stuck up gipsy-wise over it. From the pot came an appetising smell of simmering stew—welcome to the hungry rebels.

Dinner had to be taken in shifts owing to the lack of sufficient crockery, and it was fully two o'clock by the time it was over. And scarcely had the last man finished when the first alarm came.

Hobbs, who was doing sentry duty on the eastern shore of the island dashed headlong into the camp, and Wally sprang to his feet at once.

"Enemy in sight?" he demanded.

"Yes; at least there's a group of Shell and Fourth chaps across the river. Your major's one of 'em; but they're acting jolly suspiciously, and I thought—"

"Quite right!" snapped Wally. "Whether my major's with 'em or not, they've got to satisfy us they're on a peaceful errand, or they'll get it in the neck! Quick, you chaps!"

And, at the head of the rebels, Wally dashed from the camp. He arrived first at the water's edge, and, beckoning his followers to take cover, he peered across the river from the shelter of a thicket. Then he grinned.

On the farther bank eight figures were standing—eight familiar figures. They were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell, and Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, D'Arcy major, and Kit Wildrake of the Fourth.

Even as the rebel leader looked he saw them move down to the water's edge, where an ancient dinghy—obviously the one Teddy Trimble had spoken about—was tied to a stake. They tumbled aboard, and, with Tom Merry at the sculls, the boat moved out towards the island.

"Listen, my infants!" hissed Wally. "I'm going to let 'em get half-way across, and then challenge 'em. If they don't stop, then wait for the word, and let 'em have it! No good wasting good water on those silly asses, though. Just give them the clods! All ready?"

"Yes, rather!"

Next moment Wally stepped out in view of the oncoming boat, and his voice rang out clearly.

"Stop! Another pull, Tom Merry, and you'll regret it!"

"Bai Jove!"

The fellows in the boat fairly jumped. Tom Merry stopped pulling. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood up in the swaying old tub. He jammed his celebrated eyeglass into position and stared at the solitary figure on the island, in astonishment.

"Bai Jove, you fellows!" he gasped. "It's Wally! The rebellious young wascals are hean, then!"

There followed a brief muttered conversation in the boat. Then the sculls dipped again, and the boat moved on. Quite obviously the Shell and Fourth juniors saw no reason why they should obey the orders of a Third Form fag.

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But they soon did see. Scarcely had the boat moved a yard when Wally's voice rang out:

"Fire!"

Next moment the air was full of flying clods, and the water fairly hissed around the boat. But most of the clods found a billet within the boat, and it shook and stopped under the rain of missiles. Within the unwieldy, rocking craft all was wild confusion, and the air resounded with yells and thuds.

CHAPTER 7.

Wildrake to the Rescue!

"Ow!"

"Oh crumbs! Ow! Ow!"

"Bai Jove! You young ass! Ow!"

Tom Merry stopped a huge wet clod of earth and grass with his neck; Jack Blake stopped one with his nose; Arthur Augustus stopped one with his chest, and sat down with a bump and a gasp in the bottom of the wildly rocking dinghy.

"Stop! You young asses, stop!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Pax, you little. Oh crumbs!"

A hefty, water-soaked chunk missed Tom Merry's ear by a hair's breadth, and he dragged his handkerchief from his pocket and waved it frantically.

"That's good enough!" chuckled Wally. "There goes their flag of truce! Cease fire, you chaps!"

The rain of missiles ceased as if by magic.

"You can advance now, you hoary old fogies!" grinned the leader of the fags cheekily. "But no hanky-panky, or you'll get it in the neck again!"

Tom Merry grinned feebly, and sent the dinghy moving towards the island. As the nose of the boat touched the shore the eight juniors scrambled out. They glared wrathfully at the grinning rebels.

"You—you young scamps!" breathed Tom Merry, with a rueful grin. "If it wasn't for breaking the blessed truce, I'd mop you up, young Wally!"

"Bai Jove! Yass, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus warmly. "You wackles young wascals—"

"Oh, you dry up, Gus!" advised the cheery Wally. "You gas too much! What are you chaps after? Are you friends or foes?"

"Friends, of course!" said Tom. "In fact, that's what we're here for now—to help you, Wally."

"And you'll soon want all the help you can get, you young asses!" said Blake darkly. "You're fairly let yourselves in for trouble, and no mistake! This business will mean the sack for some of you! The Head—"

"Did he get my ultimatum?" grinned Wally.

"Yes; and he fairly raved!"

"Tore it up and danced on the pieces, so Trimble said!" added Lowther, grinning.

"Weally, Lowthah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus reprovingly. "I do not wegard it as a laughin' matiah. Quite the reverse, in fact! These wackles young wascals do not realise the gravity of their rebellious conduct. As youah majah, Wally, pway let me warn you—"

"Oh, do dry up, Gus!" groaned Wally. "You've no need to worry about us. We're O.K., and we're staying here until the Head gives in. It's no surrender, my pippins! But how did you manage to track us down?"

"We didn't," said Tom Merry. "When we heard that boats were missing from the boathouse we guessed you must be up the river somewhere, of course. But we weren't looking for you—"

"You said you'd come to help—"

"That's so; but in a different way. The fact is we're on the trail of the chap who biffed Selby. You—"

"What?"

Tom nodded, smiling.

"To begin with, it was all Cardew's doing," he said. "We were talking about you this morning, and he suggested that we should get Wildrake on the job. You know what a beggar he is for reading sign and tracking; beats a Red Indian and a blessed detective rolled in one!"

"My hat! Yes, rather!" said Wally, his eyes gleaming.

"Well, I thought it a jolly good idea," went on Tom. "I felt that if we could get Wildrake on the spot where Selby was attacked he'd soon solve the mystery. So I asked him, and he agreed to tackle the job. And—well, he's done it; he's not only proved beyond doubt that you didn't do it, Wally, but he's got us on the trail of the chap who did."

"But—but—"

"I reckon it was easy enough," remarked Wildrake, laughing. "Though it might not have been so easy if old Selby hadn't been walking on the grass at the side of the road when he was attacked—nor if it hadn't been more wet clay than grass. But I guess it was easy as pie. The clay had dried, and the sign was undisturbed. There were Selby's footprints and the marks where he lay; there were the footprints of Blake and his pals, and there were the footprints of the man who did it. I guess any booby could have read the sign."



Mr. Selby staggered to his feet in the boat and shook his clenched fist at the hilarious fag rebels. "You villains!" he shrieked. "Will you——" He got no farther, for a solid stream of water caught him full in the chest. With a wild howl he toppled backwards into the water! (See page 15.)

"Even Gussy did——" began Monty Lowther.
 "Yaas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus innocently.
 "I wead it easily!"

"After Wildrake had figured it out," finished Lowther.
 "That's so, I suppose!" grinned the Canadian junior.
 "Anyway, I soon figured it out. The chap—whoever he was—
 dashed out from the hedge and biffed Selby, then he tried to drag Selby towards the hedge. But Blake and the others came up just then, and he vamoosed. I reckon it was just a coincidence that young Wally's cap happened to be lying near the spot."

"Anyway, we know now that Wally couldn't have done it," said Tom Merry. "We saw plenty of footprints in the lane which might have been Wally's, but none anywhere near the spot. So——"

"But—but the chap who did it!" exclaimed Wally. "I thought you said you were on his trail——"

"So we are," said Tom Merry. "We picked up the trail where he bolted through the hedge, and," added Tom, pointing across the river, "it led us to that stake yonder, where this boat was tied up. The chap who biffed Selby jumped in that boat that night, and came to this island."

"That doesn't necessarily follow; but it looks like it," remarked Wildrake. "I guess—— What's the matter, Wally?"

"Matter?" yelled Wally excitedly. "I've got it! What about that chap we found asleep in the hut—the chap we heard quarrelling with Selby?"

"Great Scott—yes!" gasped Jameson. "That's him!"
 Next moment Wally, helped by his fellow-rebels, was telling Tom Merry and his chums all they knew of the mysterious stranger. When he had finished, the Canadian junior spoke.

"Did you notice what sort of boots he was wearing?" he asked quietly.

Wally shook his head; but curly Gibson answered.
 "Yes, I did," he said. "I noticed particularly. He wore patent-leather boots with pointed toes. They——"

"Then I guess that's the chap," he said. "And the sooner we get on the trail again the better. Come on!"

And Wildrake stepped towards the boat. But before he reached it there came an interruption. Along the bank a figure came racing. It was Reggie Manners, who was on sentry-go.

"Quick, you fellows!" he yelled excitedly. "Here's the enemy! There are two boats coming, loaded with prefects, and Selby's in one of 'em! Buck up!"

CHAPTER 8.

Damping Selby's Ardour!

IT was true enough. The group of rebels had been so engrossed in Wildrake's remarks that they had not noticed the approach of two large boats from the direction of St. Jim's. But the sentry had. And it was well for the rebels that he had.

In a moment Wally was rapping out orders right and left. There was plenty of excitement, but no confusion whatever. Every man knew his job, and every man did it. The visitors were forgotten.

"Well, my hat!" remarked Tom Merry admiringly. "Smart work, and no mistake. Old Wally's a born leader!"
 "No doubt about that!" chuckled Lowther. "There's going to be some fun presently. Fancy commandeering that giddy old fire-engine! I rather fancy somebody's going to get wet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Yes, rather!"

The visitors watched the busy scene with many chuckles. Reggie Manners took charge of the "clod" party; Joe Frayne took charge of the pumping party; Jameson, curly Gibson, Levison minor, and Hobbs each took charge of a hose, though two of these were only likely to be needed. Within three minutes every fag was at his post.

(Continued on page 15.)

The ST JIM'S NEWS

Edited by TOM MERRY.

EDITORIAL.

By TOM MERRY.

With the coming of winter and the good old-fashioned snow season, playing-fields become shrouded beneath a deep blanket of white, and footer must be eschewed for the time being. Then it is that our thoughts naturally turn to other outdoor sports and pastimes to take the place of footer.

There is nothing to compare in fun and excitement to the grand sport of tobogganing. Snow and frost bring with them the abundant joys of skating and sliding—and what is tobogganing but a more elaborate and glorious form of sliding? And it often ends with a skate!

Now the cold snap is on, and the countryside round St. Jim's is covered with deep snow, a good many of the fellows have been getting out their tools—or borrowing other people's—and hammering, sawing, and gluing have been the order of the day.

The result has been the evolution of a number of toboggans—some real natty little crafts, others weird and wonderful contraptions that caused us to roar loud and long with laughter, whilst many were so clumsily made that they fell to pieces on their first journey and hurried their luckless riders into the depths of the snowdrifts! Perhaps Glyn's instructive article, which appears in another column, will help to set the ignominious on the right track—in more senses than one!

Whizzing at speed through the crisp winter air down a snowbound hill track on a toboggan creates a sensation that sends the blood coursing joyfully through one's veins. In cold regions, such as Canada and Russia, tobogganing amongst the boys is as natural as walking, almost, and quite as popular as cycling is in England. They revel in it, as we all do. One must experience the thrill of a real, long toboggan-ride to realise what rollicking fun it is.

Some chaps dislike tobogganing on the score that it's a risky. But no sport is real sport without its element of risk. And nobody can say, at any rate, that tobogganing is "slow."

