

FOR STUNNING SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES—SEE INSIDE!

The GEM 2^D

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LIBRARY
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SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



OVER THE TOP WITH THE BEST OF LUCK!

(A Stiff Proposition for Sergeant Stuckey & Co., in their Big Push Against the Rebels of St. Jim's.)

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My Readers' Own Corner

LET'S HEAR THAT FUNNY JOKE OF YOURS!

Drawn

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, E.C.4.**

BAGS—AND BAGS!

A traveller arrived at a big terminus in Lancashire, and finding the train was in the platform, he placed a couple of bags in a corner seat while he went to purchase a paper. When he returned, he was much annoyed to find his seat occupied by a burly miner, and his bags deposited on the racks. "Excuse me," said the traveller, "but you are occupying my seat." "I put those bags on it to reserve it." "That's where these art wrong, mister," said the miner, and pointing to his own corduroys he added: "It's these bags and not them that reserve seats in Lancashire!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Eric Chew, 21, Eaton Street, Prescote, Lancs.

WHAT AN INN!

George and Joe were staying together at an hotel. They had had a rather jolly evening, and it was getting late. Lighting a candle, they went upstairs to their room. On reaching there, Joe unfortunately dropped the candle, and it went out. This meant the two chums getting into bed in the dark. Although they shared the same room, each had a separate bed. Instead of George getting into his own bed, he got into Joe's. Joe got into bed with his head on the pillow, but George lay with his head at the bottom and his feet on the pillow. "I say," said Joe to George at last, "there's a man in my bed!" "Well, that's funny," answered George. "There's one in mine!" "I say," said George, "let's throw them out!" "Yes," said Joe, "we will!" There was a brief struggle and two loud bumps, and then followed groans. "He's thrown me out!" said George. "So has mine!" answered Joe. "What an inn!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Churchill, 53, Leslie Park Road, Croydon, Surrey.

HAVE YOU HAD ONE OF OUR DELICIOUS TUCK HAMPERS YET?

If not, try for one to-day! We award one of these handsome prizes each week for the best storyette sent us—also half-a-crown is paid for each other contribution accepted. Cut out the coupon on this page, and send it together with your joke, to me.

THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER.

WASTED EFFORTS!

The recruits were undergoing a course of musketry, and they were in charge of a full-blown second lieutenant, who was trying to show his authority, together with his great knowledge of musketry. Sauntering up to the latest recruit, he said: "See, my man, this thing is a rifle; this is the barrel, this is the butt, and this is where you put the cartridges in." The recruit appeared to be taking it all in, so the officer continued: "You put the weapon to the



shoulder—these little things are called sights. To fire the rifle, you pull this little thing which is called the trigger. Now, smarten yourself up, and remember all that I've told you. By the way, what were you before you enlisted — a collier, I suppose?" "No, sir," came the reply. "I only worked in a small arms' factory as a gunsmith!"—A tuck-hamper filled with delicious tuck has been awarded to B. B. Smith, 75, Radcliffe Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham.

HOW SHOCKING!

A gentleman had been operated upon for appendicitis. Some time later, he woke up in a strange and darkened room. Everything came back to him, but he could not understand why the room was so dark. When the nurse came up to him, he questioned her. "Why is this room so dark?" he asked. "It can't be night." "No, it isn't night," answered the nurse; "but we were afraid of the shock you might get." "Why, what shock?" asked the gentleman, in surprise. "Well, there was a big fire just across the street," answered the nurse, "and we were afraid that you might think that the operation had not been successful!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. J. Birch, 241, Oxford Gardens, Stafford.

THE GREATEST EXPERIMENT!

A learned man, who prided himself that he knew more than most people, went one evening to call on a professor under whom he had once worked. He found his old master bending anxiously over a spirit-lamp on which a small pot bubbled. "What's the experiment this time?" he asked. "Very important, guess," answered the professor. The student brought out a large number of long, technical names, but all in vain. "I'll give it up," he said. "Sausages!" replied the professor, poking his evening meal.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Ernest C. Higgs, Globe Works, Clapton Park, E. 5.

A BAD MOVE!

The steamer was only a few feet from the quay when there was a sudden commotion, and a man, shouting to the officials to wait for him, came running madly towards the boat. Without pausing, he threw his bag on the deck and took a mighty leap, landing on the deck with a crash. "Good!" he gasped. "Another few seconds, and I should have missed it!" "Missed it!" exclaimed a passenger who was standing near by. "Why, this boat is just coming in!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Harris, 69, Gauden Road, Clapham, S.W. 4.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON

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No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.



HARD PRESSED!

The Rebels of St. Jim's put up a stern defence in their endeavours to hold out in the barred School House.
A Rollicking Fine School Story,

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1.

Grundy Goes Scouting!

"THERE'S something on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But what the dickens—" said Tom Merry, puzzled.

Tom strained his eyes into the darkness. But he could see little or nothing.

He stood at an upper window in the School House at St. Jim's. The hour was late—close on midnight.

A dim mist hung over the quadrangle; faintly through it the leafless trees loomed up, gaunt and shadowy.

From the misty darkness came faint sounds—the sounds of shuffling feet, occasionally the almost inaudible whisper of a subdued voice.

Something was "on," that was certain; and it was some move against the rebels of St. Jim's, who had so long held the fort successfully in the barred School House.

Most of the schoolboy rebels were asleep at that hour; but Tom Merry & Co. did not fail to keep watch and ward during the night. Half a dozen fellows were gathered round Tom Merry at the window peering into the dim quad, wondering what the movements there might portend.

"They're comin', deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arroy. "It's a night attack, you know. Pwobably Mr. Wailton and the Head, expect to find us fast asleep."

"Shouldn't wonder!" assented Tom.

"Shall I call the fellows down?" asked Manners.

"Wait a bit! They're not coming yet!" said Tom.

"As soon as they begin hammering at the door will be time enough. They won't get through in a hurry."

"Wathah not!"

Tom Merry leaned from the window peering and listening. The dim mist covered the enemy; but it was clear that they were at hand. If it was a night attack on the rebels' stronghold, it was a long time in coming.

"I guess it's some new stunt," murmured Wildrake. "They've tried more than once to break in, and shipped up on it every time. Railton won't be wasting his time and losing his beauty sleep for the sake of banging on a door or window again."

The same thought was in Tom's mind.

Hitherto, every attempt to force an entrance into the School House had been defeated. For weeks the rebels had held their own, and the honours were on their side. For several days now there had been no attack, and the schoolboy rebels wondered whether the Head had grown tired of it and given it up as a bad job.

But that was not likely. It was scarcely possible for the Head of St. Jim's to yield to a barring-out, and it was quite certain that the rebels did not mean to yield, so it could only be a fight to a finish. And what the finish would be was still on the knees of the gods.

A muttering voice from the mist came faintly to Tom Merry's ears, as he leaned from the window.

"Careful there, Brown!"

"You leave it to me, sergeant!" came the reply, in a voice Tom recognised as that of Private Jack Brown.

"Don't you butt in, sergeant! We ain't in Flanders now,

though you seem to keep on forgetting it! You remember that you're only a blooming civilian now!"

Tom Merry grinned.

Sergeant Stuckey, the leader of the party of old soldiers whom Mr. Railton had enlisted to deal with the rebels of St. Jim's, did not find his path a path of roses. His frown had lost all its terrors for the cheery privates, who indeed seemed to find entertainment in "rubbing in" the fact that Sergeant Stuckey, now that the war was a thing of the past, was only plain Bill Stuckey—morely that and nothing more. Which was a fact that the sergeant seemed to find it difficult to digest.

"That's so, sergeant!" chimed in the voice of Private Scuppers. "Don't you come the sergeant now, Bill Stuckey! Don't do it! Ain't you seen in the papers that the war's over?"

"Old your tongue, Private Scuppers!"

"Old yours, Bill Stuckey!"

"Yes, 'old it, Bill!" said the voice of Private Green. "You gave it enough exercise in Flanders, Bill! Give it a rest now."

"I wish we was in Flanders now," said the sergeant, in a sulphurous voice. "I'd 'ave you bligters in the clink afore you could say napoo."

"Order, please!" broke in a quiet voice—the voice of Victor Railton, Housemaster of St. Jim's.

"Suttlingly, sir!" said Private Brown. "Only the sergeant wagging his chin, sir; he will do it!"

"Silence, please! You may give the alarm."

"Very good, sir."

Still nothing could be seen in the mist that floated in the quad and clung round the old walls of the School House.

Tom Merry drew in his head from the window.

"They're all there!" he whispered. "A whole crowd of them, I think—all Railton's lot, most likely. It's an attack, of course; but I'm blessed if I can see what they're at!"

"Can't be a bombing party," murmured Mouty Lowther, and there was a chuckle from the juniors.

"They seem to be collecting in front of the big door," said Tom. "Railton must know that he can't shift that door, with the barricade behind it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He's got us guessing," said Wildrake. "But I reckon the tug-of-war is coming. It's some new dodge."

"Better call the fellows, I think," said Tom.

"Right-ho!"

Manners and Lowther hurried away to call the garrison to arms. They groped through dark passages and up dusky staircases. Both electric light and gas had been cut off from outside, and the rebels were reduced to bike lanterns and candles for illumination—and there was a shortage of both.

"They're up to something," said Grundy of the Shell. "It's some dodge to take us by surprise. But I know what to do."

"You generally do!" said Blake with sarcasm. "The only trouble is, that you get it wrong!"

"Shut up, Blake!"

"If you want a thiek ear, Grundy—"

"I'll jolly well—"

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"Chuck it, for goodness' sake!" said Tom Merry. "No ragging now, with the giddy Hun at the gates."
 "Yaas, wathah! I am surprised at you, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely.
 "Don't talk now, D'Arcy," said Grundy of the Shell. "No time for chinwag. I know what to do; I'm going out to scout."

"Wats! You'll get collahed!" Grundy sniffed.

"Leave it to me. I fancy I know how to scout. I'll find out exactly what they're up to, and come back and report, Merry."

The captain of the Shell shook his head.

"Better not, Grundy. You might run into them in this mist before you know where you are."

"Leave it to me."

"Besides, you're not much good as a scout," said Tom, candidly. "Stay where you are!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway dwy up, Gwunday!" George, Alfred Grundy did not heed. Having the most complete confidence in his own powers, he was not likely to waste time in considering the feeble opinions of lesser mortals.

"Hold on to this rope, some of you," he said.

"Look here, Grundy—"

"Don't jaw now, Tom Merry; no time to waste. Hang on to this rope and lower me down."

"You'll never get back, if you go!" said Tom.

"Bow-wow!"

"Bai Jove! Is that how you weply to your leadah, Gwunday? I wegard you as a mutinous ass!"

"Shut up!"

Grundy of the Shell uncoiled the rope and fastened one end to a heavy article of furniture. The other end he dropped from the window.

The juniors looked at Tom Merry. They were prepared to collar Grundy and bump him for mutiny, at a sign from their leader.

But Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders, and did not give the sign. Grundy was rather a trial as a member of the garrison, and if he chose to hand himself over to the enemy, Tom did not mind. Grundy had lined up with the rest of the St. Jim's juniors in defence of Tom Merry, sentenced to expulsion. It was that circumstance alone that caused Tom to tolerate Grundy's way—and he had been very patient. But his patience was wearing out.

"Leave it to me!" said Grundy for the third time. "Just be ready to give me a hand in when I come back, that's all."

"I've told you you'd better not go," said Tom impatiently.

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"Shut up!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Shall we collar the silly owl, Tom Merry?" asked Levi-son of the Fourth.

"Oh, let him do as he likes," said Tom resignedly.

"I mean to!" said Grundy.

And the burly Shell fellow swung himself out of the window and slithered down the rope to the ground. He vanished in the mist in a moment; and Tom Merry & Co. listened breathlessly to learn what was going to become of him. It was not likely that the enemy would allow Grundy to return the way he had gone; but if George Alfred was "reported missing," there were likely to be dry eyes in the St. Jim's garrison.

