

ANOTHER BUDGET OF THE BEST STORIES THIS WEEK, BOYS !

The GEM 2^D

No. 783.

Vol. XXIII.

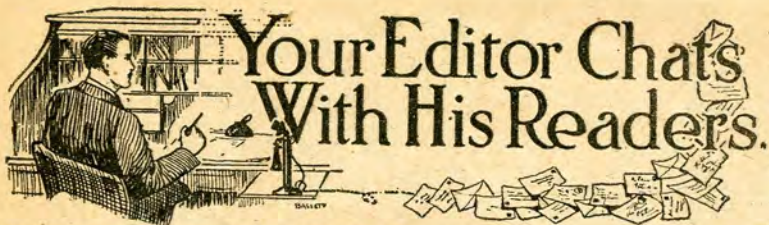
February 10th, 1923.

LIBRARY

SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



DRIVEN TO THE ROOF, BUT STILL NOT BEATEN !



Address all letters: The Editor, "The Gem Library," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" Every Monday
 "THE MAGNET" Every Monday
 "THE POPULAR" Every Tuesday
 "CHUCKLES" Every Thursday
 "THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly.

My Dear Chums,—There will be some considerable large-sized regret that the famous barring-out stories are drawing to a close. There has never been anything quite as good, as dramatic, and sparkling, as this series. The yarns deserve, and will get a place in the memory. They have the ring about them of the brave days of old. Tom Merry's stand for justice ranks as the biggest thing which ever happened at the old school.

A GRAND WIND UP.

The best things, however, must come to an end. Next Wednesday's GEM will contain the best of the batch of barring-out tales—and the final. The final is a winner; every line of it pulsates with the real significance of the Great Push of the stalwarts of St. Jim's. There is an old verse about a certain individual called Trelawney, and fifty thousand Cornishmen insisting upon knowing the reason why he should die. That's the spirit of Mr. Martin Clifford's latest and grandest effort in the fine art of school-story writing.

REAL GRIT!

Keep the numbers of the good old GEM with the barring-out yarns, even if you cannot bind all the issues. You will be glad enough to turn back later on and see how it was done; to note the grit of it; to see how a principle was fought for. We have nothing to do here with defiance of authority. That had to be. But here, as over and over again, if you take a glance down history, you find that authority—mistaken in its judgments—was no end pleased at a defeat which eventually made for better order, and a sounder state of things.

THE FIGHTING SPIRIT!

This grand old spirit is maintained right away to the swinging, tense, and who-says-die culmination. Strike the Flag! Never on your life! It means something. It signifies too many good things for me to cram the lot into my limited Chat. And look at the rush of incident! If Martin Clifford were any ordinary sort of a chap he would require a rest-cure after this tour de force, as Carpentier would call it—the attack through the skylights, the barricading, the hopelessness of a certain new recruit, and all the rest.

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ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL!

How does it end? You had better wait. Tom Merry is still under a cloud of most unwarranted suspicion. Even a wise old bird like the Head slips into errors of judgment. But somebody did take the cash, the theft of which has been laid at Tom Merry's door. You will think the climax rather pretty. It is all that. Inspector Skeat trips on to the scene, and he is in quest of somebody. The defenders of the citadel of the School House think another attack is imminent. Not so. Look out for next week's magnificent number of the GEM. You will say it is the real goods.

"THE MISSING WORLD'S CHAMPION!"

The stirring boxing long complete next week bears the above title. It is a fascinating affair, with any amount of punch in it. Read next Wednesday how the champion got knocked on the head, and lost his memory. The narrative of his wanderings and adventures in a boxing booth where nobody knows who he is, least of all himself, is altogether fine!

TUCK HAMPER!

Look out for the Grand Special Offer next week. There has never been anything to equal it. Here's your chance for a Tuck Hamper!

A COURT-MARTIAL NUMBER!

The "St. Jim's News" is going ahead in great style. Its Courtmartial Number beats the band. Drumhead trials are sometimes called for, as here, and of late St. Jim's has been going through it with a vengeance. Many of the chaps are only just back from the war with laurel wreaths and much glory.

A "MAGNET" SPECIAL.

This is a first-rate Free Photograph of the Crystal Palace Team, now on sale with the current splendid issue of our Companion Paper.

A BOOK FOR THE HANDYMAN.

The word "Encyclopedia" often suggests something dry and dull, but there is nothing like that about "Harmsworth's Household Encyclopedia," Part 1 of which is published this week. This is the most interesting, practical, and useful book for the handyman ever published. It tells you by means of thousands of pictures and simple diagrams how to mend, make, and do everything round and about the home, from building a brick wall or model aeroplane, making a boat or fitting up a telephone, to mending a tap or an electric bell.

It is the most up-to-date and fascinating book of home hobbies that one could possibly imagine. It will be issued in fortnightly parts at 1s. 3d. each. Part 1 is now on sale.

YOUR EDITOR.

BOYS, THIS IS THE TALE THAT WILL THRILL YOU!

The Amazing Adventures of the Famous

DICK TURPIN

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The King of the Road in all his Glory.



A Story that will take you back into the grand old fighting-days, when Turpin was the aristocrat of the Highway.



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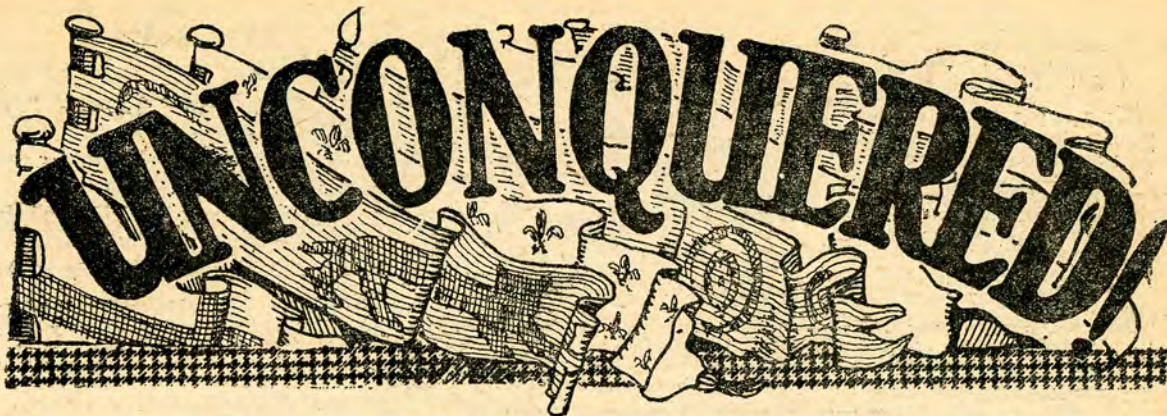
Dick Turpin was such a fighter as England had not seen since the days of Robin Hood, a good comrade, loyal to all his friends, but a bitter enemy.



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IN SPITE OF THE "BIG PUSH" MADE BY SERGEANT STUCKEY & CO.,
THE REBELS REMAIN JUBILANT. AN EXCITING SCHOOL STORY.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I. A Desperate Venture.

"PWAY be quiet!"
"Shurrup!"
"Weally, Blake—"
"Will you dry up?" asked Jack Blake, in low, concentrated tones.

"Order!" murmured Tom Merry.
It really was not a time for talking; though Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not seem to recognise that fact.

Darkness had fallen upon St. Jim's.
The upper part of the School House showed no gleam of light; though in the windows of the ground floor there was a glimmer of lamps.

Tom Merry peered from an upper window into the winter darkness. All without was dark and silent.

"Looks safe enough!" murmured Tom. "But—"
"We're goin' to wisk it, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But these fellows will have to be vewy careful to be quiet. I keep on warnin' them not to uttah a word; but Blake will talk."

Blake breathed hard.
But for the stern necessity for silence just then Blake probably would have punched the noble nose of Arthur Augustus. But it was strictly necessary to make no sound.

The rebels of St. Jim's had fallen upon hard times.
Short commons had been the order of the day for some time; and now the commons had become very short indeed.

The barring-out was still going strong; Tom Merry & Co. did not even think of surrender. But the question of the food supply was a pressing one.

The ground floor of the School House was held by the enemy—Mr. Railton and his followers.

But every attack on the barricaded staircases had been defeated, so far; Tom Merry & Co. still held the fort, with undiminished courage and determination.

More than one sortie had been made by members of the garrison to secure supplies; but they had failed. Now Blake & Co., the heroes of Study No. 6, had volunteered for another venture.

Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy were ready. There was a knotted rope from the window by which to slide down—the same rope was to pull them up when they returned with provisions. Tom Merry had his doubts; but he consented to the venture. Blake, on the other hand, had very few doubts—he had great faith in his own strategy. All that was needed, according to Blake, was a muzzle for the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

"They're all indoors!" whispered Monty Lowther, staring from the window. "It's jolly good outside. The chaps may get through."

"Let's try it, anyhow," said Herries.
"Silence, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus reprovingly, and, unfortunately, without thinking of lowering his voice. "It is quite pwoab that the giddy enemy may be listenin'—"

"You burbling ass!" breathed Digby.
"Weally, Dig—"
"Shut up, Gussy, for goodness' sake!" whispered Tom Merry. "Now, the rope's ready. Blake first."

"Ready!" murmured Blake.
"Hold on a minute, deah boy—"
"You—you frabjous chump!" hissed Blake. "If you must burble, can't you burble in a whisper!"
"I wefuse to be called a fwabjous chump, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "and I stwongly object to heah my wemarks chawactewised as burblin'!"

"Kill him, somebody!" murmured Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

There was a sound of voices from below in the School House. A dozen voices were raised in chorus. In the lower rooms, Mr. Railton's followers were camped, waiting for the next order to attack the schoolboy rebels in their stronghold. "Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag!" came in stentorian tones through the gloom.

"Good!" grinned Blake. "While they're kicking up that row, they won't hear Gussy burbling."

"Some of them may be on the watch outside!" said Talbot.

"We've got to chance that."

"Hold on a minute, deah boy! Bettah let me go first," said Arthur Augustus.

"Fathead!"

"This is wathah a difficult opewation, Blake, and it wequiah a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"Sit on his head!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

Jack Blake grasped the rope, and swung himself out of the window. Arthur Augustus frowned and shook his head dubiously. He was afflicted by doubts of the success of an enterprise in which he did not take the lead.

But there was no help for it now. Hand below hand, Jack Blake of the Fourth went actively down the rope.

It was yet early in the evening; but the darkness was thick. Blake disappeared from the eyes of the anxious watchers at the window.

But a minute later the rope was shaken from below—the agreed signal that the adventurer had landed safely.

"Good!" breathed Tom Merry. "You next, Herries."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Dry up, Gussy, old man!"

George Herries swung himself out on the rope. He vanished into the darkness after Blake, and again the rope was shaken.

Robert Arthur Digby was the next to go.

Dig also landed in safety; and then it came the turn of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Buck up, Gussy, if you're going!" said Tom.

"There is no 'if' about it, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "The entahpwise is hardly likely to be a success if I do not go."

"Well, get a move on!"

"I am gettin' a move on. Pway don't huwwy a chap."

Arthur Augustus grasped the rope, and crept out on the window-sill. There he stopped.

"Bai Jove! I forgot—"

"Get going, for goodness' sake!" whispered Talbot of the Shell.

"I forgot my gloves—"

"Gloves!" hissed Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! This wope is vewy wuff on the hands. I do not want to abwade my skin."

"You—you—you—" gasped Tom Merry.

"Is that idiot coming?" came a fierce whisper from below.

"Bai Jove! I——"

"Get going, Gussy!" implored Tom Merry. "Never mind your gloves now; never mind your skin."

"But I must mind, Tom Mewwy, old chap! I am wathah particulah about my hands, you know. The fellows can wait while I wun to Studay No. 6 for a paih of gloves—or pewwaps you will wun for me."

"Push him off the sill!" murmured Cardew of the Fourth.

"Weally, Cardew——"

"Stick a pin in him!" suggested Monty Lowther. "I've got a pin here——"

"Bai Jove, Lowthah, you wuffian——"

"I give you one second!" said Monty Lowther. "Here's the pin, and if you're not gone in a second——"

"Ow! I'm goin'!"

NEXT WEEK'S STORY——

And, regardless of his hands now, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy slid down the rope to the ground.

CHAPTER 2.

Bagged!

"SAFE as houses!" whispered Blake.

The four chums of Study No. 6 stood in the darkness, and peered round them, at the foot of the wall.

From the interior of the House the chorus still sounded, a dozen voices going strong.

But there was no sound or movement in the darkness outside. Study No. 6 seemed to have chosen the moment well for their venture.

"It's all wight," said Arthur Augustus, "I have, howevah, wubbed my hands wathah severely on that wotten wope."

"Shurrup!"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Come on!" said Digby.

Blake gave the rope a final shake, as a signal to the juniors above to pull it up; and then the four Fourth-Formers started along the wall, groping their way in cautious silence.

