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(Tom Merry & Co., vigorously resist the attack of Sergt. Stuckey and his men.)

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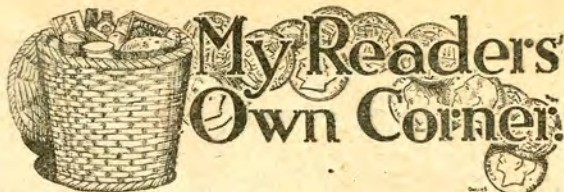
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ADDRESS

U.J.E., 1923.



LET'S HEAR THAT FUNNY JOKE OF YOURS!
Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes Awarded
for Interesting Paragraphs.
(If You Do Not Win a Prize This Week—
You May Next.)

All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: The GEM,
"My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London,
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SLIGHTLY MIXED!

A boy was told by his Form master to write a short account of the Battle of Stamford Bridge. This is what he put: "A great battle was fought at Stamford Bridge, London, in 1922. between Huddersfield Town and Preston North End. Huddersfield, after a great struggle, won by one goal to nil."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Raymond H. Smoothy, King's Hill, Rochford, Essex.

ALL THE DIFFERENCE!

Foreman (speaking to his workmen engaged on a house): "You will not get the job done to-day." Workman (sulkily): "Rome weren't built in a day!" Foreman: "No, but I wasn't alive then."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Angus, Glendening, Ashted Common, Surrey.

THE PROOF!

"Dear me," cried Mrs. Careless as she rushed into a neighbour's house, "I've broken my looking-glass! Seven years of bad luck, I suppose!" "Don't you believe it!" retorted the neighbour. "A friend of mine broke 'ers, and she didn't have no seven years. She was killed in an explosion a few days later—so you have no need to worry!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to William Nugent, 14, George Street, Birkenhead, Cheshire.

A USEFUL ALLY!

Johnny: "Pa, won't you please buy me a microbe to help me out with my arithmetic?" Pa: "What good will a microbe do you?" Johnny: "Teacher told me that they multiply rapidly."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Morris, 37, Lantana Road, Garden Vale, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

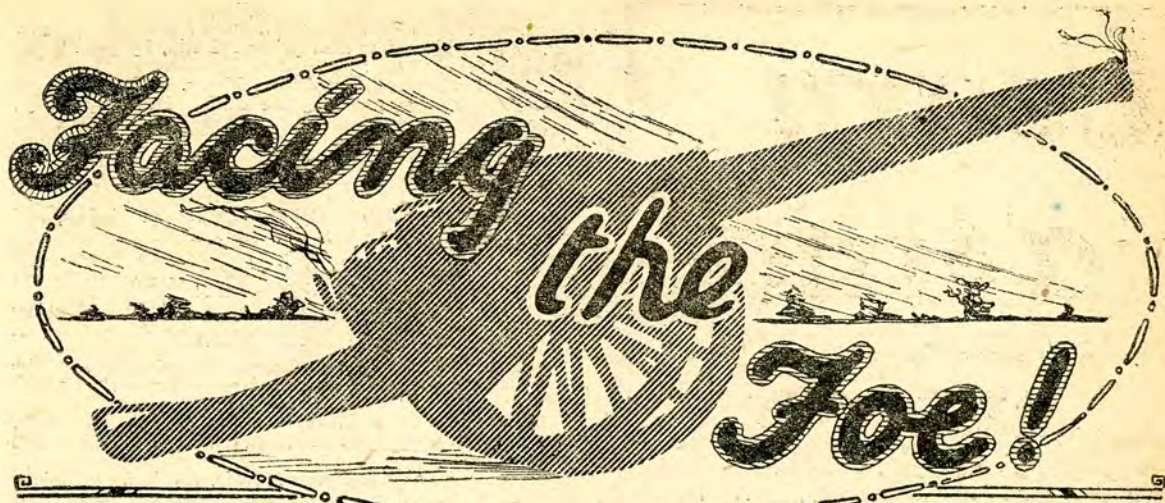
THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER.

HE LOST HIS HOLD!

The stationmaster, hearing a crash on the platform, rushed out of his office in time to see the express that had just passed through the station disappearing round a curve. A dishevelled young man was sprawled out flat among a profusion of overturned milk-cans and the scattered contents of his travelling bag. "Was he trying to catch a train?" inquired the stationmaster of a small boy who was looking on. "He did catch it, sir," said the lad, smiling, "but it got away again!"—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious tuck has been awarded to John R. Troup, c/o Mrs. Beaton, 39, Brown's Place, Hope Street, Motherwell, Scotland.



(Continued on page 27.)



Sergeant Stuckey & Co., the "Old Contemptibles," find more than a tough handful in the Rebels of St. Jim's. One of the Most Remarkable School Stories Ever Written.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Strengthening the Attack!

THERE'S goin' to be trouble!"

"There is!" agreed Tom Merry.

"There are!" said Monty Lowther solemnly.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as usual, was right.

Undoubtedly there was going to be trouble.

That Christmas vacation was, in fact, packed with trouble for Tom Merry & Co. Instead of having dispersed to their various homes for the festive season, they were holding a barring-out at St. Jim's—which was trouble enough for them, and still more for their headmaster.

But trouble did not seem to weigh upon their exuberant youthful spirits to any great extent. To judge by their looks, they thrived on it.

There were boyish faces at almost every window in the School House at St. Jim's, most of them grinning in anticipation. The School House swarmed with the schoolboy rebels.

Tom Merry & Co., from barred and barricaded windows, looked into the snow-powdered quadrangle.

Dr. Holmes, the reverend Head of St. Jim's, was visible there, talking with Mr. Railton, Housemaster of the School House—excluded now from his own House. Mr. Ratcliff, the New House master, was also there, looking as sour and bitter as usual.

The three masters glanced towards the School House as they conversed, and it could be seen that the Head's face was deeply troubled, while Mr. Railton's was very grave.

At a little distance from the masters stood a group of men, who did not look troubled or grave at all; indeed, they looked as cheery as the juniors in the barred School House. Some of them wore old Army coats and trousers. All of them looked like old soldiers of Flanders, as they were. And there were more than twenty of them. In the war days Mr. Railton had known them at the Front—they were old comrades of the St. Jim's Housemaster. And Tom Merry & Co. knew that they had been called together to carry the barred House by assault if it was not peaceably surrendered. And obviously they looked upon their task as a "lark."

"I shall be wathah sowwy to knock those chaps about, you know," Arthur Augustus remarked thoughtfully. "But I suppose they are wathah used to hard knocks, and will not mind vewy much."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Very likely," he said. "But if they get inside, I rather think we shall get most of the hard knocks. They look a hefty crowd."

"They're not getting inside, though," said Blake.

"No fear!"

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus. "The Huns could not stop them, you know, but we are wathah stiffth than the Huns. They could woll up the Hindenburg Line, but they will not be able to woll up the School House of St. Jim's."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Levison of the Fourth.

"Still, it is a gweat pity to have to punch them," said the swell of St. Jim's regretfully. "I wespsect them vewy much, you know. I am wathah shocked at Wailton for callin' them in. They had enough knockin' about in Flanders, without bein' put up to such a tewwific job as this."

The juniors chuckled. Sergeant Stuckey & Co. evidently did not consider that they were up against a terrific job, and did not look on the barred School House as anything like so tough a proposition as the Hindenburg Line.

Nevertheless, the task before them was not an easy one. Tom Merry & Co. fully intended to hold out to the last shot in the locker.

Tom Merry, indeed, had no choice in the matter.

He was under sentence of expulsion from the school, and if he surrendered it meant that he was to look his last on St. Jim's—to leave for ever, with a stain upon his name.

He did not intend to do that so long as he could strike a blow in his own defence. And the St. Jim's crowd were equally determined to back him up.

"Here they come!" called out Wally of the Third.

"Stand by to repel boarders!" sang out Monty Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

But it was only the Head who came towards the School House, and several hands that had grasped missiles dropped them again. The person of the headmaster was still sacred, though his authority was gone.

He came directly towards the great door, stopped, and looked up at the crowded windows. Tom Merry pushed open a window.

Dr. Holmes did not speak to Tom. In his view, the captain of the Shell was disgraced and expelled, and no longer belonged to the school. He would not deign to take notice of his presence.

"Boys!" he called out.

"Good-mornin', sir!" chirped Arthur Augustus.

"For the last time, I am here to urge you to surrender to proper authority," said the Head. "You see the men yonder, whom Mr. Railton has brought here. They will carry out my orders, which are to put down this reckless rebellion by force. Before such a very serious step is taken, I beg you, my boys, to return to your duty."

"And Tom Merry?" asked Blake.

"Merry of the Shell does not belong to the school now. He is expelled, and is a lawless trespasser here!" said the Head sternly.

"Can it!" said Wildrake.

"Rats!"

"Rubbish!"

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Hurrah!"

It was a roar from the garrison. Evidently the St. Jim's juniors did not regard their leader as a lawless trespasser in the old school.

The Head paled with anger.

"Boys, if that is your answer——"

"That's the best we can give you, sir," said Cardew of the

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Fourth. "We're backin' up Tom Merry to the jolly old finish!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Send forth your janizaries!" said Monty Lowther dramatically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope, sir, that you're giving them a decent screw for this job," said Figgins. "They're going to earn it!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

Dr. Holmes looked hard and long at the juniors above. His kind old heart shrank from the thought of the attack, of the damage that would be done, of the hard blows that would be given and received. But on the subject of Tom Merry he was adamant. He had decided the case on what seemed to him conclusive evidence, and everything that had happened since had only hardened him in his resolution.

Tom Merry, in his belief, had robbed Mr. Ratcliff. And the extent of his influence over the other fellows—if he was guilty—only made it the more imperatively necessary for him to leave the school. And the Head had no doubt of his guilt.

"Nothing doing, sir," said Kerr. "Sorry, and all that; but there you are!"

"You will take the consequences!" said the Head.

"I think not, sir!" remarked Fatty Wynn. "Your jolly old Tommies yonder are going to take the consequences."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Without a word further, Dr. Holmes turned and walked back to the spot where he had left Mr. Railton. Some of the juniors caught his words to the Housemaster.

"I leave matters entirely in your hands now, Mr. Railton. You will act as seems to you best to reduce those reckless boys to obedience."

"Rely upon me, sir!" said Mr. Railton.

And the Head walked away to the New House, and disappeared. And then the "trouble," which had so long been threatening, came.

CHAPTER 2.

The Attack!

"BACK up!" shouted Tom Merry.

"We're ready!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The enemy were coming on at a run. They grinned as they came on, in a cheery and merry mood. Only Sergeant Stuckey had a look of military grimness; Privates Brown and Pilkins and Scuppers and Green, and the rest looked very like a crowd of big school-boys out for a lark. Some of them carried axes and crowbars—not, of course, as weapons of offence, but for use in forcing an entrance into the School House.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

The attack was beginning.

Mr. Railton's old soldiers were under more restraint than in the wild days when they had gone "over the top" to rush the German defences. Then it had not mattered how much damage they did—indeed, the more damage the better. Now it mattered a great deal.

The breaking of one of the ancient stained-glass windows in Big Hall, the shattering of the old oak door that had stood for centuries in the School House, would almost have broken Dr. Holmes' heart.

Mr. Railton had given his instructions very carefully. It was probable, however, that they would not be very closely adhered to, when the Tommies became excited.

Pickaxes and crowbars started work on a window of the Fourth Form room. That was a spot where repairs could be executed afterwards, leaving little trace of the damage done.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

Splinters of glass and wood flew in all directions. The glass was very quickly demolished; and then the blows fell on the barrier within—stacked-up desks and forms, nailed and screwed in their places—the defenders having done their work quite thoroughly.

There was a rush of the garrison to the threatened spot.

But Tom Merry was a good leader, and he was careful to leave parties on guard in other places, and sentries at the windows, in case a second attack should be made in another place. He did not believe that Mr. Railton's whole force had been displayed yet.

A picked party gathered in the Form-room with Tom Merry.

There were three big windows, all barricaded, in the Fourth Form room; and it was upon the centre one that the blows were crashing.

"Bai Jove! They're goin' it!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "We shall want some new desks afah this is ovah."

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"Let's hope it never will be over," remarked Ralph Reckness Cardew. "I'm for keepin' it up all through the new term. I like this better than grindin' Latin, by gad!"

Crash! Crash! Crash!

"They mean business," said Tom Merry. "But so do we. We can't stop them smashing the desks. But keep ready! Hit anything you see."

"Ha, ha! You bet!"

Crash! Bump! Thump! Crash!

The attack was hot enough. A desk rolled off the stack, and came down on the floor with a terrific bang.

A large bony hand reached in at the broken window, and grasped the leg of a desk to displace it next.

Rap!

A cane—a prefect's cane in the grasp of Levison of the Fourth—came down on that hand—hard!

There was a howl of anguish outside, and Sergeant Stuckey stepped back, with his hand to his mouth, sucking it frantically. From the other assailants came a chuckle.

"You've got it, sergeant!" grinned Private Brown. "Why didn't you put your nose in instead of your paw?"

"Silence in the ranks!" snorted the sergeant.

"Oh, come off!" said the disrespectful Private Brown. "Don't come the sergeant now, Bill Stuckey! Think you're still in Flanders!"

"Don't I wish we was!" snorted Mr. Stuckey. "I'd 'ave you in the clink before 'arf-a-tick, I promise you!"

"But we ain't!" chuckled Brown; "and I promised you a one on the boko arter the war! Like it now?"

"Order, please!" broke in Mr. Railton's quiet voice.

"Yes, sir! Certainly! Go it, lads!"

Crash! Crash! Crash!

Private Brown, whose trousers indicated that his post-war profession was that of a bricklayer, wielded a big pick-axe with hefty skill. His cheery, grinning face looked in at the window as he smote. He even winked at Tom Merry, who could not help bursting into a laugh, as he caught Private Brown's cheery eye. "Look out for your nose, Mr. Brown!" said Tom.

"I'm looking arter it," said Private Brown. "No offence, young gent, we're bound to come in. Orders is orders. No offence at all, you believe me, we're obliged to you young gent. This 'ere is work for the unemployed."

The juniors chuckled.

"Make it last, then," suggested Cardew. "You've done enough for to-day, Mr. Brown."

But Mr. Brown did not act on that really useful suggestion. He plied his blows with great vigour.

Monty Lowther came forward with a large garden squirt. It was a squirt that held a gallon; and it was full. There was a good deal of water, and some ink—quite a lot of ink. Naturally, there were

good supplies of ink in the school; and it had been commandeered by the rebels.

"Go it, Monty!" grinned Manners.

"Where will you have it, Private Brown?" asked Monty Lowther, with elaborate politeness.

Private Brown squinted at it.

"You keep that away!" he said.

"Just going—" said Lowther.

"Old on a tick!"

"Anything to oblige a chap who has been in Flanders," said Monty, still with great politeness.

Private Brown stepped back.

"Take a turn with this 'ere, sergeant," he said.

"It's about time I showed you how to 'andle that pick, Private Brown!" said Mr. Stuckey.

"Well, I'm willing to learn, sergeant," said Mr. Brown, with unexpected docility.

The sergeant grasped the pick, and came on gallantly. His blows resounded on the barricade.

Swoooooosh!

Monty Lowther let the squirt go. There was a terrific yell from the sergeant, as the flood of inky water caught him full in his red face.

"Grrrrruurrrghh!"

"Got it!" yelled Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooogh! Ooooooh!"

The sergeant dropped the pick, and staggered back, gouging at eyes and nose and mouth with both hands. His face had been red a second before—now it was black, streaming with ink.

There was a roar from the crowd outside.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ooooooh! Gug-gug-gug!" gasped the unhappy sergeant. "Oh, my eye! Oh crumbs! Ooooooh!"

ANOTHER

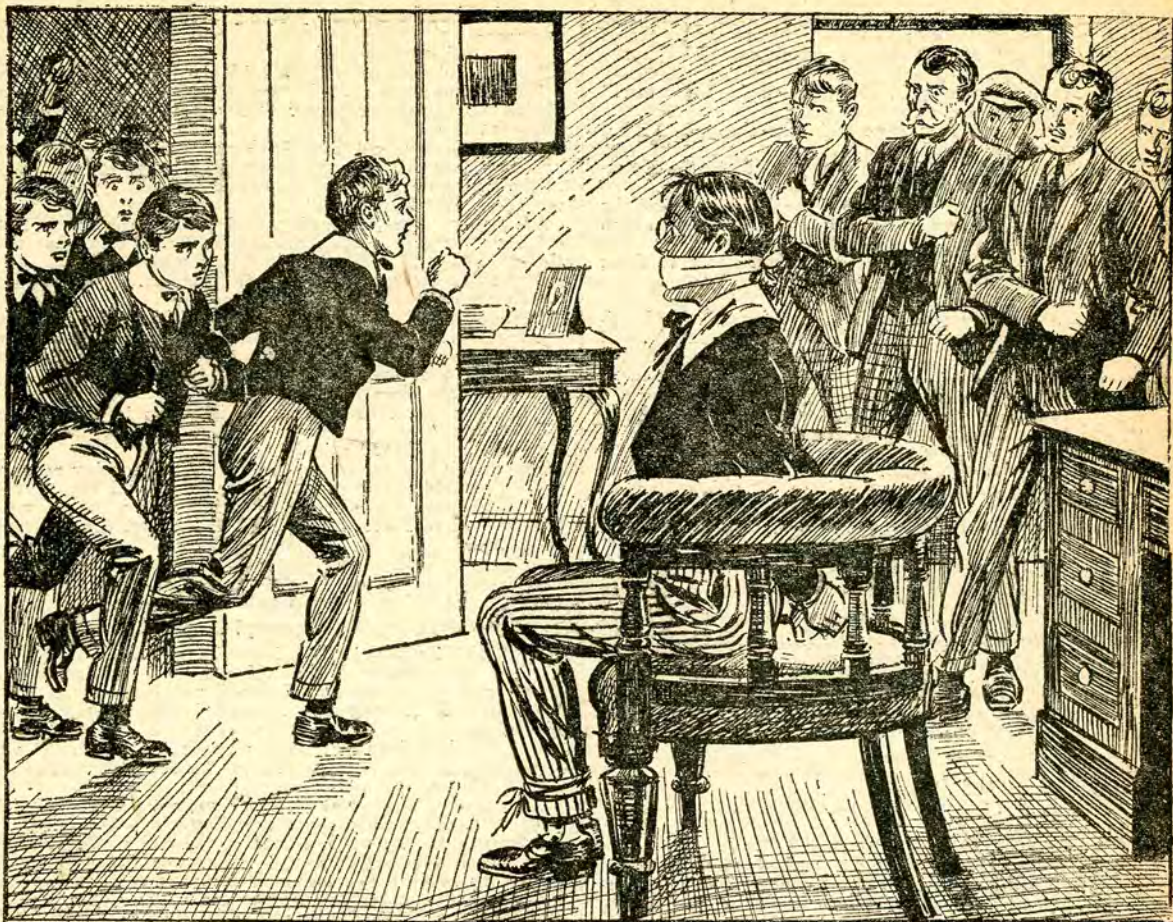
TOP-NOTCH

School Story Next Week

"TOM MERRY'S RECRUIT!"

By Martin Clifford

Dr. Holmes must draw the line somewhere—but when, where how—WHO CAN SAY?



The prisoners were standing shoulder to shoulder by the window when the juniors rushed in—and they were free! "My hat!" gasped Digby. "Look at Gussy!" "Rush them!" roared Grundy. And Tom Merry led the rush! (See page 17.)

"Good old sergeant!" said Private Brown. "Always willing to show a pore private 'ow to do things."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Ooooh!"

Sergeant Stuckey retired from the fighting line, still dabbing his features frantically. He did not heed the chortles of his comrades; he was too busy with the ink.

"You next, Mr. Brown!" said Monty Lowther, refilling the squirt from a bucket of ink and water ready in the Form-room.

But Mr. Brown seemed deaf. Having done his spell of labour, he stepped back and lighted a cigarette.