CHAPTER 2.

Grundy the Scout!

GRUNDY of the Shell landed on his feet and let go the rope. He blinked round him in the mist, unable to see a yard from the tip of his prominent nose. Now that he was fairly started, Grundy realised some of the difficulties of the task he had undertaken. But Grundy was a stickler, and nothing would have induced him to climb the rope again and own up to failure. He quitted the wall and stepped out into the mist, feeling his way with his hands outstretched before him.

Faint sounds were audible, but in the mist it was difficult to tell their direction. Quite suddenly Grundy bumped into something, or somebody, and there was a sharp exclamation.

"Don't run into me, Private Brown, you fool!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Grundy.

He had collided with Sergeant Stuckey.

"Hallo, who's that?" exclaimed the sergeant, as he heard Grundy's voice. "That's one of them kids!"

A hand groped out and fastened on Grundy's collar.

"Show a light 'ere!" exclaimed the sergeant.

An electric lamp gleamed through the mist. Grundy of the Shell caught a dim view of the sergeant's red face in the illumination.

Grundy was not quick to think as a rule. But the grip on his collar perhaps speeded up his wits a little. In another second he would have been a prisoner; but in that second Grundy drove his clenched fist full into the red face, and Mr. Stuckey, taken by surprise, staggered back and sat down.

"Ooooop!" gasped Mr. Stuckey.

"Collar him!" shouted Private Brown.

A clutching hand just missed Grundy as he jumped back. He bolted into the mist. A voice rang out behind him.

"What is it? Who is it?"

"One of the kids, Mr. Raitlon! He's knocked old Stuckey down!" chuckled Private Brown.

"I fell over!" came the deep, exasperated voice of the sergeant. "I fell over, Mr. Raitlon!"

"You are sure it was one of the boys?" asked the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir; seen him afore."

"Then they are on their guard," said Mr. Raitlon.

"However, I think we are ready now."

"The sergeant wants the ambulance, sir."

"You 'old your cheeky tongue, Private Brown!" gasped the sergeant. "I don't want any ambulance! Oh, don't! I wish I had you in my old squad for five minutes, Jack Brown!"

"Wait till the next war, Bill!" chuckled Mr. Brown.

"Come, come!" said Mr. Raitlon.

Grundy was running on in the mist, only anxious to get out of the vicinity of the merry Private Brown and his comrades. He came to a sudden halt, with a sudden howl, as he collided with the trunk of an elm.

"Whooooop!"

Grundy clasped his nose with both hands. For one dreadful moment it seemed to him that his nose had been pushed through the back of his head. Fortunately, it hadn't! It was still in its place, and there was a pain in it that drew water to Grundy's eyes.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured the unhappy scout.

A whole battalion of Private Browns would not have made Grundy run any more in the blinding mist. His nose did not feel as if it could stand any more collisions with tree-trunks.

He groped his way on blindly.

Light gleamed through the mist, and as he approached it, Grundy discovered that it streamed from an open doorway. He had blundered right across the quad, and was staring at the open door of the New House. In the doorway two gentlemen stood; he recognised Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, and Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House. The two masters were talking together, and they did not observe Grundy for the moment.

"I trust Mr. Raitlon will be successful this time!" the headmaster was saying.

"I trust so!" said Mr. Ratcliff sourly, his tone implying that he did not consider it very probable. The task of dealing with the schoolboy rebels had fallen almost wholly upon the shoulders of Victor Raitlon, Housemaster of the School House; and Mr. Ratcliff was of opinion that he could have managed the business better. The Head, however, did not appear to think so.

"I am loth to allow so much damage to be done to the House!" said Dr. Holmes. "But every other method has been tried. And this outrageous state of affairs must end!"

"I should certainly say so."

"The new term is at hand," said Dr. Holmes, knitting his brows. "I never dreamed that I should live to see this school open a new term under such conditions as these. Bless my soul! Who is that?"

The Head had spotted Grundy.

"One of the rascally young rebels!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "I will secure him!"

"Please do!" exclaimed the Head. "Secure him by all means. Why—what—what has happened?"

Crash!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Mr. Ratcliff.

He had clutched Grundy; but he had not secured him. Grundy was not disposed to be secured. He had butted Mr. Ratcliff—and the lean gentleman had sat down with a terrific concussion.

Grundy backed away into the mist, with a swimming head. He had butted hard; and Mr. Ratcliff, to judge by his wild howls, was hurt. Grundy was rather hurt, too.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head.

He descended the steps to the aid of Mr. Ratcliff. The New House master was assisted, gasping, into the House. Grundy of the Shell had vanished.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Grundy, rubbing his head.

"Oh crumbs! Bony beast—horrid bony beast! Ow!"

Grundy groped on his way. Two or three gleams of light guided him now; it was evident that they came from the party gathering for the attack on the School House. Grundy had had adventures; but he had not yet learned



Bergeant Stuckey almost ran into the juniors. "Knock him over and run for it!" panted Figgins. Mr. Stuckey went spinning under a fierce rush, and Figgins & Co., ran desperately for the House. (See page 12.)

what was "on," and he was eager to learn. He groped his way through the mist towards the gleams of light. "My only hat!" ejaculated Grundy.

Three or four men were flashing electric-torches, to show the way to the others. About twenty hefty fellows were carrying a huge object, which Grundy discerned to be a tree-trunk. They were bearing it towards the great door of the School House.

"Phew!"

Grundy understood now.

It was a battering-ram. Hitherto the attacking parties had been restrained by the Head's natural disinclination to have irreparable damage done to the besieged House. But continual defeats had driven the enemy to drastic measures at last.

It was quite certain that the big oak door, strong as it was, would never stand against such an assault as this, and that the barricade behind it would fly to pieces under the shock.

Evidently Mr. Railton's plan had been that the garrison of the School House should be awakened from sleep by the crash of the falling door—and then a rush of the old soldiers would finish the matter very quickly. It was only necessary to get to close quarters, then the whole crowd of juniors would be of little use against the thirty powerful fellows who would deal with them.

Grundy had succeeded in his scouting; he knew what was intended now. He had only to convey the information to the garrison.

But that was not easy.

As he stood blinking at the shadowy, ghost-like figures in the intermittent gleams of light, Grundy felt a sudden grasp on his collar.

"Got him!" yelled Private Scuppers.

Grundy struggled desperately. He hacked back at Mr. Scuppers' shins, and there was a yell of anguish from Mr. Scuppers.

But Mr. Scuppers did not let go. He tightened his grip, and Grundy was soon reduced to helplessness.

Mr. Railton hurried up with a light.

"Ah! It is Grundy!" he said. "Take him to the New House, Scuppers, and hand him over."

"Yes, sir."

"I won't go!" yelled Grundy, struggling wildly. "I won't! I'll—Yaroooh! Leggo! Oh!"

Grundy said he wouldn't go, but he went. He had no choice about that. Mr. Scuppers propelled him along so forcibly that Grundy's strenuous objections did not count. He came into the radius of light of the New House again, and was jerked into the House by the hefty Mr. Scuppers.

"Dear me! It is Grundy again!" said the Head, peering at him over his glasses.

"Let me go!" roared Grundy.

"Look him in a room, my good man!" said the Head.

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, you rotter!" gasped Grundy. "Ow! Let go my collar! Leggo my arm! Oh, you rotter! I'll—I'll—Yoooop!"

Bump!

Grundy landed in an unoccupied study in a heap, and a key turned in the outside of the lock. George Alfred Grundy's scouting was over for that night.

CHAPTER 3.

An Attack in Force!

TOM MERRY & CO. watched and listened at the window, still in the dark as to what the enemy intended. All the garrison were awake and up now, and ready for the fray—if the fray came. It was borne in upon the minds of the schoolboy rebels that something was about to happen—some new and more dangerous move on the part of the enemy. But what that move was they could not guess. Tom Merry would have been glad enough of scouting news from Grundy; but he did not expect to receive the report of that valuable scout. He did

not, in fact, expect to see Grundy again at all. Wildrake himself could scarcely have performed the task Grundy had undertaken; and it was pretty certain that George Alfred would fail in it. Faintly from afar the juniors heard the yells of Grundy when he was propelled away by Private Scuppers, and that was all they heard of him.

"They've got him!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"That's Grundy's foot, or else a mad bull—one or the other."

"Yaas, wathah; it's Gwunday!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"They've got him," he agreed. "Well, he would go! But I wonder what that crowd are up to out there in the dark?"

"I guess I'll try a scout, if you like!" said Kit Wildrake. "I might have more luck than Grundy."

"No fear!" answered Tom. "We can't spare you from the garrison, old chap. Besides, we shall know soon. Whatever they're up to, I don't see how we can interfere with them till they attack."

"That's so," agreed Blake.

The juniors waited in growing anxiety.

Gleams of light flickered in the quadrangle, glittering through the mist, but without revealing the enemy's movements. But the scuffling of feet, the whispering of voices, was close at hand, and once or twice Tom Merry caught the sound of a grunt, as of a man labouring under heavy exertion. There was a looming up of shadowy figures in the mist quite close under the window at last.

Tom Merry had pulled up the rope by which Grundy had descended. It was clear by that time that Grundy would not need it again. He leaned from the window, striving to penetrate the gloom.

Someone—it was Mr. Railton—was standing on the steps of the School House, giving directions in a low voice.

"Steady!"

"Steady it is, sir!" said Private Brown cheerily.

"You all have a good hold?"

"Every man, sir!"

Tom Merry wondered what it was they had hold of.

In the dim mist he could discern only vague shadows.

"They're near enough for a pot-shot, Tom!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Go it!" answered Tom.

Taking aim was difficult, almost impossible, in the uncertain gloom. But the enemy were crowded now on the steps of the School House, only some of them under the shelter of the porch. From the window missiles flew in a sudden volley—snowballs scraped from the sills, and odd boots, and empty tins, and other articles.

Whiz! Whiz! Clang! Crash! Smash!

Some of the missiles at least found billets. Three or four voices were raised in wrath and anguish.

"Owl! Wow! Oh!"

"My word! Gr-r-r-r!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Steady, there!" yelled Sergeant Stuckey. "You're letting it go!"

Crash!

It was a terrific crash; it rang almost like thunder through the misty night.

The volley from the window had been effective. Fellows suddenly smitten by old boots and tin cans had let go the long, heavy tree-trunk, and its weight had been too much for the men who retained their hold.

It went down on the stone steps with a mighty concussion.

There was a chorus of exclamations.

"You let it go, Scuppers, you huss!" roared the sergeant.

"I got a blessed bang on my blessed napper!" howled Mr. Scuppers, rubbing the injured place.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

The missiles came thick and fast now. The crash of the falling tree-trunk had enlightened Tom Merry.

"Give them socks!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"They're going to stave in the door! Keep them off if you can!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"A giddy battering-ram!" exclaimed Cardew. "By gad! The jolly old door will be a picture when they've finished with it!"

"Railton means business this time!" said Clive.

"So do we!" said Tom Merry. "Go it!"

The missiles flew fast and hard from several windows now. There were loud yells and howls from the mist.

Then there came a whizzing back, and there was a crashing of panes as some of the missiles returned. Broken glass flew in fragments on all sides.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a sudden roar as a boot, which had already smitten the head of Sergeant Stuckey, came whizzing window-wards and smote Gussy on his noble chin.

"Yawooh! Oh deah! Gwoogh!"

Arthur Augustus staggered, sat back, and sat down.

"That will do!" It was Mr. Railton's voice. "You are wasting time! Get to it at once!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Ere we are, sir!"

Sergeant Stuckey and his men grasped the fallen trunk again. They heaved it up, and brought it forward.

"You will strike the lock with it!" said Mr. Railton, giving directions from the porch. "Steady! A little more to the left! Now!"

"Ere goes!" chuckled Private Brown.