"Ow!"

Blake uttered that startled exclamation as he collided with somebody in the gloom.

The next second a pair of strong hands had fastened on him.

There was a chuckle.

"Collar the others, mateys!" said a cheery voice—the voice of Private Brown.

"Oh cwumbs!"

Blake struggled desperately in the grasp of Private Brown. He realised that, after all, the silence had been deceptive; that a keen watch was being kept by the enemy. The four juniors, climbing down from the window, had fairly walked into the arms of the enemy.

"Hook it, you fellows!" panted Blake. "They've got me!"

"Bai Jove!"

Herries and Digby rushed into the darkness—and into the arms of Sergeant Stuckey and Private Scuppers.

Arthur Augustus sprang to the aid of Blake, and his noble fist crashed on the nose of Private Brown.

Mr. Brown, with a loud yell, released the junior, clapping his nose instead.

"Come on, deah boy!" panted Arthur Augustus.

The two juniors rushed on—but it was in vain. Shadowy forms started out of the darkness, and they were grasped again, and held.

An iron grip fastened on Arthur Augustus' collar, and he struggled and wriggled in vain.

"Welease me, you wuffian!" he panted. "Welease me, and I will give you a feahful thwashin'! Oh cwumbs! Ow!"

"Got 'em!" grinned Sergeant Stuckey. "'Ow many of them? Four? Bring 'em along, and some of you keep a look-out 'ere for the rest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Six or seven of the old soldiers gathered round the prisoners and marched them off.

Blake & Co. went with feelings too deep for words. Jack Blake had had little doubt—or rather none—that a sortie would be successful in the masterly hands of Study No. 6. But it was evident that the enemy were too keen even for that famous study.

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With grasping hands on their collars the captured juniors were marched away round the School House, and across the quad to the New House, where the Head and the House-masters had their quarters during the rebellion in the School House.

"Bai Jove, deah boys!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "We seem to have done it this time!"

"Rotten luck!" growled Herries.

"Cheerio, kids!" grinned Private Brown. "You're only going to get a whacking and be sent home!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Digby crossly.

"'Ere we are!" said Mr. Brown good humouredly, as the prisoners were marched up the steps of the New House and into the lighted hall.

Mr. Railton was there, and he glanced severely at the crestfallen four.

"They came out of a winder, sir!" said Sergeant Stuckey. "We was keeping guard according to orders and they fairly walked into us. And 'ere they are, sir!"

"Very good!" said Mr. Railton. "Blake, Herries, Digby, D'Arcy, you will be caned and confined under lock and key this evening, and sent to your homes to-morrow morning!"

"Weally, Mr. Wailton——"

"Lock them up, sergeant, please!"

"Yessir!"

Blake & Co. found themselves locked in a vacant study of the New House a few minutes later. They regarded one another dismally.

"No more giddy barring-out for us!" grunted Herries.

"It's awfully wotten, deah boys!"

"Fortune of war!" said Blake philosophically. "Can't be helped! I dare say it was Gussy's jaw that put those rotters on their guard."

"Weally, Blake, I wegard this disastah as bein' your fault!" said Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Eh? How, you ass?"

"I wufuse to be called an ass!"

"How was it my fault?" roared Blake.

"Pway don't woar at me, Blake! I have mentioned more than once that it throws me into a fluttah when a fellow woars at me. I wegard it as bein' your fault, you know, because you did not let me take the lead as I requested. If I had taken the lead, I am suah that this disastah would not have happened. And I twust," added Arthur Augustus, with gentle dignity, "I twust, Blake, that this will be a lesson to you."

Jack Blake did not answer in words. He proceeded to get his noble chum's head into chancery, and for some time afterwards there were sounds of strife and woe from the locked study in the New House.

CHAPTER 3.

News for Tom Merry.

TOM MERRY & CO. turned out in the winter morning. Some of the rebels of St. Jim's wore serious looks.

They knew, of course, what had happened to Blake and his comrades the evening before; and that it was useless to expect the return of Study No. 6, with or without supplies.

The food supply in the barred House was running low, and, though the schoolboy rebels did not dream of surrender, they could not help realising that matters were growing serious.

Breakfast was very frugal, and the face of Fatty Wynn was doleful. Fatty Wynn was as determined as anybody, but he

——IS SIMPLY FULL OF FUN AND EXCITEMENT!

dreamed of the fleshpots of Egypt. He missed them more than the rest did.

Fatty felt that he was getting thin. There was no outward sign of it, certainly; but he had a feeling that it was so.

Tom Merry finished his frugal brekker, and looked down the big staircase over the stacked barricade. Below, in the hall, several of Mr. Railton's men were smoking cigarettes and chatting. Private Brown waved his cigarette cheerily to the captain of the Shell.

"Morning!" he called out.

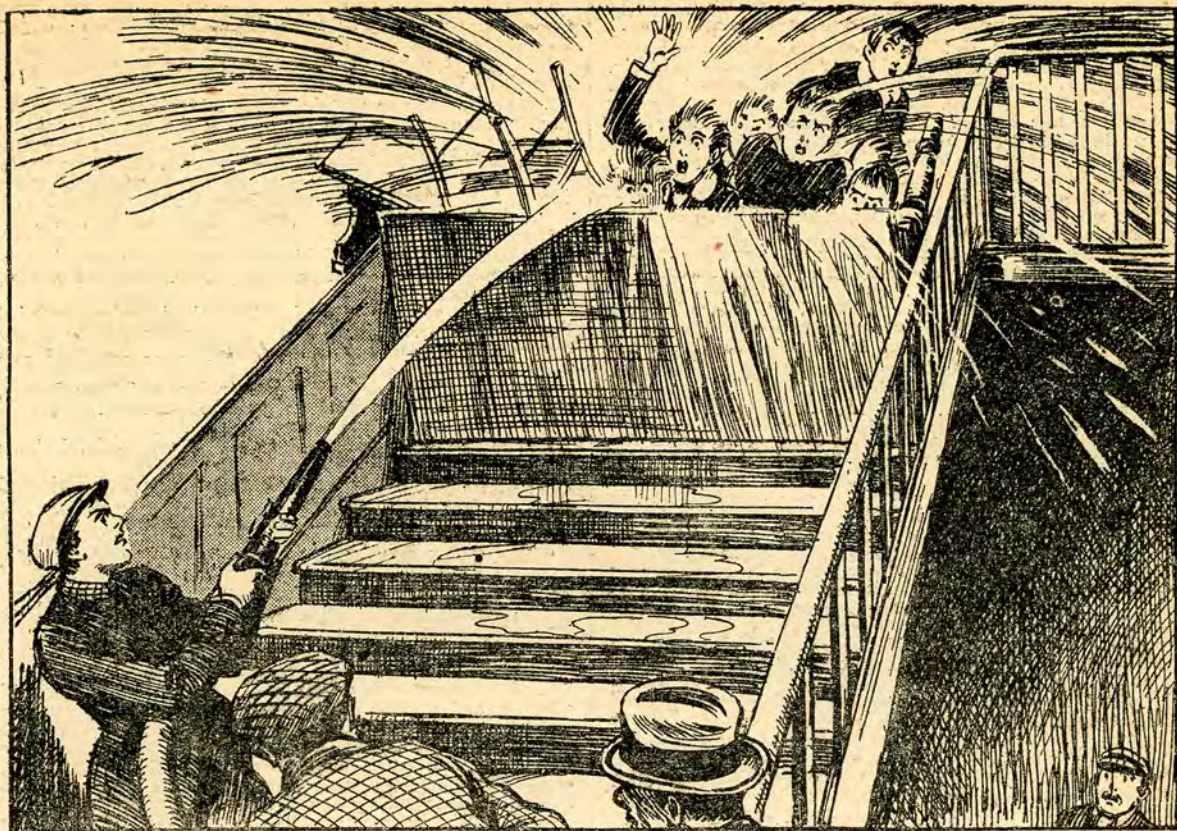
Tom smiled.

"Good-morning!" he answered.

"We're arter you soon!" said Mr. Brown amiably. "Get ready for your last licking, young 'un!"

"Not in your lifetime, old bean!" answered Tom.

And there was a chuckle from the old heroes of Flanders downstairs. Mr. Brown and his comrades seemed to be enjoying their unusual experiences at St. Jim's, though they had received a good many hard knocks in the course of the peculiar campaign.



Private Brown turned the nozzle of the hose upward and let fly. A long jet of water shot up the staircase, over the backs of the climbing assailants, and smote on the defenders. There was a chorus of wild howls. "Groooh!" "Ooooh!" "Gug-gug-gug!" Brown played the hose on the schoolboys' stronghold as if he had been playing it on a burning house. (See page 6.)

"We sha'n't see Blake again, I suppose, Tom?" Monty Lowther remarked.

Tom shook his head.

"They've got them!" he answered. "There wasn't much chance of getting through. They got Figgins & Co., when the New House tried it on. We're fairly hemmed in, and no mistake about it."

"But we're holding on!" said Manners.

"You bet!" said Tom tersely.

Cardew of the Fourth joined the Terrible Three on the landing.

"Railton's coming over from the New House," he remarked. "Looks like business again."

"Good!" said Tom.

There was a gathering of the garrison at the head of the staircase. They were quite prepared for another attack.

Mr. Railton entered the School House, and advanced to the foot of the stairs and looked upward.

His face was very grave and sombre. The task of dealing with the rebels had fallen chiefly upon Mr. Railton, and he had not found it an easy one. Some of the juniors grinned down to him.

"Goin' strong, old top?" called out Cardew.

Mr. Railton did not heed that impertinent greeting.

"Is Merry there?" he called out.

"Here I am, sir!" answered the captain of the Shell.

"I have something to say to you, Merry!" said the School House master gravely.

"I'm willing to listen, sir!" answered Tom Merry politely.

"We're hangin' on your words, sir," said Cardew solemnly.

"We're regardin' them as pearls of wisdom, to be gathered up with care. Go ahead!"

"Shurrup, you ass!" murmured Levison of the Fourth.

Mr. Railton gave Cardew a glance, but did not address him. His eyes were fixed on Tom Merry's face, which showed over the barricade on the landing.

"Merry, some new facts have come to light," he said. "It seems possible now that it may transpire that you had no hand, as you declared, in the robbery of Mr. Ratcliff, for which you were expelled from the school."

Tom Merry started.

"Oh, good!" murmured Manners.

"Mr. Railton! Do you mean to say that the thief has been discovered?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton coughed.

"I mean to say nothing of the kind, Merry. The Head is satisfied that you were the thief, as you know. This foolish and reckless rebellion makes no difference to that."

"Bow-wow!" said Cardew.

"Shurrup, Cardew!"

"But there has been something in the nature of a discovery," said Mr. Railton. "A few days ago Kerr of the Fourth Form made this discovery. As you are aware, Kerr and a number of other boys left the school——"

"To fetch in grub," said Kangaroo of the Shell. "We know that, sir. Your bounders down there collared them, and bagged the grub."

"These boys," went on Mr. Railton, "going through the wood to Wayland, fell in with a rough character, with whom they seem to have had a dispute. In the struggle he dropped several gold pieces."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"As all are aware, the money stolen from Mr. Ratcliff's desk was in gold sovereigns," said Mr. Railton. "Your statement, Merry, that when you entered Mr. Ratcliff's study you found a thief there begins to look as if it may be well-founded. It occurred to Kerr at once that it was a remarkable thing for sovereigns to be in the possession of a drunken loafer, and he went to the police-station at Wayland and reported the matter to Inspector Skeat."

"Good old Kerr!" said Manners.

"Inspector Skeat, whom I have visited since, takes the matter seriously," resumed Mr. Railton. "He is inclined to believe that the gold in the tramp's possession may be the same that was taken from Mr. Ratcliff's desk. If this should be established it would clear you, of course, by bearing out your story."

Tom Merry's face was very bright.

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

"No certain conclusion can be come to so far," said the Housemaster. "But I hope—and trust—that it may turn out as Kerr supposed, and as the inspector thinks possible. The police are now doing their best to trace the man; and as Kerr was able to give them a very accurate description of him they expect success before long. Dr. Holmes, I regret to say, attaches little importance to the incident, but I have every hope personally that your innocence may be proved."

In that case, of course, your sentence of expulsion would be rescinded, and you would be allowed to return to this school."

"I'm not gone yet, sir!" answered Tom Merry quietly.

"Listen to me, Merry!" said the Housemaster gravely. "The day is drawing near for the new term to begin at St. Jim's. This rebellion must end—must be ended by any means, however drastic. I have informed you that there is now hope that, if you are innocent, your innocence may be proved. I trust you will realise that it is now your duty to submit to the Head's authority."

Tom Merry set his lips.

"If I surrender to the Head, sir, does that mean that the sentence is withdrawn, and that I am not expelled?" he asked.