"Go it, Jim Pilkins!" he said.

And Mr. Brown smoked his cigarette and looked on, and made one or two comforting remarks to the sergeant—which somehow did not seem to comfort Mr. Stuckey at all.

CHAPTER 3.

Hot Stuff!

WHIZ! Whiz! Splash! Crash!

The garrison were getting to work now. Gaping openings were torn in the barricade by the hefty blows from without; not large enough to admit an assailant, but large enough for the passage of missiles. And there were plenty of missiles ready.

The squirt was incessantly refilled and discharged, and the showers of inky water splashed in the faces of the attacking party. It was not like the fusillade they had faced in old days in Flanders, but it was distinctly unpleasant.

Cushions, and empty cans, and all sorts and conditions of things whizzed out from within, and there were loud yells as they landed. Some of the food supplies in the besieged house were in tins, and all empty tins had been saved for this purpose.

If they hurt, that could not be helped. A frontal attack could not be stopped without hurting somebody. As was said of old, war could not be made with rose-water.

Most of the assailants were not grinning now; the matter was getting beyond a lark.

But they stuck gallantly to their work, and in spite of whizzing missiles and squirting ink, they did not retreat. The barricade reeled and trembled under the blows of the picks; fragments of broken desks littered the floor, and splinters flew far and wide. Private Pilkins, standing on a bench outside, put head and shoulders in the window at last.

Thump!

A Latin dictionary, hurled by Talbot of the Shell, caught Private Pilkins on the chin.

Mr. Pilkins gave a wild howl and rolled back on the shoulders of his comrades.

"Well hit!" roared Kangaroo.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

School-books—never put to better use, in the opinion of the juniors—fairly rained on the three or four faces that showed up in the window from outside. The fire was too hot, and the faces disappeared.

But they came on again.

Sergeant Stuckey, breathing wrath and fury, plunged in headlong at the window, heedless of Latin dictionaries and grammars. He had a thick cane in his hand, and he swept a circle with it. There were howls from some of the juniors who were within reach.

But Tom Merry rushed in. Pilkins and Green had head and shoulders in now—Scuppers was coming on behind—five or six more pressed on. It was a dangerous moment.

"Stumps!" roared Tom.

"Give 'em jip!"

"Oh, my eye!" gasped the sergeant. "'Ere, keep off, you young villains! Oh crumbs! Ow!"

It was no time for half-measures. Every head that showed in the window-frame was hit—hard.

The sergeant struggled on.

He seemed made of iron, and regardless of stumps and whacking cushions, he plunged on and rolled inside, sprawling breathlessly among broken desks and forms.

At the same moment there came an echoing crash from another part of the house. As Tom Merry had guessed would be the case, a simultaneous attack was being made in another quarter.

"Bai Jove! They're goin' to take us in the wear!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Talbot!" shouted Tom, "go and take charge! I'll see to this!"

"Right!" said Talbot; and he was gone from the Form-room like an arrow.

Tom Merry grasped his stump and hurled himself at the assailed window. He was feeling desperate now. Expulsion from the school, black disgrace, loomed over him; the fight was for all he held dear. He was not likely to think or care about broken heads then.

His comrades backed him up well.

Sergeant Stuckey, sprawling in the ruins of the barricade, was seized and collared before he could gain his feet. Figgins & Co. devoted their attention to him, and the sergeant, much to his rage and surprise, was quickly reduced to helplessness.

At the window, open now to attack, hard blows were given and received on both sides. It was no longer a lark, it was deadly earnest—the scene of violence that the Head had feared had come to pass. Private Brown was leading the attack now, and his sunburnt face, though still quite good-humoured, was very determined. His nose was streaming crimson, one of his eyes had closed, but he came on with grim resolution.

"Look out, you chaps!" shouted Lowther. "Room for little me!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus sat up on the floor, where he had been hurled by a drive on the chest from Mr. Brown.

"A wed-hot pokah! Bai Jove!"

"Good old Monty!" panted Tom.

It was Monty Lowther's own idea, and it was timely. The kitchen poker, red-hot from the fire, was in his hand. He had a handkerchief wrapped round the end he held, the other end—the business end—glowed red. Private Brown gave a gasp as the red-hot end approached him.

"Ere—keep that off!" he howled.

"Take it or go!"

"You young rip—"

"That's for your nose!"

And for Private Brown's nose, undoubtedly, it would have been, if Mr. Brown had left his nose in the danger-zone.

But he didn't!

Mr. Brown made a frantic jump backwards, upsetting the men behind him, and sat down with a heavy bump on the ground.

Mr. Brown was prepared to face many things, but red-hot pokers at close quarters were not numbered among them.

And there was a hurried jumping back on the part of his comrades.

The attack was stopped.

"Come on, dear boys!" said Monty Lowther, invitingly.

"You young rascal!" It was Mr. Ratcliff's voice, well behind the attacking party. "Lowther! Put down that poker at once!"

"Hallo, Ratty, old bird!" chirruped Lowther. "Come on, show these chaps a plucky example! As you didn't go to the war, you've never had a chance to show your fighting qualities. Try it on now!"

"Lowther, you—you—" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Private Brown. "What was that there I fell on? I fell on something 'ard."

There was a groan from Private Scuppers.

"It was my 'ead, you silly ass!"

"No takers?" asked Lowther, flourishing the poker at the window. He leaned back and whispered to Tom: "Get away and help Talbot; they're pretty hard-driven there. I can keep the window clear here."

"Right, old chap!"

"Leave a few fellows—and tell Manners to get another poker ready."

"I'm on to that!" said Manners.

The attack had paused—it did not look like being renewed so long as red-hot pokers were to the fore. And Tom Merry, calling on some of the defenders to follow him, dashed away to bring aid to Talbot of the Shell at the spot where danger threatened.

CHAPTER 4.

Peppery!

CRASH! Crash! Bang!

Tom Merry & Co. did not need guiding to the spot where the second attack was being made. The din of it rang and resounded through the School House.

A big oaken door was reeling under the blows. It was the door that gave admittance from the Head's house to the School House.

The Head's residence at St. Jim's was not a separate building, but had been built adjoining the School House. Communication was by the big door at the end of the corridor that passed the Head's study. That was the only means of ingress in that direction. While Sergeant Stuckey and his men had attacked the Form-room window, Mr. Railton and another party had entered the Head's house and started operations on the door between that and the main building. The door was locked and bolted, and barricaded with many heavy articles of furniture. But the attack was driving it through.

Already the door was split and open in several places, and the ends of crowbars could be seen, shoved through to wrench it from its hinges. The barricade was tottering.

Talbot of the Shell and his comrades did all they could. They slashed at a hand when it showed, they shoved their stumps through openings in the door, and loud yells from the other side showed that the lunges took effect. But the assault did not pause for a moment.

Tom Merry came up breathlessly.

There were two or three score of juniors swarming in the broad corridor, at the end of which the door stood. They were in a determined mood, ready for the fray when it came to close quarters—and it seemed pretty clear that it would soon be hand-to-hand now. And then, in spite of their numbers and pluck, it was pretty certain that a crowd of school-boys would be swept away by the rush of the tough old soldiers.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

It was essential to keep the struggle from becoming hand-to-hand; for that would be the end of all things. But the door was almost a ruin now, and the barricade was not likely to stop the assailants long when the door once was down.

"What's to be done, Tom?" Talbot spoke in a low, hurried voice. "We'll stand up to them, never fear. But—but—"

Tom Merry nodded.

"At the worst, we'll retreat upstairs and hold the upper floors," he said. "But we've got to stop them."

"Merry!" Mr. Railton's voice rang out from the other side of the door in a pause of the crashing assault. "Merry!"

"I'm here."

"You can see that there is no chance now for your reckless rebellion to continue. Let there be no more violence. Enough damage has been done to the school property."

Tom gritted his teeth.

"Hang the school property!" he answered.

"What—what?"

"We're fighting to the end!" exclaimed Tom. "And I know how to stop you. I warn you, Mr. Railton, to call off your men!"



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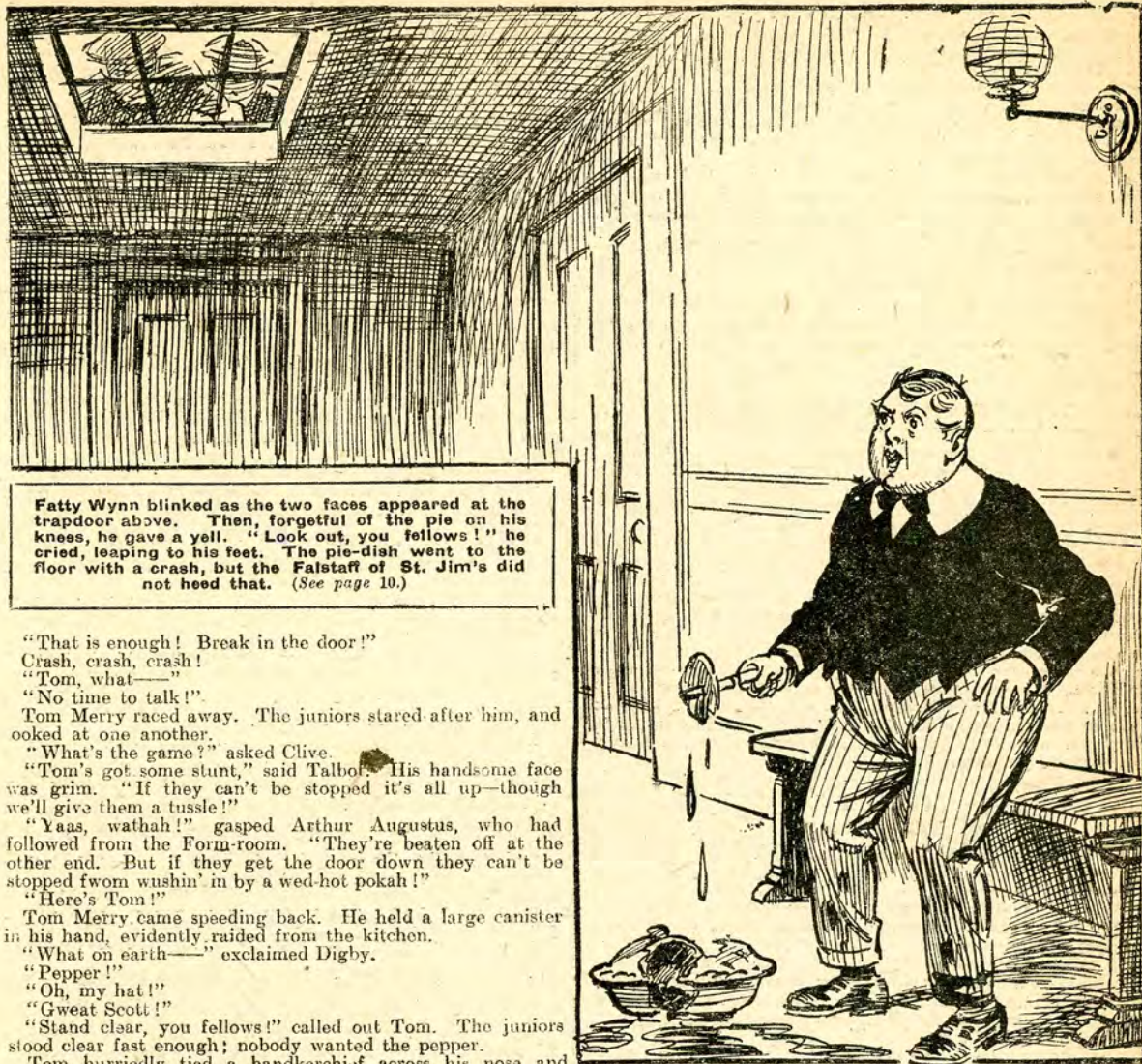
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Fatty Wynn blinked as the two faces appeared at the trapdoor above. Then, forgetful of the pie on his knees, he gave a yell. "Look out, you fellows!" he cried, leaping to his feet. The pie-dish went to the floor with a crash, but the Falstaff of St. Jim's did not heed that. (See page 10.)

"That is enough! Break in the door!"

Crash, crash, crash!

"Tom, what—"

"No time to talk!"

Tom Merry raced away. The juniors stared after him, and looked at one another.

"What's the game?" asked Clive.

"Tom's got some stunt," said Talbot. His handsome face was grim. "If they can't be stopped it's all up—though we'll give them a tussle!"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, who had followed from the Form-room. "They're beaten off at the other end. But if they get the door down they can't be stopped from wushin' in by a wed-hot pokah!"

"Here's Tom!"

Tom Merry came speeding back. He held a large canister in his hand, evidently raided from the kitchen.

"What on earth—" exclaimed Digby.

"Pepper!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Stand clear, you fellows!" called out Tom. The juniors stood clear fast enough; nobody wanted the pepper.

Tom hurriedly tied a handkerchief across his nose and mouth. Then he jerked off the lid of the canister and took a handful of the pepper. He stepped up close to the door and hurled it through a slit in the panels.

The crashing on the door ceased as if by magic.

"Atchoo-choo-choo—"

"Whoooooop!"

"Ooooooooh!"

"Atchooooooh!"

There was a terrific outburst of sneezing.

The assailants dropped pick and bar, and clapped their hands to their faces and noses, sneezing in anguish.

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Railton's voice was heard. "What—what—Atchoo, atchoo, atchooooooh!"

"Bai Jove, Wailton's got it!" murmured Arthur Augustus in awed tones.

Another and another handful of pepper was scattered through the gashes in the door. But they were hardly needed.

The assailants, sneezing frantically, backed away, almost scrambling over one another in their hurry. Certainly they had not looked for measures of defence like this.

Loud and long sounded the sneezing, as if the hapless attackers were sneezing for a prize in a sneezing competition.

Tom Merry clapped the lid on the canister. He was sneezing himself now, in spite of the protection of the handkerchief.

"Bai Jove! They'll have to wun home for their gas-masks befoah they come on again!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Ripping wheeze, Tommy, old son!" gasped Herries.

"Atchoo-choo-choo!" spluttered Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake peered through a gap in the door. There was a corridor beyond, and the assailants had withdrawn as far as the end of it, dabbing at their faces and sneezing and

weeping peppery tears. Mr. Railton was fairly doubled up with a terrific sneeze as Blake peered through.

"They've got it!" chuckled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Atchooooooh!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Here comes the Head!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Blake spotted the Head—apparently arriving to ascertain how the affair was going. The Head blinked at Mr. Railton and his comrades in great surprise.

"Why, what—" he began. Then he broke off.

"Atchooh! What—what—Chooo, atchooooo, atchoooo! Bless my soul! Atchooooo!"

"The jolly old Head's got it!" gasped Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"What an excitin' mornin'!" yawned Cardew. "Beats lessons hollow! I fancy they're goin' to give us a rest!"

Cardew was right.

Blake watched Mr. Railton and his companions depart—apparently going out into the fresh air to get rid of the results of the pepper. Tom Merry set down the canister, sneezing.

"That may come in useful again," he said. "They know we're in earnest now, at any rate!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry hurried back to the Form-room. The attack there was still hanging fire, though Mr. Pilkins was shaking his fist at Monty Lowther at the window. Figgins & Co. had heaved Sergeant Stuckey up to the window and sent him rolling out, and the hapless sergeant was sitting on a bench at a little distance, rubbing his injured places, which were almost too numerous to count.

"All serene?" asked Lowther, as Tom came in.

"Yes—we've been lucky. Get to work jamming up those windows again, you fellows!"

"What-ho!"

In the lull the garrison did not lose time in rejoicing over their triumph. A victory had to be consolidated. Tables and chairs and desks were dragged and rolled from other Form-rooms and from the masters' studies and stacked at the window of the Form-room in a gigantic barricade that reached half-way across the room.

Then the juniors trooped away to the spot where Mr. Railton's attack had so nearly succeeded. Talbot and a crowd more were already at work repairing the battered barricade. But the smashed door was past repair.

"We'll make it strong enough next time," said Tom Merry grimly. "The piano will make a good foundation."

"Oh crumbs! The giddy piano—"

"Can't afford to be particular. Come and roll it along!"

The music-room piano was soon shrieking on its castors along the corridor. It was rushed up to the door and jammed

STEADFAST AND TRUE—

there. On top of it went the Head's own desk, round about it chairs and tables were crammed, and several bedsteads dragged down from upper rooms. By that time the rebels had warmed to their work, and considerations of damage were left out. A solid barricade filled the end of the corridor against the door, and was stacked and stacked until it reached almost as far as the Head's study in the middle of the passage. And the juniors, panting with their exertions, surveyed that terrific barricade with great satisfaction. Another attack from that direction would have to hack its way through almost a dozen yards of solidly crammed furniture, and the rebels were of opinion that the enemy would never get through.

CHAPTER 5. Nothing Doing!

"Gussy!" yelled Wally of the Third.

"Weally Wally—"
"Gus—"

"I wish you would not wear at a fellow like that, Wally," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass severely upon his minor. "It is frightfully bad form to wear at a fellow!"

"Ain't he a bute?" said D'Arcy minor. "Wagging his jolly old chin, when all the fat's in the fire! Gussy, you ass—"

"If you're askin' for a thwashin', Wally—"
"It's the governor!" yelled Wally.
"What?"
"The jolly old governor."

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass fell from his eye, in his astonishment and dismay.

"The patah—heah!" he exclaimed faintly.
"His nibs himself!" said Wally, which was a disrespectful way of characterising a peer of the realm.

"Pway moderate your expressions, Wally," said Arthur Augustus. "I weguard you as a young wuffian. I say, Tom Mewwy, this is wathah howwid!"

"Beastly!" agreed Tom.

Arthur Augustus ran to a window.

Across the quad a tall, rather lean figure could be seen, in a buttoned overcoat and a silk hat. It was Lord Eastwood, the noble lord who had the privilege of being the parent of D'Arcy of the Fourth and Wally of the Third. Arthur Augustus blinked at him.

Evidently this was a new move of the enemy.

Since the attack in force had been beaten off there had been no move from the other side—till now. Mr. Railton's followers were probably busy attending to their damages, which had been, in some instance, rather severe. Black eyes and swollen noses had been discerned as the old soldiers walked in the quad after the scrap. There were plenty of similar adornments in the School House. It had been give and take, with much vigour on both sides.

Lord Eastwood was talking with Mr. Railton, whose face was very serious, and whose nose was very red—doubtless a result of the pepper.

"Bai Jove!" cried Arthur Augustus. "I don't call this playin' the game! They've sent for the patah to call us off, you know."

"Rotten!" said Blake.

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"He's a governor of the school," remarked Tom Merry. "The Head may think we shall give in to a governor."

"Which is a little mistake on the Head's part," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Yes, rather."

Arthur Augustus rubbed his eyeglass dubiously.

"If the patah ordahs me to cleah off, what the dickens am I goin' to do?" he asked. "A fellow can't wefuse to obey his fathah."

Tom shook his head.

"No," he said. "If Lord Eastwood tells you to clear, Gussy, I'm afraid you'll have to clear. As a governor of the school, we can tell him to go and eat coke; but as your father, you're bound to obey him."

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus dimly.

"Hold on," said Cardew. "There's more ways than one of killin' a cat! Gussy couldn't disobey his father—bad form, and so forth. But if he couldn't hear his orders he couldn't obey them."

"But I am bound to hear them, Cardew! I am not deaf!"

"Fathead—"

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Can't you be out of hearin'?" demanded Cardew. "Take your spell in the kitchen, helpin' with the washin'-up, while your pater's here."

"Bai Jove! But he will ask for me."

"Let him ask! He's not our father," grinned Cardew.

"We can tell him to go and eat coke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, if you tweat my fathah with diswespect, Cardew, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.

"Dear man, I'll treat him with all the respect due to a jolly old nobleman who butts his nose in where it isn't wanted."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze!" said Tom Merry. "If this little trick succeeds, they'll be worryin' a lot of jolly old parents to come along and reduce the giddy garrison. Trot away to the kitchen, Gussy."

The swell of St. Jim's hesitated.