Crash!

The very House seemed to shake as the trunk crashed on the lock of the big oak door, propelled by all the strength of thirty hefty fellows.

The oak door groaned and creaked.

Faster from above flew the missiles. But the assailants did not heed them now—except by a howl when one of them landed. The porch partly protected the storming-party, and in the mist the fire was mostly at random. It was soon clear that the fusillade from the windows would not stop the attack.

Crash!

The assailants retreated a little, and rushed the trunk forward again. It smote on the locked door with a terrific concussion.

Tom Merry set his teeth.

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "The door will neva stand that, Tom Mewwy."

"Down in ten minutes, at the outside!" said Ralph Reckness Cardew coolly. "Now they've made up their minds not to worry about the damage, they've got a giddy trump to play."

"We'll keep 'em out, somehow," said Kangaroo of the Shell. "Better lie up inside the big door, and be ready for them."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry breathed hard. He knew that the door, stout as it was, would break down under that terrific strain. The barricade within would not hold long against the battering-ram. And at close quarters the juniors had no chance; a fight to the finish only meant defeat, hand to hand with the enemy. But Tom was not beaten yet.

"Hold on!" he said quietly. "We've got to face the facts, you fellows. They will get in—we've got ten minutes, perhaps a quarter of an hour. But that's not the finish. They've got the ground floor; our job is to hold the next floor. All hands to work to barricade the staircase!"

"Good!"

No time was lost. As the battering-ram crashed on the oak door for the third time, Tom Merry & Co. started work on their second line of defence.

CHAPTER 4.

No Surrender!

CRASH! The concussion rang like thunder, again and again. The oak door groaned under it; the great hinges creaked and strained. The barricades stacked behind the door shook and rattled.

But the garrison gave no heed to the attack. They were busy—working with all speed.

The ground floor had to be given up—that was inevitable.



LOOK!

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THRILLS YOU'LL GET in

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Your GEM Early, as You are BOUND TO
ENJOY This Powerful Story.



As the hefty fellows bearing the huge tree-trunk approached the door of the School House Tom Merry, the leader of the rebels, gave the order to fire. Suddenly the air was filled with flying missiles—snowballs scraped from the sills, odd boots, empty tins, and other articles. Whiz! Whiz! Clang! Clang! Crash! Smash! There were loud yells and howls as the flying missiles found billets. (See page 6.)

now. But the schoolboy rebels were far from being at the end of their resources.

Tom Merry was a good general. He divided his forces into sections, each with its task to perform.

One party, led by Fatty Wynn, gathered the provisions from the kitchen, and hurried them upstairs. There was a food shortage in the garrison already; and not a crumb was to be left behind. Fatty Wynn could be relied upon to look after the food department with great zeal.

Three other parties were detailed—under Figgins, Kerr, and Talbot—to block up back staircases. Tom Merry attended to the main staircase, which was very large and broad, and the most vulnerable spot in the new line of defence.

The juniors worked hard and methodically, unheeding the terrific crashing of the battering-ram, at the door.

Furniture of all kinds was stacked on the staircase, and Jack Blake, with a hammer and unlimited nails, drove in a nail wherever he found room for one. Chair-legs were hooked in the banisters, chair-backs nailed to the broad steps, desks and tables jammed into them, fenders and fire-irons and looking-glasses—all sorts and conditions of things—piled and stacked and jammed.

Crash, crash, crash!

The door was yielding now. But there were still minutes left, and the rebels made use of every minute.

Fatty Wynn & Co. were making use of a back staircase, which was left to the last to be barricaded. The big staircase was fairly blocked now, and Tom Merry & Co., on the upper side of the barricade, stacked it higher and higher as they retreated upward. Bedsteads were dragged out of the dormitories and added to the pile, till the staircase was a mass of stacked furniture from the floor to the first landing.

Crash!

The great look of the School House door flew into pieces at last.

The door came open a few inches.

There was a cheer from the Tommies without, and they rested for a minute or two after their exertions.

"Keep guard here, Monty!" said Tom Merry. And leaving Lowther in charge of the main barricade, Tom

rushed away to the back staircase, where Fatty Wynn & Co. were still carrying up supplies.

"Time's up!" called out Tom, peering down the narrow stair in the light of a flickering candle. "No time for more! Come up quick, all of you!"

"We've got up all the grub!" said Redfern. "Fatty's collecting the cooking pots and things."

"No more time; the door's open! Fetch him up!"

Redfern rushed down to the kitchen regions to round up the stragglers. They came panting up the stairs, Fatty Wynn laden with saucepans and cutlery, other fellows staggering under loads of crockeryware. Tom was already at work blocking the staircase; the last arrivals had to clamber over bedsteads and chairs and tables.

The narrow staircase was soon blocked from wall to wall, and rendered impregnable. Figgins & Co. were left on guard there, as Tom returned to the big staircase.

The School House door was open now.

The battering-ram had crashed, again and again, and the door, driven in against the barricade, had toppled it over. Mr. Railton was the first to enter, flashing his electric lamp, and picking his way among broken and overturned furniture.

Sergeant Stuckey was the next, and then Private Brown, and then more and more and more of the attacking-party; surprised to meet with no resistance. Mr. Railton flashed his light round and called:

"Boys!"

"Hallo, old bean!" came Cardew's drawling voice from the landing.

The Housemaster glanced up the staircase; one mass of barricade, with table-legs and chair-legs sticking up.

He knitted his brows.

An entrance had been forced into the barred House, but Mr. Railton realised now that his task was by no means done.

"Go for 'em!" came a shout from the Housemaster's followers.

"Over the top, boys!" shouted Private Brown.

"Go it, sergeant!" chirruped Private Green. "We're arter you, sergeant!"

But the sergeant had halted at the foot of the staircase. The proposition before him was too hefty to be tackled in a hurry.

Mr. Railton looked up the staircase. Above, on the landing, two or three bike lamps glimmered, shedding a dim light on the second line of defence. The Housemaster set his lips.

"Boys!" he called out again. "I command you to come down and surrender yourselves. You can surely see the folly of keeping on with this lawless riot, now!"

"Not at all, old bean!" answered Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Cardew, that is not the way to address a Housemaster. Mr. Railton, we vewy much wegwet to be compelled to wefuse to obey. We are not goin' to suw-wender!"

Whiz!

A cushion came hurtling down the stairs, and it caught Sergeant Stuckey full on the nose. Mr. Stuckey went backwards as if he had been shot, and sat on an overturned chair, and thence rolled to the floor, roaring.

A MAN IS FOUND WITH GOLD!



"Ambulance for the sergeant!" shouted Private Brown. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Wow-wow!" came from the sergeant. "Gimme a hand up! Oh! Wow!"

Whiz, whiz, whiz! Missiles flew over the barricade from above, and there was a rush to get out of the line of fire. Only Mr. Railton still stood exposed to it; but the missiles were not aimed at him. So far as the exigencies of warfare allowed, the rebels wanted to respect the person of the Housemaster.

"I command you—" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Can it, sir!" called back Wildrake.

"What—what?"

"Dear man!" said Cardew. "Haven't you learned yet that it's a chicken that won't fight?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cardew, you young rascal—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Dry up, Gussy, old man. Mr. Railton, I command you to surrender at once!" said Cardew. "You can surely see the folly of keeping on this lawless riot now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the rebels, delighted at that parody of the Housemaster's command. Even Arthur Augustus chuckled.

"Cardew!" gasped Mr. Railton.

"Nothing doing, sir!" said Tom Merry. "Our motto is no surrender!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yass, wathah! No suw-wendah!"

"I could get Railton's boko beautifully with this apple!" said Cardew. "Have I leave from the commander-in-chief?"

"No, you ass!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Leave Railton's boko alone."

"Then let Railton take his boko out of range!" said Cardew. "Railton, old turnip, sheer off, before I catch you with this apple."

"You young rascal—"

"Take your face away!" urged Cardew. "You don't realise how it worries a chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton, with feelings that could not have been expressed in words, turned away. It was only too clear that there was to be no surrender; and that the barring-out at St. Jim's was still going strong.

The Housemaster made a round of the lower regions of the House, scanning every staircase, and finding every one blocked all the way up to the landings above. His men spread over the ground floor, taking possession, and rounding up half a dozen juniors who had lingered too long below, and whose retreat had been cut off. Those hapless youths were collared at once, and taken away to the New House, to be locked in studies till the morning.

But that, so far, was the limit of success for the assailants. Almost all the garrison were safe above stairs, behind defences that were as strong as the first line that had been forced—and much more difficult to get at.

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While the Housemaster was surveying the position, and perhaps wondering what was to be done next, there were sounds of incessant activity above. No member of the garrison was thinking of any more sleep that night.

The barricades on the staircases were being strengthened; and Blake, the amateur carpenter, was taking down doors from bed-rooms, to be nailed and screwed on the edge of landings—a "stockade," as Blake called it.

All kinds of missiles were being stacked on the landings ready for the next attack; and buckets and pails filled with water ready to drench the enemy when they came. The winter sun rose over St. Jim's and found the schoolboy rebels still busy.

Before that time, however, Mr. Railton had returned to the New House, leaving his men in charge of the position that had been won. Dr. Holmes met him with a look of eager inquiry.

"You have been successful, Railton?"

"Only in part, sir!" said the Housemaster. "An entrance has been forced, but the young rascals have barricaded the stairs, and are still determined on resistance."

"Bless my soul!"

"Did you give them time to barricade the stairs?" asked Mr. Ratcliff, with a sour smile.

"As I had no choice in the matter, naturally I did!" answered Mr. Railton quietly. "The matter is not at an end yet by any means, Dr. Holmes. No doubt we shall compel surrender in the long run, but—"

"But what?" asked the Head.

The Housemaster hesitated.

"It is amazing, sir, how the whole Lower School is standing by Tom Merry," he said. "Every boy seems convinced that injustice has been done to Merry. I am aware, sir, that the evidence against Merry was very strong; that on the face of it, it appeared conclusive that it was Tom Merry who robbed Mr. Ratcliff; that he was justly sentenced to expulsion. But—"

Dr. Holmes frowned.

"Really, Mr. Railton, it is rather late in the day to entertain doubts upon that subject," he said, a little tartly.

"I am aware of it, sir. Yet I confess—" The Housemaster paused again.

Mr. Ratcliff broke in sourly.

"The evidence against Merry was quite conclusive. There is no doubt whatever that he entered my study, in this House, by night, and robbed my desk, and is still in possession of the stolen money. Doubtless that is the reason of his obstinate resistance—he hopes to escape being forced to make restitution."

"I doubt it," said Mr. Railton.

"Come," said the Head; "the matter was carefully investigated, and Merry was expelled from the school. This riot of the juniors does not alter the facts in any way, it only makes Merry's conduct worse."

"If he is guilty, certainly!"

"I have no doubt of his guilt. I am not likely to alter my fixed opinion, simply because there has been a lawless outbreak on the part of the junior boys," exclaimed the Head warmly.

"Quite so, sir! But it is amazing that Merry's school-fellows should have so firm a faith in him, if he is capable of a despicable crime."

"Mr. Railton. You are not suggesting that I should rescind my sentence on Merry and allow myself to be brow-beaten by rebellious Lower boys?"

There was a long pause.

"No, sir," said Mr. Railton at last.

"I should think not!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "I should think not, indeed!"

—IS HE THE REAL THIEF? Startling developments next week!

"Discipline must be maintained," said Mr. Railton, unheeding the New House master. "The rebellion must be put down. Yet—"

He did not finish. The three masters separated, Mr. Railton, at least, in a troubled and dubious frame of mind. More and more it had been borne in upon his mind that a terrible mistake had been made; that Tom Merry was not, could not, be guilty of what was imputed to him. But it was, as the headmaster said, too late in the day to consider that now. Matters had gone too far; it was now a struggle between authority and rebellion, and the struggle had to go on to the finish.