"Certainly not! It means that if you are proved, after all, to be innocent, you will be allowed to rejoin the school."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Not good enough, sir!" he answered. "I refuse to leave St. Jim's. I am innocent of wrongdoing, and I refuse to be driven from the school. I will not leave so long as I can strike a blow in my defence."

"Hear, hear!" roared the garrison.

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"These fellows believe in me, sir!" said Tom Merry, with a slight smile. "They're not waiting for proof."

"No jolly fear!" said Monty Lowther. "The Head ought to know Tom better, sir! He's not going. We won't let him go!"

Mr. Railton compressed his lips.

"Thank you for the news you've given me, sir!" said Tom. "But it doesn't make any difference. We're holding on."

"I have made this appeal, Merry, in the hope of averting further strife," said the Housemaster. "If you decline to listen to reason, there is no more to be said, and I must take sterner measures."

"Take 'em, old scout!" said Cardew. "We're ready to put paid to them when you trot them out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I warn you that the measures taken will be very severe," said Mr. Railton. "I have the Head's orders to use whatever means may be necessary to crush this rebellion."

"Pile in!" said Cardew.

"We're ready!" roared Wildrake. "Come on!"

"We've licked your crowd more than once, sir!" chuckled Julian. "We're ready to give them the kybosh again!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Rats!"

It was a roar of defiance from the garrison of the School House. The answer of the rebels was plain enough for Mr. Railton; there was no mistaking their meaning.

The Housemaster did not speak again. With compressed lips he turned and walked out of the School House, followed by Sergeant Stuckey and some of his men.

"Look out for squalls now!" said Gore of the Shell.

Tompkins of the Fourth came scudding down from an upper window, his face full of excitement.

"I say!" he gasped. "I say, they're monkeying with the fire-hose outside!"

"The hose!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Phew!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew chuckled.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," he drawled, "Railton has gone one better. This is goin' to be a wash-out!"

CHAPTER 4.

Washed Out!

TOM MERRY rushed to a window. There was great excitement among the schoolboy rebels now. They had wondered what would be the next move of the enemy, and they found that it was a startling one. In Mr. Railton, as commander of the forces opposed to them, they certainly had a foeman worthy of their steel.

Tom looked down from the window into the quadrangle, where the Housemaster and the old soldiers were busy—most of the Tommies grinning.

The fire-hose had been brought out, and was being placed in position. The flexible pipe was fully long enough for the nozzle to be brought into the School House to sweep the lower staircase.

It was a terrible weapon in the hands of the assailants; and Tom Merry realised at once that it would not be easy for the defenders of the barricade to stand up against the rushing torrent of icy water that would be poured on them.

Tom knitted his brows.

"Looks serious this time, old man!" murmured Monty Lowther, with a low whistle.

Tom Merry nodded, and returned to the crowded staircase. All the schoolboy rebels were looking serious now.

"Well, what's the game?" asked Levison of the Fourth, with a rather anxious look at Tom Merry. "Give your orders, old scout."

"Third line of defence!" said Tom Merry quietly. "They

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look like getting through this time; we must be ready for them, anyhow. They've captured the ground floor; and if they capture this floor there are still two floors above."

"As a last giddy resource, there's the jolly old roof!" murmured Cardew.

"We may come to that in time," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Meanwhile, we've got to hold the position here as long as we can, and then retreat to the next floor and hold the dormitories. All the grub—what's left of it—is to be carried up to the top rooms at once, and the stairs barricaded. You'll see to that, Talbot, while I keep here."

"Leave it to me, old man!" said Talbot of the Shell.

No time was lost.

While Mr. Railton and his men were making their preparations for the attack, Tom Merry & Co. were also making rapid preparations.

Two score of fellows, under Talbot's directions, carried the frugal food supply higher up, and proceeded to barricade the upper staircases, which naturally were narrower and more easy for defence.

The rest of the defenders gathered round Tom Merry, prepared to put up a fight when the attack came.

It was not long in coming.

The old soldiers crowded into the House again, Private Brown being in charge of the fire-hose.

He looked up at the faces that showed over the barricaded staircase, and waved a hand, with an affable wink.

"This is where you get it 'ot!" he announced.

"Rats!"

"Cold, I reckon," grinned Private Green. "'Orrid cold, I should say."

"For the last time, Merry—" called out Mr. Railton.

There was a roar in response.

"Rats!"

"Proceed, my men!" said the frowning Housemaster.

And his men proceeded.

Sergeant Stuckey and the whole crowd of them started climbing and clambering up the stacks of jammed furniture that barricaded the big staircase. Fire was opened instantly by the defenders.

Cushions and boots, all sorts and conditions of missiles, rained down on the scaling party, and there were loud yells from Sergeant Stuckey & Co.

"Urry up with that there 'ose, you hass, Brown!" roared the sergeant, as he stopped a tomato-tin with his nose.

"Yow-ow-ow! 'Urry up!"

"Jest beginning, sergeant!" grinned Mr. Brown.

He turned the nozzle of the hose slanting upwards, and let fly. A long jet of water shot up the staircase, over the backs of the climbing assailants, and smote on the defenders.

There was a chorus of wild howls as it smote.

"Grooooh!"

"Ooooooch!"

"Woooooooch!"

"Oh erumbs!"

"Ugh-gug-gug-gug!"

The assailants climbed steadily on. But the missiles from above had ceased now.

The icy torrent of water fairly swept away every head that showed over the barricade. Private Brown played the hose on the schoolboys' stronghold as if he had been playing it on a burning house.

Swish—swoosh—splash!

"Oh, my hat!" gurgled Manners, as he caught the stream with his face, and staggered back breathless. "Oh! Ow! Oooch!"

"Go it, sergeant!" chuckled Mr. Brown. "You're all right! They won't 'urt your old nose this time!"

"Ow, oh! Oooch! Grooooh!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" chortled Private Scuppers.

"Come on! This 'ere is the finish!"

Tom Merry dashed streaming water from his eyes. He was drenched, as were most of the fellows on the landing. Some of them were already retreating for the upper regions. Icy water on a cold February day was no joke.

"Stand up to them!" shouted Manners, as Sergeant Stuckey, at the head of his men, reached the top of the barricade.

Crash!

A cricket-stump met the sergeant's head, and the yell Mr. Stuckey gave could have been heard across the quadrangle in the New House.

"Yarooooop!"

"Give them socks!" yelled Clive.

"Hurrah!"

Swish—swish—swooooooh! There was another frantic yell from the sergeant as the stream caught him in the back of the neck, either by accident or design. Private Brown was a gentleman with humorous proclivities.

"Ooooooch! Let up!" yelled Mr. Stuckey. "You crass idjit, you're turning it on me! You're aiming at my 'ead, you dummy!"



Before Mr. Ratcliff could recover his balance, Blake was on him with the spring of a tiger. Crash! Blake's head butted, coming into violent contact with Mr. Ratcliff's waistcoat. The Fifth Form master sat down with a gasp that was like air escaping from a punctured tyre. "Ooooooh!" he gasped. "Quick!" panted Blake. "Now collar him, chaps!" The juniors did not need telling twice. In a twinkling they rushed upon Mr. Ratcliff. (See page 9.)

"My eye! Is that your 'ead, sergeant?" exclaimed Mr. Brown.

"Yes, you dummy! What did you think it was?" shrieked the sergeant.

"Thought it was jest a block of wood!" said Mr. Brown amiably.

"You—you—you—" gasped the sergeant. "Oh, don't I wish I 'ad you in my squad again, Private Brown!"

"And ain't I glad you haven't!" chuckled Mr. Brown, giving the hapless sergeant another stream in the back of the neck.

"Ooooooh!"

Heedless of cricket-stumps, the sergeant rolled over the barricade on to the landing. The hose behind was worse than the cricket-stumps in front. He was struggling the next moment with a mob of drenched juniors.

While the icy water played on them, choking and blinding them, Tom Merry & Co. stood up gallantly to the barricade. But the game was up; the juniors realised that. The whole crowd of the assailants had reached the landing barricade, and one by one they dropped over.

Private Brown was now crawling up the stacked staircase, picking his way amid bundled furniture, and playing the hose at closer quarters as he came. Half-way up the staircase, he stood on top of the stacked furniture, and from that coign of vantage he was able to play full on the landing, raking it fore and aft, as it were.

Flesh and blood could not stand up against that.

"Hook it!" shouted Tom Merry.

A dozen of the Tommies were on the landing now, grabbing at the juniors. Tom Merry & Co. retreated along the corridor leading to the foot of the next staircase.

"At 'em!" roared the sergeant.

"We've got 'em now! Give in, you young duffers!" shouted Private Green.

"Rats!"

In a compact body, the St. Jim's juniors retreated to the next line of defence, Sergeant Stuckey & Co. following them fast. Now they were out of range of the streaming hose, and they rallied.

There was a rush of the juniors, and Sergeant Stuckey & Co. were hurled back by sheer numbers.

But there were a score more of the old soldiers clambering fast over the barricade, and there was no time for Tom Merry & Co. to lose. Once the whole crowd came to close quarters, the game was up for the St. Jim's rebels.

The juniors had a respite of a minute, or less; but it was enough for them. They rushed for the upper staircase, which Talbot & Co. were still industriously barricading.

They swarmed and clambered up, in a breathless crowd, and in less than a minute they were safe on the dormitory floor.

"Arter them!" the sergeant was roaring. "You've got 'em now! Hunt 'em out!"

"Tally-ho!" yelled Private Scuppers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole crowd were over the lower barricade now. Private Brown abandoning the hose there. They came with a rush, and a shout of laughter, along the corridor, and reached the next staircase.

"My eye!" ejaculated the sergeant, halting suddenly.

The upper staircase was jammed with bedsteads from the dormitories, and above the barricade, Tom Merry & Co., drenched but unconquered, were standing on their defence. Half a dozen stragglers of the garrison dodged into rooms, to be hunted out later, but the main body were safe and sound behind the new barricade.

"Come on!" yelled Levison.

"This way, sergeant!" shouted Cardew. "We're waitin' for you, old top! Waitin' to alter your features, old bean! Any alteration would be for the better—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bring that there 'ose along 'ere, Private Brown!" shouted the exasperated sergeant.

"That there 'ose ain't a telescope!" answered Private Brown. "It won't reach to 'ere, not by a dozen yards!"

"Look here——"

"Talk sense, sergeant!" suggested Mr. Brown. "You never did when you was in the trenches, but you might try now you're a blooming civilian!"

The sergeant crimsoned with wrath.

"Put him in the clink, sergeant!" suggested Private Scuppers. And there was a roar of laughter from the old soldiers.

"Aren't you comin' up?" called out Cardew. "We're waitin'."

COMING VERY SHORTLY—



Private Brown glanced up the staircase.

He shook his head.

"Thanks," he answered. "I'd rather not!"

Mr. Railton arrived on the scene. He found his "army" gathered at the foot of the upper staircase, and a crowd of juniors above brandishing cricket-stumps and yelling defiance. The Housemaster certainly had supposed that when the lower staircase was rushed his task would be done. He discovered that it was very far from done.

He knitted his brows as he looked at the "third line" of defence. Tom Merry & Co. were not beaten yet.

"Hallo, there's Railton!" called out the irreverent Cardew. "Wherefore that worried look, old scout? The fun isn't over yet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton looked long and hard at the new position of the rebels. There was no possibility of bringing the fire-hose to bear on the upper staircase. And Mr. Railton and his army had to content themselves for the present with consolidating the ground won, leaving the rebels of St. Jim's still in uproarious and defiant possession of the upper stories of the old School House.

CHAPTER 5.

Turning the Tables.

"**B**AI JOVE! This is simply wotten!"

"Awful!" groaned Blake.

"Beastly!" said Herries lugubriously.

"Horrid!" growled Dig.

The chums of Study No. 6 groused in chorus.

The four prisoners had been locked in a dormitory for the night in the New House. In the morning they were to be duly caned and sent away to their homes—as had happened to Figgins & Co. and Grundy and other hapless members of the rebels who had fallen into the enemy's hands. The morning had come, but the powers were too busily engaged to think of the prisoners just then.

Blake & Co. had turned out of bed, wondering when they would get the caning, and whether there would be any brekker. There was no escape from the dormitory. The door was locked on the outside, and the windows looked from sheer walls.

Their attention was roused by the sounds of strife across the quadrangle in the School House. The attack was going on there, and the uproar of it sounded as far as the New House.

Blake & Co. jammed themselves to the dormitory windows, and watched and listened, in an exasperated frame of mind.

The fight was going on, and they were out of it. It might be the last fight of the schoolboy rebels; and there they were, locked in a dormitory on the wrong side of the quad, out of it!

In those exasperating circumstances even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy forgot the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. He groused loud and long.

"It's uttably wotten, you fellows! Howwid! Those chaps are not likely to make a success of it without us, you know. Oh deah! Oh ewumbel!"

And the chums of Study No. 6 raged, while the sounds of conflict across the quad culminated and then at last died away.

Blake descended from the window.