"I am afraid it would be wathah diswespectful to wefuse to see my fathah if he asks for me, Tom Mewwy."

"But you're not going to refuse! I'm going to refuse," said Tom Merry coolly. "You're under orders, Gussy, as a member of this garrison. I order you to the kitchen. Catch on?"

"That altahs the mattah, of course," assented Arthur Augustus. "I am bound to obey ordahs. Wally, come along."

"What a lark!" grinned Wally of the Third. And the fag followed his major to the regions below.

A crowd of fellows waited at the window with Tom Merry, curious to see how the interview with Lord Eastwood would turn out. The calling in of his lordship was something like a confession of failure on the part of the enemy. The desperate resistance of the rebels had probably surprised Mr. Railton, and he was seeking less drastic methods of getting through.

"Here he comes!" murmured Cardew. "I suppose it would be disrespectful to knock off a jolly old nobleman's topper with a snowball?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Leave his topper alone, you ass!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

TOM MERRY'S CHUMS ARE TRUE BLUE!

Lord Eastwood came up to the School House alone. There was a rather curious expression on his calm, clear-cut face. He stopped, put an eyeglass to his eye in a manner that reminded the juniors very much of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and surveyed the barred House. Tom Merry slipped open a window and saluted his lordship respectfully. Lord Eastwood's eyeglass was fixed on him.

"Ah, that is Tom Merry," he said. "I have received amazing news from your headmaster, Merry."

"I hope, sir, that you can see that Dr. Holmes is making a mistake," said Tom Merry.

His lordship coughed.

"Upon that point I shall give no opinion, Merry. Dr. Holmes is invested with full powers as headmaster, and the governors are bound to support his decision. It is your duty to—ah—submit, and to obey your headmaster's orders."

"I don't see it in that light, sir," said Tom steadily. "No fellow is bound to submit to injustice."

"Hear, hear!" chorused the juniors.

Lord Eastwood coughed again. As a matter of fact, he knew Tom Merry well enough, and in spite of the convincing evidence that had been explained to him there was a lingering doubt in his mind. But it was scarcely possible for the head of the governing board to controvert the decision of the headmaster without something very tangible to "go upon."

"I hope, sir, that you have not come here as a governor, to interfere," said Tom. "We cannot surrender in any case."

"No fear."

Another cough from the old nobleman.

"I am not intervening officially in the matter, Merry," he said. "I am content to leave the governance of this school in the hands of the duly-appointed headmaster, in whom the board have every confidence. I am here at present in a private capacity—to speak to my sons. Please tell Arthur and Walter that their father is here and desires to speak to them."

"Sorry, sir—can't be done."

"What?"

"D'Arcy major and minor are members of my garrison," said Tom coolly. "They are under my orders. I have ordered them below stairs, and they are under orders to remain there."

"Bless my soul!" said Lord Eastwood.

"Sorry, of course," said Tom politely. "If there's any message I can give them—such as wishing them a Happy New Year—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You will tell them that my car is waiting, and that I am here to take them home with me," said Lord Eastwood, frowning.

"Nothing doing, sir."

"Merry, I insist upon taking my sons away from the school, while this uproar continues!" exclaimed Lord Eastwood.

"Can't allow desertion from the ranks, sir," answered Tom.

"Good gad! I repeat—"

"No good repeating, sir. If Dr. Holmes sends for a dozen parents, the answer will be the same. No parent will be allowed a personal interview with a member of my garrison."

Lord Eastwood looked nonplussed. There was a frown on his noble brow; but the juniors thought they could detect a smile lurking round the old gentleman's lips.

"Own up, sir," said Lowther. "This is a dodge of the

CHAPTER 6.

Unexpected!

MR. GLYN walked in at the gates of St. Jim's. He was a portly gentleman, with a rather red face, and an impressive manner. The Glyns lived at Glyn House, between St. Jim's and Rycombe, an easy walk from the school, and Bernard Glyn had been rather expecting to see something of his people before this. Glyn senior had turned up at last.

"He's looks a bit cross," murmured Blake, watching the face of the distant gentleman. "Bit excited, I think."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll let him blow off as much steam as he likes," said Tom Merry considerably. "Mind, no cheek to Glyn's pater, you fellows. He's a thoroughly decent old chap, and we've most of us had some good times at Glyn's place. If he's waxy now let him wax."

"Not a word," said Cardew seriously. "I won't even ask him where he dug up that necktie. I suppose it is a necktie."

"Shut up!" said Tom, laughing.

Mr. Glyn, who had been a Liverpool shipowner, and was a millionaire, was a rather expensive gentleman in his looks. The colour scheme of his tie struck Cardew's fastidious eye at once. But before Cardew could make any further remarks on the subject he felt a hand on his collar, and stared round to see Kangaroo of the Shell.

"None of your little jokes about my chum's pater," said Kangaroo, genially. "I shall have to double you up otherwise."

"You cheeky ass—"

"Order!" rapped out Tom Merry.

Mr. Glyn did not approach the School House. He walked to the New House and entered. A few minutes later he came out, with both Mr. Railton and the Head in his company.

The three gentlemen walked towards the School House together. The rebels watched them come up, and Kangaroo waved his hand to Mr. Glyn from the window. The old gentleman's frowning face broke into a smile, and he waved back to the Australian junior.

Is St. Jim's Doomed to Destruction—or

WILL THE HEAD SEE REASON FIRST?

There are Thrills, Thrills, and Still More Thrills Next Week, Boys!

Head's to get the garrison away. If Gussy and Wally went off with you, another respected johnny would happen along next, to take off another chap. You see, sir, I can't let them give my uncle the trouble of coming here—for nothing."

"The Head's pulling your leg, you see, sir!" said Cardew gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh gad!" gasped Lord Eastwood, almost overcome by the idea of so grave a person as a headmaster pulling the leg of a peer of the realm. "You are an impertinent young rascal, sir!"

"Thank you, my lord!"

"Arthur! Walter!" called out Lord Eastwood, apparently in the hope that Arthur Augustus and Walter Adolphus were within hearing of his voice.

But the two were well out of hearing, and there was no reply.

"Nothin' doin', sir!" said Cardew.

"Bless my soul!" murmured the peer.

He blinked at the grinning juniors at the window. It was obvious that this move was a failure.

Lord Eastwood turned at last and walked back to the New House, where Mr. Railton awaited him. The rebels saw them in conversation for some minutes, and then his lordship went into the New House, probably to consult with the Head.

Ten minutes later he was seen crossing to the gates, where his car was waiting.

"Going!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Goin'—gone!" chuckled Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The car drove away with Lord Eastwood in it. His visit to St. Jim's had been a failure—a rank failure. But about half an hour after the departure of Lord Eastwood there was a sudden exclamation from Bernard Glyn of the Shell who was on watch.

"There comes my pater!"

"At it again!" grinned Tom Merry. "Glyn, you're ordered down to the kitchen."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus, who had emerged from the regions below as soon as his noble parent was gone. "You can take a turn at the washin'-up, Glyn, deah boy."

And Glyn of the Shell chuckled and disappeared.

"Not so jolly waxy, after all!" commented Manners. "Good-afternoon, Mr. Glyn!"

"I trust you are well, sir!" said Arthur Augustus politely.

"Quite, thanks!" said Mr. Glyn. "Where is Bernard?"

"Hem! He is on duty elsewhere, sir."

"Under orders, sir!" explained Tom Merry. "At the present moment he cannot be spared. Any message—"

Mr. Glyn smiled again.

"You mean he does not want to come home with me?" he asked.

"Hem!"

"And the young rascal thinks I am going to order him home?"

"Hem!"

"Well, that is a mistake," said Mr. Glyn. "I am going to do nothing of the kind. Now call Bernard. I want to speak to him."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove, you fellows, I weally think that Mr. Glyn is on our side," murmured Arthur Augustus. "He knows we are in the wight, you know. I wegard him as a chap with gweat tact and judgment."

"Cut off and fetch old Glyn," whispered Tom.

Kangaroo rushed away and reappeared in a couple of minutes with a surprised and wondering Bernard Glyn.

"Hallo, dad!" said Glyn, looking from the window with a rather red face.

Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton were exchanging glances. Evidently they were astonished by Mr. Glyn's words to the rebels, and did not know quite what to make of the old gentleman.

"Well, Bernard," said Mr. Glyn, "it seems that you are spending your Christmas vacation in a barring-out."

"Yes, father."

"Dr. Holmes tells me that the reason is that Tom Merry has been expelled on a charge of theft, and that you and the rest are standing by him and keeping him at the school."

"Ye-e-es, father."

"Dr. Holmes had requested me to come here and take you away till the new term," said Mr. Glyn. "I have come! It seems, Bernard, that you believe in Tom Merry's innocence."

"Certainly, father! Everybody here does."

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"You know that the evidence is strong against him?"

"Oh, yes!" said Glyn.

"Then what do you say to that?"

"I say blow the evidence!" answered Glyn.

"You are a chip of the old block, Bernard!" said Mr. Glyn. "I say with you, blow the evidence! I know Tom Merry. I'd as soon believe that you were a thief as that he is one. You're standing by your friend; it's what I should have expected of you. Stick to it!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bravo, sir!" shouted the juniors.

"Good man!" yelled Cardew. "Oh, good man! Glyn, old trump, your pater's a jolly old brick!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Mr. Glyn!" gasped the Head. "Sir, what—what do you mean? You—you came here at my request, and—and you are—actually encouraging these reckless boys in rebellion—"

The millionaire turned upon him.

"Yes, sir!" he said emphatically. "You have told me the

FIGHT ON—OR GET OUT!—

evidence against Tom Merry. It's pretty strong. But I don't care a fig for evidence against a lad I know to be good and straight! Hang the evidence, sir!"

"Mr. Glyn! Really—"

"These boys, sir," pursued the old gentleman excitedly, "are doing right! I am proud to see my son standing up with the rest. Bernard, stick to it! If you desert your friend in a scrape like this I'll never own you again for a son of mine!"

"Rely on me, dad!" exclaimed Glyn, greatly delighted.

"Bravo!"

"That's all!" said Mr. Glyn. "I've said what I came to say—what I desired to say in the presence of your headmaster! Stick to it, my boy—stick to it while there's a shot in the locker."

And with that the old gentleman slightly raised his hat to the Head of St. Jim's, and walked away.

A thunderous cheer from the rebels followed him.

Dr. Holmes stood as if rooted to the ground. The expression on Mr. Railton's face was extraordinary.

"Straight from the shoulder—what?" grinned Tom Merry. "I fancy the Head will be fed up after this with springing the fellows' paters on them. He may catch another tartar!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bless my soul!" the Head murmured dazedly. His face was crimson with wrath and confusion. He had been far from expecting that statement of opinion from Mr. Glyn.

He walked away with Mr. Railton. In the School House there was a prolonged chortle. The Head's new move had failed—more than failed; it had given the rebels of St. Jim's fresh encouragement.

"But there's goin' to be trouble after this," said Cardew sapiently. "We can look out for squalls now."

And the "squalls" were not long in coming.

CHAPTER 7.

Dropping In!

FATTY WYNN smiled—a beatific smile.

Fatty was alone.

He was on the verge of enjoying himself.

Fatty Wynn had been appointed chef to the garrison, and he fulfilled the duties of his post nobly. All the fellows agreed that the cooking had never been so really good in the School House. Many hands helped in the work, but Fatty supervised it all, and showed proofs of real genius. The food supplies in the barred House were rather mixed, but Fatty Wynn could have made an appetising dish of American potted beef. Now Fatty's duties were over for a time, and he had a respite; and he was going to enjoy it in his own way. He had retired to the upper regions of the School House with a pie—a pie of his own making, a most gorgeous pie, a pie that was the last word in cooking, the final syllable in pies.

On the principle that the labourer was worthy of his hire, and that the ox which treadeth out the corn should not be muzzled, Fatty felt that he was entitled to that gorgeous pie.

So while the lower regions of the School House buzzed with the noisy garrison, Fatty sought a secluded spot, to enjoy that pie to the full.

Now he was seated on a bench on the top landing with the pie on his knees and beatific happiness in his plump face.

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He plunged a knife through a lovely brown crust, and a hissing spout of steam was emitted. Fatty snuffed it lovingly.

"Spiffing!" he murmured.

Fatty had not bothered about bringing up a plate with him. He was quite capable of demolishing the whole pie.

He was just starting, when he heard a loud, prolonged creak. He heard it, but, like the gladiator of old, he heard it but heeded not.

It would have been rather a startling sound coming from above his head as it did, had not Fatty's whole attention been concentrated on the pie. As it was, Fatty was not startled. A discharge of cannon would scarcely have startled him then.

He proceeded with the pie.

"Scrumptious!" he murmured.

The pie was scrumptious, there was no doubt about that. Scrumptious was the only adequate word.

Creak, creak, creak creak!

The sounds were repeated, and they continued over the bent head of Fatty Wynn. But Fatty was deaf to all considerations but the pie. He was only half through the pie as yet. When he was quite through, he would have time to listen to that mysterious creaking, and ascertain what precisely it indicated.

Creak! Creak! Snap! Crack!

That final crack was loud and sharp, almost like a pistol-shot. It was so loud and startling that it drew even Fatty Wynn's eyes from the dish on his fat knees.

He looked up.

He blinked as a glimpse of daylight above met his eyes. Then, forgetful of even the pie, Fatty Wynn gave a yell.

"Look out, you fellows!"

He leaped to his feet. The pie-dish went with a crash to the floor and smashed. What remained of the pie was scattered and wasted, and the Falstaff of St. Jim's did not heed!

He leaned over the banisters and roared.

"Figgins! Kerr! Tom Merry! This way! They're coming!"

"What—what the thump—" came a shout from below.

"They're coming—on the roof!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Great Scott!"

There was a rush of footsteps on the stairs. Tom Merry was the first to arrive on the top landing, panting for breath.

"Hurry up, you fellows!" he yelled.

"We're coming!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors tore up the staircase. Above the landing there was a large trapdoor in the roof, which was level and leaded at that spot. The trapdoor was for use in case of fire. There was a strong bolt upon it, and it had been carefully bolted—Tom Merry had seen to that. But the trapdoor was rising now, forced from without.

The creaking that Fatty Wynn had heard—without heeding it—had been caused by the forcing of crowbars under the edge of the trap from above. The enemy had avoided hammering in order not to give the alarm. Two crowbars, after infinite patient labour, had been inserted, and now they were wrenching the trapdoor up, and the bolt had parted with the loud crack that had at last alarmed Fatty.

—IS THE RULING OF THE ST. JIM'S REBELS!

The trapdoor was raised. The winter sunset glimmered in at the opening. But for the fact that Fatty Wynn had retired to the top landing to enjoy his pie in undisturbed quiet it was very probable that the enemy would have entered unknown, and dropped one by one through the trap, gathered in force on the landing, and then rushed in a body down the stairs to take the garrison by surprise.

Tom Merry & Co owed much to Fatty Wynn's pie!

The trap was up now. A space of four square feet was open, and round it half a dozen faces could be seen—the stiff, grim countenance of Sergeant Stuckey, the grinning face of Private Brown with a swollen nose and a black eye, and several others. And Private Pilkins was already swinging himself in. He hung by his hands, with his legs swinging in the air over the landing.

"Back up, you chaps!" gasped Tom Merry.

More and more juniors tore up the top staircase as the alarm spread through the besieged house.

Crash!

Private Pilkins dropped on the landing with a crash and



"Yawwooooh!" came in a wild howl from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as a pair of legs curled round his neck. For a moment Private Green had a pick-a-back on the swell of St. Jim's shoulders, then he fell and both disappeared amid a forest of legs. (See this page.)

a clatter. It was a long drop, but it did not hurt the active Mr. Pilkins. He stumbled over, and picked himself up immediately, to show a bold front to the enemy. There was no longer any chance of taking the garrison by surprise, but at least the way was open, and the enemy only had to drop in.

"Collar him!"
"Wush the boundah!"
"Stand back!" yelled Private Pilkins. "Mind, I shall hit out—yaroooh! Yoop! Oh crumbs!"

Mr. Pilkins did hit out, hard, and Tom Merry went spinning back, and Monty Lowther after him. Then Kit Wildrake's fist crashed on Mr. Pilkins' chin and hurled him back against the wall.

Before he could recover half a dozen pairs of hands were upon him, and he was dragged down. He rolled down the top flight of stairs with a crowd clinging to him.

There was a bump as Private Scuppers landed on the landing. He was assailed at the same moment, and rushed over before he could strike a blow. Fatty Wynn sat on the back of his neck and pinned him down by sheer avoirdupois.

"Back up, old beans!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Heah comes anothah—two of them, bai Jove—"

"Rush the rotters!"
"Give 'em socks!"

Private Brown and Sergeant Stuckey dropped in together. There was a wild and whirling struggle on the landing.

Hard knocks were given and taken. But the landing was fairly swarming with St. Jim's juniors now, and force of numbers told.

Mr. Railton looked in from above with a dark brow. It was difficult to drop on the swarming landing below without landing on heads and shoulders. But Private Green swung himself in recklessly.

"Yawwooooh!" came in a wild howl from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as a pair of legs curled round his neck.

For a second Arthur Augustus was carrying Private Green pick-a-back. But only for a second. Then he rolled over under the shock, and disappeared with Mr. Green amid a forest of legs.

"Yoop! Help! Wescue! Oh cwumbs!"

"Collar him!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Sit on him!"

"You next, Mr. Railton!" yelled Cardew. "Drop in, old dear."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the Housemaster did not drop in. The enemy who were already inside had fairly disappeared under the swarming juniors. Their painful yells and gasps showed that they were hurt. But it was no time to stand on ceremony—it was the enemy that had to be stood upon—and dozens of juniors stood upon them, and pinned them down helplessly.

"Clear them away!" panted Tom Merry. "Get them down the stairs! Mind you don't let them loose!"

"You bet!"

A crowd of fellows watched the trap, ready for fresh enemies to drop in. The rest dragged the prisoners down the stairs, each one held in the grasp of half a dozen hands.

On the lower landing Kit Wildrake had a coil of cord ready, and he snipped off lengths of it, and the captured enemy were tied up as fast as they were dragged down.

Sergeant Stuckey, and Privates Pilkins, Brown, Green, and Scuppers, sprawled on the lower landing, bound hand and foot, and the knots were tied with the skill of Boy Scouts who knew their business.

On the upper landing Tom Merry & Co. swarmed, ready for fresh foes shouting to the enemy to come on. But the enemy, peering down from the open trap upon the swarming landing, showed a decided disinclination to come on. Once more the "offensive" had been stopped.

CHAPTER 8. Victory!

"W AITIN' for you, old dear!"

That was Cardew's remark to Mr. Railton, as the Housemaster looked down with a grim brow.

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Pway dwop in, sir. We will tweek you as gently as is poss in the cires, sir!"

"We'll try it, sir, if you like!" said one of the Housemaster's followers, over his shoulder.

Mr. Railton shook his head.

The surprise attack was a failure, owing to Fatty Wynn and his pie. There were still enough of the attacking-party to deal with the juniors, if they could have tackled them in a body, hand-to-hand. But the trouble was that they couldn't. They could only drop in at the trap a couple at a time, and be seized by swarming hands as fast as they dropped. It was useless for the Housemaster to allow his forces to be beaten in detail.

"Not going, sir?" asked Tom Merry, looking up with a smile. "Put that peashooter away, Cardew. Mustn't peashoot a Housemaster."

"Wathah not! I am surprised at you, Cardew!"

"Bow-wow!" grunted Cardew. "What's the good of doin' things by halves?"

"There is such a thing as wespect for a Housemastah, Cardew, even when he is unfortunately playin' the giddy ox."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do drop in, sir!" said Cardew.

Mr. Railton set his lips.

"Return to the Head's house, my men," he said to his followers. "We shall proceed no further here."

"Which is one way of ownin' up to a lickin'!" remarked Ralph Reckness Cardew, and the juniors chuckled.