CHAPTER 5.
Short Commons.

"BREKKER!" said Fatty Wynn.
"Bai Jove! I'm quite weady for bwekkah!"
"Yes, rather!"

It was rather late in the morning. Fatty Wynn, chief of the commissariat, had laboured under difficulties with breakfast. In the great kitchen of the School House, Fatty had been in his element; quite at his ease. Everything he wanted was there within reach, and Fatty had distinguished himself as a cook. Matters were sadly altered now.

After the enemy had cut off the gas, Fatty had cooked on a coal range successfully. But above stairs there was nothing of the sort. There was open grates in plenty, but there was a shortage of fuel. The clearing out from the lower regions had been done in a great hurry, and the quantity of coal above stairs was limited.

Fatty prepared brekker under difficulties, but he prepared it. Rations were so short now that the cooking was not nearly so extensive as of old. There were no rashers of bacon, no new-laid eggs, or eggs of any sort or age.

The staple diet was oatmeal porridge, of which, fortunately, there was a plentiful stock. It was a good and nourishing diet; but some of the garrison sighed for the fleshpots of Egypt.

Oatmeal cakes, and other cakes, formed a more solid diet; Fatty cooked them in great quantities. He had plenty of flour, so far, and plenty of sugar and jam. There were some other articles in plenty; but of some that were generally deemed essential, the rebels had none at all.

But it couldn't be helped, and for the most part they took it smilingly. Grub, as Figgins remarked, wasn't everything.

But there was no doubt that Fatty felt the food shortage severely. He dreamed of sausages and chips, of pork-pies and cream puffs, of sirloins and fried potatoes and beautiful cabbages, and woke to dreadful reality with a heavy heart.

After breakfast, Tom Merry peered from a window into the mist. It had cleared off a little, but still hung heavily over the quadrangle, and little could be seen. He wondered what had become of the prisoners taken the night before—Grundy, and the stragglers picked up on the lower floor by the Tommies.

A little later, looking over the barricade on the stairs, he caught sight of Private Brown, surveying it from below. Mr. Brown waved a hand at him in quite a friendly way.
"Good-morning, you young sweep!" called out Private Brown.

"Good-morning, Tommy!" answered Tom Merry, with a smile. "Are you thinking of coming over the top? We're ready!"

Private Brown shook his head.

"Waiting for orders," he answered. "I dessay we'll be mopping you up afore long."

"Not in your lifetime!" said Blake.

"Precious set of young ribs, ain't you?" said Mr. Brown admiringly. "This here is a game, and no mistake! But I ain't grumbling. I've 'ad some 'ard knocks; but ten bob a day ain't to be sneezed at in these 'ard times. Bless your little 'earts, keep it up as long as you like."

"Thanks—we will!" said Blake.

"What have they done with the fellows they collared last night?" asked Tom Merry.

Private Brown chuckled.

"Licked 'em, and sent 'em home," he said. "Mr. Railton's took them to the station now. That young feller

THE "ENEMY" CAPTURE PART OF THE STRONGHOLD OF THE REBELS!

IS IT THE BEGINNING OF THE END?

YOU MUST NOT MISS NEXT WEEK'S STORY!

Fatty Wynn agreed that it wasn't everything, but he mournfully observed that it was a great deal, anyway.

It was probable that the Head hoped to see the rebels surrender in the course of time as provisions grew shorter and shorter. Indeed, for some weeks the enemy had counted upon that, which was probably one reason why such drastic measures had not been resorted to earlier.

But the rebels were as far as ever from surrender.

On strict rations they could hold out for a long time, and even when the rations should be exhausted, they did not consider the possibility of surrender. Something, they hoped, would turn up. They had a Micawber-like faith that something would turn up; and, in the meantime, they kept up their cheery spirits.

Plans for making a sortie and bringing in provisions had been mooted and were often discussed, but the prospect of success was very doubtful. The school shop had been raided and cleared out before Mr. Railton's Tommies had taken a hand in the game; but after the arrival of Sergeant Stuckey & Co. communication with the outer world was fairly cut off.

"Something will have to be done, you know," Fatty Wynn remarked. "I'll cook with anybody, so long as there's something to cook, but when there isn't anything to cook—" And Fatty sighed.

"What's the matter with oatmeal?" asked Kerr.

Fatty made a grimace.

"I've almost forgotten the taste of a rasher of bacon," he said.

"Poor old Fatty!" grinned Figgins.

"Tain't a laughing matter," said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "Of course, I'm for holding out to the last shot in the locker. But you fellows can see that I'm getting thin."

"Thin!" yelled Monty Lowther.

"Wasting away!" said Fatty sadly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

So far as the eye could see, Fatty Wynn showed no sign of wasting away. His rotund figure was as rotund as ever; his chubby face was fat and rosy as of old.

Grundy made a fuss—he had to be licked twice afore he'd go. "But he's gone."

"Bai Jove! Then we sha'n't see Gwunday again till next term!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Poor old Grundy!" said Tom. "Well, he asked for it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Private Brown strolled away smoking a cigarette, evidently in cheery spirits, though his face was still adorned by a discoloured eye and a swollen nose—relics of a former combat.

The day wore on without an attack. The old soldiers made themselves at home downstairs, and a good many times their voices were heard raised in a merry chorus. Every now and then some of them would stroll round to the foot of the big staircase to exchange chaff and chipping with the guard on the landing, but there was no hostility. They were waiting for the word to attack again, and as yet it did not come.

In the afternoon the mist still hung over St. Jim's, yellow and black. Fatty Wynn joined Tom Merry as he watched at a window.

"This is a jolly good chance for us," said Fatty.

"Eh, what?"

"This mist," said Fatty, jerking a fat thumb towards the dusky quad. "Fellow, would have a good chance of slipping out without being seen. What price some fellows getting over to Wayland and bagging some grub there—I'd go."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I think you'd go anywhere, old chap, if there was grub at the end of it," he said. "But we can't spare our cook. You're the most valuable member of the garrison, old scout."

"Well, I suppose that's so," agreed Wynn thoughtfully. "I can turn out a jolly good stew on next to nothing. But only on next to nothing, mind you—not on nothing at all. Look here, a dozen fellows with bags, they could get in

enough stuff to last for weeks, eking out what we've got along with it, you know. Even the tinned meat is all gone; in a few days we shall be down to porridge with nothing else. Think of that!"

"It's hard cheese," said Tom.

"Well, why not try?" urged Fatty Wynn. "Even if the fellows get nailed, there's plenty left to hold the fort; and a few extra mouths gone will help the rations to last longer."

"My hat! I never looked at it like that!" said Tom, laughing. "But there's something in it."

"I'll go!"

"You won't!" said Tom, shaking his head. "We want you to cook, old man. But if any fellows care to volunteer—"

"Put it to them," said Fatty, with a grin. "Nearly every chap will volunteer. They're getting pretty sick of short commons, I can tell you."

Fatty Wynn was right. As soon as the point was raised, there were fifty volunteers on the spot.

Figgins was one; and to Figgins the enterprise was confided. He picked out a dozen fellows to accompany him—all New House fellows. Figg had greater faith in his own House. Kerr, and Redfern, and Thompson, and Pratt, and the rest, were soon ready for the sortie. Tom Merry scanned the quad uneasily; but the mist hid everything from sight.

"After all, it's a good chance," he said at length. "I dare say you'll get out easily enough. As for getting back—"

"We'll take our chance," said Figgins. "But I fancy it will be all right. You see, I've selected only New House chaps for the job."

"Bai Jove! I wogard that as vewy weckless of you, Figgins," said Arthur Augustus. "I should weally think that common sense would lead you to take School House chaps."

"Bow-wow!" said Figgins derisively.

"Weally, Figgins—"

And the New House party started, sliding down one by one by a rope from the box-room window at the back of the School House. They vanished into the mist, and Tom Merry & Co. could only hope that they would return—laden with supplies.

CHAPTER 6. Guilty Gold.

"**J**OLLY thick, ain't it?" said Figgins. He was alluding to the mist.

"Thick as your napper, old top!" said Redfern.

"Dry up, Reddy!"

Figgins & Co. had succeeded in reaching the school wall and dropping over it into the road. Probably Mr. Railton's men were not looking for such a move on the part of the besieged garrison. At all events, the juniors had seen nothing of the enemy.

On the road the mist was as thick as in the quad, and the dozen juniors had almost to grope their way along. They were glad of it, however; it covered them from any possible enemy. Progress was slow, but they were soon at a safe distance from the school.

They turned into the footpath through the wood towards

ANOTHER ROLICKING FINE SCHOOL
STORY NEXT WEEK, BOYS!

"UNCONQUERED!"

By Martin Clifford.

The Rebels of St. Jim's are still standing
by their chum in spite of their many hard-
ships.

ARE THEY TO FALTER AT THE FINISH?

Tell all your chums about these most
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Wayland, which was two or three miles from St. Jim's. Figgins had judged it wiser not to go shopping at Rylcombe, which was nearer; it was possible that one or two of the enemy might be in the village.

The juniors tramped along the footpath, where the mist hung low among the leafless trees.

"Easy as falling off a form!" said Kerr. "I fancy we shall get back all right—if the mist holds."

"It doesn't look like clearing off, at present," remarked Owen.

"No! But we'd better lose no time in case it does," said Figgins. "Let's trot!"

And the juniors trotted.

They knew every inch of the footpath, and it was safe to trot even in the blinding mist. But Figgins had overlooked the fact that other persons might be on the path. There was a sudden collision, and an angry yell, as Figgins bumped into a shadowy form that suddenly loomed up.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Figgins, staggering back from the shock.

Bump!

The person unknown, whom he had crashed into, sat down, hard. A loud and angry oath rang out.

"Hallo! Sorry!" gasped Figgins. "Didn't see you!"

"Where are you running to, ang you?"

"Sorry, I tell you; couldn't help it!" said Figgins.

"Shall I give you a hand up?"

He leaned over the sitting gentleman. He was not a pleasant gentleman to look at, at close quarters. His clothes were frayed and dirty, his face almost purple in complexion from the excessive use of strong drink. He was evidently under the influence of liquor now, and he breathed out an aroma of mingled whisky and tobacco that made Figgins feel quite ill as he caught it.

Instead of taking Figg's hand, the loafer struck angrily at his face, and Figgins reeled back with a gasp.

"Take that!" snarled the ruffian.

"Ow!"

Figgins had already taken it. There was a spurt of red from Figg's nose.

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Kerr indignantly.

He made a jump at the loafer, who was staggering up. The purple-faced man staggered and went over again.

"Bump him!" shouted Redfern.

"You leave a man alone!" gasped the ruffian. "'Ands orf, I tell yer! Oh, my eye! Oh crumbs!"

The indignant juniors collared him without ceremony—unpleasant as he was to touch.

He was swept off the ground, struggling wildly, in the grip of six or seven pairs of hands.

Bump!

There was a fiendish yell from the loafer as he smote the ground. From his ragged pockets three or four articles dropped in the frosty grass—a foul pipe and a pocket-book, and two or three cigars. Redfern picked up one of the cigars and sniffed it. It was an excellent Havana.

"Where did you pinch that, you rotter?" asked Redfern. "You don't look as if half-crown cigars were in your line."

"Yow—ow—Leggo!" howled the vagrant.

Bump—bump—bump!

Figgins was dabbing a streaming nose with his pocket-handkerchief, and that streaming nose had to be avenged. The ruffian roared and struggled as he was bumped; but he went through it. There was a musical clink as he smote the ground for the third time, and two or three sovereigns rolled in the grass.

"Quids!" yelled Kerr.

"Great Scott!"

The juniors did not touch the money, but they stared at it blankly. They could hardly remember how long it was since they had seen real money. And to see it in possession of this grimy ruffian was amazing. They did not need telling that he could not possibly have come by it honestly.

It was obvious that it was only by theft that the purple-faced vagrant could have come into possession of golden sovereigns.