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

(By the St. Jim's Mathematical Fiend.)
If all the toppers that Gussy wears in a term were to be used as buckets, the filling of each would be sufficient to drain out a fair-sized pond.

The gas generated in the Lecture-room at a single meeting of the Sixth Form Debating Society would fill umpteen reservoirs, each holding 10,000,000 cubic feet.

The energy wasted by Skimpole in trying to master the ethics of Socialism and Determinism would be sufficient to propel a liner loaded with lead paper-weights across the Atlantic and back ten times.

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HOW TO MAKE A TOBOGGAN.

By BERNARD GLYN.

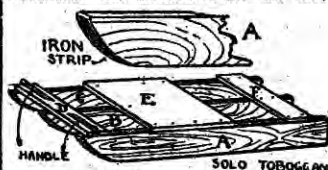
The present winter bids fair to give us many opportunities of enjoying the fun of tobogganing. Most fellows make their own toboggans, and, with a little care and ingenuity, anybody can turn out quite a decent job.

The toboggan or "bob-sleigh" is a small edition of a sledge, working on the same principle as an ordinary skate. The most simple form of toboggan can be made out of a plank of wood, turned up at one end and shod with iron beneath.

To build a serviceable solo toboggan—for one rider, that is—three stout planks four feet long, four inches wide and two inches thick (A, B, and C), two crossbars twelve to eighteen inches long, six inches wide and two inches thick (D and F) and one crossbar twelve to eighteen inches long, twelve inches wide by two inches (E) will be required. Planks A and C form the side girders, and B the middle girder or backbone, and all are rounded with an equal curve in front. To these are bolted at either end the crossbars D and F, the crossbar E, which acts as a support for the driver, being bolted in the centre. Iron strips are affixed along the bottoms of the girders to act as sliders. An easily-constructed handle for the driver to hold on to makes the toboggan complete.

A toboggan to accommodate two, three, or more, can be made on these lines, the girders A, B, and C being lengthened and extra crossbars fitted as required.

The toboggan is taken to the crest of a hill, the driver takes his position in front, with the passenger or passengers behind. The driver raises his foot from the snow, thus releasing his craft, and away they go downhill with ever-increasing speed. The driver steers with his feet in the snow, toes downward. The duration of the ride varies



with the length of the hill, of course. A little bit of speed can be got out of a toboggan, and its career cannot be stopped once the voyage is begun, until the bottom of the hill is reached.

To those who suffer with giddiness, tobogganing cannot be recommended. It is a grand and healthy recreation, but it requires not a little courage, a firm nerve, and a clear eye for its proper management. Lack of reasonable caution is the cause of most toboggan accidents. Fellows who, at the risk of life and limb, send their toboggans across village streets, upsetting horses, barrows, and old ladies, should confine themselves to draughts, ludo, or other harmless recreations.

WHAT I THINK OF TOBOGGANING!

(The Editor has asked several St. Jim's celebrities to give their opinions of the sport, with the following results.)
BAGGY TRIMBLE:

Tobogganing doesn't appeal to me. Only twice have I ridden on a toboggan, and I borrowed Grundy's (quite omitting to first ask his consent), and when the beastly thing got half-way down the hill 'it kollapsed. I got mixed up with all the others who were coming down behind on their craft, and a terrific scrm ensued. After that, Grundy's toboggan, as a toboggan, was no more, although as firewood it mite have come in useful. Grundy didn't look at it; that way and set about me, so that afterwards they had to carry me back to St. Jim's on a toboggan used as a stretcher.

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW:

The only drawback I can see in tobogganing is when somebody ties your toboggan to a tree—and you don't find it out till after you've started!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

I considah tobogganing great fun, but a fellah's twousahs are apt to get frightfully wet in a spill, and that makes you feel weally wotten; bai Jove, not to mention the wined ewease. I think I shall have to invent special knickerbockers for tobogganing, and then ewerythin' will be all wight!

MR. LATHOM:

If only enthusiastic spectators would desist from the obnoxious habit of hurling snowballs at tobogganists, I should certainly have no compunction in personally taking part in the pastime.

WALLY D'ARCY:

Veey tobogganin'! (The first word's French). What kood he be rippering that an hour or sew's tobogganin', followed by a delishus tea of hot kippers and chestnuts in the Form-room?

FATTY WYNN:

The trouble about tobogganing is that toboggans aren't made large enough to fit a chap who's rather comfortably developed like myself. I don't often get a decent-sized toboggan, and when I do my weight causes it to sink into the snow and stick. For that reason, I'm not much sought after as a passenger. (Another point, Fatty. When you get on a toboggan two others have to get off.—Ed.) But there's nothing like tobogganing to give a chap a good, healthy appetite.

TAGGLES:

Young rips! Don't talk to me about them 'ere toboggans! Which the things is one of the many curses of 'umanity devised by boys. What I says is this 'ere-boys shouldn't be allowed to shoot toboggans full of snow into a respectable workin'-man's front door and smother 'im and 'is place. If boys was all drowned at birth, which policy I've always hadvocated, such things as toboggans would never 'ave been invented. (Cheery old soul, Taggy—what! —Ed.)

MI FEET ON A TOBBOGGAN!

By BAGGY TRIMBLE.

THE seen opens at the top of the long hill outside Wayland, where the snow lay deep and white.

A score of toboggans were lined up, their drivers lying flat on their stomachs, waiting for the signal to go!

The grate St. Jim's Toboggan Race was about to commence!

The prize was a hoag hamper of luck, so, of course, I had to compete!

Mi toboggan was the center of attraction. It was composed of an old table that Mrs. Kebble had thrown away, turned upside down with its legs chopped off, and a lump of bent tin nailed in front.

Good remarks were passed by the spectators, which I treated with lofty indifference. At last, the thrilling moment came!

Kildare raised the pistol, and fired. We were off!



Suddenly mi toboggan collided with a hot-potater barrer, sending it flying.

I found the table—I mean mi toboggan—rather difficult to steer. It dived from win side of the horse to the other. Gruddy bashed into me, and Gussy bashed into him, and they both went flying into the hedge. But I went on!

Suddenly, near the bottom, mi toboggan collided with a hot-potater barrer, sending it flying.

The old chap got so excited that he grasped a hoag snowball that sum kids nearby had maid, rolled it into the rode, and sent it down after me!

The hoag snowball traveled quicker than me, and off of a sudden it came on to the table—I mean mi toboggan—from the rear, and berried me.

Mi toboggan, however, continued on its mad career, with the sno piled high upon it—and me underneath!

Then, to my horror of all, a woman's terrible screams were heard, coming from the open door of a kottage just in front.

"Help! Fire!" she screamed, tearing her hair. "Mi ancestral home will be raised to the ground!"

Next minute, mi toboggan, still with me and the pile of sno ahead sped throo the door, into the parlor, which was full of smook. Flames and smook were rising from an oil-stove that had got overturned, and had set fire to itself and the carpet.

Had it not been for mi toboggan, the kottage wood had been burnt!

Mi toboggan shot alien into the stove, overturned, and the sno shot out, all over the blazing stove and the carpet!

A sizzling noise, and clouds of steam arose. But the danger was over! The kottage was saved! The sno from mi toboggan had put out the fire!

Did I get the reward I deserved for that marvelous feat? No. Everybody treated it as a hoag joke.

But Tom Merry, who won the race, had the decency to stand me a feed out of the hamper afterwards.

KNOX'S TERRIBLE RIDE!



By HARRY NOBLE.

Merry & Co. and Blake & Co.—seven—all—

Knox rushed up in a royal rage.

"Stop!" he shrieked. "Don't you dare ride off in that thing! Stop!"

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" sang out Herries, as the toboggan, with a fine clear road before it, started off down the hill.

"Hoaray!" roared Tom Merry & Co. joyously.

But Knox was not to be outdone. Even as the toboggan sped forward, he gave a wild leap and caught hold of the back of the structure with both hands.

Wiiizzzzzz!

The toboggan gathered speed and flew down the hill like a rocket, with Knox hanging on desperately behind, lying on his chest in the snow.

This had the effect of causing the toboggan to zigzag perilously on its course. They were travelling at whirlwind speed, and Tom Merry & Co. had to hang on like grim death.

"Let go!" shrieked Blake, glaring round at Knox. "You'll have us all over in a minute, you maniac! Let go!"

But Knox was too started to do anything, except hang on. The snow that he churned up blinded him, and he was dazed at the speed at which he was going.

Crash!

The inevitable happened as they came to the bend, near the bottom of the hill. It was impossible to steer, with Knox in tow.

The toboggan lurched sideways up the snowy bank and pitched headlong into the field beyond.

Tom Merry & Co. were all flung in the air, to land on top of each other in the thick snow. They were dazed, choked, and half-smothered, but otherwise unurt.

Knox fared far worse.

He went up the bank still hanging on to the toboggan, but let go as it swooped into the field. Next minute he floundered helplessly down the bank on the other side, and fell on to the ice-encrusted surface of the ditch that ran below.

Cr-r-r-r-rack!

The ice was not proof against such an impact, and gave way. Knox, with a feedish, choking howl, disappeared through the ice into the murky depths of the ditch.

"Now! Oh crumbs!" moaned Tom Merry, struggling up and shaking the snow from him like a coltie. "What a giddy fiasco! Anybody hurt?"

Tom Merry & Co. staggered through the snow, and when they beheld Knox's head and shoulders showing through the ice, they howled with laughter.

Knox howled—though not with laughter. He was frozen to the marrow, and hurt considerably.



Tom Merry & Co. gazed upon Knox, whose head and shoulders were showing through the ice. Suddenly they burst into a howl of laughter.

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"THE FAGS' REBELLION!"

(Continued from page 13.)

"Ready, you chaps?" called out Wally.

"All ready!"

"What ho!"

"Then, listen. They may not guess we're here, and go past. In that case, sit tight. But if they make for the island, I shall order them to stop. If they don't, you know what to do. But don't fire until I give the word. Got me?"

"Yes, rather!" came the hearty chorus.

Tom Merry & Co. took cover behind the thickets, chuckling. They were keen to see the fun, but they were not anxious to be mixed up in the business.

The boats were nearer now, and their occupants could be recognised. In the first boat were Kildare, Darrell, Baker, and Rushden. In the second boat were Mr. Selby, Knox, Monteith, and Gray. And it was very soon obvious that they were indeed making for the island stronghold.

"That settles it!" said Wally.

He stepped down to the water's edge.

"Mr. Selby!" he shouted loudly. "If you come a yard nearer you'll be sorry for it!"

From the oncoming boats came sudden cries of triumph, and their occupants ceased rowing and looked round. Mr. Selby stood up in the stern, and surveyed the rebels, who had now emerged into the open, with glittering eyes.

"So I have found you!" he cried triumphantly. "You rebellious young scoundrels, I command you to return to school at once!"

"Rats!"

"Go and eat coke, Selby!"

"Three groans for Selby!"

And the groans were given with gusto by the rebels. It wasn't often the Third-Formers had the chance of defying the hated tyrant to his face, and they made the most of it now.