"It's over now!" he said gloomily. "I wonder how it's gone."

"Yaas, wathah!"

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"Hallo, here comes somebody!" said Herries.

The key turned in the lock outside. The door was opened, and the cheery face of Private Brown grinned in.

"'Ere's some company for you!" he said amicably.

Bump!

Sidney Clive of the Fourth was whirled into the room, and sprawled on the floor. After him came Reilly and Julian and Reggie Manners and D'Arcy minor and Frank Levison. They sprawled on the floor and roared, and the door was closed again and relocked on the outside. Private Brown was heard to chuckle as he walked away.

"Bai Jove! It's Wally!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, as his hopeful younger brother sat up and gasped.

"Ow!" gasped Wally of the Third.

"What's happened in the School House?" exclaimed Blake eagerly. "Have they got Tom Merry?"

"No jolly fear!" said D'Arcy minor. "They've got us, though."

"Well, you fags don't matter much!" remarked Herries.

D'Arcy minor sniffed.

"Cut it out!" he snapped. "None of your Fourth Form swank! We didn't walk into their hands, anyhow, like you chaps."

"Weally, Wally——"

"But how's it gone?" shouted Dig.

"All serene!" gasped Clive. "They're holding out. Railton's gang started the fire-hose on us——"

"Bai Jove!"

"They've got the first floor," said Clive. "But the fellows are holding the next staircase—the dormitory floor—and they can't bring the hose to bear there. They're holding on all right."

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They got us, though," said Clive ruefully. "We had to scrap to get to the upper stairs, and some of us got cut off by the enemy. I gave the sergeant one in the eye when he collared me, though."

"I jolly well hacked somebody's shins," said Reggie Manners.

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"Bai Jove! I'm glad the fellows are holdin' on," said Arthur Augustus. "But we are in wathah a bad way, deah boys. We are goin' to be whacked and sent home, and we shall be out of the bawwin'-out."

"Can't be helped!" said Levison minor. "We've done our best. They haven't got my major, anyhow." Which seemed a great solace to Levison minor of the Third.

"They've got mine," remarked Wally. "But that doesn't matter, as he's no use——"

"Weally, Wally, you young wapsallion——"

"Well, we're for it, I suppose," said Blake. "How many of us here? Ten! I wonder if we could make a rush for it when they open the door."

"Bai Jove! That's a good ideah, Blake!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, his noble eye gleaming behind his eyeglass. "Most of those bundahs are ovah in the School House, you know."

Blake looked thoughtful.

He was still thinking when there was a step in the passage outside. The key turned in the lock again.

It was Mr. Horace Ratcliff, Housemaster of the New House, who entered the dormitory.

Mr. Ratcliff had a cane under his arm, and a sour expression on his face. He stood and surveyed the silent juniors grimly.

"Good-mornin', Mr. Watcliff!" Arthur Augustus ventured at last.

Mr. Ratcliff did not reply to that greeting.

He let the cane slip down into his hand, and swished it in the air.

"Dr. Holmes has deputed me to administer your punishment!" he said harshly. "You are to be caned, and then sent home. Mr. Railton will take you to the station for the eleven o'clock train. Meanwhile, I shall deal with you."

"Bai Jove!"

"You first, Blake!"

Jack Blake drew a deep breath.

Mr. Ratcliff had entered the dormitory where there were ten of the captured, with the intention of administering the caning all round—a task very palatable to Mr. Ratcliff. It did not seem to have occurred to him that there might be

any resistance. If Mr. Railton's men were at hand resistance, of course, was useless enough. But it was probable that the greater part of them were over in the School House, maintaining the position they had won from the rebels. Blake exchanged a quick look with his comrades.

There was a chance, at least; and howsoever slight a chance it was, Blake was prepared to seize it. The caning, if it was to come, could not come too late!

"You hear me, Blake!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"I hear you, sir!" said Blake, breathing hard, his heart beating fast.

"Hold out your hand!"

"Very well, sir!"

Blake approached, and held out his hand. Herries and Digby followed him closely.

Mr. Railton swished up the cane, and swished it down with great force. That cut, if it had landed on Blake's palm, would have hurt him considerably. But as the cane came lashing down Blake jerked his hand back suddenly.

The cane, meeting with no resistance, swept down, and Mr. Ratcliff almost lost his balance, pitching forward.

Before he could recover Blake was on him with the spring of a tiger.

Crash!

Blake's head butted, coming into violent contact with Mr. Ratcliff's waistcoat. Mr. Ratcliff sat down, with a gasp that was like air escaping from a punctured tyre.

"Ooooooooh!"

"Bwavo!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Quick!" panted Blake. "Collar him!"

The juniors did not need telling twice. They had old scores against the sour, severe Housemaster, and they were quick to act. Before Mr. Ratcliff knew what was happening half a dozen excited juniors had him in their grasp.

The Housemaster rolled on the floor, gasping.

"Ow! Oh! Help! You young—groogh!—rascals—ow!—oh—"

"Shut the door!" hissed Blake.

Clive closed the door swiftly and softly. Herries sat on Mr. Ratcliff's chest, and Blake stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth as it was opened for a wild yell.

"Don't you begin, Gus!" implored Wally. "Have another Ratty?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff did not answer—for good reasons. He struggled and gurgled, with the handkerchief in his mouth.

"Silence gives consent!" remarked Levison minor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whack!

"Mmmmmmmmm!" came from the hapless Mr. Ratcliff.

"Come on, I tell you, you young duffers!" said Blake, with a chuckle. And he led the way from the dormitory.

CHAPTER 6.

A Bid For Liberty.

"BLAKE!"

"Oh!"

It was the Head's voice.

Jack Blake and his comrades stopped suddenly. There was red rebellion at St. Jim's, and all authority had gone by the board. But the voice of the headmaster had not lost all its old influence. The rebels were not prepared to obey that once-respected voice, but it brought them to a sudden halt. Dr. Holmes came on the escaping prisoners as they reached the foot of the stairs in the New House, and he gazed at them over his glasses in angry astonishment. The Head had obviously lost a great deal of his old equable temper; the late events at St. Jim's had ruffled him very considerably.

"Blake! D'Arcy! What are you doing here?" exclaimed the Head angrily. "Has Mr. Ratcliff sent you downstairs?"

"N-n-no, sir!" stammered Blake.

"Then return upstairs at once. You are to wait in the dormitory until Mr. Railton is ready to take you to the station."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"I don't think!" said Wally in a stage whisper.

"You—you see, sir—" said Blake.

Dr. Holmes raised his hand.

"Go back at once!"

"B-b-but—" stammered Blake.

The juniors had not the slightest intention of going back. But roughly as they had handled Mr. Ratcliff, they hesitated to rush so awful a personage as their headmaster. Their old respect for him was by no means gone, reckless as they were in their present mood.

"Pway listen to me, Dr. Holmes," said Arthur Augustus, with conciliatory politeness. "Undah the circs, sir—"

"Silence, D'Arcy!"

"Weally, sir—"

"The fact is, sir, we're off!" said Clive. "We're not going back to the dorm, if—if you don't mind, sir."

"I have ordered you to return to the dormitory, Clive. Are you persisting in your reckless disobedience in the presence of your headmaster?" exclaimed Dr. Holmes sternly.

"Hem!"

"Where is Mr. Ratcliff?"

"In—in the dormitory, sir!"

"Has he administered your punishment?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"I do not understand this," said the Head. "I shall see you back to the dormitory myself. Go in advance!"

The Head advanced towards the juniors, who were clustered, hesitating, on the stairs. The rebels exchanged quick glances. They were quite determined not to be rounded up again, now that the way to freedom lay open; but only as a last resource could they think of laying hands upon the respected person of Dr. Holmes.

Blake made his comrades a sign, and they backed away up the stairs. Blake had decided upon his course of action.

—OF FAMOUS FOOTBALLERS, EACH BEARING THE PLAYER'S OWN SIGNATURE!

"Got him!" breathed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Make sure of him!" grinned Wally of the Third. "Stand on his legs! It doesn't matter if you hurt him. It's only old Ratty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dig seized a sheet from one of the beds, and cut it into strips with his pocket-knife. Mr. Ratcliff's ankles were tied together, and then his wrists.

The juniors grinned down at him in great glee. The hapless Housemaster wriggled in his bonds.

"Gug-gug-gug!" he mumbled faintly. That was the best Mr. Ratcliff could do in the way of speech with the handkerchief stuffed in his mouth.

Blake went quietly to the door and listened. There was no sound in the corridor outside.

"All serene!" whispered Blake. "Nobody's heard. Leave the old bounder there and come along."

"Give him some of his own cane first!" said Wally of the Third.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No time!" said Blake. "Come on!"

"Rats!" said D'Arcy minor obstinately. "There's time for one whack, anyhow. Roll him over, you chaps!"

Levison minor and Reggie Manners rolled Mr. Ratcliff over as Wally caught up the cane. There was frantic apprehension in Mr. Ratcliff's face. He had a strong predilection for the cane when he administered it. Evidently he had no liking for it when he was to have it administered. It was a case when it was more blessed to give than to receive.

But Mr. Ratcliff was fated to receive it this time. Wally swished up the cane, and brought it down with a most athletic swipe.

Whack!

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

"Bai Jove! I cannot regard that as respectful to a Housemastah, Wally!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Stop it at once, you young wascal!"

—PREPARE FOR THE RUSH!

"Look here—" muttered Wally of the Third rebelliously.

"Get on!" said Blake.

"But—"

"Get on! It's all right!"

Wally reluctantly assented. The juniors remounted the stairs, Dr. Holmes following them, with stern brow and rustling gown, shepherding them back into the fold, as it were.

They reached the door of the dormitory. The key was still in the outside of the lock. From within the room there

came a sound of faint and muffled mumbling. Horace Ratcliff was trying to make himself heard.

"Go in!" said the Head sternly.

"Mr. Ratcliff's there, sir!" said Blake respectfully.

"I shall speak to Mr. Ratcliff. Go in first!" said the Head grimly.

There was hesitation again, but the rebels went in. The Head followed them, and uttered a startled exclamation at the sight of the New House master wriggling on the floor, struggling with his bonds.

"Bless my soul! What—what—" ejaculated the Head. "Mmmmmmm!" came from Mr. Ratcliff.

"Mr. Ratcliff, what—what—"

Dr. Holmes hurried to the Housemaster in consternation and wrath. He had not expected that amazing sight to greet his eyes in the dormitory.

"Now for it!" breathed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a rush of the juniors into the passage again. They were out of the dormitory in a twinkling, while the Head was bending over Horace Ratcliff. Blake turned the key in the lock.

"Bagged!" he murmured.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! That was weally quite stwategic, Blake, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Oh, I see!" said Wally, mollified. "After all, we don't want to handle the jolly old Head if we can help it."

"I should wesuspect to tweat the Head with personal disrespect, Wally," said Arthur Augustus. "We are bound to wesuspect our headmastah, though he is actin' the giddy ox at pwesent and wesusin' to listen to weason."

"Bow-wow!"

"Blake!" It was Dr. Holmes' voice from within the dormitory. "You—you have locked me in! You young rascal, open that door at once!"

"I don't think!" murmured Blake.

"You—you have tricked me, and locked me in!" Dr. Holmes' voice was trembling with wrath. "Blake, open that door—"

"Pway listen to weason, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, through the keyhole. "We vewy much wegwet havin' to tweat you in this mannah—"

"D'Arcy!"

"But you have left us no othah wesource, sir, bein' such a vewy obstinate old gentleman—"

"Boy!"

"I twust, sir, that you will not be put to vewy much inconvenience," continued the swell of St. Jim's. "But for the pwesent I feah that we have no wesource but to leave you locked in."

"You young rascal!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Come on, Gussy, you ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Thump, thump, thump! came on the inside of the door. Blake & Co. hurried away, leaving the Head thumping.

They reached the bottom of the staircase again, with no one now to bar their path. The Head and Mr. Ratcliff were safe under lock and key; and Mr. Railton, evidently, was over in the School House with his men, or most of them. The juniors reached the big door of the New House, and Blake opened it a few inches and looked out.

Near the steps two men in old Army overcoats were lounging—Privates Green and Higgins—smoking cigarettes. Blake drew back quickly from the door.

"Two of them!" he whispered. "We shall rush them easily enough. All together!"

"And then we make for the School House again, deah boy!"

Blake shook his head.

"We couldn't get in; they're holding the lower floors, fathead. Besides, we came out to get supplies. We haven't got the supplies yet."

"Bai Jove! I had forgotten that—"

"You would!" assented Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We're going to make a break out of gates," said Blake. "We've got lots of time to get the supplies, and somehow or other we're going to get back into the School House with them after dark. See?"

"Good egg!" murmured Julian.

"Tom Merry will be surprised to see us again, I dare say," remarked Blake. "He ought to know that Study No. 6 never fails to come up to time, though."