In their amazement they let the ruffian go, and he squirmed away, gasping and panting.

"He's a rotten thief!" said Owen, in disgust. "He must have stolen that money from some bank!"

There was a howl from the vagrant, as he saw the sovereigns glimmering on the ground. He clutched them up hurriedly.

"You let me alone!" he spluttered. "That money's mine. No business of yours, ang you!"

And without waiting to argue the matter further, the ruffian, evidently scared, dodged into the mist under the trees and vanished.



Struggling wildly, in the grip of six or seven pairs of hands, the ruffian was swept off his feet. Bump! There was a fiendish yell as he smote the hard ground. From his ragged pockets a foul pipe, a pocket-book, and two or three sovereigns fell to the ground. This was followed by a musical clink as two or three sovereigns rolled in the grass. "Quids!" yelled Kerr. (See page 10.)

CHAPTER 7. Kerr's Suspicion!

"COME on!" said Figgins, giving his nose a final dab.

The juniors moved on. But Kerr did not stir. There was a startled expression on the Scottish junior's face; his brows were wrinkled in deep thought.

Redfern tapped him on the shoulder.

"Get a move on," he said. "What's up? Going to sleep standing up, like a horse?"

"Come on, Kerr!" called Figgins.

"I wish we'd collared that rotter!" said Kerr.

"Oh, bother him!" said Owen. "No time to collar tramps. Besides, why should we collar him?"

"He must have stolen that money."

"Must have!" agreed Figgins. "But, after all, it's not our business, Kerr. We're not bobbies."

"I dare say the police are after him if he's robbed a bank," said Pratt.

"He hasn't robbed a bank," said Kerr quietly. "He's a loafer. He could no more break into a bank than he could fly."

"I haven't seen any quids outside a bank for donkeys' years, anyhow," said Pratt.

"What on earth have you got into your noddle, Kerr?" asked Figgins, gazing at his Scottish chum, in astonishment. "What does that loafer matter to us? We're wasting time."

"He may matter a great deal to us, Figgy, and still more to Tom Merry!"

"Eh? What?"

"Think a bit, old chap," said Kerr. "You know of what Tom Merry is accused!"

"Robbing old Ratcliff," said Figgins. "Silly rot!"

"Yes! Tom's account was that he went into Ratty's study, thinking that his chum, Manners, was there playing a trick on Ratty for smashing his camera. Tom says there

was somebody else in the room, who dodged out in the dark and escaped. We all believe him."

"The Head doesn't," said Owen. "But we do! But that's all ancient history now, Kerr."

"Fathead!" said Kerr politely. "Don't you remember of what Ratty was robbed?"

"Money!" said Pratt. "Nearly fifty pounds!"

"Sovereigns!" said Kerr.

"Oh!"

There was a general exclamation from the juniors. They could see now what was in Kerr's keen mind.

"It came out that Ratty had a store of sovereigns," said Kerr. "Lots of fellows knew it, as a matter of fact. Just like Ratty to hoard up quids, when everybody else had paper money."

"Just like him," said Figgins. "But—"

"Sovereigns are mighty scarce in these days," said Kerr quietly. "That drunken ruffian might rob a dozen places and never come across a single golden quid. Don't you see what it looks like? It looks as if we've landed, by sheer chance, on the sneak-thief who robbed Ratty—the rotter who was in the room when Tom Merry got there."

"My hat!" said Figgins, with a deep breath.

"Phew!" murmured Redfern.

"But how would anybody outside St. Jim's know about Ratty's money?" said Pratt. "That was a point against Tom Merry."

"He might have found it out," said Kerr. "A lot of fellows knew about it, and made jokes about it, and that rascal may have heard them, or he may have talked with one of the servants. Anyhow, golden quids in his pockets look jolly suspicious. He must have stolen them—and he couldn't burgle a bank. Other people may be hoarding quids like Ratty, but Ratty was robbed of quids, and I believe we've just seen some of the quids. I'm going to the police-station at Wayland. Come on!"

"Well, it won't do any harm!" said Figgins doubtfully.

"It will do good, I think!" said Kerr.
The juniors tramped on their way and reached the Wayland road, and followed it into the market town.
While Figgins and the rest proceeded to do some extensive shopping, Kerr walked into the police-station.

There he asked for Inspector Skeat.
Mr. Skeat was there, and Kerr was taken into the inspector's room. The fat, portly inspector looked at him with a grin. News of the St. Jim's barring-out had reached Wayland, and the inspector knew all about it.

"Good-afternoon, Master Kerr," smiled Mr. Skeat. "I hear you have had a very jolly Christmas at your school."
"No end jolly, thanks," answered Kerr.

"All over now?" asked Mr. Skeat.
"Not at all; going strong."
"Ha! Then you are a deserter, what?" grinned the inspector.

Kerr laughed.
"No. But I've called to see you on business, Mr. Skeat."
"News from the seat of war, what?" said the inspector, who was evidently in a humorous mood. "What's the latest? No casualties, I hope!"

"You know there was a robbery at the school, Mr. Skeat?" said Kerr, without heeding the portly gentleman's banter.

"Certainly!" The inspector gave Kerr a very sharp look. "The affairs at your school, Master Kerr, are rather a topic lately. Nobody seems to know the rights or wrongs of the matter, but I understand that one boy was expelled—"

"Quite so! It was Tom Merry. He was accused of taking a sum of money from Mr. Ratcliff's desk, in his study in the New House," said Kerr. "The money was in gold. A few quids were picked up on the floor, but the rest—I think about forty-five pounds—are still missing. We're all standing by Tom because we know he's innocent. I think I can give you a clue to the real thief, Mr. Skeat."

The inspector drummed on the table.
"The matter is not in my hands," he said. "Dr. Holmes, I understand, has dealt with it himself, and there is to be no prosecution."

"The Head thinks Tom Merry is guilty."
"And you know better than your headmaster?" murmured the inspector, with a touch of heavy sarcasm.

"I hope so," said Kerr coolly. "We're all risking the sack by standing up for Tom Merry. Listen to this, Mr. Skeat."

And Kerr gave a succinct account of the meeting with the vagrant on the footpath in Wayland Wood.

The inspector listened attentively.
Kerr could see that he had made an impression.
"Give me the man's description as well as you can!" said the inspector tersely.

"Man about fifty, with a purple face, ill-dressed, down at heel; but with golden quids, and expensive cigars in his pocket," said Kerr. "Shabby check clothes, red dirty necktie, dirty check shirt. About five feet seven, and fat round the waist. Cast in the left eye and a large nose."

The inspector smiled.

"I see you had a good look at him," he said. "Well, if there's anything in this, Master Kerr, you can rely upon it that it will be threshed out. In any case I should look for the man; for from your description it's pretty clear that he has robbed somebody. One of the gang that hang around the Black Bird, by the river, I dare say. Depend upon it I'll see to it; and if your schoolfellow should be cleared I shall be glad."

"Good!" said Kerr. "Thank you very much, sir!"
And he quitted the police-station with a light heart.

The Scottish junior rejoined Figgins and the rest in the High Street of Wayland, and found that they had finished their shopping. Every member of the party had a bag crammed with comestibles.

"Seen the giddy inspector?" asked Figgins.
"Yes; and he's going to look for the man."
"Good! Now for home!"

And Figgins & Co. started for St. Jim's. They saw nothing of the purple-faced gentleman on the footpath through the wood; probably by that time the loafer had found his way back to the bar at the Black Bird. The juniors avoided the Rylcombe road, and came back to the school by paths across the misty fields.

The mist had thinned, and they could see, dimly, the great mass of the school buildings looming against a leaden sky.

They climbed the wall and dropped on the inner side, one by one, and approached the rear of the School House.

"Look out!" breathed Figgins suddenly.
The juniors had almost reached the House when there were footsteps close at hand, and a dim figure loomed up in the gloom.

The next moment Sergeant Stuckey almost ran into them.

"Oh gum!" ejaculated the sergeant in astonishment.
"Knock him over and run for it!" panted Figgins.
"Ere, you— Yaroooh!" roared the sergeant, as he went spinning under a fierce rush.
Mr. Stuckey sprawled on the ground, and Figgins & Co. ran desperately for the Ecuse.

CHAPTER 8.

Woe to the Vanquished!

"E LP!"
Sergeant Stuckey roared at the top of his powerful voice.

There were answering shouts from the House, and two or three back doors opened. Figgins & Co., breathless, halted under the box-room window, from which a knotted rope came dangling down.

Tom Merry & Co. were ready at the window.
"Quick!" shouted Tom.

Figgins grasped the rope. Dim figures loomed in the mist, the sergeant, in a towering rage, was shouting to his fellows.

"Ere they are!" yelled Private Brown.
He came up with a rush to the group below the box-room window. Tom Merry, peering down from above, could not distinguish friend from foe. But the dim, awaying figures, and the panting and shouting, told him that a struggle was going on.

It was hard luck for Figgins & Co. On the very verge of success the blow had fallen.

They dropped the provision bags, and put up their fists, and fought desperately as the enemy came on. Figgins let go the rope; there was no time for climbing now.

Private Brown had rushed to the attack alone—but the rest of the Tommies were quickly on the spot.

"Collar 'em!" roared Sergeant Stuckey. "Orders is to collar every young raskil that comes out."

"We've got 'em, sergeant."
"Ow, wow, ow!"

"Stand up to them!" panted Figgins.

Tom Merry grasped the window-sill to swing himself out. He could not stand idly looking on, while his comrades below were facing odds. But Talbot of the Shell caught him by the shoulder, and pulled him back.

"Chuck it, Tom!" said Talbot quietly. "It's no good. The whole lot of us couldn't handle that crowd hand to hand."

"Wathah not," said Arthur Augustus dismally. "Pway don't lose your head, deah boy. No good chuckin' up."

Tom Merry breathed hard. The sortie had taken its chance—and luck had failed. It was impossible to help the juniors below—a descent from the window would only have delivered more of the garrison into the hands of the enemy. It was hard to hold back; but Tom realised that it was the only thing to be done.

The struggle was soon over.

A good many hard knocks were given and received; but Figgins & Co. were hopelessly outclassed by their opponents. One by one they were collared, and had to give up the struggle.

Figgins, as he was seized and overpowered, shouted up to the garrison above.

"They've got us, you fellows! Stick it out without us."
"Yaas, wathah, Figgy, old man!" called back Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Wely on us to stick it out!"

"Figgy!" yelled Fatty Wynn. "Figgy, old chap, I'm coming!"

"Don't!" yelled back Figgins. "There's no chance! Keep him back, you fellows!"

Figgins was hauled away before he could say more. In a rather ruffled and dishevelled group, the juniors were hustled away through the mist across the quad. Privates Brown and Green and Scuppers lingered on the field of battle, to gather up the bags of provisions, with many chuckles. The convoy had fallen into the wrong hands; but Private Brown and his comrades, at least, rejoiced.

Figgins & Co., in a very breathless state, were conducted into the New House by Sergeant Stuckey and a crowd of his men. There they came face to face with the headmaster they had defied and the two Housemasters. Dr. Holmes peered at them very severely over his glasses.