Mr. Selby was thunderstruck. He glared at the grinning rebels, his face livid.

"How—how dare you!" he yelled angrily. "You—you shall suffer for this insolence dearly! You hear me, D'Arcy minor? Unless you and your rascally followers return at once, you will all bitterly regret it!"

"Nothing doing!" remarked Wally cheerfully. "You know our terms—or the Head does. Here we are, and here we stay until the Head agrees to drop that rotten charge against me, and to cancel all punishments both for what happened in the Form-room and for taking part in this rebellion. And we're sticking to our guns. We don't give in until we get those terms!"

"No jolly fear!"

"No surrender!"

"Hurrah!"

Mr. Selby literally ground his teeth. He turned savagely to the prefects.

"This—this disgraceful foolery must be ended without delay!" he snapped. "Kildare, Knox, you will land on the island at once, and apprehend those reckless boys. You will take them across to the mainland in batches, and march them back to the school!"

"Er—yes, sir," observed Knox doubtfully.

"We'll try, sir," said Kildare, eyeing the island suspiciously. Kildare, like Knox, did not like the look of things.

But, for all that, they dipped their sculls and pulled—and barely five seconds afterwards they regretted it!

"Now!" yelled Wally. "Let 'em have it, boys!"

And "let 'em have it" they did! The two boats stopped dead as if a hurricane had struck them—as indeed it had—a hurricane of whizzing, whirling clods. But that was not all. By now the pump was working in earnest, and next second two solid, hissing streams of water shot out from the island and struck the rocking boats.

Whizz! Thud! Whizz!

Hissess!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whirling clods of earth were bad enough. But those steady, hissing jets of water were worse. Within ten seconds every person in the boats was drenched to the skin. Confusion and consternation reigned in the rocking boats, and their occupants yelled and dodged and doubled in their wild efforts to dodge those solid streams of water.

"Stop, you young rascals!" howled Kildare.

Only Kildare seemed to keep his head. Despite the rain of whizzing clods and relentless jets of water, he stuck grimly to his sculls and his seat. He dug his sculls in, and desperately pulled out of range.

"Hurrah!"

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A roar of cheers followed from the rebels, but they did not stop even then. The second boatload were completely demoralised, and at the mercy of the rebels. Knox and his fellow-prefects were howling fiendish threats at the rebels, and made no effort to escape. Then suddenly Mr. Selby did a very unwise thing. He staggered to his feet, and shook his clenched fist at the hilarious fags.

"You—you young villains!" he shrieked. "Will you—"
He got no farther. A solid stream of water took him full in the chest, and with a howl he toppled backwards into the river.

"Cease fire!" yelled Wally D'Arcy. "Forward the ambulance!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rain of clods and jets of water ceased on the instant. Amid cat-calls and jeers from the rebels, Knox and his raving fellow-prefects fished the luckless master from the river.

"Are you coming on again, Mr. Selby?" called Wally sweetly.

Mr. Selby did not reply. He lay in the bottom of the boat and gasped. Knox shook his fist furiously at the chortling rebels. Then he picked up the sculls, and the boat moved after the other. It joined Kildare's craft, and a brief council of war apparently took place. Then both boats moved off towards St. Jim's.

"They're retreating!" yelled Jameson. "We've won the day!"

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 2.

On the Trail!

TOM MERRY and his chums of the Shell and Fourth emerged from their place of concealment almost weeping with laughter.

"My only aunt, Wally, you young scamp, you've done it now!" breathed Tom-Merry. "You've fairly burned your boats!"

"Yass, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus, looking very distressed.

"Rats!" remarked the scamp of the Third cheerfully. "We've won the first round; but that's only the beginning. We'll teach you old fogies a thing or two! But what about tea? You fellows care to stay?"

"I guess not," remarked Kit Wildrake. "If that merchant's going to be tracked down before dusk, we'd better get on the job."

"That's so," assented Tom Merry, nodding. "If we've anything to report we'll come back, Wally. Come on!"

And a moment later the Fourth and Shell juniors had boarded the dinghy and were pulling across the river. And scarcely were they ashore when Wildrake's keen eyes were at work. They had already examined the ground, and they picked up the trail at once.

With Wildrake leading, they pressed on swiftly. Never once was he at fault. And, indeed, the trail was easy enough to follow. In the woods, beneath the thick trees the soft clay soil was still wet, and the "sign" was clear and unmistakable. Any scout could have read it with ease.

They reached the end of the wood at last. As they emerged into the bright afternoon's sunshine Kit Wildrake paused and looked about him.

"I reckon it's easy to guess where the sign leads now," he remarked after a moment's thought. "I reckon we need go no farther than the old barn yonder."

"Bai Jove, Wildrake! Weally, I uttally fair!"

"You would do," smiled Wildrake. "But figure it out. The galoot must be homeless, or he wouldn't have been sleeping in the hut. But he was kicked out, and he'd have to find another sleeping-place. And the first thing he sees on leaving the wood is that barn. It was moonlight last night, remember."

"My hat! You're right, Wildrake!" breathed Tom Merry. And Wildrake did prove to be right. The narrow-pointed footprints led up to the door of the old barn, and there they ended.

Tom Merry's hand dropped on the latch of the rickety door, and he pushed it open. A shaft of sunshine lit up the gloomy interior and shone full upon the figure of a man—a man who had apparently just sprung up from the heap of straw at his feet. Tom Merry & Co. looked at his face. Wildrake looked at his feet. He wore narrow, pointed, patent-leather boots, worn and travel-stained.

"I reckon that's the chap," said Wildrake coolly.

The fellow eyed them savagely, furiously.

"What do you kids want?" he snapped. "Get out of this, or—"

"We want you, my pippin," said Tom Merry. "There's a little matter—Back up, chaps!"

As the fellow made a savage rush, the St. Jim's juniors "backed up," and closed in upon the man. There was a

struggle—a very brief struggle. The man was weak and thin, and he went down much more easily than he had done under the swarm of fags the night before. He was well held at last, and then Tom Merry found some pieces of rope lying about, and he was securely trussed up.

"You'll be safer like that while we talk to you," grinned Tom Merry. "And now—Hullo, what's that?"

For Wildrake had uttered an exclamation—a startled exclamation. From the man's pocket had dropped a folded-up newspaper, and the Canadian junior had picked it up and glanced at it. Why, he knew not. He handed it to Tom Merry.

"I guess it'll interest you, Tom," he said.

And it did. For the marked paragraph Wildrake had pointed out read as follows:

"There is still no clue to the whereabouts of Harold Selby, the absconding bank cashier, who was arrested when boarding a cross-Channel steamer some weeks ago, and who, it will be remembered, succeeded in escaping from his captors at Victoria Station. The police, however, have traced him to Sussex, in which county he is still believed to be hiding."

Then followed a brief description—a description Tom scarcely needed to read to learn the truth. His face clouded, and he glanced at Wildrake. Wildrake nodded.

"I guess that description fits this galoot like a glove," he remarked.

Tom Merry handed the paper to his chums. He turned, to find the man's eyes fixed upon him with bitter hatred.

"Now you know who I am," he said, with a bitter sneer, "I suppose you'll give me away! Spies and informers, eh?"

"It all depends," said Tom quietly, "upon yourself. If you'll do what we want you to do—"

"And what's that?"

"Merely write and sign a confession—a confession that it was you who attacked your uncle—I suppose Mr. Selby's your uncle—the other night in Rylecombe Lane."

"Ah! And if I refuse?"

"Then the local police will make a capture. It will be a feather in their caps to do what Scotland Yard men failed to do."

Harold Selby muttered a curse.

"Hang you, I'll do it! But why do you want it?"

"To save an innocent kid from expulsion. You need not fear any action from your uncle. To give you away to the police would be the last thing he'd do."

"I see that now, though I didn't at the time," said the fugitive savagely. "He refused to help me—his nephew! Not only that, but the mean-souled old beggar threatened to put the police on my track; and I was desperate. I believed he meant it. I followed him along the inside of the hedge and knocked the old fool down. I intended to kidnap him, and to maroon him on that island until I got clear. It was a mad game—a fool's game, and it failed. Someone came along just as I'd downed him, and I bolted. That's the truth."

Tom Merry nodded silently. He tore a leaf from his pocket-book. Then he released the fellow's hands and handed him book, paper, and an indelible pencil.

"Write that down and sign it," he said. "That's all we want."

The man did so. He finished at last, and handed the things back with a scowl to Tom Merry. Tom read the confession and nodded.

"That's good enough!" he remarked. "As I promised, we'll not put the police on your track, though I suppose you deserve it. We'll tell Mr. Selby you're here, and leave him to deal with you as he wills. It's his business, not ours. And now, you chaps, come on! We've got to clear Wally now."

"Yass, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus happily. "Bai Jove, this is wippin', you fellahs!"

CHAPTER 10.

Mr. Selby Sees It Through!

"COME in!"

Mr. Selby's voice was like unto the rasp of a saw cutting its way through a brick. The Third Form master had only just finished changing his drenched clothes on his return to St. Jim's, and he had immediately repaired to his study to don cap and gown as a preliminary to laying his report before Dr. Holmes. Mr. Selby was in the vilest of vile tempers, and that report was not likely to do any good to the cause of the Third Form rebels.

He glanced irritably at Tom Merry as that junior entered the room, followed by his seven chums.

"Well, Merry," he said harshly, "what does this mean—what do you boys want?"

Tom Merry laid a paper before the tyrant of the Third.

"We want you to read that, sir," he said quietly. "Afterwards we want you to place the matter before Dr. Holmes."

Mr. Selby took the document. As he read it, he jumped and his eyes almost started from his head.

"What—what does this mean?" he gasped.

"It means what it says, sir. It is a confession, signed by your nephew, Harold Selby. It says that he, and he alone, was responsible for that attack on you the other night. We want you to place it before Dr. Holmes, and see justice done to young Wally D'Arcy, sir."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Selby, with a bitter sneer. "Then let me tell you that I shall do nothing of the sort. I do not believe one word of it. Leave my room at once."

"Very good, sir," replied Tom Merry, picking up the paper. "Then I shall place the matter before the Head myself."

He started for the door.

"Stop!"

Mr. Selby's voice was hoarse with mingled rage and fear. "One—one moment, Merry. I—I do not understand you—"

"I will explain, sir," said Tom Merry quietly. "This confession proves that young Wally is innocent, and we, his friends, are determined to see justice done. If you will not see justice done to him, then we will. And we shall tell the Head that you refused to set the matter right. In view of the fact that you stated that you heard Wally D'Arcy's voice that night, he will think this very curious—very."

"You—you insolent young—"

"But that is not all, sir. We shall give him the real facts as to what happened in the Third Form-room; you will

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be interested to hear that the mark of your cane is still visible on young Gibson's neck. He will know, then, who is really responsible for this rebellion. Mr. Selby," went on Tom, eyeing the fuming tyrant steadily, "it is in your power now both to clear D'Arcy minor and to end this rebellion, and to obtain for the rebels a free pardon. The Head is just and generous. If he knows you—the supposed injured party—will forgive, he will forgive. That is why we came to you, sir. We want you to use your influence, not only to get those unjust punishments cancelled, but to persuade the Head to grant free pardons to the rebels."