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I like that!" grinned Julian. "You walked fairly into their paws last night—"

"And now we're walking out of them," said Blake. "If you're going to be a cheeky ass, Julian—"

"Bow-wow! Let's get going before the giddy enemy come and collar us," suggested Julian.

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"Yaas, wathah! You are wastin' time talkin', Blake," said Arthur Augustus reprovingly.

Blake breathed hard.

"You silly owl—" he began.

"I can see Railton from this window," remarked Wally of the Third casually. "He's coming this way."

"Come on!" said Blake hastily.

He threw open the door of the New House, and the juniors rushed out in a body. Messrs. Green and Higgins looked round in surprise, but they had no time to do more than look. They went whirling before the rush of the juniors, and sprawled on the ground, roaring. Blake & Co. sprinted for the gates at top speed.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Railton in the distance.

The School House master was coming back to the New House, prepared to convoy the prisoners to the railway-station for the eleven o'clock train. He was amazed to see them sprinting across to the gates, and he broke into a run in pursuit.

If Mr. Railton had reached them it was improbable that he would have succeeded in stopping them. But he did not reach them.

Blake & Co. streamed out of gates, with the Housemaster a dozen yards behind.

Mr. Railton halted in the gateway and stared after them. Down the lane Blake & Co. were going at a trot.

Blake paused a moment to look round and kiss his hand to the astonished and angry Housemaster. Then he ran on with his comrades, and the juniors vanished from Mr. Railton's sight.

CHAPTER 7.

The Message.

"HOW many missin'?" asked Cardew.

"Ten!" said Tom Merry.

"Poor old Clive's one of them!" said Levison of the Fourth. "It's rotten!"

Tom Merry had called the roll in the garrison in the School House. Ten members of the garrison were missing from the list, including Study No. 6.

"Can't be helped!" said Monty Lowther. "There's lots of us left to hold the fort; and they haven't got Tommy, that's the main thing."

"They've got my minor!" said Manners.

"I wish them joy of him, old chap!"

Manners grunted.

"Lots of us left for the amount of grub that we've got!" remarked Cardew. "Anybody feel inclined for a light lunch?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lunch was decidedly light in the besieged School House. Rations had been growing stricter and stricter for some time; but though some of the garrison indulged in the ancient British privilege of grouching they did not think of giving in on that account. Fatty Wynn, chief of the commissariat, did wonders with what resources there were; but Fatty's soups were growing thinner and thinner, and Fatty's plump face was growing longer and longer.

Tom Merry & Co. were quite cheerful, however.

It was agreed on all hands that the barring-out was a tremendous "lark"—an episode that would not be soon forgotten in the history of St. Jim's. And the rebels were confident that the Head would have to "come round."

It was as clear as daylight to Tom Merry's friends that Tom was innocent of what was laid to his charge, and they expected the Head to see it in the same light sooner or later.

And they felt, too, that matters must come to a head before long, for the opening day of the new term was now close at hand. St. Jim's could not open the term with the School House in the hands of rebellious juniors, and the masters barred out. The Sixth and Fifth Forms could not return to the school at all until the rebellion was at an end. Lessons could scarcely begin in the Form-rooms downstairs while the upper part of the House was held by the rebels.

Evidently the Head would have to come to some decision, and the rebels hoped that he would decide that he had made a mistake, and rescind the sentence of expulsion passed on Tom Merry.

Unless he did so they were prepared to hold out—all through the new term, if necessary. Only the pressing question of the food supply had to be settled somehow—and somehow or other that would be settled.

So the St. Jim's rebels kept up their spirits, and played leapfrog in the upper passages, and exchanged chaff with Sergeant Stuckey & Co. over the barricaded stairs, and waited for the Head to "come round." Indeed, there were few of them that were anxious for the barring-out to end before the new term began. There was more entertainment in a barring-out than in grinding Latin and maths in the Form-rooms.

All day the rebels watched for an attack, but it did not come. The enemy seemed to be at a loss.



"Bless my soul! What—what—" ejaculated Dr. Holmes as he entered the dormitory. He rushed to the New House master, who was wriggling on the floor struggling with his bonds. "Now for it!" breathed Blake. There was a rush of juniors into the passage. They were out of the dormitory in a twinkling. While the Head was bending over Horace Ratcliff Blake turned the key in the lock. (See page 10.)

"Goin' to starve us out, perhaps!" Cardew suggested. "That will take some time. Fatty Wynn will last us a week—if we come down to that!"

Fatty Wynn did not smile.

Fatty Wynn was as determined as ever; but the shortage of tuck led him to be very, very serious. With the diminution of the food supply, Fatty felt that the glory had departed from the house of Israel, as it were.

Tom Merry was thinking deeply over that pressing question. He had no expectation of seeing Blake & Co. again. His belief was that those cheery youths, along with the other prisoners, had already been caned and sent to their homes. He was in blissful ignorance, so far, of what had happened over in the New House.

Half a dozen of the enemy could be seen in the corridor at the foot of the dormitory staircase. When the winter dusk came on, they lighted lamps there. Gas and electricity had been cut off from the School House, on the rebel's account, and Sergeant Stuckey & Co., in the lower region of the House, were reduced to oil and candle like the schoolboys above. Oil for bike lamps had run out in the schoolboy stronghold, but there were still candles, which shed a dim glimmer over the stairs and the long passages.

Occasionally a missile whizzed down the barred staircase, or the pea-shooters came into play; and the enemy had learned to keep at a respectful distance. The juniors would not have been sorry to see them attempt to rush the stairs.

But for the present the attack was holding off. Probably Mr. Railton was puzzled to know what step to take next. His position was full of difficulties, as the rebels cheerily realised. Mr. Ratcliff was quite useless in such a posture of affairs, and the Head could do little but deplore the sad pass things had come to at St. Jim's.

All the warlike operations depended upon Victor Railton, and for the present it was obvious that Mr. Railton was at a loss.

Crash!

There was a sudden sound of splintering glass, and a pane flew from a window in fragments.

"Great pip!"

"What the dickens—"

"Some silly ass throwing stones!" exclaimed Manners.

A jagged hole showed in a window at the end of the dormitory passage, at a distance from the stairs.

A stone had come through, thrown up from somewhere in the darkness outside, and rolled along the floor after smashing through the window.

"Silly asses!" commented Lumley-Lumley. "They won't hurt us by chucking silly stones through the windows!"

"I guess I'll look at that stone!" remarked Wildrake.

The Canadian junior strolled along the passage, with an electric torch in his hand. He turned the light hither and thither till he found the stone that had come through the window.

"Don't throw it back," said Tom Merry. "Throwing stones is a rotten trick. Might have caught some fellow on the napper."

Wildrake grinned.

"This giddy stone didn't come from the enemy," he said.

"Must have," said Manners. "There's not likely to be any stranger within gates chucking stones at the windows, I suppose?"

Wildrake came back into the light of the candles on the landing. He held up the stone, and there was a general exclamation from the juniors as they saw that a paper was wrapped round it.

"What the thump—" said Levison.

"I reckoned somebody might have had a reason for heaving that rock in at the window," remarked Wildrake. "It's a message, of course."

"A message! My hat!"

"But who—" said Tom Merry.

"I guess we'll see soon enough."

Kit Wildrake unwrapped the paper from the stone. It

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had been wrapped very carefully, and tied with twine. As it was unrolled, the juniors could see that it was scribbled on in pencil.

"Blake's fist!" exclaimed Levison.

"Blake! Then he's not gone!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Good old Blake! What does he say?"

The rebels gathered round eagerly to read the missive. It was in Jack Blake's "fist," and was a sufficient proof that Blake was not far away. It ran:

"From J. Blake, Chief of Convoy, to T. Merry,

Commander-in-Chief of the St. Jim's Garrison.

"Dear Tommy.—Study No. 6 are getting on with it, as per contract. We've got the goods."

"Hurrah!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn at this point.

"Shurrup, Wynn!"

"Get on with it, Tom!"

The juniors were eager to hear the rest. Tom Merry proceeded with reading out the letter:

"We've got the goods. No end of stuff. All of us loaded up to the chin."

Fatty Wynn's plump face beamed. He looked quite his old self again.

"There's ten of us. We took your missing duffers along to help us carry the stuff."

"Oh, good!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "I hope they haven't forgotten the sausages."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shurrup!"

"We're coming back by the trapdoor in the roof," the letter went on. "Never mind how we're going to manage it; leave that to Study No. 6. You fellows had better be on the look-out for us. Show a light in the window to let me know you catch on. Same window where the stone came in.—Yours with the tuck,
J. BLAKE."

Levison picked up a candle and hurried to the window where the jagged hole showed in the pane. He held the light steadily to the window. Somewhere in the darkness without, it was evident, Blake of the Fourth was watching for the signal.

"I guess that's O.K." remarked Wildrake.

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry heartily. "If they get through with it we'll let Study No. 6 call themselves top study as long as they like! They seem to have been jolly lucky!"

"Good old Blake!"

Leaving Talbot of the Shell in command of the barricade, Tom Merry hurried up the upper stairs with a dozen fellows. There was a ladder to the trapdoor in the roof, which was supposed to be used only in case of fire. In a very few minutes the trapdoor was open, and Tom Merry & Co. were out on the leads, in the dim glimmer of the stars. There they waited for the arrival of J. Blake, Chief of Convoy.

CHAPTER 8.

Gussy Takes a Hand.

JACK BLAKE crouched in the gloom under the leafless old elms, watching the windows of the School House. Blake was in a mood of considerable satisfaction. So far, Study No. 6 had done well. They had deserved well of their country, so to speak. Certainly, luck had befriended Study No. 6 to a great extent, but Blake was not inclined to attribute his success to luck. He put it down to his own masterly strategy. Outside the walls of the school the "convoy" was waiting, while Blake crept within the precincts of St. Jim's to convey a message to the garrison. From under the dark elms he watched for the answering light signal.

From the glimmering doorway of the School House a tall, angular figure came into view, and Blake recognised Sergeant Stuckey. Private Brown followed him out into the quad.

Blake could guess that they had heard the crash of breaking glass, and had come out to investigate. He kept close in cover.

"Only some of them young rips breaking a winder!" he heard the voice of the sergeant.

And the two men went back into the House. Blake grinned quietly in the darkness.

From a window in the School House, previously dark, a light began to shine. It glimmered out into the dim winter evening.

"They've got it!" murmured Blake.

The candle in the window was his answer. He was prepared to cut back to the school wall, when there was a sound of footsteps close at hand. Blake made himself as small as possible, hugging the trunk of a tree as the footsteps came along the gravel path under the elms.

Two figures came dimly along, pacing in a slow and

stately manner. To Blake's horror, he heard the voice of the Head.

"The new term is so close at hand now, Mr. Railton—"

Blake scarcely breathed.

Evidently the two masters were taking a stately promenade along the path under the elms in the quad, discussing the unprecedented state of affairs now obtaining at St. Jim's, and little dreaming that one of the rebels was hidden by the gloom within sound of their voices.

"I have done my best, sir." It was Mr. Railton's voice.

"I know—I know! It is most distressing, Mr. Railton. The boy Merry has much to answer for! I should never have dreamed that such a lad could exercise so much influence over his schoolfellows. It is a very painful discovery to me."

"Nevertheless, sir, it shows a fine spirit in the boys, to take such risks in support of a schoolfellow whom they believe to be innocent!" said Mr. Railton.

"No doubt! But this belief in Merry's innocence is sheer wilful obstinacy, after the conclusive proof of his guilt."

"I cannot help saying, sir, that from the first I could not help having some doubt on the subject. The faith of Merry's schoolfellows in his honour is, in its way, evidence in his favour."

"I do not see it in that light, Mr. Railton!" said the Head dryly.

"And the discovery made by Kerr, sir, and the opinion expressed by Inspector Skeat of Wayland," urged Mr. Railton.

"I attach little importance to that."

"There is, at least, a hope that Merry may prove to have been innocent in the affair, sir."

"I cannot believe so, Mr. Railton. At all events, it is his duty to submit to proper authority, and I cannot excuse him, even on the theory that he may be, after all, innocent. Be that as it may, this outrageous state of affairs must come to an end; that it has lasted so long is a reflection upon us."

"I am at your orders, sir!" said the Housemaster quietly. "At all events, the rebellion can scarcely last much longer. I am assured that there can be very little food left in the School House at this date; and when their supplies fail, the rebels can scarcely do anything but surrender."

"That is what I am now relying upon, Mr. Railton, since other measures seem to be useless—"

The Head broke off suddenly.

"Who is that?"

Blake's heart almost stopped beating for a moment. The two masters had stopped quite near to him; and for the moment he supposed that he had been observed.

But the Head was standing with his back to the junior and peering over his glasses on the other side of the path.

There was an exclamation from Mr. Railton.

"It is one of the boys! I will secure him."

"Bai Jove!" came a sudden exclamation.