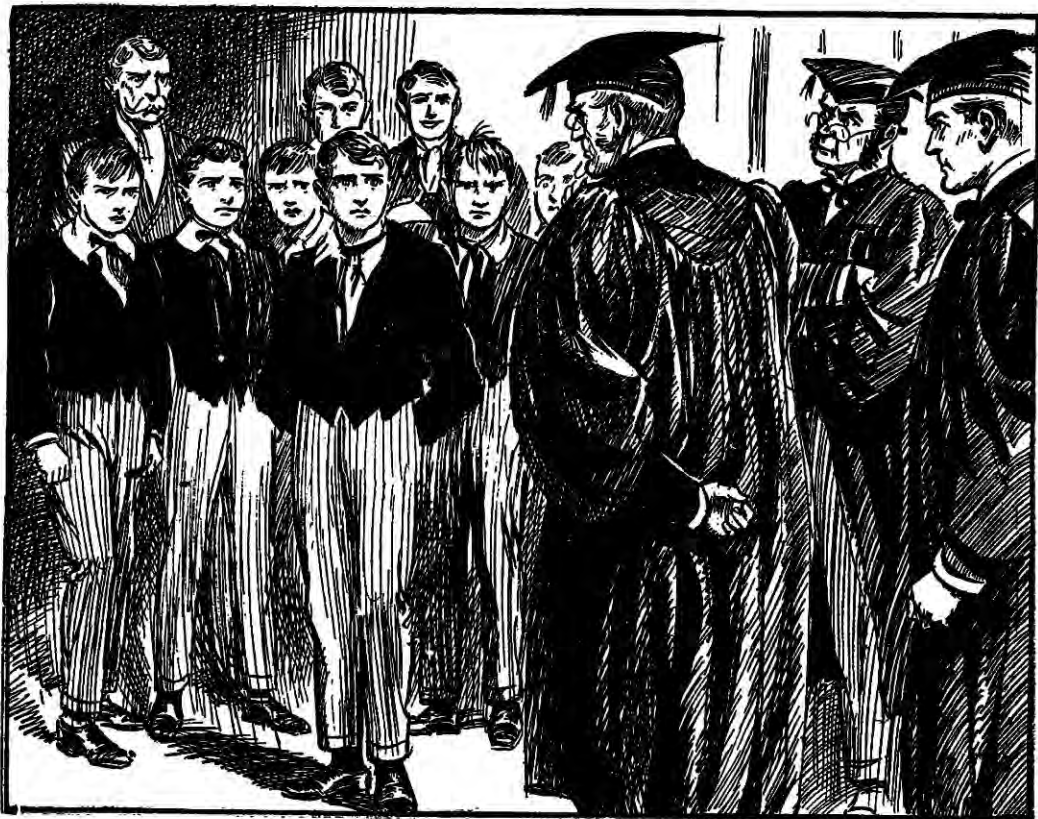
"Ah! Figgins! Kerr! What were these boys doing outside the House, sergeant?"

"Getting 'old of tommey, sir!" grinned the sergeant.

"Getting 'hold of Tommy!" repeated the Head in perplexity. "Tommy? Do you mean that Tom Merry was outside the House also, and that these boys were seizing him?"

"Oh, my eye!" said the sergeant. "I mean they was arter toke, sir."

"Toke!" said the astounded Head.
"Grub, sir!"



"Ah! Figgins and Kerr!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, peering at the two rebels over his glasses. "What were these boys doing outside the house, sergeant?" "Getting 'old of tommy, sir," grinned the sergeant. "Tommy?" repeated the Head in perplexity. "Do you mean that Tom Merry was outside the House also, and that these boys were seizing him?" "Oh, my eye!" said the sergeant. "I mean they were arter toke, sir!" (See page 12.)

"Grub? Oh, food!" said the Head. Apparently the word "grub," though not in the Head's own vocabulary, had reached his scholarly ears at some time or other, and he knew, or guessed, its meaning. "I—I see! They had gone out for food."

The sergeant blinked at him. This old gentleman was the headmaster of a big school, and he did not know what "tommy" and "toke" were. The sergeant marvelled at the ignorance of the wise.

"That's it, sir!" said Mr. Stuckey. "They 'ad a lot of bags, which 'ave been took."

"Very good!" said the Head. He fixed his eyes on Figgins. "I suppose food is very short in the School House, Figgins?"

"Oh, there's lots, sir," said Figgins cheerfully. "Fatty Wynn fancied a few things, that's all, and we went out for them."

"Nonsense, Figgins! There cannot be too much food left, with so many boys to feed," said Mr. Ratcliff.

"We're on rations, sir," said Figgins.

"Indeed! And how long, Figgins, do you suppose that the supply of food will last, even on rations?" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"About a hundred years, sir."

"What!"

"Wall, say ninety!" said Figgins. "I don't want to exaggerate."

There was a chuckle from the dishevelled prisoners. The enemy were not likely to gain much information from George Figgins—or, indeed, from any member of the party.

Mr. Ratcliff compressed his thin lips.

"These boys all belong to my House, Dr. Holmes," he said. "With your permission, I will take their punishment into my hands."

"Go ahead!" said Figgins coolly. "You're up now, and we're down. You can take it out of us. I didn't

notice you figuring in the scrapping, sir—I suppose now's the time for you to come out strong!"

There was a grin from Sergeant Stuckey and his men, and Mr. Ratcliff turned purple.

"Figgins! You—you insolent boy—"

"Kindly do not be impertinent, Figgins," said the Head mildly. "You boys will all be sent to your homes till the end of the vacation. Your Housemaster will cane you first."

"Aren't we entitled to the rights of prisoners of war?" inquired Redfern. "Did the Huns cane you, Mr. Stuckey, when they had you?"

The sergeant gave an explosive chuckle.

"Silence!" exclaimed the Head. "Mr. Ratcliff, I leave these boys in your hands, as they belong to your House."

"Very good, sir!" said Mr. Ratcliff, with a glitter in his eyes. "I shall punish them adequately!"

"One minute, sir!" exclaimed Kerr. "I have something to say to you, Dr. Holmes."

"You may speak!" said the Head coldly.

"We've found out what looks like proof that Tom Merry never did rob Mr. Ratcliff, sir—"

"Nonsense!"

"We've come across a man who—"

"Nonsense!" repeated the Head.

And the old gentleman turned away, leaving the captured rebels to the tender mercies of Mr. Ratcliff. The New House master took his cane.

"You will hold out your hand, Figgins!" he said.

Figgins looked round. There was overpowering force at hand. Mr. Ratcliff had followed the Head; but the sergeant and a dozen men remained in charge of the prisoners. George Figgins reluctantly extended his hand.

Swish!

"The other hand, Figgins!" said Mr. Ratcliff harshly.

(Continued on page 16.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 782.

The ST JIM'S NEWS

Edited by TOM MERRY.

EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

At the first glance I expect this number of "St. Jim's News" will probably be a bit of a staggerer to many of my readers. No, we have not suddenly taken leave of our senses, or even mislaid the dictionary.

This is Wally D'Arcy's first editorial effort, unaltered and entirely original in every way—at least, Wally says it is. The spelling is, well, rather weak, and perhaps, the grammar is not all that it might be, but Wally and Co. believe in the maxim that so long as the material is there, the manner in which it is put doesn't matter much.

For some time Wally has been worrying us to allow him to run the "News" all on his own. He explained that Dicky Nugent and Co. had had a number of the Greyfriars Herald all to themselves, and made a howling success of it, so why shouldn't he? Sammy Bunter, too, was a valued contributor, and Wally considers himself much smarter than Sammy.

The fags' number of the "Greyfriars Herald" was most certainly a "howlers" success if you go by the number of "howlers" it contained, but I told young Wally we would consider his proposal and he went off contentedly.

A week later, before we had even had time to have an editorial meeting of the staff of the "St. Jim's News," we received a round robin from the fags which, spelling corrected, ran something like this:

"Gentlemen and silly fatheads,
"Why don't you turn your beastly rag over to the geniuses in your midst? There is more talent in the Second and Third than there is in the whole of the rest of St. Jim's. Command our services, and double your circulation!"

Underneath were the signatures of several fags of which Wally D'Arcy's at the end was the only one we could manage to read. In writing his own name, he had smudged all the other signatures and then upset about half a bottle of ink over them all.

We held a meeting of the staff to consider the matter, and owing to the earliest pleas of our Fashions Editor, the one and only Arthur Aspinall D'Arcy, we turned the number over to his minor, not without some misgivings, however.

We also bumped Gussy severely after he had compared the brains of the D'Arcy family with some of the others, rather unfavourably for the latter.

For some days each fag marched around with a very important air, and were one and all even more inky than usual. Wally told me he had enough contributions to last the "News" for a year, in fact, he offered to run it altogether.

Enough as good as a feast, however, and after this gem from the mighty brains of the fags it will probably be some time before they again run your old favourite.

Joe Frayne wanted to contribute to this number, but, as enough is as good as a feast, I think I will hold over his little effort for some future issue.

TOM MERRY.

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THE LIFE STORY OF A BLOATER!

(This pathetic little gem comes from the pen—I mean pencil—of that brilliant writer—

Reginald Manners.)

After a few months swimming about in the mitey ocean, I was cort by a young fisherman named David Carew from the end of Southend Pier. The worm with which he cort me was a fat juicy one, and after eying it with great temptation I at last suckomed and swallowed the hook.

I was plaised with several other bloaters, all kicking and complaining, and we were put in a barrie. Then comes one of the most horrible parts of my life story. I was smoked!

When we were quite finished we were put back in the barrie and sent up to London. Here we were emptied upon a gre' marble slab at a plaice called Billings Gate, and Mr. Codd, the Rylcombe fishmouger, pour a lot of us. A fast train took us to Mr. Codd's home and my temting appearance attrakted the attention of a handsome young schoolboy from that fine old school St. Jim's, who carried me away.

My new owner stuck a penholder through my middle and started to cook me over the Common-room fire. I noticed a lot more of us were being treeted in the same horrible way. Then somebody murecfully jorged my owner's shoulder, and I fell into the ashes.

"Look hear, young Joe Frayne you've just knocked my bloater off my toasting fork," yelled the handsome young feller.

"Rott!" said the other warmly. "You've just knocked my pence of bread into the fire yourself, young Manners."

Soon a general mix up was in progress and young Frayne picked me up by the tale and threw me at Reggie Manners. That youth ducked promptly and I flew over his head strats for the door, which opened at that moment. With a sickening skwesh I lunded full in the face of Mr. Selby, master of the Third!

The finish is obvious, and the thought of it pains me a lot, so I'll leave you to guess what happened.—R. M.)



Stabbed with a penholder, I was held over the Common-room fire to cook.

JOTTINGS FROM THE THIRD FORM COMMON-ROOM!

(A few of the most important events of the week.)

By Stanley Gibson (Curly).

On Monday last the grade marbel tournament was held in the 3rd Form Common-room. Mr. Reginald Talbot of the Shell was kind enough to present a cup to the winner, siltely chipped but otherwise in first-class condition.

Their were many entrees—in fact, the whole of the 2nd and 3rd Forms entered, but their were several qualifying rounds, which dwindled the number down a lot.

Left in the competition proper were W. A. D'Arcy, J. Frayne, Curly Gibson, Reggie Manners, and Ruben Piggott. The draw for the first round was as follows: Wally D'Arcy v Reggie Manners, Joe Frayne v Curly Gibson, and Piggott drew a by.

After an exciting game Wally D'Arcy licked Reggie Manners in fine stile; while Joe Frayne licked Curly Gibson by a howling luke. (What rott,—Ed.)

The draw for the semi-final found Joe Frayne matched against Wally D'Arcy, while Piggott drew a by again. After we had bumped young Levison for scoffing the feed while we were playing, the game started. Excitement ran high. Even the lost herrings were forgotten. But Wally outlashed his opponent.

Young Piggott swanked horribly when the final commenced. He openly said it was a lot of rott drawing a by and we might as well give him the cup at ice. We all cheered like 1 o'clock when Wally heat him hollow, but Piggott said he had cheeted, so Wally punched his hed.

A meeting of the Fags' Union took place on Wednesday after prep. The fags met in order to protest against the bullying methods used by Knox of the 6th.

In evidense, Joe Frayne said he fagged for the rotten bully for some weeks, and was fed up. Knox had pulled his ear for putting salt in his tea instead of sugar—an accident which mite happen to anybody. He also stated Knox had punched his hed for toasting his muffins too much on one side.

It was desisted that an anonymous note should be sent to the bully and that his slippers should be filled with tin tax.

On Thursday young Wally suggested that a deputation should wate upon the Head and demand a seprate study for each 3rd-Former.