"But—but this is blackmail! It—it—" Mr. Selby was beginning to stammer. "You—you would not dare—"

"We would dare a great deal to save young Wally and his chums from expulsion, sir."

"Yes, wathah, bai Jove!"

"And we have still another card to play, sir," said Tom Merry quietly. "Your nephew, who is a fugitive from justice, is in our hands—a prisoner to do with as we wish. That confession proves it. Unless you wish him to be handed over to the police—unless you desire your name to be linked with his in the police-courts and newspapers, you will do as we request—you will clear D'Arcy minor, and do your utmost to obtain free pardons for the rebels."

Mr. Selby staggered. He was beaten, and he knew it. Tom Merry was quite right. If he refused to clear Wally, the Head would think, as everybody else would think, that his charge against the fag had been actuated by pure spite and malice. And he shuddered to think of what the capture of his nephew would mean. He had congratulated himself that no one at St. Jim's knew his secret—that none connected him with the absconding bank cashier. But now the local papers would be full of it—all St. Jim's would know. The shame and disgrace of it!

He fairly crumpled up.

"Merry," he said, almost in a whisper, "if I do as you

(Continued on page 26.)

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THIS GREAT STORY IS A REAL WINNER.



The Fire Friends!

By
Norman Taylor

A Thrilling Complete Story of the Daring Deeds of Two London Firemen.

CHAPTER I

Alarms and Reality!

"EVERTON can play as good a game as—"

The conversation was interrupted. A bell, clamouring incessantly, was the cause of the interruption.

In a moment the little group of uniformed men who had clustered about the door of the rest-room of the Cannon Road Fire Station forgot football and everything else save the business in hand.

The bell clamoured and clamoured, and down a brass pole slithered four other men. One of them leapt to the seat of the big engine, others snatched up brightly-polished brass helmets, whipped on leather belts, and sprang upon the engine.

The motor was started, and its roar almost drowned the sound of the clamouring bell. The driver waited, with his hand on the gear-lever, his foot on the clutch and accelerator, his eyes eagerly upon the door of the officer's room.

A man came out at last, a silver helmet on his head, his face set and stern. "Argyle Street!" he said briefly.

A moment later the motor roared, a slight click sounded as the gear was engaged, and the engine swept out of the great doors into the street.

Clang, clang, clang!
The warning-bell, which thrills the heart of every listener, cleared the streets as if by magic. The driver's eyes never even blinked as he turned to the right, his wheels scoping the wheels of an agitated carman's cart by a fraction of an inch.

The people who worked or lived near Cannon Road Fire Station knew Bob West, the engine-driver, and, knowing him, they kept out of his way. There was never a driver in the Brigade to touch Bob West. Daring, steady as steel, with hands as powerful as a vice, grim, and silent, Bob looked what he was—one of the fire-fighters to whom every second is precious.

"Let her go, Bob!" said Harry Thompson eagerly, as a wide stretch of road loomed up before them, with the traffic all drawn into the side of the road. "Clear road!"

The "clear road" would have given the most reckless motorist a chance of proceeding at ten miles an hour, for there was, in reality, only a narrow path between the stationary vehicles. But Bob was not a motorist—he was the driver of a fire-engine! Clang, clang, clang!

The warning went out continuously, and the back of the engine seemed to sway dangerously as the driver's foot went down hard upon the accelerator. There was no speedometer on the engine, but Bob knew that he was doing thirty miles an hour.

"He don't 'arf make that there engine go!" shouted a carman ecstatically.

"The Bonocing of the Fire Brigade!" remarked another.

There was a chuckle at that, but none of the firemen, of course, heard it. They were already half a mile away—swaying, swinging, hanging on grimly, with eyes on the road.

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even their stout hearts quaking a little at the recklessness of their driver.

Bob smiled. He loved the mad dash through the streets. From somewhere near by came a second clanging.

Clang! Clang-a-clang-clang!

Another engine swung round a corner a hundred yards ahead of Bob's engine, and went on down the road at a terrific speed. Two minutes later the two engines swung across the most dangerous traffic spot in the world—Blackfriars Bridge, and then along they went to the Victoria Embankment.

Then the public stopped and stared. The most enthralling sight to the townsman is a dashing fire-engine; even the horse engines used to draw everybody's gaze. But though the dashing horses had always attracted attention, the speed of the present-day machines attracted more.

Bob smiled again, and a little chuckle left his lips.

"See that engine—that's from Southwark!" he said to nobody in particular. "This is where we move!"

They did move—they moved so fast that the other engine appeared to be crawling.

Clang, clang, clang!

The noise the two bells made was almost deafening. Hearts were beating fast—seldom has a race between two fire-engines to be seen on one of the widest roads in London.

"He'll be over!" said the policeman, with a grim shrug of his shoulders as he held out his hand to keep a man from crossing the road as the engines approached.

The Southwark driver took up the challenge, swung down and increased his speed, but the swaying body of his engine was too much for his nerves—steady though they were. He looked admiringly at the fast-disappearing back of the Cannon Road engine, and shook his head.

"That's Bob West—first, as usual!" he said to the man who was clanging the bell.

"That's no driver in London who can hold that fellow," was the reply.

"Argyle Street is the danger spot, isn't it?" asked the driver, changing his subject abruptly.

The answer was a nod.

The end of the Embankment was reached, and the engine swung round to the right, and swept past the Abbey. Bob's engine was already past—a quarter of a mile away.

Argyle Street was very near the Abbey, and the two engines were joined by an escape which pelted along Whitehall, and a fire chief's little car swept past engine and escape, but did not catch the Cannon Road men.

They were already off the engine by the time the chief's car pulled up—looking round, in fact, for sign of the fire. There was no smoke to be seen, and no excited crowd clustered round a building which might have been burning at the back. Bob's eyes opened wide.

"Where is it, chief?" he called out.

"Manson's!" said the chief briskly.

"You're right outside it!"

Manson's was a warehouse, and faces had appeared at the windows as the engines drew up. Some of the faces showed alarm, for the prospect of fire-engines generally meant danger.

A man came out of Manson's, wiping his hands on his apron.

"What's up?" he asked hastily.

"The alarm was given from here," said the chief. "Who gave it?"

"There's no fire here, thank goodness!"

said the other fervently. "There hasn't been a telephone-call, either, so far as I know."

"Rubbish!" snapped the chief. "You don't think the Brigade turn out for nothing, do you?"

"Can't help that, sir," said Manson's man contritely. "I'll ask the telephone-operator."

The chief went with him, and as he did so two more engines swung round the corner of the road, scattering the interested onlookers in all directions. An escape appeared at the other end of the street, the bell clamouring for space.

Bob did not leave his engine, but a faint grin crept at the corners of his lips.

"Somebody has been having us on toast!" he said to Harry Thompson.

"I'd like to get his blamed neck in my hands," growled Harry; "we could do him a bit of good, I reckon!"

"Hullo, here's the chief!" "Back, men!" said the chief briefly. "False alarm! But it wasn't given here. Somebody at us!"

It was no new experience for the firemen to be summoned to a "fire" which did not exist. But it was something strange for them not to know whence the call emanated.

Two minutes later the traffic was proceeding quite normally, and the engines and escapes were being driven slowly back to their stations. Along the Embankment, the Southwark engine led the way, and this time Bob made no effort to pass it.

They were crossing into Queen Victoria Street at Blackfriars Bridge when a small car swung towards Bob's engine, and in the back of the car was a uniformed policeman.

"Bridge Street!" he roared. "Drive like fury! Danger zone!"

Instantly the clang, clang! started again, and the amazed spectators suddenly noticed the engine-driver bend over his steering-wheel, and a keen light leapt into his eyes.

Clang, clang!
Again the vehicular traffic swung to the sides of the road, and again the pedestrians turned to stare at the reckless manner in which Bob drove his engine along the busy thoroughfares.

Some of the traffic barely had time to get to the side of the road. Some of the pedestrians started running after the engine—people who were always eager to see the firemen at work. But they could not hope to keep up with it.

Behind them sounded the clang, clang of another engine's bell. It was Southwark men who had been turned on to the new call.

Bridge Street was in the City danger-zone, and Bob needed no urging. He was there second this time, one of the other engines at Cannon Road having been summoned first.

But there was no activity amongst the firemen already in the road. And again there was no proof wanted that the call was a false one—there was no fire.

A chief swept up in his little car, and jumping down, disappeared in a building. When he came out a few moments later his face expressed anger and surprise.

"Another false alarm!" he explained. "Get back, men!"

And the engines went back to their respective stations, the men fuming with rage. False alarms have to be attended to just as quickly as real alarms, for the men cannot differentiate between them until they get to the scene whence the call comes. If the alarm-spreading vandals only realised that a fireman takes his life into his hands every time he drives out of his station, there would be fewer false alarms.

There were no other calls that morning, and a small fire demanded only the attendance of the escape and crew during the afternoon.

But with the night came the repetition of the false calls. Twice Bob drove his engine through the almost deserted streets, and twice he found the engines had been called out for nothing. The police were informed of this incessant trickery, and when the alarm-bell again clanged out, at midnight half the men appeared disposed not to take any notice of it.

The chief officer came out of his room, his face white with anger.

"Another darned false, I'll bet!" he said

tartly. "Wait a bit, boys, and we'll get a call, perhaps, from the directing officer."

"Better not do that, sir," said Bob West quietly. "One never knows—we might catch the alarmists soon—drat the bell!"

Clang-a-clang! The bell rang out again and again, and the men bit their lips.

"Up, boys!" commanded the chief bitterly. "I'm sorry—Hullo, sonny! What do you want?"

A small boy in tattered clothes dashed into the station, his face white and tense, his eyes blazing with excitement.

"Mister—the whole of Gander Street is afire!" he panted.

That was enough for Bob. With scarcely a glance round to see if his crew were on the engine he started off. The street outside was almost deserted, only a few taxicabs being seen. The bell clanged a warning, and the engine swept along the street.

It is a rule in London that everything stops at the sound of the fire-bell, and traffic draws into the side of the road. Night-time is hardly sufficient an excuse for not obeying this order, and the cabmen, from force of habit, drew in and stopped, leaving the road absolutely clear for the engine.

Bob was letting his motor out, and the engine swayed and roared on its journey, the men clinging on like grim death.

There was a slight glow in the sky—this time it was no false alarm. Gander Street was packed with warehouses and tiny factories—one of the most dangerous spots in London. And the small boy had said that Gander Street was blazing from end to end!

Speed took the place of caution. The clanging of bells could be heard in all directions. Engines and escapes could be seen at many corners. The brigade-call had been given.

With a rush Bob West drove round the corner into Gander Street, and his brakes went on almost at once. He was on the scene first again, and his crew were down and at the hydrants before he had stopped.

Bob looked up and around. From a dozen windows, in a dozen different warehouses, smoke and flames could be seen. The driver's eyes blazed, and his lips came together in one straight line.

"Harry!" he called out. "There's a dirty guy been at work here! The whole street is alight! Where, in Heaven's name, are we going to start?"

That was the point! Every single warehouse was burning.

Every single little factory showed smoke and flames. And in the street men and women clustered, ringing their hands in anguish and terror.