Blake breathed hard, as he recognised the voice of his noble chum, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus had been left outside the walls, with the convoy, with strict orders to remain there. Obviously, Arthur Augustus had seen fit to disregard those strict orders.

Mr. Railton made a sudden stride, and then came back into the path, with his grip on a collar, and Arthur Augustus wriggling in his clutch.

"Yow-ow! Leggo! Bai Jove, you are wumplin' my collar! Pway leggo!" wailed Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, the awful ass!" breathed Blake, in silent wrath.

Dr. Holmes peered at the captive.

"Bless my soul! Who is it, Mr. Railton?"

"D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, sir!" said the Housemaster, still keeping his grip on Gussy's collar.

"D'Arcy! One of the boys who locked me in the New House dormitory this morning!" exclaimed the Head, frowning. "D'Arcy! What are you doing here?"

"I must refuse to answer that question, sir!"

"What?"

"Sowwy, sir, but I trust you will recognise that, undah the cirs, I cannot vewy well give information to the eneny."

"Bless my soul!"

"You absurd young rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, bestowing a powerful shake upon the swell of the Fourth.

"Gwooooooh!"

"No doubt D'Arcy was seeking to communicate with the boys in the House yonder," said the Head. "You will secure him, Mr. Railton."

"Bai Jove! I wufuse to be secured! If you do not release my collar, sir, I shall be undah the painful necessity of hackin' your shins!"

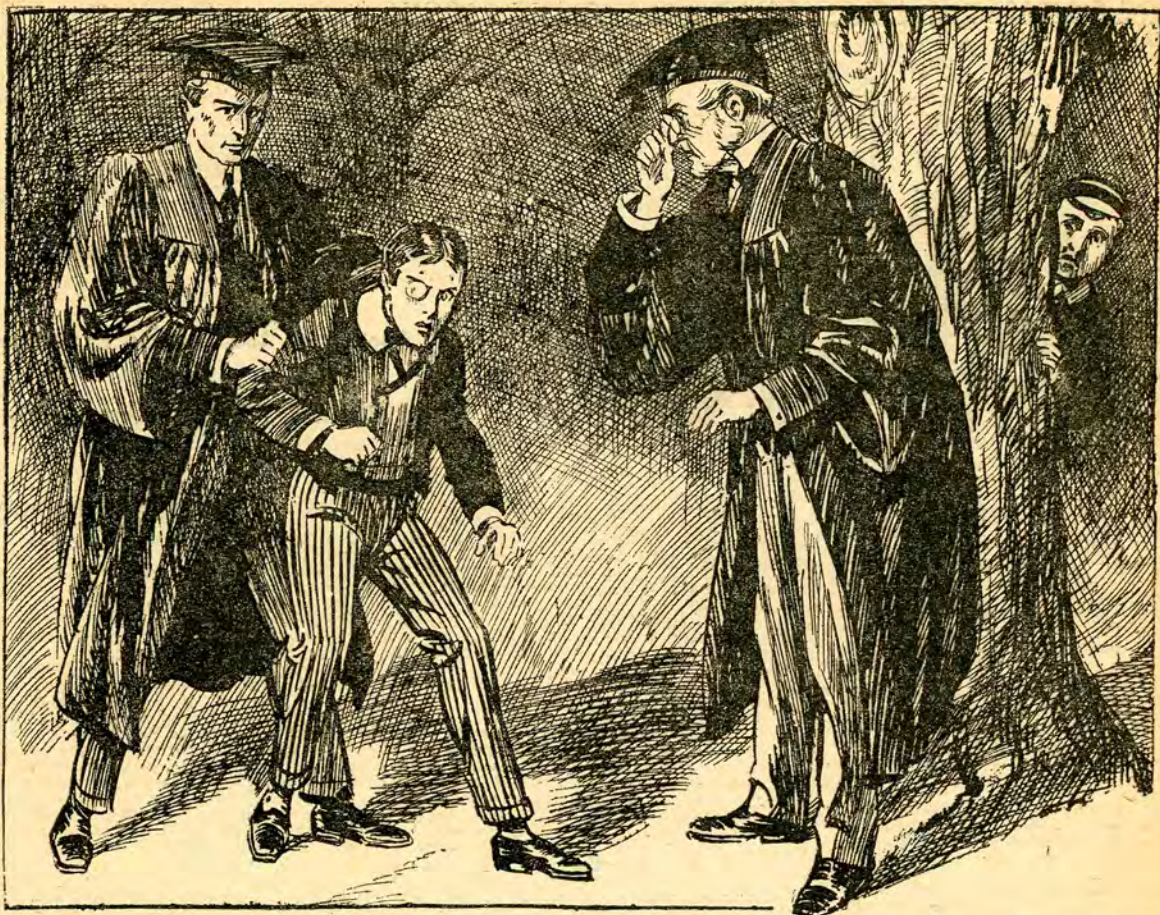
Mr. Railton tightened his grip.

"Are you alone here, D'Arcy?" he asked.

"Eh? Certainly not!"

"Who is with you, then?"

"You, sir, and Dr. Holmes," answered Arthur Augustus innocently.



Mr. Railton came back into the path, with his grip on a collar and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wriggling in his clutch. Dr. Holmes peered at the captive. "Bless my soul! Who is it, Mr. Railton?" "D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, sir!" said the Housemaster, still keeping his grip on Gussy's collar. "D'Arcy! One of the boys who locked me in the New House dormitory this morning!" exclaimed the Head, frowning. "D'Arcy! What are you doing here?" (See page 12.)

"You absurd boy!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "I mean, are any of your schoolfellows with you here?"

"I must wefuse to weply to that question, Mr. Wailton. I uttally wefuse to give Blake away."

"Blake! Is Blake here?"

"Pway do not ask me questions, sir. I cannot weply to them!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "You can lick me if you like, but I certainly shall not acquaint you with the fact that I came in to look for Blake."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head again. Probably the old gentleman was somewhat struck by Gussy's method of refusing to impart information. "Take him to the New House, Mr. Railton. Blake can be looked for afterwards."

"Certainly, sir."

Dr. Holmes continued his stately peregrinations, and Mr. Railton started for the New House, hooking the reluctant junior along by the collar. Jack Blake turned out from under the tree. He was strongly inclined to leave Arthur Augustus to his fate, as a lesson to that noble youth on the subject of "butting in" against orders. But friendship came first; and Blake determined upon punching Gussy's noble head later on.

Blake was quick to act.

Exactly what happened, Mr. Railton did not know. There was a sudden rush in the darkness, and something hard butted him, and he sat down on the gravel with a gasp. Involuntarily he released Arthur Augustus as he sat down.

Blake grabbed the swell of St. Jim's by the arm, and dragged him away.

"Hook it!" he whispered fiercely.

"Bai Jove! Blake—"

"Rum, you ass!" howled Blake.

Mr. Railton, with a wrathful expression, was jumping up. Blake fairly dragged the swell of St. Jim's away among the elms.

"It's all wight, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Don't dwag at a fellow like that. I came in to look for you—"

"Come on!" hissed Blake.

"I'm comin', deah boy. You see, I was wathah alarmed at your bein' so long—"

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Railton.

"Hurry up, you fathead!"

The two juniors raced for the wall, even Arthur Augustus appearing to realise the necessity of speed, as Mr. Railton's heavy steps rang in pursuit. Blake and Gussy reached the wall, and Blake bunched his chum up desperately. Arthur Augustus clutched the coping and climbed on the wall, and Blake clambered after him.

"You young rascals!" Mr. Railton loomed up in the gloom below. "Descend from that wall, at once! I—"

Apparently Mr. Railton realised that the juniors were not likely to descend at his command, for he rushed away, with the evident intention of getting out at the gates, and cutting off the retreat of the fugitives outside the walls.

"Come on!" breathed Blake. "We've got time to get clear. What are you up to, you frabjous chump?"

He clutched at Arthur Augustus, as that aristocratic youth was preparing to drop back within the wall.

"It's all wight, Blake!"

"You dummy! What—"

"I've drowped my eyeglass!"

"What!" shrieked Blake.

"My eyeglass, deah boy. I'm goin' back for it. What are you holdin' on to my arm for, Blake?"

"I—I—I—" babbled Blake. "I—I'll smash you! Come on, you chump! Come on, you frabjous cuckoo! Railton will be round under the wall in a tick! Get a move on! Jump!"

"But my eyeglass!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Blake fairly swung him off the wall, and Arthur Augustus had to jump. He landed in the road with a thud. Blake jumped after him.

"Hook it, you dummy!" he gasped.

"My eyeglass—"

(Continued on page 16.)

OUR SPECIAL SHORT COMPLETE DETECTIVE STORY!



THE CASE OF THE PARISIAN GUEST!

Another of the Amazing Exploits of

ANTHONY SHARPE—Investigator.

CHAPTER 1.

"M. Pierre Lemare."

THE telephone-bell buzzed loudly, and Anthony Sharpe picked up the receiver at his elbow.

"Hallo! Who is it—Conyers? By Jove, it's some time since I heard from you. Eh? No, not too busy at the moment, old man. All right, I'll run down at once!"

He rang off, drawing a Bradshaw towards him and turning the pages rapidly.

"H'm! Just about time to catch her, if I sprut!" he muttered, slipping on a macintosh and cap, and picking up a small valise which he usually kept ready packed.

Twenty minute later he was seated in the train which was swiftly bearing him away from smoky London to picturesque Devonshire, the country of cream and cider.

"Wonder what Conyers can want? He's hardly the kind of fellow to be mixed up in any sort of mystery," Sharpe thought, as he watched the outlying suburbs slip rapidly by. "However, a change will do me no end of good; it seems donkey's ages since I took a breather."

He leaned back comfortably with closed eyes, sleeping throughout the greater portion of the journey; and when the train eventually drew up at the little station of Sanchester, he sprang out, inquiring the way to the Hall from the solitary individual who seemed to act as porter, station-master, and ticket-collector all rolled into one.

Sharpe and the Hon. Gus Conyers had been at college together, and were fast friends, though it was some years since they had last met. Conyers was a perfect specimen of the ideal Englishman—big, strong, and red-faced—just born to fill the position he now occupied—that of a country squire, who had little work to do in life save to draw the rents at regular intervals from his many tenants.

The detective found the house without any difficulty; in fact, nobody could very well have missed it, since there was no other building of that size for some miles around. Conyers met him at the door.

"Hallo, Sharpe!" he greeted. "You didn't lose much time, I'd have sent a car, only I wasn't sure which train you'd—"

"Jackson," for the present, if you please," the other interrupted with a smile—"John Jackson," a journalistic friend of yours. You see, it may be necessary for me to conceal my identity, if, as I gathered from your tone over the wire, something out of the ordinary has occurred."

Conyers nodded, and, leading the way to his "den," closed the door behind them.

"Something has occurred," he began. "It's this way. For the past week or so, both the wife and I have been missing several things—rings, bracelets, and such like small articles, which are, nevertheless, valuable."

"Such as servants would be most likely to take a fancy to, eh?" suggested Sharpe; but the Honourable Gus shook his head decidedly.

"Perhaps; but not in this case," he replied. "All the servants have been questioned, of course, but they know nothing."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite!" Conyers answered with conviction. "We've had every one of 'em for years, and I'm prepared to put my last shilling on their honesty."

"H'm!" Sharpe grunted. "You may be right, but—Any other guests here except myself?"

"One," replied his friend. "A Frenchman named Pierre Lemare, whom I met on the cross-Channel boat a couple of weeks ago."

"Ah!" said the detective. "Anything peculiar about him?"

Conyers burst out laughing.

"Peculiar!" he echoed. "Not at all! He's one of the dearest little chaps you could come across; indeed, I took such a fancy to his genial disposition that I asked him down here for a short stay, to break the monotony of his holiday in London. Oh, no, there's nothing peculiar about Lemare, except that his whole object in life seems to be playing croquet."

"Strange," reflected Sharpe audibly. "I always thought that was more or less a ladies' game. Is that the chap, by the by?"

He suddenly nodded out of the window towards the lawn. A dapper little Parisian was coming across the grass, swinging a croquet mallet in his hand.

"That's he!" confirmed the Honourable Gus. "He's always at it. Hi, Lemare!"

The Frenchman came in and was introduced to the detective.

"I am delighted to meet you, Monsieur Jackson!" he said, in fairly good English.