As Wally could get no support at the moment, it was decided to drop this skeme for the time being.

On Friday it c'me to our molledge that several Shell bounders had met together to discuss whether they should ask the Head for fags to be appointed to fellows in the Shell. Wally massed an army of fags, and we joined in the discussion with rulers, stumps, bottles of ink and paste, and flower and soot. The several Shell bounders have now desided not to ask the Head for fags.

On Saturday we had a footbawl match with the wildlidge boys, who were a jolly good team, cos they heat us two goals to one. We celebrated their victory by holding a feast in the Common-room, and everybody eniojed themselves. We are going to get our own hack before the end of the reeson—about the footbawl, not the feed!

THROUGH THE MAGICK SPECKTACKLES!

By Frank Levison.

A tense hush fell over the mitey crowd at the Wembley Stadium. Then a grating roar arose as the unbeten English football team appeared. Over 800,000 were there, and they all roared together.

It was the last International game of the year against Walls. England had beaten Ireland 16-0 and Scotland 12-0, and were now about to make rings round Walls! Most of the goals that year had been scored by the center-forward and the inside-right. These too were famous amateur players, W. A. D'Arcy and Frank Levison. For a long time the inside-forward combination had baffled the selection committee, but in a moment of inspiration they had picked these too, and had never regretted it, either.

Wally D'Arcy was the English captain as well as the center-forward, and he blushed as the spectators yelled his name.

"Buck up, Franky!" he whispered. "Let's get on with it!"

Followed by the rest of the team, the too, who were the idols of the crowd, raced towards the further goal, and commenced to practise shots. Crash! With a mitey shot Franky Levison beet the famous goal.



I suddenly woke up to find Wally standing over me with a streaming sponge.

"Good shot!" everybody yelled.

It was a jolly good shot, too! The referee's whistle interrupted the practise, and the English captain went up to the half-way line in order to toss up. "Heads!" cried Wally, as the coin spun. "Tails!" it's tails!" yelled the Welsh captain happily.

A grin took settled on our captain's face as he told his men the direction in which they were kicking. A nor'w'ind had sprung up—almost half a gale, in fact.

The amateur center-forward tapped the bawl to his famous inside-right as the whistle blew. Now, it was almost as much as we could do to kick the bawl. Like a flash Franky Levison swung the bawl rite across to his wing, but the treacherous wind sent it from its true direction.

A nippy Welsh forward was upon the bawl like lightning, but the English captain was nippier. Turning back, he tricked the Welsh outside-left neatly, and, with a tremendous effort, sped down the field, and drove the bawl into the nett. Crash!

"Goal!" roared the vast crowd. Then the rain came down in bucketfuls, and I was drenched to the skin. I woke up to find that best Wally standing over me with a streaming sponge, yelling that rising-bell had gone a long time.

"Come on, slacker!" he cried. "It ain't Christmas-time now, you know. If you don't show a leg quick I'll turn the bed over on the top of you!"

It was a quick move I made then, you bet!



PART 1. CHAPTER 1.

FLASH HORRIS, the dandy crack-man, stood upon the pavement polishing his nails with a silk handkerchief. Suddenly his eyes lit up with a cunning lile as an enormous Rolls-Daimler rolled by.

Within was seated the bewtiful young Countess of Arrowroot. A hoarse cry blurt from the lips of Flash Horris as he cort site of the marvellous string of perls clasped round her fare neck.

"Crums!" he muttered. "Those perls shall be mine."

He looted like a howl three times.

CHAPTER 2.

At once Horris' gang began to collect from all sides. His leftennant, Croking Bill, was the first upon the seen.

"Do you see that car?" asked Flash Horris.

"Not i," replied Croking Bill.

"Well, it contains the Countess of Arrowroot."

"Oh golly," cried Croking Bill. "Was she wareing the sparklers?"

"Course she was, you chump," replied the impudent Horris. "Six rows of them round and round her fare neck."

"They shall be ours in three hours," hissed his leftennant.

"Good!" cried Flash Horris.

CHAPTER 3.

Two hours later a high power Ford car drove up to No. 13 Thieves Kitchen Alley where Flash Horris' gang lived. Again through the nite came the hoot of an owl, and the door of No. 13 opened stelhely.

Then 1 by 1 the gang began to creep out. Flash Horris came first. He was wareing a black velvet mask and round his waist was a belt containing several revolvers.

Croking Bill followed him and he was dressed in very much the same way as his leader. When all the gang had got into the car, the driver shut the door and leaned through the window.

"Wear are you going too?" he asked. "The hunt hall at Cornflower Castle," hissed Flash Horris mysteriously.

He knew that that was wear the Countess was going.

CHAPTER 4.

The chimes of midnite rang out from the old clock tower at Cornflower Castle as Flash Horris' car drove up. The gang dismounted and surrounded the old gateway.

As the last stroke of twelve struck the Countess of Arrowroot, ran down the drive, r wonderfu perls shimmered under her cloak.

"Now," hissed Flash Horris, as he leapt forward. "Hands up!"

"Rats," replied the plucky countess.

In a few minutes she was overpowered by the ruffians, who outnumbered her. Snatching the perls from her neck, Flash Horris jumped into his car, followed by the others.

"Cheery oh," called Croking Bill as they made off.

"You rotten cads!" howled the countess, as she made a note of the car number upon her dance program, then she collapsed with a grone.

AT DED of NITE.

By that Talented Young Orther,
Walter Adolphus D'Arcy.

PART 2. CHAPTER 1.

As the countess collapsed a handsome young man, who had heard the row, ran up.

"Crums!" he exclaimed. "What's happened?"

He carefully raised the countess from the ground and with a fluttering eye she came two. In a few hasty words she told him what the trouble was.

"The villains," cried the young man, whose name was Bob Daker. "I will re-cover them for you."

"You darling!" cried the countess. "Come to my car," said Bob Daker, and he led the way towards his racing car.

CHAPTER 2.

A few minutes afterwards the 2 were speeding off in the direction taken by the car of Flash Horris. Luckily they were no side turnings to the road so they new they were upon the rite track.

"Hark," said the countess after about 1 of an hour. "I can here a car."

"It's a Ford, two," exclaimed Bob Daker joyfully. "We'll soon catch her up."

He was as good as his word. As the car in front passed a lamp post the countess saw the number and new it was Flash Horris'. A neck and neck race ensued, but at last the car in front came to a standstill.

"Now we've got the rotters!" yelled Bob.

CHAPTER 3.

Bob Daker's car slowed up. Then from the other car came a hole of bullets. The rotters were bring upon them.

Bob Daker threw the lovely countess to the floor of his car and crept out over the spare wheel. He was unarmed but he did not hesitate. With a horse "Goodby" to the Countess of Arrowroot he raced towards the other car.

"Come on, you cads," he cried as he got near the other car.

A sinkle laugh was all he got in reply. Then Flash Horris took a pot shot at Bob, but missed. Somebody had upset sum petrol on the caps for his pistols.

"Surrender, villain!" shouted Bob.

"Sha'n't!" retorted the villain.

Bob Daker wated no longer but lashed out. A rite uppercut to the jaw lade Flash Horris upon the road. Seeing there leader falt the rest of the gang ran away.

CHAPTER 4.

The Countess of Arrowroot rushed up at that moment with a policeman she had run 'o find while the fite was in progress. The famous perls were found in Flash Horris' pocket and he was sentenced to 49 years 6 months imprisonment.

A short time afterwards the wedding bells rang out there merry peal over Bob Daker and the Countess of Arrowroot.

THE END.



As he felled Flash Horris with a rite uppercut the rest of the gang ran away.

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"HARD PRESSED!"

(Continued from page 13.)

Horace Ratcliff was not an athlete; but he put remarkable energy into those wishes. Figgins turned quite pale. "Now the other hand again, Figgins!"

George Figgins set his teeth.

"That's enough, sir!" he said.

"Hold out your hand at once, Figgins!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"I won't!"

"Don't!" said Kerr.

"Sergeant Stuckey, seize that boy and compel him—" began Mr. Ratcliff.

The sergeant looked at Mr. Ratcliff. He was a grim martinet himself; he fully believed in the efficacy of the rod of iron. But he had no sympathy whatever with malicious spitefulness.

"Skuse me, sir," said Mr. Stuckey; "seems to me that the kid has had enough."

"That is not your business, my man!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"And it ain't my business to 'old him, neither!" said the sergeant. "I'm 'ere under Mr. Railton's orders, not yours."

"Ear, ear!" said several other voices.

And the old soldiers made a move to go. The juniors exchanged quick glances. Once the Tommies were off the scene, they would have dealt with Mr. Ratcliff fast enough.

Mr. Ratcliff realised that. He moderated his transports, so to speak.

"Kindly do not go," he snapped. "Mr. Railton has left you in charge of those mutinous young rascals."

"We'll see they don't get away!" said the sergeant, with a grunt. "But they're plucky kids, if they're cheeky; and we ain't 'elping you to take it out of them, old gentleman."

"That we ain't!" said Private Hooker.

"Kerr, hold out your hand!"

Mr. Ratcliff gave up the disputed point. He proceeded along the row of juniors, giving them two cuts each. But the cuts were hefty ones, and the rebels rubbed their hands with anguish.

Then Mr. Ratcliff, with a frowning brow, whisked away.

Half an hour later, Figgins and his comrades were on their way to the railway-station, escorted by Mr. Railton. They went quietly enough; there was obviously no chance of getting back into the School House, and they had no desire to remain in the New House in company with their Housemaster.

At the station, Mr. Railton, with a thoughtful brow, drew Kerr aside.

"What was it you wished to tell the Head, Kerr?" he asked quietly. "I shall be glad to know."

Kerr explained at once the incident of the purple-faced gentleman, and added that Inspector Skeat had promised to look into the matter. The School House master listened without interruption, his brow growing more and more thoughtful.

"If there is anything in this, Kerr, you may depend upon it that it will be elucidated," said Mr. Railton. "I shall myself call upon Inspector Skeat and consult him. I only hope that it may turn out as you think. In any case, you have done very well, my boy. I hope and trust that it may yet prove that Tom Merry has been wronged."

Mr. Railton saw the juniors off in their train, and returned to St. Jim's with a thoughtful face. His doubts of Tom Merry's guilt had been strengthened. He hoped—he almost believed—that the rebel leader of St. Jim's was innocent. But that did not make any difference to the duty he had to do, which was to put down the rebellion against the headmaster's authority. That was the Housemaster's task; and a task that he was determined to carry through.

CHAPTER 9. The Attack.

"WHAT awful luck!"

Fatty Wynn fairly groaned.

The Falstaff of St. Jim's felt the blow deeply. Not only had his two chums been taken by the enemy, but the consignment of provisions had been captured. That was the unkindest cut of all. Fatty Wynn wore an expression compared with which the mournful looks

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of Niobe of old might have been considered merry and bright.

"Poor old Figgy!" mumbled Fatty Wynn. "Poor old Kerr! And the grub! It's rotten for Figgy; but think of the grub! Kerr was going to bring a lot of sausages in his bag! Poor old sausages—I—I mean, poor old Kerr! Oh dear!"

"Hi!"

It was a hail from the foot of the staircase. Tom Merry looked over the barricade.

Private Brown, with a merry grin, held up a string of succulent sausages.

Fatty Wynn's mournful gaze fixed upon them.

"Thanks, young fellers!" said Private Brown. "This was very thoughtful of you—very! I always did like a sausage for my tea."

"This here ham," said Private Green, "is prime! My best thanks to the cove that thought of sending for this here ham."

"What price this cold beef?" asked Private Scuppers. "Pounds and pounds of it—cut and come again, you know. Young gentlemen, I'm very much obliged to you."

"We all are," said Mr. Brown. "Very much indeed! And if you'll be so kind, will you send for a fresh lot to-morrow? We'll be ready to nab it as it comes in, you may lay to that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, give 'em a volley!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully. The sight of the captured provisions was exasperating to the garrison, reduced now to such short commons.