"The Fire Fiends!" spat out a foreign-looking man of middle-age. "The low-down tykes! The Fire Fiends have started again!"

Whereat there was much muttering and cursing, for the Fire Fiends were more dreaded than the flames themselves.

Bob started as he heard the appellation muttered. The Fire Fiends! Who, in the whole of London's great and magnificent fire brigade, did not know of the Fire Fiends—that group of men who burned down warehouses for apparently no reason?

Acting on the impulse of the moment, Bob called to his chum, Harry Thompson.

"Harry!" Thompson came up, his face a little white and a hopeless, despondent expression on his face.

"This is hopeless!" he declared, with a grimace. "Bob, the whole darned street is alight—and all the brigades in the world couldn't save a wooden door of the whole shoot! They're saying it's the Fire Fiends back again—"

"I know—I've heard!" said Bob grimly. "Harry, I want you to slip away with me—we're going to have a look round at the back. There must be a reason for all these fires—a reason which the culprits want burned to cinders! Come on—round the back!"

Without another word, he turned on his heel, slipped down a narrow passage, and

climbed a wall into the back-yard of one of the burning warehouses. A moment later Harry joined him.

Had they known what they were to go through it would have made no difference to their determination. But they were to undergo as much danger in the next few hours as befalls the majority of men in a life-time!

CHAPTER 2.

'Midst Flame and Peril!

"HERE are we going to start?" Harry Thompson asked the question in a grim tone, his hands steady as he buckled his belt a little tighter and hitched his axe over his hip.

Bob, as driver of the engine, had neither axe nor helmet. He had not waited for them. But his little round uniform-hat was on his head, and he set this at an angle which would have looked rakish at any other time than the present. Then he looked grim—and ready for anything that came his way.

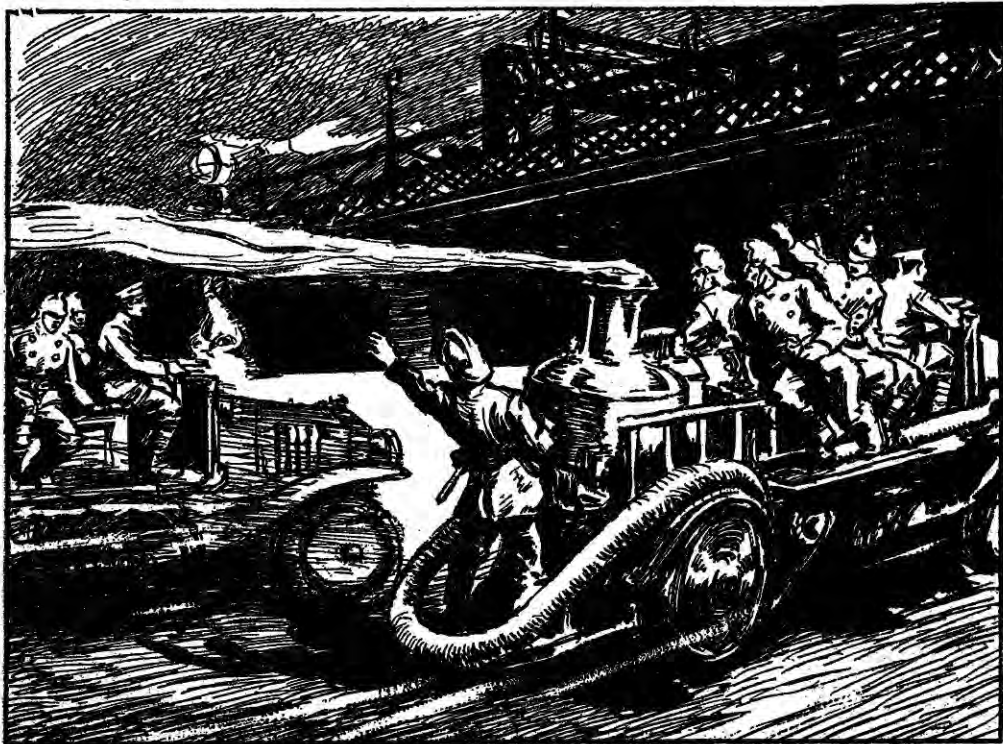
Harry looked at him as he spoke. Bob's brows were puckered in a frown of thoughtfulness, and his keen eyes were looking here, there, and everywhere.

"Harry," he said suddenly, "we must have been quick on the scene, despite the wait at the station!"

"We were easily first—as usual," said Harry. "Why?"

"Supposing the alarms—the false ones—during the day were given for the sole purpose of causing us to hesitate whether to turn out or not? Supposing that the alarmists were the Fire Fiends, who wanted the flames to gain a good hold before the engines turned up? Supposing—"

"Supposing we shut up supposing and get down to brass tacks!" suggested Harry grimly. "The engines are here—the whole darned brigade is round in the front, where we ought to be!"



Clang! Clang! Clang! The noise of the two fire engines was almost deafening as they dashed neck and neck along the road. "That's the Southwark engine!" yelled Bob. "This is where we move!" And move they did!

"Supposing," went on Bob, as if he had not heard his companion's outburst—"supposing we came so quickly that the Fire Fiends haven't had time to get away—would they choose the front or the back?"

"To escape," queried Harry.

Bob nodded.

"They'd choose the back, obviously," said Harry briskly. "The front would be crowded just as soon as the first flicker of flame was seen, or the first whiff of smoke got to the nostrils of passers-by. And—"

"Look!" said Bob suddenly.

He pointed as he spoke to the upper room of one of the warehouses.

A face was at the window—a face half-covered by a beard or a mask. The face looked white and ghastly in the dim light cast by a lamp in a window of the warehouse backing on to the building.

"Every warehouse here is a trap!" said Bob tensely. "What the dickens is that Johnny doing there?"

"He's one of the Fire Fiends!" declared Harry breathlessly. "Bob, hang on here for a tick—I'll get a couple of bobbies—"

"No time—we're going in after him!" said Bob grimly. "Come!"

He climbed another wall, running at it to get a good start. Harry followed him instantly.

They found themselves in a small, narrow yard. Bob scarcely looked around before he charged at a wooden door and pushed at it.

It refused to open.

"Together!" said Bob briefly.

A moment later two hefty shoulders crashed upon the door, and it burst open, and the two firemen were precipitated headlong into a dark passage. Smoke poured out of the aperture, smoke which was rendered as a turred red by flames.

The staircase immediately before them was ablaze. The men pitched themselves up, choking as the smoke got into their throats.

"Up we go!" said Bob, between his teeth. A moment later his big-booted feet were sounding weirdly on the wooden stairs, and the crash of Harry's feet sounded behind him.

Then beside him. Side by side the two sprang up the stairs.

Inside the building there was only a crackling of burning wood to be heard.

"A light!" exclaimed Harry suddenly.

Bob looked round hurriedly. He was just in time to see a tiny flicker of an electric hand-lamp before it went out. Without a word the two firemen kept in the direction of a large room, stacked with huge bales of a nature they could not determine at the moment—and did not stop to determine. They wanted to know the identity of the man who had shone the lamp, not the contents of the warehouse!

The lamp had been a guide for a moment, but the next moment the smoke hid everything from view.

"If only we could find the switch which would light up the whole place!" said Bob hopefully, as he fumbled his way amongst the bales. "The beggars are here, we know that! But in this smoke—and flames—and darkness—"

He stumbled suddenly, and pitched headlong down a flight of stairs, pulling up at the bottom feeling as if he had fallen off a mountain-top. Harry, calling to him, went down the stairs in the darkness, two at a time.

"Bob—Bob, old chap—" he exclaimed. Bob was on his feet, rubbing an elbow which felt as if it had been hit with a hammer.

"If this is the main staircase," he said quickly, "the switch might be here. Hallo, they're getting the water on!"

Finally to their ears came the swish-swish of water, and still louder the hiss as water met flaming wood.

"Strike a match, for the love of Mike, and let's see where we are!" said Bob. "We—"

A light glimmered out for a moment, and died away as it was smothered in smoke. Bob grunted.

"Light something—anything!" he said recklessly. "We can't do the darned building any harm!"

He fumbled round, and his fingers touched a box-like partition. It was a small office, and he fumbled for the door. He could not find it, however, but his fingers ran up against something soft. It was a sack.

"Light this sack I'm holding, Harry!" said Bob hurriedly. "That's right!"

Harry had struck another match, and, shielding it with his hand, he held it whilst

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Bob placed the edge of the sack to the flame. A moment later it caught alight, and blazed furiously.

The light it cast was weird, but it was sufficient for their purpose. The door of the box-like office was found locked, but it was the work of a moment for Harry to smash the lock with his axe. Then the burning sack held out to light the office, they discovered what they sought—the switchboard.

Bob did not hesitate. He pressed down every switch on the board, and they were numerous. The effect was as they wanted it—the whole burning warehouse became a blaze of light.

"That'll surprise 'em in front!" said Bob, with a chuckle. "Now to tackle Mr. Fire Fiend! They won't go out at the back, but our boots, for they'll know we came in this way, and the way we came in might be the way dozens of our chaps are looking!"

The swishing and hissing had by this time grown almost deafening. The hope that they might hear the footsteps of any lurking men went out like the snuff of a candle, and they had to trust to their axes. The light, however, was a great asset to them.

They dashed up the stairs, and made for the room whence the flash-lamp had shone for that brief but illuminating moment.

There was no one to be seen. Smoke filled the room, and smoke and flames. The floor was alight, and great bales of cloth were burning furiously. There was a kind of passage-way between the bales, and along this the firemen chums made their way. They then found themselves in another room, in which wooden cases were stacked. Like the bales, the boxes were blazing furiously.

It was here that the chums caught a second glimpse of the Fire Fiends.

Three shadowy figures loomed up, and above the din of hissing water came a foreign snarl.

"Stand back!"

"We blow ze head off!"

"Blow away, and be blowed!" said Harry fiercely.

The next moment he had snatched his axe from his belt, and had flung it towards the shadowy forms. There was a howl of rage and pain, and a groan, followed by a thud as something struck the floor. A moment later there were two loud explosions, and a couple of bullets whistled past the chums and struck boxes just by their heads.

"Duck!" muttered Bob.

The chums fell to the floor, and wriggled their way along until they were near the fallen man. He was perfectly still, and as Bob's hands went out to catch hold of the man, his fingers ran into something warm and sticky. It was blood.

"He's out!" snapped Bob, and there was not the slightest feeling of pity in his breast as he spoke. The man had done foul work, and as if that was his just punishment there was no case for pity.

The other two men had disappeared, but a narrow passage between the boxes showed the way they had gone. The two firemen rose to their feet, choking as the smoke got thicker, and dodging sudden bursts of flame as the fire got through the boxes and caught at the inflammable stuff inside.

Behind them there was a sudden, deafening roar, and, startled, they glanced behind. The floor had suddenly given way, and a huge column of fire and smoke burst through.

"That's one way out off!" said Bob grimly.

"My heavens, that man—"

The man who had fallen to Harry's well-aimed axe was rolling towards the abyss of smoke and flames! The reason was obvious the next moment, for the floor upon which he lay collapsed, and man and wood disappeared from the firemen's eyes.