"Boys, you will send out the men who have entered," said Mr. Railton. "I will direct them to come quietly, without giving trouble."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Nothing doing!" he answered. "They're prisoners, and they're going to stay prisoners till this affair comes to an end. We let the sergeant go last time, and here he is again. Now he's staying."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Prisoners of war," said Glyn. "We'll find them something to do, so that they won't be bored, sir. There's lots of washing-up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton opened his lips to speak, but closed them again. He was not in a position to give orders.

He disappeared from the trapdoor, and the juniors heard

receding footsteps on the leads above. The assailants had gone back the way they had come—by the trapdoor in the roof of the Head's house.

"Now there's another hole to stop," remarked Tom Merry, glancing up at the patch of blue sky. "Blake, you're chief carpenter. Trot out your tool-box."

"You bet!" said Blake.

The amateur carpenter of the Fourth was soon at work. The trap was reached by a pair of steps, and it was dragged shut. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass on it, with a shake of the head.

"Weally, Blake, I don't see how you are goin' to nail it fwm undahnneath," he remarked.

"Lots of things you don't see, old scout, even with the aid of your glass-eye," answered Blake cheerfully.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hand me up the gimlet!"

"Bai Jove! You cannot possibly fasten a twapdoor with a gimlet, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"Fathead!" roared Blake. "Hand me the gimlet!"

"Weally, deah boy, I trust you are not goin' to allow the excitement of scwappin' to detewiowate your mannaahs. You know vewy well that I object to bein' called a fathead!"

Blake breathed hard.

"Kill him, somebody, and hand up a gimlet," he said.

Tom Merry laughed, and handed up the gimlet. Blake proceeded to pierce a number of holes round the trapdoor, close to the sides.

"Now the screw-eyes!" he said.

"Bai Jove! I am quite assuahed, deah boy, that you cannot possibly sewew up a twapdoor with sewew-eyes!"

"Won't somebody knock Gussy down and sit on his head?" inquired Blake plaintively.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom handed up the screw-eyes, watching Blake curiously. The amateur carpenter screwed in a number of the screw-eyes into the holes he had pierced. Then he proceeded to drive nails through the metal rings, into the frame round the trapdoor.

"Good!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, you know!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "That is weally a nobbay ideah!"

Blake descended from the steps, much pleased with himself. The trap was secure again now. It was almost as difficult to force from above as it had been before the attack. But Blake was not finished yet. He proceeded to nail the end of a cord to the trapdoor. On the loose end of the cord he attached a bell, raided from the regions below.

"They can't raise the trap again without ringing the bell," said Blake, with pardonable pride. "That will give the alarm. See?"

"Topping!" said Tom Merry heartily.

"Yaas, wathah! I vewy on Studay No. 6 for weally wippin' ideahs, you know!" said Arthur Augustus.

The defences having been repaired, the juniors descended the stairs. They found five hapless prisoners sprawling on the lower landing, wriggling in their bonds, and making remarks of the most emphatic nature.

"Ow long is this 'ere lark goin' on?" Private Brown inquired.

"Just as long as the barring-out," said Tom Merry. "I'm sorry, but you've asked for it, you know. We can't afford to let you loose, to come on again."

Private Brown grinned.

"You're a young rip, you are!" he said admiringly. "A regular young rip, and no mistake! But I ain't grumbling. This ain't as bad as the time when the Huns got hold of me."

"It ain't, not by long chalks," said Private Pilkins. "And what's the odds? We was out of a job, and the pay goes on just the same. If there's something to smoke, I don't mind being a prisoner of war."

"I'm afraid there's nothing to smoke," said Tom, laughing. "But we'll make you as comfy as we can."

"Yaas, wathah! We can put them on pawole, Tom Mewwy."

Tom Merry looked doubtful.

"Will you chaps give your word to toe the line and keep quiet, if we let you loose?" he asked.

"I won't!" rapped the sergeant.

Private Brown shook his head.

"Can't be did!" he answered. "You see, Mr. Railton's paying us ten bob a day and all found, for this job. We're bound to do what we can. If I get a chance of getting loose, I'm going."

"Then we sha'n't give you a chance," said Tom. "We shall have to keep your paws tied. Let their hoofs loose, you chaps, and we'll walk them downstairs."

The five prisoners were "walked" downstairs, and walked into the Head's study, which was to be their prison. There the key was turned upon them, and they were left to their own devices.

At supper that night in the rebel stronghold, there was gleeful rejoicing. The fortune of war had favoured the rebels

STAND



**THE
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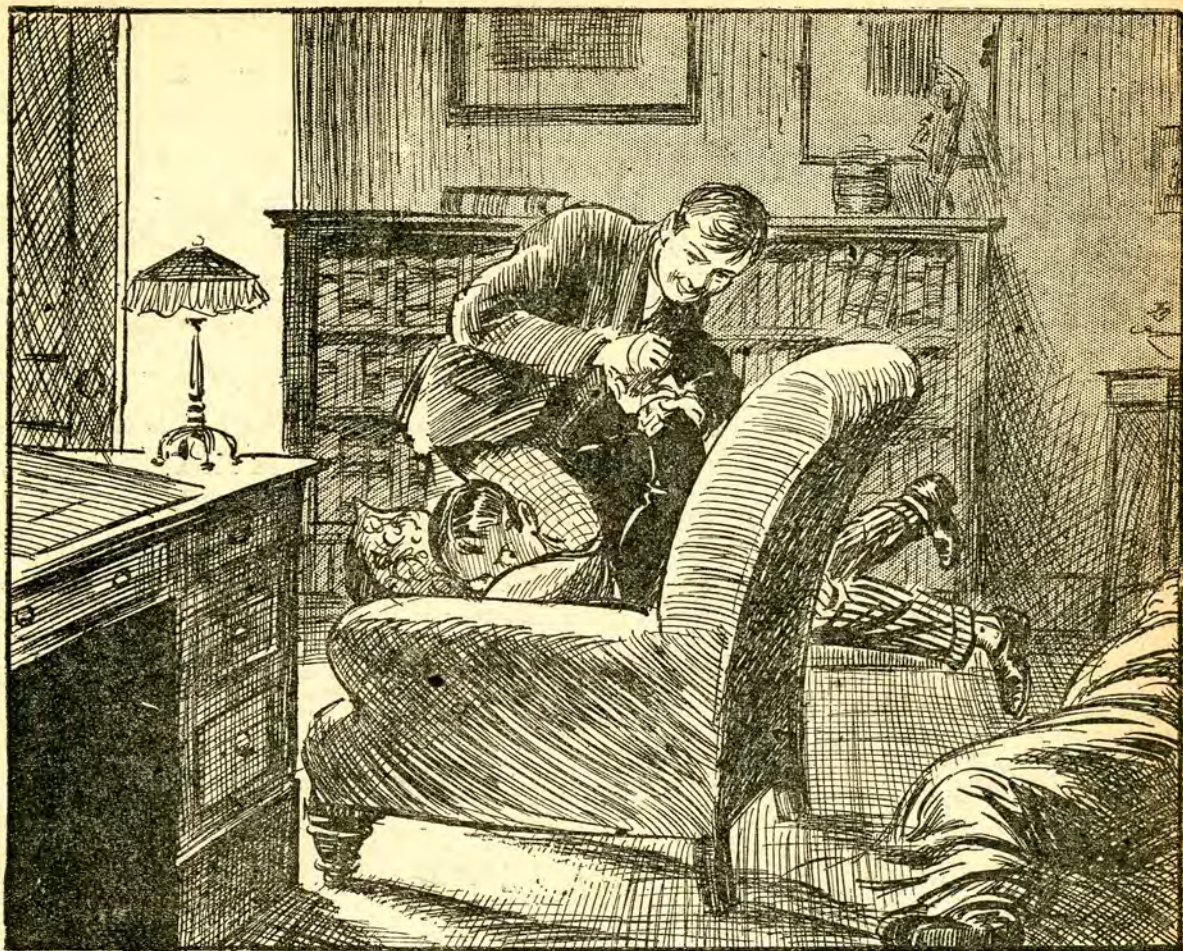
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Keep Your Eyes Open!



"Mmmmmmm!" came faintly from Arthur Augustus. He found himself bent over a chair, his face jammed into a cushion and a knee planted in the back of his neck. By this simple process, Mr. Brown kept him silent while he tied his hands behind his back, with the cord so lately loosened from his own wrists. (See page 16.)

of St. Jim's—three attacks in succession had been defeated, and there were prisoners taken. And Tom Merry & Co. felt, with great satisfaction, that they were masters of the situation—quite able to hold their own until the Head "came round"—and they were willing to give the Head as long as he liked to make up his mind.

CHAPTER 9.

Gussy is Too Good!

"**B**AI Jove! That's wotten!"

Arthur Augustus murmured the words dubiously. It was a late hour of the night. Most of the garrison were fast asleep; but in all quarters watch and ward was kept.

More than a dozen sentries were on duty, changed at regular intervals. Tom Merry & Co. were aware that a night attack might be the enemy's next move, and they were ready for such a move.

It was D'Arcy's turn for duty, and he was on sentry-go in the passage outside the Head's study.

In that apartment there were five prisoners, reposing in what comfort they could with their hands tied.

The prisoners had been released—under strong guard—for supper. After that, their wrists had been bound again. Tom Merry was not taking any chances with five such hefty individuals on the inner side of the School House defences.

Arthur Augustus was sleepy, and he marched up and down the corridor to keep himself awake; certainly he would have dropped off if he had sat down.

He passed and repassed the door of the study, which was left partly open, so that the prisoners would be under observation.

Sergeant Stuckey, sitting bolt upright, with a frowning, grim brow, gave the swell of St. Jim's hard looks when he glanced in. But the other prisoners were taking the situation

philosophically. They had been up against much more severe experiences than this in their time.

Private Brown was wide awake; the others had gone to sleep on a pile of rugs and blankets provided by the kindness of the garrison.

Several times, as Arthur Augustus passed the door, he heard the sound of a low groan in the room.

It touched his tender heart.

Every one of the prisoners had been in the war, and some of them were silver-badge men, and Arthur Augustus felt that this was hard lines on them, and he would gladly have released them. But war was war; Gussy realised that. Still, the suppressed groans of Private Brown touched a chord in his heart.

He remarked to himself, a dozen times at least, that it was "wotten." At last he could stand it no longer, and entered the room.

"Feelin' vewy bad, deah boy?" he asked, addressing Private Brown, who blinked at him with his only serviceable eye.

"Oh, it's nothing, sir," said Mr. Brown heroically. "Jest cramp from this 'ere rope. Nothing to make a fuss about."

"I am vewy sowwy, old scout," said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps I could give you a little relief; without lettin' you go. I twust you realise that we are bound to take pwecautions in the cires."

"Course you are, sir," said Private Brown. "It's a queer game you're playing here, but prisoners is prisoners. But if you could let this 'ere cord jest a little loose—"

He fixed his eyes on the swell of St. Jim's hopefully. Private Brown had spotted Arthur Augustus as a youth whose heart was soft, and whose head matched his heart.

Gussy's unsuspectingness was one of his most marked characteristics. A prisoner of war was entitled to use strategy to obtain his freedom; but Arthur Augustus was

(Continued on page 16.)

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TAKING THE PIGS TO MARKET.

By Clifton Dane.

"I 'M daunted if I know what to do!" moaned Farmer Gileson. "Here am I, kept indoors with the rheumatiz, and my four labourers down with the flu! And the pigs have got to be taken to Rylcombe Market to-day!"

While he was thus bemoaning his lot to his "old 'ooman" there was a jingling of bicycle-bells, and Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's entered the farmhouse.

"Hallo, Farmer Gileson!" said Tom Merry breezily. "We've just been having a spin, and feel jolly peckish! We've come for some of your famous honey cakes and cream and some tea!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

While the chums of St. Jim's were partaking of their refreshments, Farmer Gileson poured his tale of woe into their ears.

Tom Merry jumped up.

"You've got nobody to take your pigs to market!" he exclaimed. "Why, we've just come in time! We'll do the necessary."

Farmer Gileson gladly accepted. Tom Merry & Co. herded the pigs out of their sty, got them into the wagon, slipped the net over the top, and then crowded aboard. Gussy, who is an expert at driving horses, took the reins.



"Gather round, gents!" roared Tom Merry, after Baggy had been placed in the pen. "What offers for this fine fat pig?"

"Right away for Rylcombe!" sang out Blake.

The pigs squealed, and the old wagon rumbled on its way to Rylcombe Market. Suddenly Manners gave a shout. A fat schoolboy was seen sitting by the wayside.

"Baggy Trimble!" roared Blake.

"Into the wagon with him!" chuckled Tom Merry. "We'll take him to market with the rest of the pigs! He'll be in suitable company in the cart!"

Baggy was thrust, kicking and yelling, under the net, and he lay on the floor of the wagon, with the pigs squealing and tumbling over him.

Rylcombe Market was reached, and the pigs taken charge of by the farmer's agent. Baggy was hauled out of the cart, trussed up, and placed in an empty pen.

"Gather round, gents!" roared Tom Merry, in his best auctioneer's manner. "What offers for this fine fat pig?"

"Fourpence!" yelled Cardew, who was in the crowd.

"Going—gone!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"He's yours for fourpence, Cardew!"

"Good!" chuckled Cardew. "I've a number of parcels I want taken back to St. Jim's. I'll turn this pig into a beast of burden!"

Cardew strapped his parcels on Baggy's back, and he and Levison and Clive drove the fat Fourth-Former back to St. Jim's, amidst yells of laughter from everybody.

Tom Merry & Co. went back to the farm on the empty wagon, and then rode to St. Jim's on their bikes.

GRUNDY and the GOAT.

By George Herries.



"MY hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!" said Gussy. "And Lowther, Manners, Blake, Digby, and I all gasped in amazement."

It was a radiant vision of loveliness that met our eyes in the old quad at St. Jim's one Wednesday afternoon. No less a person than George Alfred Grundy came strutting down the School House steps, arrayed like Solomon in all his glory. Grundy's collar was as white as the driven snow, his necktie was of a colour that fairly put Gussy's stunner in the shade. His topper was as shiny as his patent shoes, and Grundy wore spats—actually wore spats! His jacket was immaculate, his trousers creased to a razor edge, and his fancy waistcoat made all beholders blink.

"Grundy!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Is it—can it be our own George Alfred? I say, Grundy, what's the game?"

Grundy went out, and we followed. Grundy glared round and waved his cane in the air.

"Go back!" he roared. "I don't want you cheeky, grinning jabberwocks following me!"

Ten minutes afterwards we discovered why Grundy had so arrayed himself to kill. He made his way to old Jacob Bigweed's farm, on the outskirts of Rylcombe, and, scattering all the chickens, went up to the farmhouse door and knocked. Miss Lottie, the farmer's pretty daughter, opened the door, and Grundy swept off his topper and made a low bow.

"Ha, hai!" grinned Lowther. "The silly chump! Fancy Grundy being smitten with Miss Lottie's charms. He's nearly as bad as Gussy."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy entered the farmhouse, where teas were provided, and we saw him through the window having tea and regarding pretty Miss Lottie with love-lorn looks.

Monty Lowther chuckled as we made our way back to St. Jim's.

"Old Farmer Bigweed has a goat, hasn't he, kids?" he grinned. "They call the goat Billy. It's an old regimental goat, and it's the worst-tempered goat in the neighbourhood. In fact, Bigweed has to keep it chained up in a special shed, for it's butted down three sheds already. Billy's hot stuff, as goats go!"

"But what on earth has the goat to do with Grundy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Heaps!" chuckled Lowther. "Listen, kids, and I will a wheeze impart!"

We listened—and then we chuckled mightily.

That evening, when the evening shadows were falling, Grundy was waiting at the gates of St. Jim's for the postman when a young urchin came up and handed him a note. Grundy gave a start when he saw his own name on the envelope, written in a girlish hand. Then his heart went pitter-patter when he read the following epistle inside:

"Am being kept prisoner in the large shed at back of the farmhouse. Enclosed is a key that will open the padlock. Set me loose to-night, and we will flee together, my darling.—L."

Grundy went hot and cold.

"From Lottie!" he gurgled joyfully to himself. "Who else can it be? Her old father's keeping her a prisoner in a filthy shed. My word! I'll set her free, and—we'll flee together! This shows she thinks a lot of me,

by Jove! I'll be her hero! She can rely on me! I'm Grundy!"

The Terrible Three and Blake & Co. sped away in the darkness, and at length reached the farm. All was still and dark. We crept to the rear of the large shed where Billy, the goat, was incarcerated. We could hear it treading the straw inside. Blake took out his brace and bit and bored a hole in the rear wall of the shed. Billy snorted angrily at the liberties that were being taken with his shed. We hid behind the shed and waited.

Presently the gate opened, and a stealthy figure entered. In the moonlight we saw that it was Grundy. George Alfred's eyes were gleaming. He crept up to the door of the shed and tapped.

"Are you there, Miss Lottie?" he said softly.

Monty Lowther, with his mouth to the hole in the opposite side of the shed, answered. His voice sounded to Grundy as if it had come from inside.

"Yes, I am here, darling!" Monty spoke sweet and tenderly. "Oh, my hero, rescue me!"

Grundy's heart leapt with joy. Billy, the goat, wondering what all this was about, stamped up and down angrily inside the shed.

"Don't be impatient, Miss Lottie!" said Grundy. "Rely on me! I've got the key."

Grundy fumbled with the lock, and during the time that he was opening the door, Monty spoke endearingly to him through the hole in the shed. Billy was getting in quite a rage.

"Oh, good!" muttered Grundy, as the padlock snapped open. "Now we shan't be long, and—"

Crash!

Something hard and heavy struck the door like a battering-ram from inside and sent it splintering outwards. Then a form hurtled out of the dark confines of the shed and came straight at Grundy.

Biff!

"Yaroooooogh!" howled George Alfred, as the goat butted him over like a ninepin. "What the—Yah! Help! Oooooogh!"

The goat's blood was up. He took another flying leap at Grundy and sent him hurtling into the midst of a cucumber frame. Grundy went through it with a howl that awoke the echoes and a splintering of glass.

"Ha, ha, ha!" we roared.

Grundy was up and out of that cucumber frame like a shot. He saw Billy charging at him again, so he turned and tore away, just as Farmer Bigweed and a number of farm hands dashed up.

Grundy sent two of them spinning, and the goat bowled the rest of them over. We were helpless with laughter, but we beat a hurried retreat out of the farmyard. We saw Grundy disappear down a leafy lane with the goat in full chase, both streaking like lightning for the village.

It had effectively knocked all the "spooky" notions out of him.



The goat took a flying leap at Grundy and sent him hurtling into the midst of a cucumber-frame.

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"FACING THE FOE!"

(Continued from page 13.)

not suspecting any strategy on the part of Private Brown.

"I will do my vewy best, deah boy," said D'Arcy.

"Thanky kindly!"

Sergeant Stuckey's eye glittered as Private Brown closed his sound eye at him for a moment. The sergeant understood, if Arthur Augustus did not.

Arthur Augustus bent over the bound man and proceeded to loosen the knots. Those knots had been scientifically tied by Blake of the Fourth, and certainly Private Brown would never have got them loose by his own efforts.

Mr. Brown lay on his side on the rugs, keeping his arms rigid—apparently cramped and immovable. In those circumstances there seemed no great risk in loosening the bonds.

The cord loosened.

"Is that bettah, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus kindly.

"Lots!" said Private Brown. "'Eaps! Sorry, sir—don't make a row, or I shall 'ave to 'urt you!"

His hands being loose, he fastened a grip like that of a vice on the unsuspecting swell of St. Jim's.

A startled gasp escaped Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Sorry—mustn't make a row," said Private Brown politely. He clapped a large hand over Arthur Augustus' mouth, stopping the shout the swell of the Fourth would have uttered.

Sergeant Stuckey's crusty face broke into a grin.

"Gwooooh!" gasped Arthur Augustus faintly.

Private Brown rose to his feet, still with his hand gripped over Gussy's mouth, his other hand grasping his collar.

Arthur Augustus struggled wildly; but he was like an infant in the grasp of the perfidious Mr. Brown.