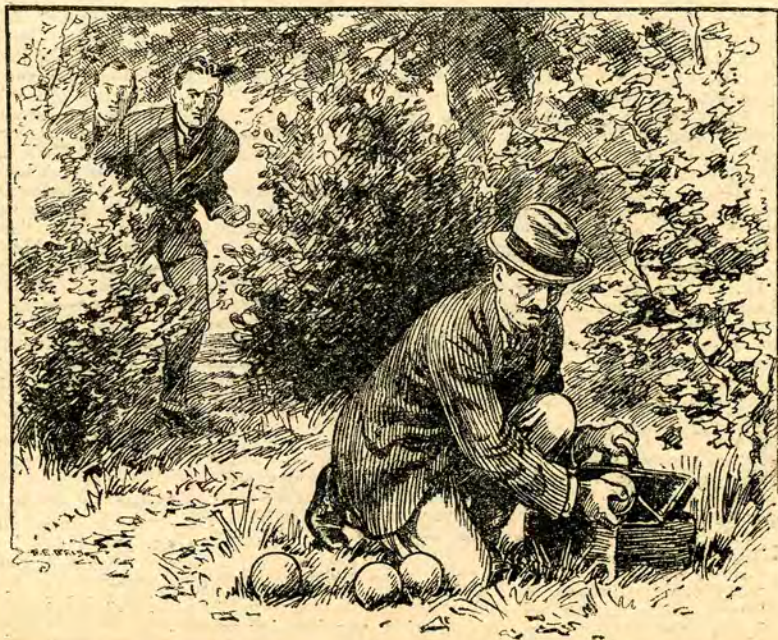
"The weather is charming, is it not so?"

Sharpe agreed that the weather was indeed such, and then began studying the foreigner intently, though without appearing to do so. There was something vaguely familiar about Monsieur Lemare, yet Sharpe could not exactly place him. Nevertheless, somewhere at the back of his mind he had a hazy idea that this was not the first time they had encountered each other, though, of course, it might have been merely imagination. So many individuals of various degrees of "shadiness" had passed through the investigator's hands from time to time, and so many had some facial characteristic in common, that it would have been quite easy to make a mistake.

"Fond of croquet, m'sieur?" Sharpe asked carelessly, as Lemare deposited his mallet on the floor beside his chair.

"Oh, oui!" was the enthusiastic reply. "I love it! I could play it—how you say?—all day long—tousjours!"

The conversation then drifted into other channels and after dinner Lemare strolled



After a hasty glance round, Lemare stooped and, picking up the croquet balls, he proceeded to pack them into a small handbag. As he did so there was a sudden rustle in the bushes, and Anthony Sharpe appeared upon the scene.

down to post some letters in Sanchester. When he had gone, Sharpe drew Conyers aside.

"Which is that chap's room?" he asked quietly.

"Lemare's?" gasped the other. "What do you want to know for? Surely you don't suspect—"

"My dear fellow," Sharpe cut in, "that's just where my job differs from that of a judge and jury. The law deems everyone innocent until someone has been proved guilty; the detective believes everyone guilty until he has trapped his bird without any reasonable doubt, judging from what evidence he possesses."

"But, man alive, you've no evidence against Lemare—"

"Maybe so—maybe not. Time will tell that; but I believe I've met your French friend before somewhere or other, old man. There's something vaguely familiar about him, and I want to take this opportunity of finding out anything I can. Now, lead the way, and no more questions, like a good fellow!"

The mystified Conyers did as requested, preceding Sharpe upstairs to the first landing and pointing out a bed-room on the right-hand side of a short corridor. The detective passed inside and closed the door.

There was nothing extraordinary in the appearance of the apartment—just a bed, a few chairs, and a dressing-table, underneath which was a small tin trunk. It was not fastened, and Sharpe raised the lid.

The trunk was half-full of clothes, and he lifted these out. At the bottom were half a dozen croquet balls of various colours.

"Well," Sharpe mused, "he must be a deuced fond of the game when he brings his own outfit along with him! Phew!"

He uttered a soft whistle and took up one of the balls, examining it closely. Then, with a grim smile playing about his lips, he replaced the articles and left the room.

"Well?" asked Conyers, as his friend rejoined him downstairs. "Did you nab the ruthless criminal?"

"Not yet," Anthony Sharpe answered in a peculiar tone. "But I'll tell you what I've discovered—that I'd very much like a game of croquet with M'sieur Lemare to-morrow afternoon, if he feels so inclined."

The Honourable Gus looked surprised, but made no comment save to say that he would arrange it. However, before the next afternoon arrived, Mrs. Conyers reported the loss of a necklace and a pair of gold ear-rings, whilst her husband was unable to find a diamond pin which he had left on his dressing-table that morning.

Sharpe made no remark, but smiled queerly to himself.

CHAPTER 2.

A Game of Croquet.

"**A** H, a powerful stroke, M'sieur!" cried Anthony Sharpe, letting his mallet swing from his hand as he watched the course of the red ball bounding along. "Rather too powerful, I think!"

They were nearing the end of a long and sternly-contested game, and the short winter afternoon was drawing to a close. Already the three shadows were lengthening on the well-kept croquet lawn, where the trio—Sharpe, Conyers, and the latter's Parisian guest—moved slowly round, the Frenchman leading by a few points.

Lemare had just driven the ball through the hoops, but had used greater force than seemed to be necessary for the requirements of the occasion, with the result that it had rolled far beyond the lawn boundary and in among the bushes of the shrubbery.

The ball's performance did not seem to ruffle the Frenchman's even temper, however, for he smilingly followed and disappeared from view.

Presently he reappeared with the truant in his hand, and the game was resumed. But Lemare made no more wild drives, and, as dusk closed in, they re-entered the house, Monsieur Pierre being declared the winner by a short head.

Some little time after dinner a figure slipped out by one of the side doors, and, stepping cautiously across the now moonlit lawn, pushed through the trees. An electric pocket-lamp flashed out and Anthony Sharpe commenced searching carefully about, stooping every now and then as he systematically explored the shrubbery.

Suddenly his foot brushed against something hard, and, bending down, he cleared



The pressure on Anthony Sharpe's throat was growing tighter, when all at once a pattering sound was heard, and the Honourable Gus, followed by a couple of gardeners, came hurrying to the scene.

away the leaves and other litter, a strange half-satisfied whistle issuing from his lips as the lamprays shone upon what he had unearthed. It was not one croquet ball that lay there, but four!

The detective closely scrutinised each, and then covered them up again; after which, humming a few bars of "La Marseillaise" softly to himself, he returned to his room.

The next morning two individuals lay quietly behind one of the thicker bushes, watching carefully. They were Sharpe and the Honourable Gus.

"You're sure he's leaving to-day?" asked the former.

"Quite! He's due back in Paris at once, he says. Rather a sudden decision, I thought, considering that he said nothing about it before."

"He's due at a certain 'government hotel,' where the meals are plain but wholesome, if I mistake not!" returned the detective grimly. "S'ah! Here he is!"

The bushes were parted and the Frenchman crept cautiously through. After a hasty glance round, he stooped and unearthed the croquet balls, which he proceeded to pack into a small handbag.

Then, as Lemare again turned towards the house, the detective made a sudden spring and seized him by the arms. There was a brief struggle, a metallic click, and the "croquet enthusiast" stood staring foolishly down at the handcuffs which encircled his wrists.

"You're early this morning, m'sieur!" Sharpe said pleasantly, as, with a swift movement, he plucked away his prisoner's moustache and imperial. "Or," he added, "I should have said Mr. Slippy Sam! I thought there was something vaguely familiar about the upper part of your face and the droop of your shoulders, but now, I'm sure! Conyers, allow me to introduce you to an old pal of mine, Slippy Sam, one of the most original pilferers in Britain, or anywhere else!"

"Well, I'm—!" The Honourable Gus stopped short, utterly at a loss for suitable words to convey his astonishment.

"And now," continued Sharpe evenly, "we'll examine these little things!"

He picked up one of the balls and gave it a quick twist. It unscrewed in the middle, and inside, packed in cotton wool, were the necklace, the ear-rings, and the diamond pin which had been most recently missed. The remaining three balls were of like construction, and contained the other stolen articles.

"Clever," mused Sharpe audibly. "Clever, even for Slippy Sam. You see, Conyers, how

it was done? As soon as he took the things, he put them in one of these, having, I presume, previously hidden a proper ball of similar colour somewhere about here. Then, when playing the next game after each theft, he would use the ball containing the spoils, and, seemingly by accident, drive it into the shrubbery, where he would change it for the sound one already concealed there. Croquet balls are innocent looking things, supposing anyone should decide to search him at any time; and, as you can see, nobody would ever suspect that these were not the genuine articles. The two halves are so beautifully joined that the crack is almost imperceptible. Oh, he was always an original boulder, was Sam, with more than a trace of eccentricity in his make-up, as well! I remember that the last time he was through my hands, he had his harvest hidden in an ingenious dummy camera which no one would be likely to open for fear of fogging his pictures!"

Conyers laughed, but instantly became serious again.

"By James, you're right, though!" he cried. "I noticed that on two or three occasions he made some terrific drives, but I put it down to excitement or something like that. It was actually more like golf than croquet!"

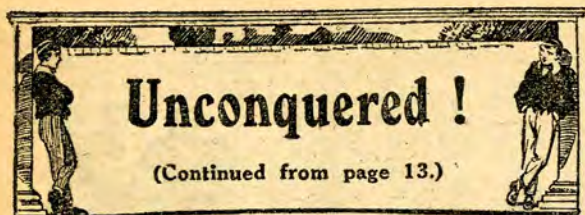
"Exactly!" said Sharpe. "Well, all you've got to do now is to ring up the Sanchester police-station. Come along, Sam, and look as pleasant as possible, for you've got to go through it once again!"

The culprit, however, did not intend to be taken so easily. Whilst his captors had been engaged in discussing his personal qualities, Slippy Sam had been meditating; and now, even as Sharpe turned towards him, handcuffed though he was, he darted sideways through the trees. Taken utterly by surprise, the other pair stood still for a moment, but that moment was quite sufficient to give the thief a valuable start. Sprinting away at considerable speed, despite the handicap of his manacled wrists, Sam was almost instantly swallowed up by the thickly-planted shrubs, which sprang back into position after he had forced his way through.

Sharpe and Conyers recovered themselves quickly, and started in pursuit; but the shrubbery was a large one and Slippy Sam apparently knew it well. They listened for a few minutes, but the sound of the fugitive's footsteps had now died away and there was nothing to be heard.

"It's a bitter pill," said Sharpe irritably, "but I don't imagine he'll get far with

(Continued on page 27.)



Unconquered!

(Continued from page 13.)

Blake grabbed his arm, and rushed him away, as Mr. Railton came pounding up through the gloom.

Arthur Augustus had to run—in spite of his anxiety for his eyeglass. Blake had an iron grip on his arm; and his arm had to go; and Arthur Augustus had to go where his arm went.

The two juniors vanished in the gloom. Blake plunged through a gap in a hedge, dragging Arthur Augustus recklessly behind him. The swell of St. Jim's stumbled and fell on his hands and knees; and a fearful yell indicated that he had discovered the locality of a bed of nettles.

"Come on!" hissed Blake.

"Yawwooh! Leggo! Oh cwumbs!"

"This way, dummy!"

"Yow-ow! You are dwaggin' out my arm——"

"Hurry up!"

Blake raced across the field, dragging at his chum, and Arthur Augustus accompanied him in a series of kangaroo-like jumps. Sight and sound of Mr. Railton died away behind, and Blake stopped at last. In a narrow lane at the farther side of the field several shadowy figures rose to view.

"All serene?" asked Dig.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Gussy put his foot in it, as usual?" asked Wally of the Third.

"Gwoogh! Weally, Wally——"

"Why didn't you fellows sit on his head?" demanded Blake wrathfully. "You know he oughtn't to be allowed to wander."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I vegard that wemark as offensive and idiotic, Blake. I should like to know what would have happened if I had not come to look for you!" said Arthur Augustus warmly.

"You—you—you——" gasped Blake.

"Howevah, it is all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "I've got my eyeglass. It did not dwop, aftah all—it is still on the stwing. So it's all wight."

"Don't put it in your eye for a minute!" breathed Blake.

"Eh! Why not?"

"Because I'm going to punch you in the eye."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus dodged away. For some reason unknown to Arthur Augustus' noble brain, Blake seemed to be rather excited just then, and not amenable to reason. So Arthur Augustus retired from his immediate neighbourhood rather hastily.

CHAPTER 9.

Blake Delivers the Goods!

"READY, you fellows!"

"You bet!"

"Waiting!" said Wally.

Blake & Co. had allowed an hour to elapse, Blake considering that judicious, after the alarm that Arthur Augustus had given by his ill-timed intervention. It was not agreeable to wait in the shadowy lane, swept by a keen winter wind. But Blake was inexorable. So far, Study No. 6 had been successful in their enterprise; and Blake was not taking unnecessary chances.

The "convoy" was well supplied, if only they could succeed in getting the supplies within the walls of the beleaguered School House. Every one of the ten juniors had a rucksack strapped over his shoulder, crammed with comestibles, and every pocket was filled to its fullest capacity. Blake & Co. had done shopping in Wayland on quite a considerable scale; and there was a supply of good things that Fatty Wynn would have contemplated with beatific ecstasy. It only remained to convey the goods to the School House garrison, the most difficult part of the enterprise. But the chief of Study No. 6 had his plans cut and dried.