Bob gasped. It was horrible, but unavoidable. The man had not cared what wanton damage he did, and now he had met his fate.

"I hope he's dead," said Harry shakily. "He'll be a cinder in less than five minutes."

Bob pulled himself together with an effort, and the same grim lines came back to his lips.

"There are another two, at least," he said. "This way!"

The floor was shivering underneath their feet even as they moved away, and the crash a moment after they had got out of the room told them that floor, boxes, and everything else had gone the way of the fallen Fire Fiend.

The floors below must have been a raging furnace by that time. The heat was intense, and the perspiration ran down the grimy

faces of the firemen. But there was no hesitation about the young fire fighters. In that building—in that place of flame and smoke—the men who had caused this terrific conflagration were running, or hiding.

They loomed up in sight a few minutes later, and through the thick smoke and red glare of the flames they could be seen to be staggering about.

"Stop!" roared Bob. "You might just as well stop! We're bound to have you in the end!"

The answer was a couple of bullets, but the aim was as bad as the light, and the bullets flew harmlessly past the chums.

Bob and Harry fought their way on, their breaths coming in gasps and gasps, and with ever-increasing difficulty. Harry was wishing the men would stop, for the floor upon which they stood was rocking and sagging beneath their weight.

Below there was a furnace which would take all the water of the Thames to quench. Below them the horrible, horrible, ghastly death! Yet they stamped on, through the blinding smoke, their eyes watering with pain and the heat, their hair tingling and scorched.

They never thought of giving up the chase, and leaving the Fire Fiends to their fate. Where the firemen put the Fire Fiends could follow—even as the famous admiral had said that where the Spaniards could go the English could follow.

Crack!

Another bullet sped its way through the smoke—this time from behind. Somehow or other they had slipped past the Fire Fiends in the murky gloom. They swung round, and were just in time to see the two men slip across the passage-way, clamber over a couple of big bales, and disappear.

A moment later the firemen had followed, and their lungs drew in sweeter breath in great, gasping pants. It was clearer there, but only for a moment.

A crash behind them, a sudden breath of hot, scorching air, told them that another floor had given away—another lot of bales were added to the blazing furnace beneath.

There was no hissing now, and the chums knew the warehouse had been given up as hopeless to save, and that their chums outside were concentrating all their attentions to prevent the fire from spreading.

But there were the Fire Fiends yet to encounter.

The smoke was choking the chums, the heat was scorching them—their uniforms were brown by this time. Blisters were coming up on their faces, and their eyes felt as if they must drop out. In short, they shut their eyes, and fought and felt their way.

Crack!

Another bullet, and this time there was a sharp gasp from Bob. Harry opened his eyes at that.

"Bob!" he cried anxiously. "Are you—"

"He's got me in the thigh!" said Bob between his teeth. "The trash! I'll have him now if I die for it!"

And he went on at increasing speed.

The flames were burning all around them as they forced their way through another room and found themselves at the stairs. Great rolls of thick black smoke greeted them, and to make matters worse, the lights suddenly went out. Then there was darkness save for the ghastly red glare on the horrible black smoke.

"Bob!" panted Harry. "Bob, we—we must get out of this!"

"Go on down, then, old chum!" said Bob between his teeth. "I'm seeing what's happening. I'm going to get those scoundrels!"

There was another gasp from Harry. "I'm—I'm coming—too!" he panted painfully.

They crossed the top of the stairs, and looked into another great room. Here the floor had already given way, and down below, in what looked like a huge pot, they saw the crackling, splintered woodwork blazing furiously.

"Not there!" panted Bob, choking and coughing as he got a throat full of hot air. "Down—stairs!"

They went down together, stumbling, falling, staggering. They were almost blind by this time, and their lungs felt as if they were burning.

"Bob!" panted Harry. "I'm—I'm done, old man!"

He fell as he spoke towards a window on a landing, and his helmeted head crashed through the glass, immediately their faces

were greeted by a wind that felt as cold as ice, and, with their mouths wide open, the chums drew in the life-giving fresh air.

Bob looked down; they were only on the first floor, and the ground was barely fifteen feet below them. And, as he looked, in the red light cast by the blazing warehouse, he saw two shadowy figures climbing a wall.

"Harry, pull yourself together, old chum!" shouted Bob. "The villains have taken to the open!"

"Thank-Heaven!" said Harry, and with a terrific effort he gathered his scattered wits, and went down the stairs to the ground floor.

Above them the warehouse flared and roared. They were away from the smoke now, and already their breath seemed to be coming easier.

They got out of the warehouse at last, and it was the work of a moment to climb the wall, tired and worn though they were. But they staggered rather than ran along the passage-way; in front of them was the crowd of interested sightseers, behind them a high blank wall.

"There's a side passage somewhere, Harry!" said Bob huskily.

Obviously so, for the men would not have bolted into the crowd. That would have meant capture, for whereas the crowd would have willingly made way for the firemen, they would have resented any attempt of a civilian to fight a way through their ranks.

They found the side passage, and they went along it, dimly lighted as it was by the glare of the flames. There was, however, no sign of the foreigners.

The passage gave admittance to the right, and along here they found themselves going into the street. But what made them put a spurt on was the fact that at the entrance to the passage, standing in the roadway, was a small two-seater motor-car—one which had brought a fire chief to the scene of the conflagration.

"Harry, they're sneaking the cars!" panted Bob. "Hook it!"

They "hooked" it as fast as their cramped and weary limbs would allow them to.

A second car stood by the passage, a big brass bell shining in the lamplight.

In a moment Bob had helped his almost beaten chum inside, had started up the engine, and had climbed over the back of the car to the driving seat.

"Now we'll see about it!" he said grimly. The next moment he was driving madly down the road.

CHAPTER 3.

The End of the Chase!

THE swiftly rushing air had the effect of reviving Harry Thompson, and though their eyes smarted, the two chums sat up in the car and stared ahead of them.

In the distance, a red light of the rear lamp of a car caught their eyes, and they chased it. Bob was driving the car with all the recklessness of which he was capable.

"Ring that dashed bell!" he ordered. "We'll clear the way, at any rate!"

Harry's helmet was an asset at that moment; the news would be flashed all over the London police-station that two of the cars had been stolen. One of them, it would be seen, had a fireman in it, and that would pass anywhere. But the other would contain civilians, and that one would receive a lot more attention than the civilians would care for.

In ten minutes' time they found themselves over Blackfriars Bridge.

Clang, clang, clang!

Harry swung the heavy striker on to the bell, and the noise he made was simply deafening. The sound, familiar as it was, brought a smile of joy to Bob's lips, and he drew as hard as he could to get his car still in pursuit of the car in front.

They saw a policeman at the Elephant and Castle step out into the road and hold out an arm as the first car approached. He might just as well have stopped where he had been—on the pavement, for the car shot past him, and a moment later the clang, clang, of the bell greeted his ears.

Bob was past a minute later, and the officer, amazed, rubbed his chin in perplexity. Clang, clang! Clang-clang-clang!

Through Kennington—still on through Brixton, up the hill to Streatham, down the hill to Norbury—still chasing, still clanging loudly on the bell. Out of Norbury on to Farringham with half the police of Thornton Heath



Bob West was close upon the Fire Fiends when suddenly he turned his car towards the path. It bumped up, but as he raced past, a bullet came whistling behind, crashing into the back of the car.

rubbing their eyes and wondering if this was a dream or stern reality.

Clang, clang, clang!

The car in front was losing the chase. Bob was driving recklessly down hills, up hills, round corners and curves, his back wheels seeming to take it in turns to touch the ground.

The open country was reached, and still Harry kept up the incessant clamour on the bell. It would strike terror into the hearts of the Fire Fiends, at any rate.

"Mind their revolvers!" said Harry, his voice sounding faint in the rush of air.

"Blow their revolvers!" snapped Bob. "I'm going to drive them into a ditch!"

Crack! A spurt of flame from ahead, and a bullet crashed through the wind-screen of their car. Another flash, and another bullet whistled between them, splintering what was left of the wind-screen.

"Getting hot!" said Bob, lying over the steering-wheel. "Hallo! She's stopping, Harry! Hang on! It's our only chance! Hang on! Keep your head low!"

The car in front was pulling up. Something had evidently gone wrong; but it occupied the centre of the road, and there was only a narrow strip of road and the path left, and the path was seven or eight inches above the road level.

Bob did not hesitate. He knew what would happen if they stopped just then—a bullet for each of them!

He turned the car towards the path. It bumped up, and Harry was flung against the driver's seat. But Bob was ready, and he steered himself to receive it. He got a bruised side for his pains, for he was crushed against the woodwork of the car body by the weight of his chum.

A moment later they were past, a bullet whistling after them and crashing into the back of the car.

Ahead there was a bend in the road, and Bob took it at full speed, and disappeared from view of the Fire Fiends.

There he pulled up, and swung himself out of the car.

"Come on, Harry! They'll be away across the fields in a jiff!"

Harry needed no bidding. He was feeling stiff and sore, but he had his breathing apparatus in better working order by now. The chums broke through a hedge, and peiled across a field towards where a light shone through a hedge.

The next instant revolvers were blazing away, and a bullet struck Bob in the shoulder. Another buried itself in the ground by Harry's head, but that was all.

A moment later Bob was on his feet, and reckless as ever, he charged full tilt into the foreigners with the revolver. Curses rent the air, and threats which were never likely to be fulfilled followed them.

Bob's hands were on the man's throat, and he dimly did he realise that Harry was tackling the other man. The pain in Bob's

shoulder was intense. He was feeling sick and giddy with the loss of blood already.

But he hung on until there was no strength left in him. The revolver had dropped to the ground as he had kicked the man's wrist, and the other man's was blazing away into the air as Harry held his arms straight up in the air.

Suddenly Bob was thrown down to the ground by a superhuman effort of the unwounded foreigner, and there he lay, his fingers touching the revolver.

Dizzy and sick, he sat up, just in time to see Harry thrown or tripped up. Then the men took to their heels.

"They're for it!" muttered Bob thickly. "I can't help it!"

The next instant there were two successive cracks, and the two foreigners flung up their hands and dropped to the ground, rolling and groaning.

Bob was beside them in a minute, staggering from weakness.

"You've asked for it, you fools!" he said, between his teeth. "You're too dangerous to be at large!"

There was no answer save a groan.

Two hours later a small car drew up at Thornton Heath Fire Station. Two unconscious men were tied with straps to the dicky-seat at the back. A fireman in a battered helmet was hanging up the driver, whose white face appeared ghastly in the station lamps.

With an effort Bob's hand went up to the salute as the station-officer came hurriedly out.

"The Fire Fiends, sir!" he reported. "G-got 'em!"

The next moment he had collapsed over the wheel, beaten to the world, yet triumphant.

All the country rang with the names of the two firemen the next day. All the world thrilled at the report of their hour-long fight amidst flame and smoke and heat.

And all the world possessed but a few sympathisers when it was reported that the two Fire Fiends had died of their wounds.