"Awfully sorry, sir!" said Mr. Brown regretfully. "You're a nice young gent, and I like you. 'Ope I'm not 'urting you, sir?"

"Mmmmmmm!" came faintly from Arthur Augustus.

He found himself bent over a chair, his face jammed into a cushion, and a knee planted on the back of his neck. By this simple process Mr. Brown kept him silent while he tied his hands behind his back, with the cord so lately loosened from his own wrists.

Having secured Arthur Augustus' hands, Mr. Brown next jerked out the junior's handkerchief, pulled his head round, and stuffed it into Gussy's mouth.

"Now sit quiet, sir," he said. "Can't say 'ow sorry I am to 'andle you like this; and you such a kind-'earted and unsuspicious young gent. But it can't be 'elped, can it?"

"Mmmmmmm!"

Arthur Augustus' eyes gleamed with wrath. He had been taken in—hopelessly taken in and done for. No doubt Mr. Brown had suffered a little from cramp, as he had stated; but obviously it was not a very serious attack, for Mr. Brown was extremely active and energetic now.

"Jest sit quiet, and you're all right," he said.

That was about the last thing that Arthur Augustus intended to do. His hands were tied, and his mouth was closed; but his feet were still free. He raised both boots to crash them on the floor, in the hope of thus giving the alarm to the other sentries.

But Mr. Brown was too wide-awake for him. Gussy was grasped and pitched back into the arm-chair before he could bang his boots on the floor. Then his ankles were tied together, and also tied to the legs of the chair. After that, Arthur Augustus was quite helpless.

Private Brown left him and tiptoed to the door and listened. He did not put his head out, lest it should be seen by another sentry at a distance—for the passage was bright with electric light. There was no sound of alarm, and Mr. Brown came back, grinning.

All the prisoners were wide-awake now, and Private Brown went to one after another, pocket-knife in hand. In a few minutes they were all cut loose.

They stood in a grinning group, rubbing their wrists. Even Sergeant Stuckey was grinning.

Arthur Augustus' looks spoke volumes as he glared at them. But his looks did not seem to worry the late prisoners. Private Brown winked at him cheerfully.

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"Better get out of this 'ere," said Mr. Scuppers. "There's too many of the young rips for us to tackle, Browney."

"I don't think!" said Private Brown. "We ain't getting out—we're letting the other blokes in!"

Arthur Augustus groaned inwardly, but he was helpless; he could only look on with infuriated eyes, regretting the tenderness of heart that had led him to release the exceedingly deep and cunning Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown silently closed the study door and locked it. That gave the quintette a respite, in case their escape should be discovered by the garrison.

Then the five started to work on the barricade at the study window.

It was a strong barricade, and it was well built. Blake had driven in nails and screws galore to strengthen it.

There were no tools at hand. Private Brown & Co. had to work with their bare hands. One by one they jerked the pieces of furniture away as quietly as they could.

Arthur Augustus watched in anguish.

Once the barricade at the window was down, the way lay open for the prisoners to signal to the rest of Mr. Railton's force—open to an attack of the whole party. Then there would be a rush. Mr. Railton and all his forces would be inside the School House, and that was the end. Arthur Augustus struggled frantically with his bonds. But he struggled in vain. Mr. Brown had tied him quite securely.

The barricade, carefully as it had been constructed, was rapidly demolished. It had been intended to resist an attack from outside—not demolition from inside.

Mr. Brown and his comrades worked quickly and cheerfully.

The window was uncovered at last, and Private Brown opened it—and a gust of keen wind blew in.

At the same moment there came the sound of a calling voice in the corridor.

"D'Arcy! Where's D'Arcy?"

CHAPTER 10.

Hand to Hand!

"D'ARCY!" shouted Tom Merry.

"D'Arcy! Gussy!" roared Blake.

"Gone to sleep somewhere!" said Grundy of the Shell. "That's how a Fourth Form kid keeps watch! Might have known it, really."

"Rot!" snapped Blake.

"Gussy!" shouted Tom.

It was the "relief." D'Arcy's spell of duty was over, and Tom Merry was relieving the sentries. He had found all the sentries at their posts—with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The Head's corridor, where Arthur Augustus should have been pacing his round, was empty.

"Gone off to sleep, I tell you!" snorted Grundy.

"Gone in to speak to the Tommies, I expect," said Tom Merry, and he turned the handle of the study door.

But the door did not open. Tom hammered on it.

"D'Arcy! Are you in there?"

No reply.

But though no words came from the study, there were sounds in the room—the shuffling of feet, and hurried breathing. And there was another sound, which was like the sound of somebody clambering out of a window.

Tom Merry understood.

"They're loose!" he exclaimed.

"The prisoners—"

"Looks like it. And they've locked the door and got the window open," said Tom, setting his lips. "That ass D'Arcy—"

"But where is he?" exclaimed Blake.

"Goodness knows! It doesn't much matter now! Call all the fellows—quick! We've got to get in here!"

"What-ho!"

In less than a minute the alarm was ringing through the School House from one end to the other.

The Head's corridor swarmed with awakened juniors, some of them only half-dressed, all in wild excitement.

"Break in the door!" shouted Grundy.

"Let me get at it!" said Blake. Blake had dashed away for his tools. "I'll have it open in a jiffy!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

That sacred apartment, the headmaster's study, had never been treated with such scant ceremony before. Blake drove a cold chisel between the door and jamb with terrific blows of a hammer.

Bang! Bang! Crash! Creak! Crack!

"Go it, Blake!" panted Tom.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

It was a stout lock on the door, but it was not designed to resist such drastic treatment as that. It cracked and gave, and the door flew open.

Round the open doorway the juniors swarmed. Tom Merry stared into the room.

The barricade was down, and the window was wide open. Private Brown had dropped outside and was shouting at the top of his voice. There was no use in further concealment, and Mr. Brown yelled in stentorian tones to his comrades over in the New House.

But for the "relief" coming round just then, certainly Mr. Brown's little scheme would have succeeded to perfection. Now it had been interrupted—and success was doubtful.

There were answering shouts from the New House—footsteps in the dusky quad.

Mr. Railton had been roused from sleep by the shouts of Private Brown, but he was quick to comprehend. He turned out his men in a marvellously quick time, and called on them to follow him as he started across the quad at a run.

That was the position when Tom Merry & Co. burst into the room. Sergeant Stuckey and Scuppers, Green, and Pilkins stood round the open window, and they stood shoulder to shoulder as the juniors rushed in. Private Brown came scrambling in again to back them up.

"Keep 'em back till the boys git over 'ere!" panted Mr. Brown.

"Rush them!" roared Grundy.

"There's Gussy!" gasped Digby. "Oh, my hat! Look at Gussy!"

Gussy's face was crimson as he sat bound in the Head's armchair. But the juniors hardly troubled to look at him. There was no time to waste on the unfortunate Arthur Augustus just then.

"Come on!" shouted Tom Merry.

He led the rush.

"Stand back, you young idjits!" shouted the sergeant. And, as the juniors did not heed, the sergeant hit out with powerful blows.

Tom Merry spun back and landed on the carpet. Blake rolled over him the next moment—and then Herries and Digby pitched over. Manners and Lowther, rushing on, were knocked over like ninepins.

Mr. Stuckey and company were putting their beef into it. They intended to hold their ground until reinforcements arrived.

Five powerful fellows seemed a match for almost any number of schoolboys, standing shoulder to shoulder with their backs to the window.

But the juniors came on determinedly.

The troopers hit out right and left, straight from the shoulders, and the schoolboys went spinning from the hefty blows. There were a dozen of them on the floor already, knocked out.

Tom Merry struggled up.

It was only too plain what would be the result if the five hefty foes in the study were backed up by the crowd that was now hurrying across the quad to their aid.

"Come on!" panted Tom.

Talbot of the Shell dodged under the sergeant's arm as he was hotly engaged with Cardew and Levison, and caught him round the waist. The next moment Mr. Stuckey's leg was hooked, and he came down with a crash.

Clive, on the floor, desperately clutched at a pair of legs, heedless of kicking, and dragged Mr. Scuppers down.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Kangaroo.

"Oh, my nose! Ow!"

"Ow! Wow! Oooop!"

"Pile in, St. Jim's!"

Crash! Five or six juniors, heedless of hammering, dragged Mr. Brown to the floor, and kept him there.

Then a swarming rush fairly closed over Mr. Green and Pilkins, and they were borne back against the open window, still fighting hard.

Mr. Railton was below the window now.

He grasped the sill, to pull himself up, "bunked" from behind by one of his followers.

It was a critical moment. A few seconds more and the reinforcements would have been pouring in, and the tide of battle would have turned.

But those few seconds were not granted to the enemy. Private Pilkins, fairly hurled over by the weight of numbers, rolled backwards out of the open window.

He crashed on the Housemaster, hurling him back, and rolled over him to the ground.

"Chuck them out!" panted Blake.

Five or six pairs of hands were on the sill, to climb and clamber in. But Private Green, with a dozen pairs of hands on him, went bodily out, rolling and kicking and struggling. There were loud yells from the assailants outside as he landed on them—and still louder yells from the hapless Mr. Green himself.

"Keep 'em out!" roared Kangaroo.

A fire-shovel in the Australian junior's hand crashed on a head that came in, and the head was withdrawn with marvellous celerity.

On the floor of the swarming room Sergeant Stuckey and Brown and Scuppers were wriggling and struggling under a horde of juniors. The room was packed now, and there was scarcely space for them to rise, if they had been allowed to do so.

But they were not allowed.

The situation had been critical; but it had been saved in time. Tom Merry & Co. had the upper hand again.

A dozen fellows had hold of Mr. Brown—the perfidious Mr. Brown—and they lifted him to the window and shoved him out.

"Catch!" shouted Lowther, to the assailants outside, and there was a breathless laugh.

"Whoooooop!" howled Mr. Brown, as he went.

He vanished from sight.

After him, wriggling and gasping, went Sergeant Stuckey—and the attacking party cleared back to give him room to fall. The sergeant landed in trampled snow, with a grunt.

"Here's the last of them!" panted Tom Merry.

"Ow! Ow! Yow!" gasped Mr. Scuppers. "Wow! Wow! I'll go quiet! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Mr. Scuppers did not go quietly; he went loudly, yelling at the top of his voice as he was hurled out.

Another yell from below announced that he had fallen on the sergeant. Sergeant Stuckey broke his fall; and to judge by his terrific yell, Mr. Scuppers had broken the sergeant.

The window swarmed with triumphant rebels, brandishing cricket-stumps and bats and other weapons of offence.

"Come on, you rotters!" roared Grundy.

"This way!" shouted Glyn.

"Waitin' for you, Railton, old scout!" gasped Cardew. There was a rush from without. Hands grasped the window-sill; heads came in—

"Whack! Whack! Whack!"

The defence was too hot. The assault receded again. Tom Merry jammed the window shut. The glass was gone, in fragments. The Head's table was rushed to the broken window, and up-ended there. Behind it the rebels stacked the barricade. Grundy, in his excitement, rushed the Head's armchair into the barricade, heedless of the fact that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was sitting in it, tied to it. There was a wild gurgle under the handkerchief stuffed in Gussy's noble jaws.

"Gr-r-r-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on!" gasped Tom Merry. "Get Gussy out——"

"Mmmmmmm!"

Jack Blake kindly released his chum, chuckling. Arthur Augustus did not chuckle. He gasped and spluttered.

"Oh cwumbs! Ooooh! Gwooooooh!"

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CHAPTER 11.

Arthur Augustus Catches It!

"LICKED again!" said Monty Lowther.

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, my nose!" groaned Levison of the Fourth.

"Look at my eye!" mumbled Clive.

"Is my chin still there?" inquired Kangaroo, in tones of anguish. "It feels as if it isn't."

There had been severe casualties on the side of the rebels. They had won the victory, but they had paid dearly for it. There was hardly a fellow in the crowd without a sign of damage.

"Can't be helped!" said Tom Merry cheerfully—as cheerfully as he could, with a black eye and a streaming nose. "We've beaten them! We've had a jolly narrow escape, but we've pulled it off."

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh cwumbs! I have been tweated with the gwosset diswespect! Ow!"

"Now we want to know what the sentry was doing!" Grundy exclaimed.

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"Yes, rather!" said Manners. "Court-martial!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"You frabjous ass, Gusey!" roared Herries. "Look at my eye! I've got this eye because you went to sleep on duty!"

"I did not go to sleep on duty, Hewwies!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I was keepin' watch like—like anythin'!"

"Then how did the prisoners get loose?" demanded Talbot.

"It weally could not be helped. I weleased that howwid boundah Bwown because he told me he had the cwamp. Then he turned on me in a vevy unexpected way, you know—"

"Unexpected!" gasped Blake. "No, I suppose you

wouldn't expect it—you—you—you babbling, burbling jabber-wock!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I don't think we'll take any more prisoners," said Tom Merry. "It's not safe. Not with Gussy on the watch, at any rate."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! I do not see that I was to blame, in the least. I suppose I was bound to sympathise with a chap who had the cwamp—"

"Fathead!"

"And I nevah expected—"

"Court-martial!" said Manners.

"Weally, you know—I pwotest—"

Arthur Augustus' protests did not avail him. A drum-head court-martial promptly sat on Arthur Augustus. In the space of one minute he was tried and sentenced—to three bumpings, and running the gauntlet of the whole garrison.

"I pwesume this is a joke!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I shall wefuse to submit— Yawwooh!"

Bump!

"I pwotest—"

Bump!

"I wegard you—"

Bump!

"Oh cwumbs!"

"Now the gauntlet!" grinned Blake.

"I pwotest! I wegard you as uttah wuffians! I—"

Arthur Augustus ran for his life.

The sun rose upon St. Jim's—a new day dawned upon the old school, to find the rebels still victorious, the barring-out still going strong. Tom Merry—under sentence of expulsion—was still at St. Jim's—behind the defences of the barred house, the rebels were still unconquered, and facing the foe.

THE END.

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What You Have to Do!

Here is a splendid new competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of Plymouth Argyle 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 below, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Plymouth Argyle" Competition, GEM Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURS. DAY, January 25th, 1923.

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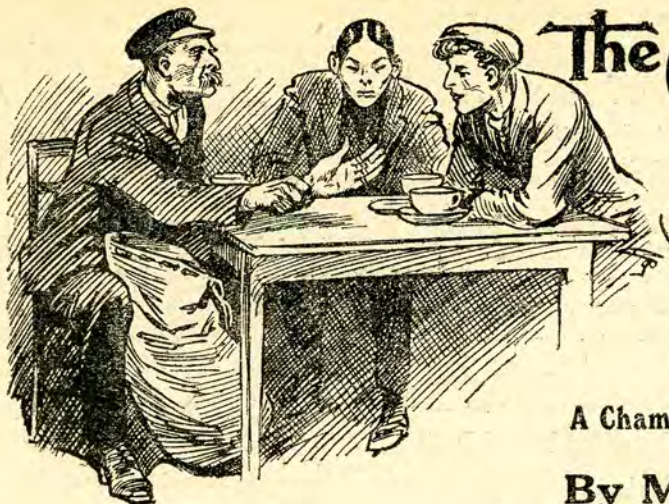
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The Golden Hand!

A Scoundrel Would Have Succeeded In His Plot but for the Timely Intervention of a Plucky Chinese Youngster.



A Champion Story of a Celestial's Cunning.

By MALCOLM ARNOLD.

CHAPTER 1.

A Cry for Help!

"HELP!" He—
The hoarse call, a call which was broken off sharp to end in a meaningless gulp, came through the fog-filled night, and two youngsters, shuffling along the edge of the pavement, stopped and turned their heads in the direction of the sound.

On their left was an arched gateway which led to a narrow alleyway. The street lamp on the corner of the curb was a feeble glimmer, and its beams failed to pierce the darkness under the arch.

"What was that, Tu Sin?" Ginger Dan asked.

Tu Sin, a slim, yellow Chink, born and bred in Limehouse, looked first at his chum then across at the archway.

"I think that some honourable stranger is getting his honourable throat squeezed," Tu Sin remarked, catching at Dan's sleeve. "That's a very bad place up there, and discretion advises peaceful personages such as you and I to deviate. Better beat it, Dan, I think!"

"No jolly fear!" Dan said sturdily. "Come along, Sin; we'll look into this!"

In another moment the two ragged youngsters had darted across the pavement and were moving up the dark alleyway.

A scuffling sound came to them from the left, and they heard quick, panting breathing. Dan, leaping from his chum's side, darted towards a doorway set to the left of the arch.

As he did so, a low, warning call sounded, and a burly figure leaped out at him. Dan saw the man's arm rise, and sheer instinct—the quick cunning that a friendless vagabond must cultivate, if he desires to go through his rough existence successfully—made Dan lunge in at his attacker.

The sandbag whistled harmlessly over the youngster's head, and next moment Dan had planted a swinging punch at the unseen features. He felt his knuckles land on a short, stumpy nose, and his assailant snarled out an oath as he fell back against the wall.

Tu Sin had darted after his chum, and it was just as well for Dan that he did so, for a second shape, a taller, leaner individual, came rushing into the fray.

The newcomer aimed a savage kick at Dan, and his boot landed on the sturdy youngster's knee. Dan was brought down with a crash, but he managed to grip at the thick legs of his first opponent, and he brought the man down with him.

Tu Sin, leaping to the left, went at the second man like a cat, and, evading a whirling fist, the Chink tackled the ruffian low. His long, pipestem-like arms were wound round the fellow's thighs, and, with a quick, deft swing of the body and a tug, Tu Sin rolled over backwards, dragging his quarry with him.

The attack was so entirely unexpected that the tall man pitched heavily on to his face and rolled over into the muddy archway with a groan. An ee-like wriggle saw Tu Sin astride of his opponent, and, clenching his bony fist, the young Chink began to rain a

battery of blows on the half-dazed man's head.

"You kick my honourable friend with an entirely dishonourable foot. This humble personage will punch your dishonourable nose into your disreputable face!" howled Tu Sin, as he swung his small, tough fists.

A wild scrimmage began then, Tu Sin's antagonist trying to grip at his plucky young assailant's throat, while on the other side of the alleyway, Ginger Dan, half-dazed with his fall, clung tenaciously to his thickest opponent.

Dan's adversary had managed to grip the youngster by the throat, and, with a powerful swing of his body, he forced Ginger Dan back against the wall.

Plucky though the two lads were, it was more than probable that that unequal battle would have gone against them; but suddenly from the end of the alleyway there came an unexpected interruption. The shrill blast of a police-whistle sounded, and, with an oath, the thickest man, releasing Dan's throat, leaped to his feet.

He called out something in a guttural language, and, darting to the top of the alleyway, threw himself on Tu Sin and the lean, wiry ruffian.

Tu Sin was jerked over on to his back, then the second man was dragged to his feet by the thickest rogue, and, turning, darted off with his friend.

By the time that Ginger Dan had managed to rise, the two ruffians had vanished, and Tu Sin, crossing to his chum, gripped him by the arm.

"You all right, Dan?" Tu Sin asked in an anxious way.

Dan drew a deep breath and fingered his pained foot for a moment.

"Yes, I think I'm all right," he said. "But, by James, that brute very nearly strangled me! How about you, Tu Sin?"

Tu Sin chuckled.

"I chuck that fellow on his head, then punch his nose," he explained. "I not hurt."

He turned and glanced up the alleyway through the gloom.

"But where are the coppers, Dan?" he asked. "I no can see honourable policemen."

There was no sign of anyone moving, and Dan and the Chink began to walk up the alley quietly. A faint sound came to them from the left, then they heard a man's voice, a low, thin tone.

"Come here, you two!" it said. "I feel a bit groggy and can't get up."

A moment later Dan and his chum found themselves leaning over a figure propped up against the wall. It was that of a man, and by his feet lay a seaman's kitbag, and in the half-gloom, Dan saw that he was dressed in the usual refer coat-suit of the sailor.

"Help me up, mates; I'll be all right in a minute."