There was a whizzing of tins and other missiles down the staircase, and Private Brown & Co. marched off with their plunder, still chuckling. There was a most enjoyable "high tea" that afternoon on the ground floor of the School House, while the garrison above ate their rations in a very gingerly way.

"Bai Jove! We weally have been done this time!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dolorously. "I am not a gwedday chap as a rule—not like poor old Fatty, you know—"

"Silly ass!" interjected Fatty Wynn.

"Weally, Wynn—"

"B-r-r-r!" growled Fatty.

"As I was wemarkin', I am not a gwedday chap, but I weally should like a solid meal again," said Arthur Augustus. "Fatty is vewy olevah in makin' an Iwish stew out of nothin', but aftah a time a fellow would pfer to have somethin' in it. But nevah mind—stick it out!"

Tom Merry had a rather worried look.

"I'm beginning to think that I oughtn't to have let you fellows get landed in this," he said slowly. "I've said before, and I say now, I sha'n't take it amiss if any fellow would like to stand out."

"Wats!"

"Rot!"

"Cheese it!"

"I twust, Tom Mewwy, that you do not take my wemark as hintin' that I am weakenin' in any way," said Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Not at all, old fellow. But—"

"Wats! We are stickin' it out to the vewy end. If the gwub runs out, we shall manage somehow."

"If we come down to cannibalism, like chaps in an open boat at sea," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "Fatty will last us quite a long time. We can look on Fatty as a month's reserve of provisions for the whole garrison."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"B-r-r-r!" grunted Fatty Wynn. The fat Fourth-Former was thinking of his captured chums and the captured provisions—mourning for both perhaps equally—and he was not in a humorous mood. He mourned for that which was lost, and could not be comforted by Monty Lowther's little jokes.

The winter night set in, and two or three candles and bike lamps glimmered at the barricades. It was all the illumination that the hard-pressed rebels could afford. One fire was kept going at a large grate in a passage, and the juniors mostly gathered round it. Early to bed was the rule; but a guard remained on the watch during the night hours.

About midnight there was an alarm at the main barricade—someone in the dark below was stealthily operating on the stacked furniture. Kangaroo of the Shell tossed a chair over the barricade, and it went rolling and crashing down.

A fiendish yell answered from the darkness below, and the juniors recognised the voice of Sergeant Stuckey.

There was a sound of retreating footsteps. The sergeant, apparently, had had enough for that night.

There was no further alarm. Morning dawned once more over St. Jim's, and the garrison gathered to their frugal breakfast. Fatty Wynn was observed to wear a brighter expression.

"Figgy and Kerr are home now," Fatty remarked. "Kerr will be at Figgy's place, you know. We were going

with him for the vac, if this barring-out hadn't turned up. They'll be at brekker now—bacon and eggs"—Fatty Wynn sighed—"and kidneys, and buttered toast! It's a comfort to think of them getting a jolly good brekker, isn't it? Almost as good as having it oneself."

During the morning Mr. Railton was seen to enter the School House, where most of his men had camped for the night. There was a buzz of voices below, and Tom Merry & Co. were on their guard at once.

"Looks like business," said Levison of the Fourth.

"We're ready!" said Herries.

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

"Gussy, old man—"

"Yaas, Wally, deah boy?"

"Show your face over the barricade, Gussy."

"Bai Jove! What for?" demanded Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass in amazement on his cheery minor.

"Scare them off, you know!"

"You uthah young ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Look out!" called out Levison minor.

Tom Merry & Co. lined the barricade. Mr. Railton and the whole crowd of the enemy had gathered at the foot of the big staircase, and it was evident that the attack was coming.

The Housemaster glanced up the big staircase at the row of faces showing over the barrier.

Cardew waved his hand in greeting.

"Good-mornin', sir! Lookin' for more trouble?"

Mr. Railton did not reply. Two or three of his men brought in ladders, which were planted against the big, oak balustrade beside the stairs. The angle of the staircase above, however, made it impossible to rear the ladders near the landing.

"Now, my men!" said Mr. Railton.

And the attack came with a rush.

**CHAPTER 10.
Over the Top!**

"OVER the top!" sang out Private Brown.

There was a plentiful supply of missiles, stacked

"Give them socks!" roared Blake.

Whiz! whiz! whiz!

ready for use, and a volley swept down the staircase on the attacking party. Mr. Railton, plunging first over the barricade to lead his men, received a tin kettle on his respected head, and went backwards with a sharp exclamation. The sergeant clambered on, clambering actively over the stacked furniture on the staircase, but he was quickly in difficulties. His legs slipped down in the interstices of the stack, and he found himself unable to advance or to retreat. He struggled there, exposed to the fire from above, yelling as the missiles rained on him.

Others were coming up the ladders and clambering over the banisters. Private Brown, heedless of raining missiles, arrived within a few feet of the landing, but there he stuck fast in the furniture. Jack Blake reached over and tapped him with a cricket-stump, and Mr. Brown gave a terrific howl.

The task the assailants had to perform was a difficult one. Some of them working below strove to drag away the stack of furniture, but Blake's nails and screws were not easy to deal with. And those who were clambering over the top found progress slow and difficult. Some of them stuck fast, like the sergeant and Mr. Brown; but five or six fellows, breathless and gasping, succeeded in getting to the top, within reach of the landing. There they were met by lashing cricket-stumps and lunging brooms, and they dodged back from that hot reception.

There were loud yells and howls on the crowded staircase.

"Give the wottahs socks, deah boys!" roared Arthur Augustus, brandishing a cricket-stump.

"Yaroooh!" roared Herries.

"Bai Jove! What is the mattah, Hewwies?"

"You silly owl!" shrieked Herries. "You've nearly brained me!"

"Oh ewumbs! I weally wish you would not shove your head in my way, Hewwies. Can't you keep your head out of a fellow's way?"

Herries did not answer that in words. He rushed on Arthur Augustus and got that noble youth's head into chancery.

Thump, thump, thump!

(Continued on next page.)

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What You Have to Do!

Here is a very simple little competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of The Wednesday 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 "The Wednesday" Competition, Gem Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, February 8th, 1923.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all, or any, of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

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I enter "THE WEDNESDAY" COMPETITION, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

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"Yawwoh! Help! Wescue! Help, deah boys! Hewwies has gone pottay!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwoogh! Yoop! Ow!"

Herries was dragged off. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rubbed his noble nose and gasped.

"Hewwies, you uttaw wuffian—"

"Back up!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Order!"

"Don't you Fourth Form kids begin ragging!" said Wally of the Third. "Have a little sense!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Look out!" roared Blake

Private Brown had detached his imprisoned legs from the intricacies of the furniture at last, and hurled himself forward. He received half a dozen severe swipes without heeding them, and came rolling headlong over on to the landing.

"Collar him!"

"Jump on him!"

"Yass, wathah!"

Private Brown had penetrated the defences. But he could do no more. He disappeared at once under a swarm of juniors.

His voice was heard, in muffled yells, as he vanished from sight under a crowd of excited fellows.

The struggle was waxing fast and furious now.

There were seven or eight of the enemy close up to the landing, and others struggling after them.

But the defence was too vigorous.

Under a rain of lashes and lunges the assailants had to dodge back. And then they were given no rest; all sorts of missiles showered on them from above.

One by one they dropped away. Sergeant Stuckey, when he had wriggled himself loose, rolled down instead of coming up. Others rolled and wriggled after him. Mr. Ratcliff, realising at last that there was "nothing doing," called off his men to save further damage. The damages already done were very considerable.

"Now chuck that boulder Brown over!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Ow! Wow—wow!" came from Private Brown. "Go easy! Ow! Oh, my word! Woop!"

In the grasp of a score of hands, the hapless Mr. Brown was hoisted over the barricade and sent rolling down.

He clutched, at a table-leg and stopped his wild career; and then the juniors mercifully allowed him to crawl the rest of the way to safety unassailed.

There was a loud cheer from the victorious garrison.

"Hurrah!"

"Huwway!" shouted Arthur Augustus, waving his eyes glass in great excitement. "Huwway, deah boys!"

"Bravo us!" chuckled Cardew.

The attack had been driven off. Mr. Ratcliff and his men gathered again at the foot of the staircase; the House-master's face was very grim. Never had the juniors seen Mr. Ratcliff looking so angry and exasperated.

"This way up!" shouted Blake jubilantly. "Come on, you're not half licked yet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the fight was over. It was a bitter pill for the Housemaster to swallow; but there was no help for it. Mr. Ratcliff came in by the open door on the quadrangle and blinked round him.

"Is it over?" he asked.

"It is over—for the present!" answered Mr. Ratcliff grimly.

"You have finished with those young rascals?"

"Scarcely yet!"

Mr. Ratcliff glanced up the barricaded staircase, and then at the hapless heroes of Flanders who were rubbing their bruises and contusions—of which they had a plentiful crop. Then he fixed his eyes, with a very unpleasant look, on the School House master.

"Mr. Ratcliff!" he exclaimed, "Surely you have not allowed those boys—a set of Lower boys—to defeat you again!"

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes gleamed. He was angry and disappointed; and his head was aching from violent contact with a tin kettle. He was in no humour to listen patiently to his colleague's criticisms.

"You can see for yourself!" he snapped.

Mr. Ratcliff shrugged his thin shoulders.

"It is really very extraordinary!" he said, "I am surprised; quite surprised! It really does not seem that you are able to deal with this matter, Mr. Ratcliff!"

"You are welcome to deal with it, Mr. Ratcliff," said the School House master. "These good fellows have been very roughly used, but I am sure they will follow if you will lead the way, and I will do so myself."

Mr. Ratcliff coughed. He glanced at the stacked staircase and at the row of defenders above, and coughed again. Apparently it was not a chance of distinguishing himself as a fighting-man that Horace Ratcliff was looking for.

"Hem!"

"Yes, come on, Ratty!" shouted Monty Lowther. The juniors above had heard all that was said. "This way, Ratty! Lead on, Macduff!"

"Lowther, this insouciance—"

"This way, Ratty!" shouted Cardew. "What are you hanging back for, old skinny bean?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff gritted his teeth. The old soldiers were grinning. They were well aware that they would not be called upon to follow Mr. Ratcliff's lead into the danger zone.

"Mr. Ratcliff—" began the New House master sourly. Mr. Ratcliff turned his back on his colleague and walked away. Horace Ratcliff flushed with anger.

Whiz!

A tin can sailed down the staircase, hurled with unerring aim by Wildrake of the Fourth.

"Oh!" roared Mr. Ratcliff.

The tin can landed on his head, knocking off his mortar-board. The sudden shock made Mr. Ratcliff sit down.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well hit!"

"Goal!" roared Blake, and there was a yell of laughter.

"Oh! Ow! Oh! Oh dear!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff, staggering to his feet. "You young rascals—Ow! Young scoundrels—Ooooooh—"

Whiz, whiz, whiz, whiz!

"Oh dear! Goodness gracious! Yarooooooh!"

Mr. Ratcliff fairly fled with missiles rattling round his unprotected head. He disappeared out of the big doorway, going at a great rate, followed by howls of laughter from the St. Jim's rebels.

"Victory, deah boys!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with great satisfaction. "We shall hold out till the new term all right!"

"Yes, rather!"

"What next, though, I wonder!" murmured Cardew.

What next was a question to which the rebels of St. Jim's could not supply an answer. But one thing at least was certain, and that was, that for Tom Merry & Co. there was no surrender.

THE END.

(On no account must you miss reading about the final scenes in this most exciting drama at St. Jim's. Mr. Martin Clifford has written a remarkable story for next week, entitled: "Unconquered!" which, as you will learn next Wednesday, brings to light many strange things. In the end, Tom Merry & Co. are still unconquered, but they know that the end, one way or the other, is very near indeed.)

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