Bob learned later that the three men had taken to robbing warehouses right and left, and had burned them afterwards to hide traces of their work. Thus many fires which had had a mysterious origin were accounted for; but there were no more fires like those. The Fire Fiends were all dead, though neither forgotten nor mourned.

And to-day one can still see Bob West driving the Cannon Road engine in the streets of London, ready again to risk his life in the cause of the public who employ him. And beside him, at every turn-out, is Harry Thompson, ready to follow Bob again should occasion ever demand it.

THE END.
(Be sure you read next week's grand complete story of football and adventure, entitled: "FOILED AT THE FINISH!")

YOU WILL LIKE THIS THRILLING SERIAL, BOYS!



Wolves of St Beowulf's!

By
DUNCAN STORM.

Jack Wobby & Co. are the liveliest schoolboys you ever met, and their adventures are amazing!

Introduction.

JACK WABBYDONG, JAMES READY, SWEET, and a Chinese named LUNG, chums together in the great school of St. Beowulf's, in company with JOHN LINCOLN, one of the governors of the school, and VISCOUNT WAFFINGTON, a relation of the Countess of Castlewode, are instrumental in capturing a gang of international burglars, at a private landing-stage, with a number of bags containing the supposed treasure, the little party await the arrival of the Trois Freres, a small craft which has been chartered to smuggle the ill-gotten gains out of the country. The crew aboard the vessel think only of the treasure, and pay little attention to the party as they board ship.

Safely aboard, Lincoln offers to pilot the vessel, whilst the crew go down in the cabin to make merry.

The robbers then open the bags, and discover that they have been deceived. They prepare to attack the Englishmen, only to find that they are locked in the cabin and made prisoners. They manage to gain an exit from the engine-room, however. A fierce fight then ensues, but the robbers are soon overcome.

After a most exciting journey, the Trois Freres reaches Barham Harbour, where Mr. Lincoln hands over his little haul to the safe keeping of the harbour officials. After that the boys return to High March Castle, where John Lincoln tells them of his intention of taking them on a world tour. The boys have been back at school a few days, when Mr. Lincoln arrives to make the final selection of the party to accompany him. Wobby & Co. and Slurk, etc., are chosen amidst great excitement. Later, Wobby has some trouble with the Kids' Union, and sits down thoughtfully in his study chair to consider the matter.

(Now read on.)

The Mysterious Watcher.

"WHAT'S the matter, Wob?" asked Stickjaw, coming into the study. "Prithce, why so sad?"

"Why?" replied Wobby. "It's those Lower School kids and their union. They want me to go and apologise for clumping young Saunders and young Merri-dew, saucy knaves!"

"I should go and apologise if I were you, Wob!" said Jim, grinning. "You won't have any peace until you do. They've put you on the black list. They say that you chuck your weight about too much."

Wobby rested his arms on the arms of his wooden chair. "Look here, chaps," he said, "I'm not going to apologise to a gang of young tugs like those Little Lord Fauntleroy of the Lower School. I may have only a few days left at school, but I'm not going to spend them on my hands and knees begging to a gang of saucy children who have not yet learned to wash their necks. What say you, gentles?"

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Stickjaw laughed.

He had put his hand on the seat of another wooden chair to draw it to him. "My hat," he exclaimed. "What's this on the chair? It's something worse than treacle!"

Wobby had moved uneasily on the chair in which he had taken his seat.

"Here, I say!" he exclaimed. "What's this?"

He strove to rise, and the chair rose with him.

"It's some of that stuff that they stick aeroplanes together with," announced Stickjaw, examining his fingers, the tips of which had nearly been torn off by their contact with the seat of his chair. "It's one of those new glues, Wobby, Disposal Board stuff. You can say good-bye to the seat of your trousers. You've no more chance than a bluebottle on a catch-em-alive-o!"

"It's the Amalgamated Union again, Wob," said Jim, laughing. "You had better go and apologise before they take their next move. Those kids have learned their power. Look, they have covered the seat of the other chair the same way!"

"Here, I say, you chaps!" exclaimed Wobby wrathfully, as he strove to tear himself from the armchair. "This is too bad! Cobble's-wax or a dab of pitch is one thing, but to glue a chap down like the flap of an envelope is a bit too thick! What am I going to do about it?"

He took a firm grip on the chair and strove to rise. He rose all right, but his trousers remained well glued down all over the seat.

"It's no good trying to do that, Wobby," said Stickjaw. "That stuff is used for gluing sections of wood and fabric together. Your trousers are now part of that chair. Nothing will ever shift the seat. That is splendid glue. The kids use it for making their model yachts. The only thing we can do to get you out of that is to cut away the seat of your trousers. Then you had better go and Union. They'll sign a peace with you if you approach them decently," added Stickjaw. "They will be very decent about it—not spiteful, you know—but they mean to have their own."

"They mean to have the seat of my trousers!" mumbled the disgusted Wobby. "And they are a new pair of bags, too! Never mind, boys, cut me away, but go easy with your knives!"

His friends set to work, and, with the loss of the whole seat of his trousers, Wobby was released.

"It's time we got out of this school, chaps!" Wobby said gloomily. "Perhaps Slurk and his tugs had their use, after all, in keeping these kids in order, like wasps amongst

flies! I'd sooner be amongst the savages of Africa myself!"

"Well, you will soon be there," said Stickjaw soothingly. "Now go and apologise for clumping Saunders and Merri-dew and for spanking the secretary."

Much against his will, Wobby went and sought out the secretary of the union, who obliged him to attend a full meeting of delegates in Class-room No. 3, and to sign a written apology in a very ink book of minutes, as well as paying a fine of two pound pots of raspberry jam.

He was then coldly informed that the union would take no further action against him or his chums if he did nothing to provoke it, but that any interference with any member of the union would at once be followed by condign punishment.

For a few hours Wobby was quite low-spirited over his correction, but of a sudden all thoughts of the Lower School Union were swept from his mind.

A message came that the Pole Star was in Barham Harbour, ready for sea, and that on the following day the boys were to join it at noon, whilst the school would enjoy a half-holiday to see them off.

It was Monsieur Faux de Blanquiers who brought the news to the boys.

Monsieur was radiant. Like all Frenchmen, he was mad on sport.

"Eep, eep, hooray, boys!" he cried.

"We go to Africa, we shall shoot ze crocodile, ze giraffe, ze elephant, and ze dickey bird! You will all be ready at eleven of ze clock. A motor-wagon 'e come for us an' our baggages, and you will 'ave a place for ze kangaroo, Nobbes. Ha, it is more better to become ze explorer than to teach boy savages ze beautiful language of la belle France, which zey will never understand! Look, boys, I dance ze Fling of ze 'Ighlands!'"

Monsieur hopped about in some sort of war-dance, which he fondly believed to be a correct rendering of the Highland Fling.

"Froggy's gone dilly!" said Wobby, when monsieur had danced off. "He will be all right on the trip, though. Froggy is a sport! It is Slurk who is going to make us tired!"

But the boys saw nothing of Slurk till the big motor-van came to the school to collect their baggage.

Slurk joined them with a sulky nod. It was not that he looked on the expedition as a mad sort of trip, and was by no means looking forward to a life of adventure.

"Don't take any notice of him, boys," whispered Wobby. "We'll leave the tug on the ice for a bit, and see how he goes on. 'Get in, Nobby,'" he added, to his pet kangaroo. "We are off to see life!"

Nobby leaped into the van with one joyful bound. Nobby had had about enough of being penned up in a loose-box and teased by the Lower School. It was evident that he knew that he was off for fresh adventures.

Slurk edged away from the kangaroo. He had learned to hate Nobby as heartily as he hated his master.

Then Blackbeard Teach and monsieur swung themselves into the van, and they were off.

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2:

As soon as they were clear of the school there was nothing of the master left either in Blackbeard or monster. They sat perched upon the pile of boxes, bags, and gun-cases, and chatted with the boys as if they were brothers. But Jim noticed that neither Blackbeard nor Froggy took much notice of Slurk. They knew more about Slurk than that worthy was aware of. The van did not take long in reaching Barham Harbour, and there the hearts of the boys leaped as they saw lying alongside the quay the Blue Peter ship at the fore, John Lincoln's ocean-going steam-yacht, the Pole Star, a magnificent vessel of two thousand tons.

As soon as they were alongside all was bustle and confusion. There was no time to spare, for the pilot wished to make his tide on the bar.

The pile of luggage and gear was rapidly cleared from the van and run on board. On the deck the boys found Waff waiting for them.

On the bridge, John Lincoln was standing with Captain Mason, the skipper of the Pole Star.

The last good-byes were hastily shouted. The gang-planks were withdrawn, and the warps cast off, and, before the boys were aware what had happened, the Pole Star was gliding slowly down the harbour towards the sea.

Wobby had made Nobby fast to a belaying-pin in the rail, and was busy stowing his luggage in a compact heap, to be taken down below.

Jim Ready was watching the familiar faces of the men of the Harbour Board as they watched the departing yacht, and raised a cheer for John Lincoln.

Wobby had lent him his glasses, and with these he coned the groups on the quay.

He was surprised to see Mr. Travers, the detective, there, leaning unostentatiously against a crane. But Jim's attention was drawn by a yellow-faced man, who was lurking in an alleyway between two sheds on the wharf.

This man also carried a pair of binoculars, which were directed at the bridge where John Lincoln was standing.

As the yacht glided down the harbour the man suddenly turned and made his way to the harbour telegraph-office.

At the same moment Mr. Travers, of Scotland Yard, quietly moved from his careless, lounging posture against the harbour crane, and seemed to take an intense interest in the movements of the yellow-faced man.

That was all Jim saw, for the Pole Star was rounding the bend of the harbour and increasing her speed.

They were passing along the great wall of the breakwater now. It was black with St. Beowulf's boys, and the Lower School were cheering themselves hoarse as the stately yacht glided out to sea.

Wobby picked up a rope's-end, and waggled it in the direction of a group of the Lower School Union, as much as to threaten what he was going to do when he came back.

He was answered by a derisive yell as a pair of trousers, without a seat, were run up, like a flag, to the last signalling-yard of the harbour.

Jim saw the trousers come fluttering down as a horrified harbour official ran towards the boys. Then the shrill cheers were heard no longer. The Pole Star was bustling along, leaving a great white wake of foam behind her, and soon the entrance of Barham Harbour was a grey blur in the distance astern.

They were fairly off now on their great adventure. In a few minutes they seemed to have steamed into a new world of swinging blue seas and white crests.

Only Jim had a thought for what they had left behind.

"Who was the yellow-faced man on the quay, and why had Mr. Travers, of Scotland Yard, taken so much interest in his movements?"

An Old Friend.

SOON the good yacht Pole Star was well away down Channel.

It was a brisk, breezy day, with a blue, white-topped sea running, but this was only a surface bubble, and did not shift the big, beamy steam-yacht of two thousand tons.

The Pole Star was a ship in every sense of the word. She had voyaged in every sea in

the world, and had even found her way high up in the stormy, ice-laden seas of Baffin's Bay.

Her crew was a strange one, as the boys were soon to find out, for where ever John Lincoln had found a man whom he had proved and liked, that man, if he were willing to accompany him, became one of the crew of the Pole Star and a sharer in his master's adventures. And there were very few men who refused the chance of sailing with John Lincoln in the Pole Star.