It was a deep, pleasant voice that spoke, and Dan and his chum, reaching out, managed to lift the burly sailor to his feet. He swayed rather unsteadily, and they stood for a moment in the archway, supporting him.

"I reckon you two youngsters just about saved my life," the man began presently. "But I also helped, you know. I remembered that old whistle of mine and sounded it. It cleared those ruffians away."

He straightened himself up slightly, and drew another deep breath.

"A close shave, mates; I'd have been a goner all right if you hadn't come along. That skunk, Jose, had his knife out ready to finish me."

He turned and nodded towards his kitbag. "Help me to get that away and we'll be all right," he said. "There's just a chance of them coming back."

It was Dan who swung the kitbag on to his broad shoulders, wondering at the weight of it; then, with Tu Sin lending a shoulder to support the burly sailor, the trio left the alleyway and turned down the fog-filled street.

"Where are we, anyhow?" the sailor asked presently.

Tu Sin was a walking street-guide of Limehouse, and no fog ever brewed could confuse him.

"This is Malder Terrace, honourable stranger," he said; "and at the top is Gladstonebury Road, where you get trams or buses."

"Why, we're still close to the docks, then, are we?"

"Oh, yes, mister," Dan put in. "We're quite close to them."

The sailor shrugged his shoulders.

"It's this blinking fog," he went on. "I ought never to have trusted to Hans Kapp. I might have known that that dog was out to get his own back."

He looked down at Dan.

"I've been trudging through these streets for the best part of two hours," he said, "and these skunks who were with me swore I was close up to Shoreditch, but from what I can make of it, we must have been very close up and down and round and round the same spot. They was waiting for a chance to do me in, and I never tumbled to it."

"They try to kill you, eh? What for do they want to do that?" Tu Sin asked.

The burly man, walking along between the chums, laughed grimly, then he nodded to Dan.

"They wanted something that's in that kitbag," he said quietly. "They must have known it was there all the time, although I thought I'd kept my secret."

They reached the corner of the side street, and a lighted bus passed them, to vanish into the opaque gloom again. They were under an electric standard now, and by the light from the bulb the stranger was able to see the two faces more clearly.

He glanced, first at Dan, then at the long, lean, yellow face of Tu Sin.

"Blow me, you're a quaint couple to knock up against on a foggy night!" he said at last. "But, in any case, you did me a good turn, and Bill Martin ain't the sort of fellow to forget a thing of that kind."

He nodded to Tu Sin.

"What about a bite of somethin' to eat?" he said. "One of your chop suey places, Chink, would do fine. I've just come back from your part of the world—been two years beating up and down the China Sea."

He fired off a string of fluent Chinese, and Tu Sin shook his head.

"I do not understand the honourable stranger," Tu Sin replied. "The honourable

stranger make a mistake; he think I Chink, but I born here, London. I got yellow face, slant eyes, but I Englishman all right. No blinking chop-chop stuff about me, is there, Dan?

Dan saw the look of amazement which crossed the face of Bill Martin, and chuckled. "Tu Sin is a bit of a character," he explained to the burly sailor. "But he's a jolly good chap. He and I get on fine together!"

They moved off again, and presently Tu Sin did manage to nose out a Chinese cafe, into which they turned, and were soon seated at a dingy table, enjoying a supper.

If the sailor noticed the rather wolfish appetite which the two lads showed, he did not remark upon it; but he insisted upon having their plates refilled, and concluded the banquet by ordering coffee and thick wads of cake.

He paid the bill with a note from a thick roll which he produced from his breast-pocket.

"Got paid off this afternoon," he explained, as he pocketed the wad again.

They were in a small alcove, and, after a look round, the sailor reached for his kitbag. As he stretched out his left hand, Dan noticed that there was a gash along the upper part of the sleeve on which a few streaks of blood were showing.

"So they wounded you, did they?" Ginger Dan said.

The sailor glanced casually at the tell-tale mark, then shrugged his shoulders.

"Only a scratch, young 'un," he said. "I don't feel it now, but you can take it from me that Jose meant that blow for my heart, only you came up in the nick of time, and spoiled his aim rather."

The cord which held the mouth of the kitbag together was unloosed; then the sailor, slipping his hand into the kitbag, rummaged for a moment, and finally drew out a brown-paper package.

Again he glanced towards the entrance to the alcove, then, satisfied that he was not being observed, he hastily unwrapped the package, and laid an amazing object out on the small table.

"What do you think of that, young 'un?" he said.

Dan looked at the thing. It was a hand—a hand of dull yellow metal. The fingers were extended, and on each finger there were rings, rings with blood-red rubies set in them. The hand had obviously been broken off from the arm, for the edges below the wrist were rough and jagged.

It was a beautifully-modelled piece of work, and, as Dan stared at it, the sailor reached out, lifted the hand, and placed it on Dan's palm. It was only then by the weight of the thing that Dan realised what it was.

"Thought it was made of brass, eh?" the sailor chuckled. "I guessed you would. You can take it from me, young fella-me-lad, that's solid gold."

"Solid gold! Great Scott!"

Tu Sin's almond eyes were almost starting out of his head as he leaned across the table to peer at the valuable fragment.

There was little doubt as to what it had been; it was loot of some kind, a trophy broken off some rare idol.

"That's what Jose and Hans Kapp were after," the sailor said, with a grim nod of his head, as he prepared to wrap the parcel up again. "But it beats me to know how they found out about it."

"Where did you get it, mister?" Dan asked.

The burly sailor chuckled.

"Oh, it ain't mine! You don't think I'd have been working before the mast on board that old hooker, the Teckleville Castle, if that chunk of gold and rubies belonged to me! No fear! It'd have been a saloon passage for me, and cigars in the smoke-room!"

He dropped the package into the mouth of the kitbag, and drew the cords together again, knotting them firmly.

"I've got to deliver that little bit of goods to a gent called Rustam Simonovitch. He's got a shop—a jeweller's shop, I reckon—at 330, Houndsbury Road, Shoreditch. He's got to give me some papers in return for that gold fist, and he's also got to pay my passage back to Pekin."

He laughed quietly.

"I ain't going to bother you youngsters with the whole yarn," he went on. "But I met the gentleman who owned that hand while I was at a loose end at Canton. He did me a good turn, he did, although he

was a foreigner, and when I met him later on, and told him I had a chance of a ship back home, he asked me to do this job for him. I reckon it ain't every man who could be trusted with a big lump of gold like that, but Bill Martin ain't no thief, although he may be only just a poor sailorman."

The honest, steel-blue eyes widened into a smile.

"That was my job," the sailor said. "I had to hand this over to Simonovitch, and he had to give me papers and money for the return journey to Pekin, where I got to hand them over to the gent who sent me on the job. I reckon them darned papers must be worth a lot o' money for that heathen idol hand must have cost a pretty penny to make, I'll bet."

He stood up and slung the kitbag under his arm.

"Just put me on a bus now, youngsters," he said. "I'll find my way to Houndsbury Road all right, I reckon. I want to deliver that little parcel o' mine to-night. I won't feel comfortable until it's out of my possession."

Ten minutes later Ginger Dan and Tu Sin saw the broad-shouldered figure take a seat in the interior of a bus; then the lighted vehicle moved off up the street, and Tu Sin, standing on the edge of the curb, watched it until it had vanished. Finally he turned and grinned through the fog at Ginger Dan.

ANOTHER GREAT STORY NEXT WEEK.

"MOTOR-BIKE BILLY!"

By Stanley Austin.

A Rattling Fine Story of Drama on the Racing Track.

Thrills! Thrills!! Thrills!!!

"You see him slip that ten-shilling note into my hand, Dan?" Tu Sin asked.

Dan smiled.

"He did the same to me, old chap," he said. "We're in clover to-night."

"Him a velly good sort, Mr. Bill Martin," Tu Sin went on in his quiet, sing-song tone. "There's only one thing I no understand quite."

"What was that?" Ginger Dan asked.

Tu Sin pursed his lips and whistled; a trick he had when he was particularly perplexed over something.

"I don't understand how that gold hand came from China," he said. "For it not a Buddha hand at all. No Chinese made that hand, Dan."

"Then who did make it?" Dan asked.

Tu Sin shrugged his lean shoulders. "One time long ago, before I knew you, Dan, my honourable father go to Russia. He go into churches there and see plenty gold images—they called ikons. I not sure, but I think that hand come from Russia ikon. It velly, velly strange, Dan."

They made their way back to the dorellet caravan which served them as a home and shelter, to find their faithful Bill, the sheep-dog, on guard at the door of the little structure.

Just before Dan went to sleep that night, Tu Sin leaned out of the bunk opposite.

"What did the honourable sailorman say was the name of the gentleman he wanted to see?" the Chink asked.

Dan called out the name and address sleepily, and Tu Sin settled into his pillows again. But if Ginger Dan had been able to

read the queer thought which was rising in that quaint brain, he might have realised that Tu Sin was off on another of his hare-brained schemes—a scheme in which that slim, golden hand bulked very large.

CHAPTER 2.

What Tu Sin Saw!

IT was about five o'clock in the afternoon, when a slim, yellow-faced youngster halted outside the window of 330, Houndsbury Road, and, thrusting his yellow face near to the grimy panes, began to study the meagre collection of cheap jewellery displayed therein.

The window was divided into two sections, one of them being used to display the trinkets, while the other part was fitted up with a watchmaker's bench and tools.

Seated at the bench was a lean, wiry-looking man in a skull-cap. He had a short, bristling beard, and, with an eyeglass screwed into position, he was hard at work on the task of mending a watch.

Tu Sin did not seem to notice the watchmaker at first; his keen almond eyes were roving over the trays of miscellaneous jewellery; but he was really studying the interior of the shop which he could see through the glass panel at the back.

It was by no means a pretentious establishment, and, pursing his lips Tu Sin began to whistle softly to himself. In his queer, aloof way the young Chink had come to the conclusion that something had happened to Bill Martin.

He and Dan had argued heatedly on that decision, but Tu Sin had stuck to his guns. Three days had passed since they had that little adventure with the sailor, and, during the interval, Tu Sin had searched every sailor's home and hostel in the whole of Limehouse. He had also made inquiries among his Chinese compatriots, those silent, shadowy denizens of Limehouse, who seem to know the coming and going of every stranger in their midst.

The result of Tu Sin's investigations had been fruitless; no one in Chinatown had set eyes on Bill Martin, and it was as though the ground had opened and swallowed him up alive.

"What's the good of worrying, anyhow," Tu Sin's Ginger Dan had asked at last. "Perhaps by this time he's on the way back to Pekin, for all we know."

But Tu Sin had an obstinacy which was his own peculiar characteristic; and, although he did not attempt to persuade his friend to take part in his search, the slim yellow Chink began on a new trail, a trail which had brought him to 330, Houndsbury Road.

Now, with his nose flattened against the grimy window-pane, Tu Sin suddenly caught sight of something that made his long face go grim. On one of the trays, where a number of cheap rings were displayed, lay a heavy gold fragment in which a cheap, blue stone was set. The ring was close to the window, and the ticket on it informed the likely purchaser that the article displayed was all solid gold and could be purchased from five shillings upward.

That heavy band of gold seemed to fascinate Tu Sin. His almond eyes grew as keen as gimlets and he studied it carefully. Only a quick-sighted observer would have noted the tiny indentation on the inside of the circle, where a tool of some sort had been used to prise the ring from some hard socket.

There were also marks on the clear setting which indicated that the stone now there had been a recent addition.

"Unless I am very much mistaken," Tu Sin said to himself, half-aloud, "that golden circle was at one time upon a highly valuable hand, and a ruby of rare worth has been removed from it. I am sure that the honourable elderly person engaged on humble toil over there will be able to give me valuable news concerning our generous and noble benefactor, Bill Martin."

Tu Sin had reached that stage when he was conscious of a pair of eyes, and, looking to the left, he saw the watchmaker had raised his head and was peering at him through the grimy glass. It was a very curious face which appeared above the black beard; the nose was long and keen, and the eyes were set very close together. To a casual observer the face might have appeared a benevolent one, but a closer student would have noticed the thinness of the lips, and the curious hard light in the close-set eyes.

The man raised a lean hand and made a gesture to Tu Sin, an unmistakable gesture,



Taking a flying leap across the counter, Jose made a rush at Tu Sin. As he did so the Chinese youngster's strong hands reached for the glass display case, and, whipping it up, he flung it full at Jose's head.

and one that Tu Sin was very much accustomed to. He was being ordered away.

Moving back a pace, the yellow lad smiled towards the gesturing figure, then turning, he reached for the door and entered, the door-bell clanging as he stepped into the shop.

There was a small counter running down the full length of the shop, and Tu Sin, reaching it, looked across at the bearded watchmaker.

"Will the honourable bearded stranger condescend to reply to a few questions of this entirely dishonourable personage?" Tu Sin asked.

The man arose from his work-stool and came over to the counter, spreading his hands out on its rough surface.

"Vot it is that you vant?" he asked in a harsh, guttural tone.

In the act of spreading his hands out, Tu Sin caught a red glint, and, looking down at the left hand, he saw a ruby ring planted on one of the stubby fingers.

Again it seemed to him that that ruby ring was amazingly familiar, but the hand on which it was displayed now was very different from the one which he had seen it on in the little alcove of the Chinese cafe.

Tu Sin raised his almond eyes and looked at the pale-faced, bearded man. Just below the temple there was a red bruise, obviously of recent make; a hard hit could have left that tell-tale mark behind it. There was also a slight suggestion of puffiness about the thin lips under the black beard.

"Do I address the honourable Russian gentleman, Prince Rustam Simonovitch?" Tu Sin asked.

He cracked on the title with true Celestial fervidity, and the lean figure of the watchmaker drew itself up slightly.

"I am Simonovitch," he returned, eyeing

the yellow youngster intently. "What do you want with me?"

"I have been sent here by my master, Tai Fu, keeper of the House of Good Cheer and Contentment, to ask the honourable prince if he will condescend to undertake the cleansing of an entirely disreputable clock which has ceased to run its accurate time, despite the most careful winding on the part of this humble personage?"

Now, of course, this was all bunkum, and had been made up on the spur of the moment. Some instinct warned Tu Sin that it would be dangerous for him to mention his real mission.

"I mend clocks," Simonovitch said sourly. "But I never leave my shop. If he want clocks mended, he come here"—he hesitated for a moment, then went on—"but he no better bring that until next week. Tomorrow I go away for a holiday for five or six days."

Tu Sin bowed low.

"Velly well, I will inform my respected master of your distinguished highness!"

At the back of the counter was a glass-pannelled door, and, as Tu Sin was speaking, he saw a movement of the curtains behind the glass panel, then there appeared in the space a long, brown face. Tu Sin saw the face suddenly harden, then the door flew open, and a short, thickset figure leaped out towards the counter.

Tu Sin had had only a very fleeting view of Jose and Hans Kapp as they had belted out of the archway after the fight, but he recognised the sinister countenance of the dago at once. And that recognition seemed to be mutual, for Jose, rapping out an angry torrent of words in a language unknown to Tu Sin, took a flying leap across the counter and made a rush at the young Chink.

Jose's hand had slipped into his belt, and Tu Sin caught the glimmer of the knife-blade.

On the counter was standing a small display-cabinet filled with cheap brooches, etc. As Jose made his leap, Tu Sin's strong hands reached for that cabinet, and, while the half-caste was still a yard away from the youngster, the glass display-case was whipped up and Tu Sin flung it full at Jose's head.

With an angry oath, the man behind the counter lunged out, trying to grip Tu Sin by the arm. His fingers closed on the Chink's ragged sleeve, but a jerk saw Tu Sin free himself, and, as the heavy case crashed into Jose, knocking him backward against the counter, Tu Sin made a leap for the door.

"Stop him—stop him; that's the Chink—the Chink who helped Martin!"

Rustam Simonovitch dodged from behind the counter and appeared a moment later with a heavy wooden mallet in his lean hand. As Tu Sin opened the door the mallet flew from the Russian's fingers, and only the young Chink's catlike swiftness saved him again.

He ducked his head, and the mallet crashed into the glass panel of the door, breaking it into a thousand pieces.

Next moment Tu Sin was out in the street, running like a rabbit; but he did not run far. Reaching the first side street, the Chink dropped to a quiet trot, then to a walk, and finally he came to a halt, thrusting his hands into his pockets.

"What do I do now?" Tu Sin muttered to himself. "That Simonovitch person has got the gold hand and the ring, and that Jose man is living in shop. That looks bad for our friend Bill Martin."

If Tu Sin had known a little more about the laws of the country in which he lived, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 780.

he might have solved the problem easily enough by going to the nearest policeman and reporting the affair, but in common with his countrymen, Tu Sin, although he had a few special friends among the police, regarded the body as one to be avoided if possible.

"I better go look round, see what I can do," he said.

He retraced his steps then, but turned down the side street before he reached No. 330 and found himself in a narrow alleyway which led to the dingy backyards of the houses in Houndsbury Road.

By studying the houses carefully, Tu Sin finally located the yard behind No. 330. There was a six-foot wall, but that did not trouble the lone youngster, and, moving stealthily in the darkness, Tu Sin swarmed over the wall and dropped into the backyard.

It seemed to him that he had landed into a rubbish heap, for it was filled with garbage and broken cases. Through it Tu Sin picked his way until he reached the back of the house.

He found that the back door was boarded up, indicating that the proprietor never used the rear portion of the premises. On the left of the doorway, however, there was an iron grating with a steel plate beneath it. It was evident that once upon a time that steel plate was used for the receiving of coal, and led to the cellar below the house.

Tu Sin set to work to remove the grating which covered the steel plate; and he was still at that task, when a flash of light caught his eye, and he looked through the iron grating.

He saw now that behind it was a dirt-grimed window into the cellar, and lying flat on his face along the steel plate, Tu Sin peered into the dark space below, following the moving beam.

It came nearer and nearer, until, at last, he was able to make out the tall, sinister figure of the watchmaker. The man was carrying a small electric torch, and Tu Sin saw that the window stood above a narrow, paved passage.

There were the dim outlines of doors on either side, and Simonovitch halted at a door on the right. The Chink saw him unlock the heavy barrier, pushing it inward with his foot, and enter, the light vanishing as he went.

Tu Sin strained his ears to catch a sound, but no sound reached him, and three or four minutes passed before Simonovitch appeared again. He was carrying a jug and a couple of empty plates in one lean hand, and, as he turned to lock the door behind him, he craned his evil head forward, and Tu Sin saw his lips move as he said something, but the words did not reach the keen ears of the youngster.

The door was locked, and as the figure shuffled away up the passage again, Tu Sin arose to his feet, rubbing his long hands together.

"That highly dishonourable watchmaker would not carry plates and jug from underground apartment if there was not some unfortunate prisoner there," Tu Sin decided. "I think it's time I go and tell Ginger Dan, my intelligent partner. This job too big for this humble person to handle by his lonesome!"

CHAPTER 3.

Tu Sin's Triumph!

THREE-QUARTERS of an hour later Tu Sin was in the broken-down caravan, with Ginger Dan perched on the bunk opposite him. On the way there the Chink had turned the matter over in his mind, and, realising that Ginger Dan might have his own ideas on the propriety of the scheme which Tu Sin had decided upon, the Chink approached the subject in his usual subtle way.

From one of his mysterious pockets Tu Sin produced a couple of very innocent-looking cardboard boxes, and placed them solemnly on the little table in the caravan.

"You want to make some money, Dan?" he asked.

"How?" Ginger Dan returned, sitting up eagerly. "What's the scheme, Tu Sin?"

Tu Sin's yellow face was as innocent as that of a babe.

"There is to be a birthday celebration of a humble cousin of mine who lives in Shore-ditch. It is the custom in his country to make firework display outside house, so that the bad spirits will keep away from his part for another year. Honourable cousin must

not make fireworks himself. They must be made by friends or stranger."

He tapped on the two boxes, and Dan saw now that each of them had a small fuse on the top.

"The bad spirits get into house by way of window and door always," Tu Sin went on. "Therefore my cousin wish that fireworks be made outside his humble house at midnight. He give us five bob each, Dan, for job. You on?"

Dan slipped from his bunk and reached for his shabby boots.

"Bet your life I am," he declared. "Five bob is five bob these hard times."

He reached for one of the brown boxes, but Tu Sin caught him by the hand.

"You be velly careful with this," he warned. "It velly fine firework, and last long, long time. Better let me carry 'em—Chinese fireworks have power in 'em!"

He slipped the box into his pocket again, then reached for the ladder.

"We have plenty time," he said. "My cousin no want the fireworks until twelve o'clock."

It was after eleven o'clock when they left the caravan, and Tu Sin led a devious route to the silent street—so much so that Dan hadn't the foggiest notion where he was when finally they emerged from the narrow side street into Houndsbury Road.

That thoroughfare is very badly lighted at nights, and it is by no means a savoury quarter. At that hour the intelligent inhabitant gives it a wide berth, and so it came about that Dan and Tu Sin had the thoroughfare to themselves.

Some distance down the road there was a church with a lighted clock, and Tu Sin indicated the dial. It wanted three minutes to twelve.

"This is what happens now, Ginger Dan," he said. "I go and put those fireworks on window-sill and door, then, when twelve o'clock go, you strike match and light fuse. You no make any sound, just slip across street, and wait until I come back."

"And what are you going to do?" Dan asked, the first signs of suspicion coming into his head.

Tu Sin grinned.

"I go waken my honourable cousin by back door of house, so he be ready for fireworks when they start."

Crossing the dark pavement, Tu Sin wedged one of the boxes under the sill of the window, and placed the other one on the doorstep of No. 330!

"You not forget, Dan," he said to his chum. "You not make honourable birthday firework until twelve o'clock."

THE RESULT OF THE "LIVERPOOL" COMPETITION.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to: JOHN HOGGEN.

35, Bournemouth Road,

Folkestone.

The second prize of £2 10s. and the ten prizes of 5s. each have been added together and divided among the following thirteen competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

Percy Brooks, 16, Nichols Square, Hackney Road, E. 2; James Brooks, 16, Nichols Square, Hackney Road, E. 2; Maud Brooks, 15, Nichols Square, Hackney Road, E. 2; A. M. Duffin, 67, West Banks, Sleaford; Frances H. Morton, 3, Brunton Terrace, Sunderland; Mrs. A. F. Climie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Ronald Pagan, 14, Firwood Grove, Bolton, Lancs.; Edwin Jesty, 2, Douglas Street, Birkenhead; John James, Bull Hotel, Rochester, Kent; W. Newbery, Needles Golf Club, Alum Bay, I. of W.; William Dounes, 45, Wordsley Green, Wordsley, near Stourbridge; Henry Sidwell, 15, Broadmead Road, Folkestone; Norman Willis, Whelford, Leekhampton, Cheltenham Spa.

SOLUTION.

Liverpool, in a sense, was born with a silver spoon in its mouth: a tremendous asset to any football club. Since the club commenced it has always had a magnificent set of players, and although periods of bad luck have come its way, Liverpool has always come up smiling at the finish.

"Right-ho!" said Dan.

Tu Sin turned and vanished into the darkness, and Dan, leaning against the lamp-post, waited patiently. It seemed a very long three minutes, but finally the clock began to chime the solemn hour of midnight, and, taking the matchbox from his pocket, he crossed to the deserted shop. Striking a match, Dan touched first one fuse, then the other.

They began to fizz and sparkle, then suddenly the box on the doorstep leaped into seething, red light, and from it there came pouring a cloud of thick, yellow, sulphurous smoke, which rose in a dense, black sheet.

A moment later the second box went off, and Dan, horrified, fell back into the roadway, staring at the flames and billowing smoke.

From somewhere nearby a window shot up, and into the quiet night air there arose that terrible cry:

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

Dan, standing in the gutter, heard the crash of glass, and, looking up at the shop in front of him, saw an indistinct figure appear in the window for a moment—a black-bearded man, who was driven back gasping as the thick, sulphurous cloud of smoke poured into the broken window.

"What the deuce does it mean? That was no Chink, I'll bet!" Dan gasped.

As though by magic, a number of people appeared, and presently a burly policeman came running down the pavement towards the glowing, smoking patch. Just as the policeman reached the pavement opposite Dan there was another crash of rending woodwork, and out through the sulphurous smoke came three terrified figures.

Choking and gasping for breath, they staggered across the pavement, while another belching volume of dense smoke came pouring out from the crackling, spluttering boxes, and the little group of spectators fell back, leaving a wide space in front of the shop.

"I am ruined—I am ruined! My shop—my shop—my beautiful shop!"

Dan heard the hoarse, raucous voice arise in a wail, and one of the spectators standing beside the youngster turned to him.

"That's old Simonovitch," he said. "Serves the blinking old skunk right if he does get it in the neck. He's no more nor less than a crook at the best!"

Simonovitch! Instantly the truth flashed on Dan, and he turned again to study the three figures who were huddled under the lamp-post with the policeman chatting to them.

Their features were clearly revealed under the light, and Dan recognised the evil face of Hans Kapp and his nefarious companion, Jose.

"What is the blinking thing, anyhow? How did it happen? Can't you explain it, instead of jabbering like a pack of monkeys?"

The policeman's commanding voice came to Dan as he began to slip away through the crowd.

"Can't you see what it is that's happened?" he heard Simonovitch's voice call. "Look—look at my shop!"

A shout went up from the group of sight-seers, and Dan halted on the fringe of the crowd, looking back.

"Why the blinking fire's gone out! Look, look!"

That scorching mass of flame and yellow smoke had vanished almost as quickly as it had appeared. Greek fire is highly spectacular to watch, but it is singularly harmless, and as the last wisp of yellow, sulphurous smoke sped away into the quiet night air, the gaping throng saw the shopfront appear almost unharmed.

A couple of strides took the policeman into the doorstep, and, stooping, he picked up the charred fragments of the box, holding it between his powerful fingers.

"Somebody's been 'aving a game with you, mister," Dan heard the calm official voice declare. "Been trying to smoke you out; same as they do with rats!"

He dropped the charred fragment and took up his official duties again, nodding towards the crowd.

"Now then, pass along there, please; pass along!"

And Dan was among the first to obey that strict injunction.

"Wait till I meet that yellow skunk again!" the tattered vagrant told himself as he hurried homeward. "I'll give him Chinese birthday-party fireworks!"



There was a sudden sound of rending woodwork, and out through the sulphurous smoke came three terrified figures. Choking and gasping for breath, they staggered across the pavement.

As he reached the edge of the waste ground on which the caravan stood, Dan saw lights glimmering from the interior of the vehicle, and, as he drew nearer, sounds of voices reached his ears.

Creeping up the stairs, Dan flung open the door, then halted dead on the threshold, for seated on his bunk, looking very white and drawn, was a dust-covered, dishevelled figure, around whose head a bandage was being tied by the deft fingers of Tu Sin.

The man looked up as Dan entered, and the red-haired youngster recognised the face of Bill Martin.

"Hallo, young fellah-me-lad!" the sailor said, in a rather weak voice. "How did the firework display go?"

Dan gulped, and crossing to the table, seated himself on the edge of it.

Tu Sin turned his long, yellow face towards his chum, and his almond eyes twinkled.

"Solly I could not come round pick you up, Dan," he said. "But I thought it best to get away quick with my fiend here."

Dan swallowed violently.

"If you will kindly explain, instead of grinning there like a yellow image," he began, "perhaps I'll be able to understand. What was the idea, anyhow? What sort of game were you trying to pull at my expense?"

Bill Martin laughed.

"He's told me all about it, young 'un," he said. "And, by James, I'm ready to take any blame that is coming to him! He smoked those darned skunks out of their hole and saved my life in the process."

He nodded his bruised head towards the opposite bunk, and, following the gesture, Dan saw lying on the grimy blanket the golden hand. Beneath it was a huge envelope, a very bulky envelope.

"That skunk Simonovitch was a double-crosser," said Bill Martin. "I delivered my goods to him, but instead of handing over them papers, he played a trick on me. Asked me to have some supper, then let loose those two rats, Hans and Jose, while I was sitting at his table. They floored me, and next thing I knew was finding myself in a filthy cellar a prisoner. They meant to keep me there, too, until they'd time to get away themselves."

He looked at Tu Sin.

"They're a blinking lot of Bolsheviks," Bill Martin went on. "Simonovitch pretended to be on the other side, but he was a double traitor, taking money from both parties. But what I can't understand is how Tu Sin tumbled to the skunk."

Tu Sin had completed the bandaging of Bill Martin's head, and he leaned back, examining his handiwork for a moment, then turned and looked at Dan.

"Our honourable fiend was in a dishonourable prison, and this humble personage had to help him," he said in his bland, quiet tones. "The entirely unworthy Simonovitch was of untrustworthy appearance. I decide to smoke him out, Dan, and so I got two big smoke-boxes from fiend of mine who keep Chinese fireworks for celebration."

"While you busy in front, I go get into cellar, and when Simonovitch and other man bolt out into street, fiend Bill Martin and me come up from cellar and search shop."

"He had put the hand and the papers in a cupboard in the sitting-room," Bill Martin explained. "I saw him put them in there, and knew where to look for them."

He arose to his feet unsteadily and crossed the caravan, lifting the golden hand.

Dan saw then that the rings had been prised from the moulded fingers.

"We could not stop to find the rings," Bill Martin added. "But, anyhow, that don't make no difference. I'm going back to Pekin with those papers, and I reckon I can sell this lump of gold easily enough. It'll raise my passage and leave a bit over—a bit over for my friends."

Six days later, two strangely-assorted youngsters were standing on the platform at Charing Cross saying good-bye to a broad-shouldered man in the Continental express.

There was a comfortable little wad of Treasury notes in Ginger Dan's breast-pocket, and Bill Martin, leaning out of the carriage window, waved his hand to his two friends.

"I think," said Tu Sin meditatively, "we go have busta supper, Dan. I know place long Causeway where they give you good grub."

They were strolling arm-in-arm down the platform, and Dan looked at his companion.

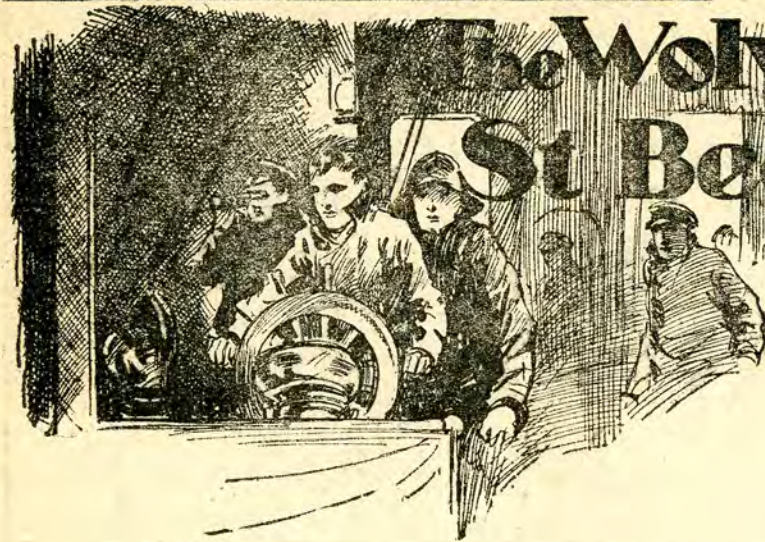
"What's the names of the place?" he asked.

"It's a delectable establishment where honourable clients are worthily treated," said Tu Sin; "and it is called 'The Golden Hand of Plenteous Fare.' But I hope we no met Simonovitch there Dan, for I think him velly, velly cross man just now!"

THE END.

(Another splendid complete story next week: "MOTOR - BIKE BILLY!" By Stanley Austin. Be sure and read it).

ANOTHER THRILLING INSTALMENT THIS WEEK, BOYS!



The Wolves of St Beowulf's!

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

BY
DUNCAN STORM.

Introduction.

JACK WABBYGONG, 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 Castlewood, 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 to the cabin to make merry.

The robbers then open the bags, and discover that they have been deceived. They prepare to attack Lincoln's party, 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. Wobby & Co. and Slurk are among the chosen.

The great day comes, and the Polo Star, with its happy party aboard, sets off on its great adventure. Wobby & Co. soon make themselves useful, but Slurk, looking idly on, only passes uncomplimentary remarks to Mr. Wiles, the engineer.

Little did the bully realise that shortly afterwards he was to make a false move and go hurtling into the raging seas, only to be rescued by the boys whom he had been running down.

Reaching San Carlo the chums go ashore, where, through Wobby's inquisitiveness, they get arrested and made prisoners in a strange little cage projecting from the tower of the town hall.

Mr. Hobbs, who is in charge of the party, sets off in search of Wobby & Co. Armed with an official envelope, he passes himself off as a servant of the Crown.

(Now read on.)

The Escape.

THE paper and explanation acted like a charm.

The police fell back, apologetic and saluting. The crowd stared at Mr. Hobbs, and fell back also.

Up in the belfry Wobby still kept La Joimba swinging and tolling out her message of alarm.

Although Mr. Hobbs had not sighted them, the boys up in the cage had spotted that

mariner in the crowd. Mr. Hobbs was easy to distinguish in that dark-faced mob, for not only was he wearing a white cap, but he looked so fat and fresh and red that he appeared to be the only person in the surging mob below who had had a bath.

"There's old Hobbo looking for us!" exclaimed Stickjaw. "Silly old ass! Why doesn't he look up?"

"How on earth do you expect him to look for us up here?" exclaimed Waff. "I don't suppose there's another gaol like this in the world. If Hobbo's heard that we've been nabbed, he won't be looking for us swung a hundred feet up in the air. He'll be looking for dungeons."

"Then how are we going to attract his attention?" asked Stickjaw.

"Why," replied Waff, "tickle him up with the catty! That'll make him look up. Do you think you can hit him, Jim? It's a long shot, but see if you can ping him on his fat leg?"

Jim was sitting with his legs dangling through the bars of their aerial cage.

"I'll have a try," he said: "but I might hit one of those Portuguese in the ear. Then there would be a row round Hobbo, and Hobbo would get into it."

"Well," replied Stickjaw, "he seemed to be in some sort of a row just now, but he got out of it all right. Didn't you see him show a paper to those policemen?"

"Right-ho, then!" said Jim. "I'll risk it! But shove Dempsey back, you chaps. He's trying to lick my ear and he's crowding my elbow."

Dempsey, the bear, was hauled back in the narrow space of the cage, and cuffed, and Jim carefully fitted a leaden bullet in the sling of his catapult.

Whing! went the catty, and the bullet sped.

Jim took the nicest aim. Mr. Hobbs' white cap-top made an admirable target in that dingy, shifting mob, and Jim made due allowance so that the bullet should catch Mr. Hobbs' fat leg just about on the sciatic nerve.

The boys watched the cap-top breathlessly. They saw it jump.

"Shot, by jingo!" muttered Mr. Hobbs, clapping his hand behind him as he felt a sudden stinging blow on his leg.

But his trousers were intact, and, looking round, he looked up. Then he gasped, for there, far above the line of sight, in that rusty little cage projecting from the edge of the tower, Mr. Hobbs saw his missing party.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he muttered to himself. "They've clapped the young rascals in clink! Now what have they been up to?"

Mr. Hobbs was very cunning. He had been in many tight places in his life, and he had been in trouble in many seaports, but his ready wit had always found a way out.

He knew in his heart that, somehow or another, the boys were mixed up in this sudden tumult. He could see them all in the cage with Nobby and Dempsey—all with the exception of Wobby.

What had become of Wobby?

Mr. Hobbs mumbled his thoughts to him-

"That young rip is up in the belfry, raising all this derry!" he told himself. "You must be careful, 'Obbs, my friend, if you are going to get them out?"

No one had noticed Mr. Hobbs' sudden start. All were intent on a picket of cavalry who were lining across the Palaza farther up.

Around him, the people were muttering that the cavalry were going to charge.

Mr. Hobbs took off his cap to wipe his forehead, and made a slight signal with it.

It was answered by the flutter of a handkerchief from the cage as Jim Ready answered in Morse code.

"We are in gaol!" ran the signal.

Like all really great men, Mr. Hobbs' mind worked simply and directly. If the boys were in gaol it was not his part to reason why. His job was to get them out as speedily and as swiftly as possible.

He knew enough of foreign ports to know that to get the boys out of the Calabozo would mean an appeal to the nearest Consul and to the Authorities. And he knew that in a disturbed society things are possible that are not possible in peace time.

Mr. Hobbs' move was the simplest thing in the world.

There was the town-hall tower. There were the boys in a cage high up in the tower, and he had a very shrewd suspicion that Wobby, on the top of the tower, was stirring the city to its depths.

He simply walked over to the little doorway at the entrance to the tower.

There stood two sentries and a fat policeman, all looking rather scared at the increasing tension in the crowd. They glanced in surprise at Mr. Hobbs as he stepped up to them, assured and official in his neat blue uniform and brass buttons.

The first impression that passed through their minds was that some British cruiser had just come into port. They knew, by long experience, that always, when a revolution happened, or any disturbance of the public peace took place, a British destroyer or cruiser turned up, as though she had just been waiting round the corner for the fireworks to begin.

"Captain Inglees?" asked the policeman.

"Si, senhor," replied Mr. Hobbs, with dignity, as he produced his military pass. "I'm Captain Aubrey de Swank 'Obbs, commander of H.M. Cruiser Yesidounthink, and I'll trouble you to let me pass."

The sentries came to the salute, the policeman touched his helmet at the sight of the pass, and Mr. Hobbs boldly entered the doorway of the tower.

Up that narrow, endless staircase he climbed, puffing and blowing. There was no one on the stairway to stop or question him, and Mr. Hobbs toiled right to the head of the stairway, passing the little doorway that led to the cage.

He came out on the platform of the great open belfry, and there, as he had expected, was Wobby, clinging to the bell-rope of La Joimba, raising the biggest clatter that Mr. Hobbs had ever heard since Zebrugga.

"Hey, you young limb!" yelled Mr. Hobbs. "Stop that! Where's the rest? What are you up to?"

Wobby dropped the bell-rope, perspiring from every pore.

"They've gaoled us!" he said. "And I was just ringing the old bell to let you know where we are. What's going on down in the street?"

"Why, you've stirred up the whole city, that's what you've done!" replied Mr. Hobbs wrathfully. "And 'ere am I with me clean collar like a dish-rag through climbing those steps. Come out of this quick! Show me where the other young gent's are. We've got to fade away out of this before the fighting starts!"

"The boys are down below," said Wobby. "I'll show you. I've marked the place. The rotten tugs put us in the Birds' Nest, but I climbed out of it up the side of the tower."

"Up the side of the tower?" gasped Mr. Hobbs. "Why, you ought to 'ave broken your neck! Ought to be ashamed of yourself, you ought! Bless me if ever again I play nuremaid to such a barrowload o' monkeys!"

"That's all right," replied Wobby calmly. "Keep your hair on, Hobbo! The corner of the tower is as easy to climb as a ladder. It's all carved up like a wedding-cake. This way, Hob, my boy!"

He darted down the narrow stairway, closely followed by the perspiring and worried Mr. Hobbs, till they came to that inconspicuous little door in the wall, beyond which the boys were imprisoned.

The huge key of this door to the Birds' Nest was too large for any man to pocket. So it was simply hung on a rusty nail outside the door.

Wobby snatched it down, and fitted it in the mighty lock, the machinery of which creaked and groaned as it was turned. Then the door was flung open, and the merry crowd inside the cage was revealed.

"Out of it, boys!" ordered Wobby. "Out of it! We must be off before we are noticed. There's another way out from this old tower. I spotted it as they brought us in."

The boys cleared out of the hot cage quickly.

"Who was it that peppered me in the leg?" demanded Mr. Hobbs.

"It was me!" replied Jim cheerfully. "I only did it to draw your attention."