It was Wobby who was the first to explore the ship, whilst his chums were busy shaking down in their cabins.

Blackbeard Teach, finding them all grouped on deck, had hustled them off to this duty.

"Down below with you, boys!" he said commandingly. "Sing Sing will show you your cabins. You had best stow your things away now, for the weather is not going to improve."

"Don't care what the weather is," grumbled Bully Slurk under his breath. "I'd like to see it blow a hurricane. There is nothing I like better than a good swinging sea. I hate calm weather, and I should like to see some of you chaps seasick!"

Wobby had winked at his pals at this boastful announcement. He had done a lot of sea-faring in his time. His father was one of those parents who believed in turning their sons out early to see the world, and before he was ten years old, Wobby had sailed across two oceans. At eleven years old he had steamed through a typhoon in the Gulf of Mexico, and he did not want to steam through another in a hurry. Wobby had learned to like a nice, calm, smooth, blue sea for his sailing, and never talked about rough weather, for he had a superstitious notion that to talk about wind was the way to bring it on.

"Slurk, Slurk, my old colber!" he had answered. "You go on shooting your mouth in the 'old salt' style, and let's hope that nothing will hear you. I'll see you to-morrow morning about breakfast-time, and I'll see if you feel like a good fat rasher and fried eggs—all sizzling. Bet you'll feel more like pulling up your socks and laying down to die!"

And with this Wobby had slid off, whilst Sing Sing, a bland and smiling Chinese, had shown the boys to their cabins.

Fine cabins were these, light and airy, with two berths to each cabin. Slurk was given a cabin to himself which Stickjaw promptly called the "Dog's Home."

"I say, Sing Sing," suggested Stickjaw, "can't we all sleep together? We all come out of the same dormitory at school, except that pie-faced swell who has taken a cabin on his own."

Sing Sing nodded. The Pole Star had been used as a hospital-ship in war-time, and some of her arrangements had been left unaltered. He turned back two folding-doors that made a couple of transverse bulkheads, and lo and behold! there was one great, airy six-berth cabin.

Sing Sing had looked very curiously at Lung, whose pigtail was coiled up beneath his school cap.

But Lung took no manner of notice of Sing Sing till the backs of his chums were turned. Then there passed between them an almost imperceptible sign.

China is a land of secret societies, and the sign which passed between the steward and the schoolboy might have been recognised by a few hundred thousand Chinese as that of the Brotherhood of the Celestial Lotus, which, next to the great Triad Society, is the most powerful secret society of young China.

And from that moment Sing Sing was one of the boys. It did not take him very long to discover that

Slurk was no friend to the party he accompanied, and that Blackbeard Teach and Nobby were masters and in authority above them.

In the meantime Wobby had pitched his bags into an empty cabin and had gone round to make himself acquainted with the ship. Wobby followed his nose, and it led him to the galley, from which a delicious smell of cooking was wafted on the fresh breeze.

There was a big, round, brass-bound scuttle to the galley, and as Wobby approached this, with his nose in the air, it framed the face of the blackest nigger Wobby had ever seen—see him once.

The nigger stared at Wobby, and Wobby stared at the nigger, unable to believe his eyes.

"Slushy!" he cried. "Say, Slushy, is it you, or am I dilly?"

"Wobbe-ee!" yelled the nigger. "Mars'r Wobbee! Am dis you, or am it your spirit?"

"Good old Slush!" exclaimed Wobby. "Give me one of those pies and try me!"

The nigger flung open the door of the galley, his white cook's cap tipped rakishly on his frizzy head. He slapped his huge black paw over Wobby's hand.

"For brass ma soul, Mars'r Wobbee," he cried, "you have gib me a turn! I did tink dat you was in Australia!"

"Not a bit of it, old Cherryblossom—I'm here," said Wobby. "And I thought you were pearling still up Torres Straits!"

Slushy touched his chest with his finger.

"De bellows am gone wrong along ob de diving, Mars'r Wobbee," he said. "But Mars'r Lincoln, he come along when I was in de hospital, and I hab work on his boats, so he gib me a job on dis packet. He am a very good gentleman, Mars'r Lincoln, an' he gib me dis good job. An you, Mars'r Wobbee, where hab you come from?"

"I've been to school in England, old colber!" replied Wobby. "And Mr. Lincoln, he is the governor of our school, is taking me and my pals for a cruise. That's how I'm here, Slush. And don't you forget that the sea-air will give us an appetite!"

"I don't forget dat you save me from dat debble-fish, Mars'r Wobbee," replied Slushy. "Anything dat dis ole niggah can do to make yo' happy an' comfortable, dat will he do. S'pose you want a nice cup o' tea early in de mornin', you come to ole Slushy."

"I'm glad I did not let that devil-fish get you, Slush," said Wobby, with feeling. "Cause you are the blackest and the whitest nigger I ever happened on. But who's that queer-looking tug in the hairy trousers?"

Slushy looked back into the galley and grinned.



"Here, I say, you chaps!" exclaimed Wobby wrathfully, as he strove to tear himself from the chair. "This is too bad to give a chap down like the flap of an envelope. What am I going to do about it?"



Address all letters: The Editor, "The Gem Library," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

My dear Chums,—Next week's issue of the GEM will be the Christmas Number. That is the great point to be considered. I hope nobody is going to miss this very special number. It is the finest Christmas extra we have ever had. For weeks past I have been getting hints from my friends about the Christmas Number, and I believe those correspondents, along with everybody else, will agree that this time the GEM has scored a bigger triumph than ever.

STEADY ADVANCE!

The plain fact is, this grand number of the GEM, out next Wednesday, cuts into fresh ground. There has never been anything quite so good before, either read in books or dreamt of in dreams. I have taken more trouble than usual over this number. Its superb stories have the real Christmas spirit in them. The whole number is distinguished by the wonderful atmosphere of Christmas, and it is crammed full of magnificent features.

A REAL CHRISTMAS NUMBER!

That is it in a nutshell. You will not find a better, take it from me. It is no use doing things by halves—never was, never will be—and, of course, this year I had to mark the new conditions of the GEM, and to keep well ahead of what is expected since our mammoth change a few weeks since.

THE CHRISTMAS COVER!

Next week's number can boast a particularly attractive cover, the most effective yet, and the programme of yarns will be voted magnificent. One hears people say that there is nothing fresh and inspiring to be said about Christmas, but such a theory can be dismissed right away. See next Wednesday's GEM, and judge for yourselves.

"FOR FRIENDSHIP'S SAKE!"

Now, I might reasonably refer here to the shoals of splendid congratulatory letters I have received about the enlarged GEM, but that matter can wait. I have more to say about our Christmas Number and its myriad attractions. The gripping story of St. Jim's bears the above title. Somehow, you always link up Christmas and what it means with friendship, and I do not think Mr. Martin Clifford could have hit on a better or more ringing title for his great Christmas yarn.

A DRAMATIC CHRISTMAS STORY!

"For Friendship's Sake!" will please you as a tale of the old school. What is more, it will give you just the sort of sympathetic impression of Christmas which stirs the heart, and leaves a cheery remembrance behind for months to come.

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS SUPPLEMENT.

Another special feature for next week is the grand Christmas Number of the "St. Jim's News," packed full of seasonal stories, pictures, quips, and fun! Then there is

"FOILED AT THE FINISH!"

The brilliantly written, well-knit footer tale next week is sure to get a welcome, while Duncan Storm's serial, "The Wolves of St. Beowulf's!" carries us a big stage further in the amazing adventures of Waff, Nobby, and the rest.

THINGS TO REMEMBER!

That further developments in the photograph line are coming. That the "Holiday Annual" is the best sort of Christmas present anybody could wish for. With its prime budget of stories of school and adventure, and its innumerable extra attractions, it makes a long winter evening fly past like magic. When making up your Christmas list you would be well advised to give the "Annual" a front place.

Also, please take note of what our Companion Papers—the "Magnēt," the "Boys' Friend," and the "Popular"—are doing. Their new programmes are unsurpassed.

YOUR EDITOR.

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THE FAGS' REBELLION!

(Continued from page 17.)

request, can I rely upon you to keep my relationship with my rascally nephew a secret—"

"Of course, sir. No one, with the exception of the Head and ourselves, need know that fact."

"Then—then I will do it. I will see Dr. Holmes at once." And Mr. Selby did. He came back some time later. His face was white, and he was trembling.

"Merry," he said, his voice quivering with passion and humiliation, "you have gained your ends. Dr. Holmes has agreed to cancel all punishments, and to grant a free pardon to the rebellious boys. He has dispatched Kildare to acquaint them with the news, and to escort them back to school. Now go!"

And Tom Merry and his chums went. "Well, my word," breathed Blake, "it's come off!" "I guess it has," agreed Kit Wildrake, nodding. "I reckon young Wally will be no end bucked."

"We'll trot off and see him now," smiled Tom Merry.

"He's got you to thank for this, Wildrake."

"Yass, wathah!" remarked Arthur Augustus happily.

"It's whipping, bai Jove!"

But they were mistaken there. The scamp of the Third was neither joyful or grateful—at least, he did not appear to be. When they arrived on the island they found Kildare before them. His skiff was drawn up on the bank, and he stood surrounded by the whole of the rebels.

"Cheerio, Wally!" yelled Blake. "What do you think of it? Good news—eh?"

"Rotten!" grumbled Wally. "Fancy having to give up this jolly old island for a blessed Form-room and lessons! Brrrr! We were just having the time of our lives."

"You—you ungrateful young ass—" began Kildare. "Never mind," said Wally, brightening up. "I suppose it would have got a bit tame after a time. And, after all—we've won the day. Hip—hip—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Lowther blandly. "But didn't we win it for you?"

"Rats! We'd have won in any case!" yelled Wally. "Now, you chaps, all together. Three cheers for the giddy old rebellion. Hip, hip—"

And cheer the Third-Formers did—a tremendous cheer that rang across the dusky river, and echoed and re-echoed amidst the deepest recesses of Rylcombe Woods.

The dusk was thick over the old quad of St. Jim's as the fags—rebels no longer—trooped through the gateway that evening. They took their places in School House and New House as if nothing had happened. The masters treated them as if nothing had happened. But the Head sent for Wally. It was a brief interview.

"My boy," said Dr. Holmes quietly, "I have sent for you to express my deep joy and thankfulness that you have been proved to be innocent of the charges made against you. I regret more than I can say that I was one of those who deemed you guilty of such a crime."

He shook hands warmly with the blushing fag, and with one hand resting kindly on the boy's shoulder led him to the door.

And that was all.

THE END.

(You will be pleased with next week's extra special Christmas Story: "FOR FRIENDSHIP'S SAKE," By Martin Clifford. Be sure you order this Great Christmas Number EARLY, otherwise you may get left!)

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Here is a splendid new competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of Burnley Football Club in picture-puzzle form. What you are invited to do is to solve this picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears under the puzzle, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Burnley" Competition, GEM Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, December 21st.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all, or any, of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

The competition is run in conjunction with "Boys' Friend," "Magnet," and "Popular," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.

I enter "BURNLEY" Competition, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and binding.

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