"Well, Master Ready," answered the aggrieved Mr. Hobbs, "next time you draw my attention, don't you draw it quite so hard. You've just tickled up my old rheumatics. Now get 'old of that bear and pull him along. We've got to be quick!"

Down the dark stairs they stumbled till they had almost reached the foot of the tower.

"This way!" whispered Wobby, and he took a turn down a dark passage which led into the heart of the tower.

They stumbled into a room full of old ledgers and law books, and from this opened a door into a quiet and deserted garden. It was the private garden of the town-hall, gay with flowers and butterflies.

"I say! What a jolly garden!" exclaimed Stickjaw. "But, my hat, what's that?"

The garden was not unguarded. Out from the shelter of the dark trees, behind the flower-beds, darted a huge sandy-coloured dog, snarling and growling.

It was the sort of dog that is only found in southern climes, where all sorts of breeds get mixed into one gigantic mongrel about the size and look of a small donkey tied up in coconut matting.

This brute meant business as he bounded forward, barking furiously, and showing his yellow teeth.

"That's put the lid on the can!" muttered Mr. Hobbs. "No good tellin' this tyke I'm a friend of Royalty!"

"Hey, Tiger!" called Wobby amiably. "Good old Tiger! Who says a nice biscuit?"

But the great dog stood its ground, snarling.

It did not like the look of the boys, and it liked still less the mingled scent of bear and kangaroo that emanated from Dempsey and Nobby under the hot southern sunshine.

"He doesn't seem to want to kiss us, does he?" said Wobby. "If he keeps up his song, we'll be pinched for keeps. Any of you nugs got a bun in your pocket?"

But none of the boys had a bun in his pocket to offer this angry Cerberus of the forbidden gardens of San Carlo.

Wobby looked round him. He was a youth of resource, and not easy to beat.

"Something always turns up," was Wobby's motto, and Chance was his dearest friend.

Fortune favours the brave, and Wobby was not long in noticing an open window of a wing abutting on the garden from the main building of the town-hall.

This building was evidently attached to the kitchen portion of the premises, for, hanging in the window's cool draught, was a leg of mutton, or, more likely, a leg of goat.

"Here, pebs," said Wobby, "you keep that dog entertained whilst I skip across the flower-beds and get him something to chew, instead of letting him get at us."

The little party lined up opposite the growling dog, which seemed to have marked an imaginary line across the garden and to be saying, "You shall come thus far, but no farther."

It did not attempt to go for them so long as they did not move forward. Then it showed all its yellow teeth in a terrible snarling.

"People didn't oughter be allowed to keep a dog like that!" complained Mr. Hobbs. "They ought to be persecuted. Perhaps the brute's got hy'd'yphobia. Ought to be put out of its misery!"

But Wobby came bounding across the sunny flower-beds triumphantly flourishing the leg of supposed mutton.

"We'll try him with this!" he said, with happy inventiveness. "He can't bite two things at once!"

"Don't you be so cocksure of that, my lad!" said Mr. Hobbs. "I never saw such a mouthful o' teeth in all my life!"

"Here you are, Tiger!" called Wobby, and he threw the leg of mutton to the dog, which hurled itself upon the dainty morsel ravenously, snarling and grumbling as it tore the meat from the bone.

"Now come along," said Wobby. "Here's the garden wall, with a quiet street behind. All we've got to do is to drop over the wall, and there we are!"

The boys moved forward cautiously, and the huge mongrel growled. But the joint was too strong an attraction.

"E's a proper mongrel!" said Mr. Hobbs. "First he growls because 'e hasn't got a bone, then he growls because he has!"

He followed the boys quickly.

"Boost that bear over the wall, young gent," he said. "He's that fat with high living he can't climb for toffee!"

Pursued!

THE boys got under Dempsey and boosted him up the wall. Dempsey was disagreeable over it. He did not like being pushed up walls, and he tried to bite Jack's ear. But Wobby punched his head, and they hoisted him up till his great claws, which were like meat-hooks, caught in the stonework at the top of the wall.

"Shove him over!" ordered Wobby. And they shoved the bear over. To their horror there was a crash and a yell on the other side.

Wobby shinned up the wall, and saw a Portugee pieman racing down the quiet lane behind the town-hall for his life.

Dempsey had fallen straight into his tray of sweet fruit-pies.

The pieman must have thought that it was raining bears, and Dempsey must have thought that he had fallen into pleasant quarters, for he was gobbling up the pies as fast as he could bolt them.

"That's put the lid on the old can again, boys!" announced Wobby. "Hurry up before that pie merchant comes back with a crowd!"

Nobby came flying over the wall in one magnificent bound.

The boys shinned up and shinned over.

Wobby, sitting astride of the wall, held out his hands to assist Mr. Hobbs to climb the wall; but Mr. Hobbs was very heavy and very clumsy. His feet slipped on the wall, and he nearly pulled Wobby back into the garden again.

"Here, I can't get out o' this!" puffed Mr. Hobbs desperately. "I shall die of an applepox. Let me go back and bluff 'em at the front door with my military pass."

"Don't be silly!" replied Wobby. "Why, if they find we are gone, they'll as likely as not jug you in that Birds' Nest. Come over, Hob. And look out! That dog's after your pants!"

The dog had indeed dropped his bone, which was losing its interest now that the meat was off it. Mr. Hobbs represented a bone that had far more meat on it than the leg of mutton.

With a savage roar, it bounded towards him. Mr. Hobbs, lent wings by fear, made a supreme effort, and scrambled up to the top of the wall, not, however, before there was a snap and a rending sound close astern of him.



With a savage roar, the dog bounded towards Mr. Hobbs, who was making a supreme effort to scramble on to the top of the wall. Mr. Hobbs was not quick enough, however, and there was a rending sound astern of him!



Suddenly from across the great barren plain dashed a squad of horsemen whose lances glittered plainly in the whirl of red dust. "Crumbs!" muttered Mr. Hobbs. "It's the Portuguese 'Death or Glory' boys after us!"

"Has he got you, Hob?" asked Wobby, with solicitude.

"No," replied Mr. Hobbs, puffing; "he hasn't exactly got me, but he's torn the seat of my best trousers!"

"You leave that to me, Hob!" said Wobby calmly. "I'm a very good tailor, and I've got my housewife on me!"

Mr. Hobbs, with a sigh of relief, dropped into the safety of the quiet lane, where Dempsey was gobbling up the last of the pie-man's stock.

"How am I to go through the streets like this?" he asked, looking over his shoulder in an attempt to view the festoon of serge which hung down the back of his leg.

But Wobby was there with needle and thread—all ready and resourceful.

"Stoop down, Hobby," he said. "I'll draw it together!"

The boys leaned against the wall and rocked with laughter as Mr. Hobbs stooped down, and Wobby, wielding his needle deftly, put in the necessary repairs in a rough and ready fashion.

"It's like putting a repair in a sofa, isn't it?" said Wobby. "Pon my word, Hob," he added, "you have got a figure! There you are; that's a good job. There's nothing the matter with your Sunday trousers now if you don't sit down too hard. Now we will do a get!"

They dragged Dempsey away from the last remnants of the pastrycook's tray, and he trotted along licking meringue and raspberry jam from his snout, and grunting contentedly.

The party cleared that quiet lane only just in time, for there was an excited rush of the mob, headed by the pastrycook, who declared that the authorities were letting all the wild beasts in the town loose.

Mr. Hobbs steered his party with circumspection.

Mr. Hobbs was for the open country. He knew that if they tried to make for the harbour they would probably be arrested. He designed to get up the river a bit where Mr. Teach and Mr. Wiles and monsieur had gone exploring some ancient Roman remains.

"Which gate shall we go for, Hob?" asked Stickjaw.

"Not so much of your 'Ob, Master Stickjaw," replied Mr. Hobbs, who was still rather crusty about his torn trousers. "As for gates, I ain't going out of this place by any gates. They will all be closed. To go to the gates would be the same as going to a police-station and asking the man on duty to

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run you in. But there's always more ways than one out of a town like this. A Portuguese town is like my trousers, there's a rent in it somewhere!"

Mr. Hobbs was not wrong in his surmises. He led the way towards the Avenida, the public garden that lay within the walls behind the old fortification; and it was no long before they came to a spot well hidden by sweet-scented shrubs and datura-trees where the wall had been battered down into the ditch by the French bombardment in the Peninsular War.

No one in San Carlo had ever taken the trouble to stick the wall up again, and the huge slope of rubble and debris was now overgrown by bushes and ferns.

It was easy enough to cross the ditch at this point. Once across they found themselves in the Circo do Football, where the Portuguese youths of the town were learning mysterious arts of the all-spreading game of Soccer.

There was no one on the deserted, sun-baked football ground, and, crossing it, they found themselves in a country lane running between tall hedges of cactus, and a foot deep in red dust.

Mr. Hobbs gave a sigh of relief when he found himself out in the country safe from the turmoils of the city.

"Now," he said, "we'll fetch a wide compass-course round the city, and we'll steer up river and find Mr. Teach. I've 'ad about enough of schoolmastering, I have! How anyone can take on schoolmastering for a living beats me! I wouldn't do it for ten thousand a year. When I was young, we boys minded our books, and, if we didn't, we got a jolly good leathering! And that's what all you young fellers want—a jolly good 'iding!"

"Cheer up, Hob!" said Wobby soothingly. "I bet we aren't any worse than you were when you were a boy. And when we get out of this, we'll present you with a new pair of trousers as a testimonial. You must count your blessings, Hob," added Wobby. "That dog might have bitten more of you than your trousers!"

Mr. Hobbs could not resist the soothing blandishments of the boys. He cheered up, and they struck out at a good pace for the spot where Mr. Wiles and Blackbeard Teach and monsieur had gone.

"As like as not they've got one of the ship's boats up there," said Mr. Hobbs. "And we can come down the river in that straight to the ship. I'm not going into that town again. I'd sooner go into a hornet's-nest. Listen!"

Across the fields and vineyards came the clanging of La Joimba again.

"They are ringing that there firebell," said Mr. Hobbs. "That means they have found that you boys have gone. This way! We'll keep in the deep lanes, and if anyone is on the look-out for us with a telescope, we shall not be seen."

The country was full of deep, sandy lanes, which passed between banks of the rich, red soil.

Here were grapes hanging in profusion on the vines. And the boys gathered a few pounds to keep them going.

Presently they came in sight of a magnificent range of arches crossing the smooth plain across the river. It ran in a dead straight line across country issuing on a huge embankment from the hills.

The pile looked like a vast railway viaduct. But it was older by hundreds of years than any railway, for it was the great aqueduct of Trajan, one of the most glorious remnants of the work of the Roman Empire in Spain and Portugal.

This aqueduct, which tapped the springs of the hills thirty miles away, was still doing its work. But the Roman city it had once supplied was gone. Only a few great heaps of green mounds of earth, rising from the river bank, showed where it had once stood.

The city of San Carlo had been built from its debris, but amongst those heaps were many interesting Roman remains, and in these great mounds, Blackbeard and Mr. Wiles and monsieur had gone to dig for Roman pottery.

"What's that?" asked Wobby, pointing to the magnificent line of the aqueduct. "Is it the San Carlo branch line?"

"No," replied Mr. Hobbs. "That's an aqueduct. Can't you see it's broken at the other end and a waterfall pours out of the pipe-line. Mr. Wiles was telling me about it. Said that it's the finest thing in the world next to the Pyramids of Egypt. We'll march on that, young gents, then we'll follow it down, and at the end of it, we'll find the gentlemen. Then I'll hand you over to your proper keepers."

"I say, Hob!" exclaimed Wobby. "You ain't going to split on us, are you?"

Mr. Hobbs looked at Wobby more in sorrow than in anger.

"Split on you!" he exclaimed. "What d'ye take me for? No, I shall just bring you up to them, and as for anything that 'appened this morning—not a word. Mums it!"

"Good lad!" said Wobby approvingly.

Then he came to a sudden stop and climbed up the steep bank of the lane from which he could get a view through a clump of prickly pear at the city they were leaving behind them.

"What are you up to, Master Wobby?" asked Mr. Hobbs. "Don't you touch them prickly pears. They are no good, they fill your fingers with needles and your inside with pips. They'll give you pencytitis!"

"I'm not touching the old pears!" replied Wobby; "but there's something more prickly coming after us. Come and have a look, Hobbo. We are pursued!"

Mr. Hobbs scrambled up the bank of red earth and peered through the shelter of the cactus hedge.

"My aunt!" he ejaculated.

For across the great barren plain outside the city walls, which was the common land of the people, and the drill-ground of the military, dashed a squad of horsemen! They were enveloped in a whirl of red dust amidst which showed the glitter of lances.

"Crumbs!" muttered Mr. Hobbs. "It's the Portuguese 'Death or Glory' boys after us! And here comes another batch—and another!"

Indeed, cavalry were dashing out of the gate on this side of the city at full-pelt, dividing in squadrons, which separated in a fashion that showed that they were going to search the whole country round the town.

"They've rumbled us!" said Mr. Hobbs dismally. "Now we are going to catch it! What about it?"

A single glance told Wobby that, if they went across country to the aqueduct's end, they would be captured long before they got there.

Mr. Hobbs came to the same conclusion. "We are done!" he said.

(You must follow up the adventures of Wobby & Co. by reading next week's fine long instalment of this wonderful serial. There are many thrilling incidents in it!)

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

(Continued from page 2.)

NO WASTE:

"I have sent for you," said the man of the house to the gas official, "because these pipes want looking after. There's a leak somewhere, and a lot of gas is going to waste." "No, sir," replied the gas company's inspector, smiling a sweet and meditative smile, "maybe there's a leak, but there ain't any gas going to waste. You'll find it all in the bill, I assure you."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Brown, 33, Buchanan Drive, Rutherglen, Glasgow.

DRAWING THE SWORD!

Some visitors to a young man's flat noticed a fearsome-looking sword hanging over the mantelpiece. The young man did not look warlike, and one of the guests asked him how the weapon came into his possession. Taking the sword from the wall, the owner drew it from its scabbard. "I shall never forget the day when I first drew this sword," he said impressively. "When was that?" asked one of the party. "In a raffle," said the young man.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Samuel Bateman, 22, Fedora Street, West Derby Road, Liverpool.

HARMLESS!

Two young fellows who came from rival towns were discussing the merits of their respective mayors. "We've got a real, proper mayor, we have, in our town," said one. "So have we," retorted the other. "Ay, but ours has a collar and chain. Has yours?" "No, we can trust our chap. We let him go about loose!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Chadwick, Park House, Farley, Oakamoor, Staffs.

FULLY QUALIFIED:

A woman inserted the following advertisement in a newspaper: "Wanted.—A companion for lady. Total abstainer, must be cleanly in her habits and know a little about nursing. Comfortable home. No salary." A few days later the advertiser received by rail a basket containing a tabby cat. An accompanying note ran: "Seeing your advertisement, I recommend bearer. She is a total abstainer, cleanly in her habits, and knows a little about nursing, having brought up a large family. She will be pleased to accept a comfortable home, and requires no salary."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Queeny Thomas, 103, Malefant Street, Cathays, Cardiff.

OPEN TO CHOICE:

The Wexford Rovers were annoyed that quite a crowd of small boys were getting on the ground without paying. The secretary considered the matter, and then had the following notice posted up in a prominent position: "There are two kinds of kick-offs—one can be seen, and one felt. To see one and avoid the other, please pay as you enter!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Hopkins, Hopewell Hill, Kingswood, Bristol.

AN UNFORTUNATE MISUNDERSTANDING!

A rich business man, who had only recently been married, was accompanied by his wife as he entered the dining-room of the hotel famed for its excellent cuisine and pretty waitresses. His order was served promptly, but the fried chicken he had been telling his wife so much about was not in evidence. "Where is my chicken?" he asked somewhat irritably. The waiter, leaning over and bringing his mouth in close proximity to the ear of the stockbroker which was farthest from his wife, replied: "If you mean the little girl with blue eyes and fluffy hair, she doesn't work here now!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Squires, East Street, St. Neots, Hants.

AN AWKWARD PREDICAMENT!

"Jones," said the manager of the bank, "there'll be a vacancy at the head office very shortly, and I'm thinking of nominating your twin brother for the job." "My twin brother, sir!" exclaimed Jones. "But—" "I mean the one I saw watching a football match yesterday, while you had gone to seek advice from your doctor," said the manager. "Oh—er—yes," said Jones, "I—I remember, sir. I—I'll go round and fetch him." "Good," said the manager, "and don't come back till you've found him."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Percy Lynch, 8, Greenhough Street, Ancoats, Manchester.

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Your Editor Chats With His Readers.

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,—First and foremost in my Chat this week must be a word about the magnificent series of barring-out yarns. There is a big surprise coming. Look out for it in next Wednesday's story of the sensational revolt at St. Jim's.

"TOM MERRY'S RECRUIT!"

There you have the title of next week's rattling tale. It carries on the breathless narrative of the uprising in dramatic style, and will leave you gasping at the end, and asking for more. You can blame Tom Merry over this special bit of business or not, just as the fancy takes you; but in the end you will come to realise that, after all, it was just one of those things which you look for in the course of a protracted campaign.

THE FORTUNE OF WARI!

Tom Merry thought he had hit on a piece of good fortune when he enrolled the new recruit. T. M. was deceived. Naturally, he liked the notion of increasing his army, for when a struggle is in deadly earnest with serious possibilities every day—well, every fresh hand helps—or ought to help. But there are gloomy exceptions, as here. No sooner has the newcomer made himself at home in the camp than the painful discovery is made that he is "N. G." He is no good at all, and yet he is an old friend, so to speak, of the gallant crowd of St. Jim's chaps.

THE WASH-OUT!

It is the only way to describe the strange addition to Tom Merry's headquarters. I shall not give him away, but the fellow is hopeless—more trouble than he is worth. He gets in the way like Alphonso at the circus. He does not obey orders. He has far too extensive an appetite for a besieged party of heroes. The only thing to do in the circumstances is to turn the chap out. Out he goes. Tom Merry is quite prepared to admit he made a tactical mistake in enrolling such a useless person.

A STERN FIGHT!

And the battle goes on. There has never been anything like it at St. Jim's. There is punch enough here, and no error. I feel proud of the series. Each story gets more spirited and exciting. Over and over again my chums have asked me for a barring-out series of yarns. The theme in itself is not new, but the novel way in which Mr. Martin Clifford is handling it is nothing short of masterly.

A FAMOUS DETECTIVE!

Anthony Sharpe, the celebrated detective, has enjoyed a first-class reception from Gemites. The new stories have gone with a bang. Next week there is a magnificent addition to the list of exploits of the champion crime-investigator. This time Sharpe is assisted in

his work—and precious difficult work it is—by a new character. The latter is Timothy O'Carroll, a youngster who happens to know something of the thief who is being hunted down over a little matter of the startling disappearance of some priceless jewels. How Timothy O'Carroll comes to the aid of the detective is splendidly told. You will find the new episode in the amazing life of Anthony Sharpe a breathless and fascinating business, with a wonderful atmosphere of mystery surrounding the drama. Watch out for this tale. It is called

"THE CLUE OF THE THREE STARS!"

and it reveals a strange side of a detective's life. Then there is something tremendous about another striking feature next week. I thought it was high time we had a motor-bike story.

"MOTOR-BIKE BILLY!"

This tale will grip you, I know. I am glad it is down in the GEM programme for next week. Billy is a sterling chap, true as steel, and up against anything underhand. It is quite by chance that he tumbles upon a very unpleasant bit of plotting by a mean-spirited individual, who is secretary to an inventor. The story is chock full of incident. The great motor-bike race is as brilliant a bit of writing as I remember. In this race the secretary, one of the competitors, does his utmost to steal the victory from Billy, but—well, just read the story next week, and you will consider that justice is done, as it should be. That's all about it.

THE TUCK-HAMPER BOOM!

This is coming—almost in sight—so make a note of the fact. The Tuck-Hamper Page is popular. So are the Tuck-Hampers. You will be pleased with the plan I have arranged for adding still further to the appreciation of the first-class feature. More next Wednesday concerning this novelty.

YOUR EDITOR.



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