He gave the word at last to start, and the shivering juniors were glad to get going. They crossed the field, and entered the road, and with great caution approached the school walls. There was a faint glimmer of stars in the cloudy sky, barely sufficient to show them their way. They stopped outside the wall.

"Bunk me up!" whispered Blake.

"Pewwaps I had bettah go first, Blake——"

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"Dry up!"

"You wemembah we came wathah a muckah last night, Blake, thorough you goin' first!" said Arthur Augustus mildly.

"Kill him, somebody!" hissed Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

Julian and Reilly "bunked" Blake up the wall. He sat astride of it, and peered into the shadows within. From the distant Houses there came glimmers of light; and from the School House, Blake could catch the sound of a chorus. Apparently Mr. Railton's old comrades-in-arms were making merry there.

"All serene!" whispered Blake. "Come up, you fellows, and don't make a sound."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway wemambah not to uttah a word, deah boys. If any fellow begins talkin', it may give the whole show away."

"Will you shut up, Gussy?" asked Blake, in concentrated tones.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Dry up, old chap," said Clive. "Up you go!"

One by one the juniors climbed the wall, and one by one they dropped down on the inner side. They were within the precincts of the school again. There was a sudden clink on the frosty ground.

"Bai Jove! One of you fellows has dwopped somethin'!" said Arthur Augustus. "You may give the alarm if you are clumsy, you know."

"You've dropped it, you duffer!" grunted Herries.

"Bai Jove! It must be that tin of corned beef. Pway don't gwouse, Blake. I did not dwop it intentionally, you know. Show a light heah, somebody."

"A light!" gasped Blake.

"Yaas; my electwic torch is played out."

"Do you want to announce our visit to Mr. Railton, Gussy?" asked Julian, with sarcastic politeness.

"Certainly not, deah boy. I want to look for that tin of corned beef."

"Come on, you born idiot!" gasped Blake. "Never mind the tin." And he grasped Arthur Augustus' noble arm and jerked him onward.

The "convoy" did not approach the School House. They had had plenty of experience of the vigilance of the enemy. Blake led the way cautiously through the gloom towards the Head's house. That building, which adjoined the School House on one side, was dark and deserted.

In term time it was the residence of the doctor and Mrs. Holmes. But it was vacant now; Mrs. Holmes was away for the vacation, as the Head would have been, but for the barring-out which had followed the sentence of expulsion upon Tom Merry.

At the beginning of the barring-out the Head's residence had been used as a base of operations by the attacking party, as it had a door into the School House. Dr. Holmes had taken up his quarters in the New House, across the quad.

"Safe as houses!" murmured Blake, as he halted in the shadow of the building.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Don't you begin, Gussy!" murmured Wally.

"Nobody here," said Blake, peering in at a dark window. "You see, in cutting off the gas and electricity from the School House, they cut it off here as well; so the jolly old Head had to stick in the New House over the way."

"Good for us!" murmured Clive.

"Yaas, wathah! But——"

"You remember those blighters got out on the roof, and got to the School House roof, and tried to invade us that way!" chuckled Blake. "That's the idea now; what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!"

"Yaas; but——"

"Fifteen minutes' interval, while Gussy exercises his chin!" said Levison minor; and there was a chuckle from Wally and Reggie Manners.

"Weally, you young wascals——"

"Shurrup!" whispered Julian.

"Yaas; but——"

"Will you dry up?" breathed Blake. "You'll have the whole gang down on us with your blessed chinning!"

"Yaas; but I was goin' to say that the place is locked up, you know. How are we goin' to get in, deah boy? We cannot get out on the woof until we get inside the house, you know."

"Did you work that out in your head, Gussy?" asked D'Arcy minor, with great admiration.

"Follow on, and don't jaw!" said Blake.

"If you wufer to my wemarks as jawin', Blake——"

"Br-r-r-r!"

Blake led the way round the house to the rear. He stopped under the kitchen window.

There he inserted the blade of his pocket-knife between the sashes, to push back the catch.

Blake had laid his plans carefully; he was rather proud of the way he had mapped this out.

All was plain sailing—as Blake had mapped it out. Forcing the catch of the window gave admission to the Head's deserted residence—the trap in the roof gave access to the leads, and thence it was only a step to the leads of the School House. That was the way the assailants had come, on an occasion when the schoolboy rebels had very nearly been caught napping.

Unfortunately, the best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley, as the poet has told us. Pushing the window-catch with the blade of a pocket-knife is an easy thing to arrange. In actual practice, it is not often so easy.

Blake forced the blade up through the sashes. He found the catch with it. But the sashes fitted too tightly together, and he could bring no leverage to bear on the catch.

That was unexpected. Blake really was not to blame, as he had had no experience as a burglar. But there it was!

"Finished, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, after a minute or two.

"Cheese it, fathead!" Blake's voice sounded a little cross.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Shut up!"

"If you are goin' to weply to me with uttah wudeness, Blake, I will say no more!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I will only remark that we are waitin' for you, and that it is vewy cold; and that pwobably, soonah or latah, the enemy will drop on us, and—yow-ow-ow!"

Arthur Augustus' remarks were cut short by an elbow jamming suddenly in his noble ribs. Blake appeared to have lost patience.

"Ow! Wow! You uttah wuffian!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Quiet!" breathed Clive.

"Yaas, but—"

Snap!

"All right!" said Herries. "There goes the catch!"

"That isn't the catch!" breathed Blake. "That's the blade of my pocket-knife."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Let me try," said Reilly. "I dare say I can do it."

"I dare say!" said Blake in concentrated tones. "I dare say you're a wonderfully clever sort of idiot, and I dare say I'll give you one in the eye if you shove near this window."

Snap!

"Is that the catch?" asked Julian.

"No, you frabjous ass. It isn't the catch—it's the other blade of my knife. Any more fool questions to ask?"

Julian was discreetly silent. Blake really seemed to be approaching a dangerous state of exasperation.

"Well, what is the progwamme?" asked Arthur Augustus, after a painful pause. "I am quite willin' to stand heah, Blake, though it is vewy cold; but I cannot see that we are gettin' any newawh the woof."

"Hush!" breathed Julian. "Somebody's coming!"

There was a footstep, and a muttering voice.

"Oh, rot!" It was Sergeant Stuckey speaking. "I never 'eard nothing. You fancied it, Brown."

"You wouldn't 'ear anything, sergeant, not with that old wooden 'ead of yours," said Private Brown pleasantly. "I tell you—"

The juniors stood still as mice. Blake set his teeth. His plan had been so beautifully mapped out, that it was simply cruel to be stopped at the last moment like this, by an unexpected trifle. Private Brown broke off suddenly at the sight of shadowy figures huddled by the window.

"What did I tell you? There they are—"

Crash! Blake exasperation found a victim in the too-watchful Private Brown. Before Mr. Brown could finish, Blake smote him, and Mr. Brown sat down with a suddenness that knocked all the breath out of him. The next moment the sergeant was struggling in the grasp of half a dozen pairs of hands.

He reeled back in the clutch of the juniors, and crashed on the window.

Crash! Smash!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Clive. "He's done it!"

"Yoooooop!" roared the sergeant.

The sergeant's head had done it. There was no more need of Blake's pocket-knife. Sergeant Stuckey's head had crashed on a pane, and sent it flying in fragments into the room within.

The alarm was given now with a vengeance. There were shouts in the distance, and the sound of running feet.

Blake thrust his hand through the broken pane, and grasped the catch and forced it back. A second later, the window was open.

"Quick!" he panted.

Sergeant Stuckey went with a bump to the ground, crashing down on Private Brown, who emitted a breathless grunt. While the two hapless old soldiers were sorting themselves out, the juniors clambered into the window with desperate haste.

They rolled and stumbled inside. Blake flashed on the light of his electric torch, and led the way. Like rabbits, the juniors scampered up the stairs.

Loud shouts rang out behind them: some of the enemy were clambering in at the window, others dashing round to the doors. But Blake & Co. had a start.

They came up to the top, landing with a breathless rush. Blake jammed the steps into position, swarmed up them, and hurled open the trap in the roof. One after another the juniors scrambled up, and out on the leads.

"All out?" gasped Blake. "Good!"

He slammed the trapdoor shut—almost upon the head of a pursuer. There was a shout from the adjoining roof of the School House—the voice of Tom Merry.

"That you, Blake?"

"What do you think?" chuckled Blake. "Get going, you fellows—I'll sit on this trap till you're all clear."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors scudded away. Tom Merry & Co were ready for them on the School House roof—ready for the enemy, too, if the enemy followed. But the enemy were thumping on the underside of the trapdoor on which Blake was calmly sitting—his weight keeping it from opening.

"Sing out when you're all clear!" called out Blake.

"They'll be after me a tick after I leave this cosy corner."

"Right-ho!" sang back Tom Merry.

He hurried the juniors down into the School House, remaining to the last himself.

"All clear, Blake."

"Good!"

Tom Merry descended last. Blake rose from the trap, and scudded across to the School House leads, and clambered in. A moment after he was gone, the trap flew up, and a head appeared. But the pursuers came too late. Blake was safe in the School House. Tom Merry dragged the trap shut, and it was bolted underneath. And the disappointed pursuers, after thumping on it a little to express their feelings, retired the way they had come.

Fatty Wynn's face beamed like unto a full moon.

That night, there was a supper of the gods in the besieged School House.

Fatty Wynn was master of the ceremonies; and the supper he turned out was a feast that beat all records.

"Going to starve us out, you know!" grinned Blake, as he helped himself for the fifth time. "Think we're bound to give in when the tuck's gone. I heard the Head tell Railton so. They reckoned without Study No. 6, what?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I don't want to swank—" said Blake, looking round.

"You don't?" asked Monty Lowther in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No!" roared Blake

"All right: my mistake! Go on."

"But what I say is this—Study No. 6 is the goods," said Blake. "You see, you fellows, I had the whole thing mapped out from start to finish—"

"This is what comes of having a strategic brain," said Monty Lowther. "You planned that bit about falling into the enemy's hands last night?"

"N-n-no—not that bit," said Blake hastily. "That was a—a—merely an incident—"

"Merely that and nothin' more!" grinned Cardew.

"We got out of that!" said Blake warmly, "and the whole thing went like clockwork—planned from start to finish—"

"Wonderful brain!" said Cardew. "No other fellow could have planned it out for Sergeant Stuckey to bust a window just in time with his head—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Blake. "There was—were slight incidents—but we've delivered the goods."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "We've delivered the goods, deah boys—there's no gettin' out of that! What do you think, Wynn, old chap?"

"Splendid!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Oh! You think it was splendid, old fellow?" asked Blake, cordially.

"Certainly," said Fatty Wynn. "Simply splendid! I'm going to have another."

"Eh! Another what?"

"Another soss."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently it was the sausages that Fatty Wynn was alluding to with such enthusiasm. But it was agreed on all hands that Study No. 6 had done remarkably well, and that they had a right to swank, which they did just a little, perhaps more than a little. The barring-out was still going strong, and Tom Merry & Co. were full of cheery confidence—and still unconquered.

THE END.

(Next week's story of St. Jim's deals with the end of the rebellion. Every reader should take the precaution of ordering his copy in advance.)

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Wideawake Willie— of the "Daily Wire"

A Thrilling Story of the Perilous
Adventure of a Young Reporter.

By VINCENT OWEN.

CHAPTER 1.

Trapped by the Train Bandits—The Death Ride!

"B R-R-R-R! Of all the outlandish places I've ever struck, this is the most awful! Here am I, with an hour to wait for a train, copy to deliver, and there's a feeling round my frozen heart that I'm longin' to be back in London!"

So soliloquised Will Freeman—or, as the staff of the great London newspaper, the "Daily Wire," called him, Wideawake Willy—as he paced up and down the frost-glittering platform of Biggersteth Station, somewhere in the remote parts of Northumberland.

Nutting, the news editor, had sent his young "cub" up there to secure details of a mountain tragedy. Such things were common enough in those rugged parts, but as there was nothing exciting happening anywhere else, Wideawake Willy had gone to write up the Northumberland affair.

Adolphus Buzzard, of the "Morning Telegram," was also in the neighbourhood after news. Keen rivalry existed between the nimble-witted young cub of the "Wire" and the "Telegram" man.

Wideawake Willy—he always lived up to his nickname—had secured first-hand information, written up his copy in the local post-office, and raced down to the station, only to make the exasperating discovery that there was not a train for another hour.

Willy rammed his gloved hands deep down into his overcoat pockets, and gave a snort of disgust as he looked round the deserted station. It was nearly nine o'clock p.m., night pitch-black, and temperature nearing the zero mark.

"Oh, it's enough to make a brass monkey shed tears!" he growled. "Buzzard will be buzzing around shortly—when he's got his car dug out of the snowdrift I shoved down in the road in front of him! Br-r-r-r! I wasted ten minutes over the job, too, and now he'll have the laugh of me! He'll get his flivver dug out within half an hour, and— Oh! H'm!"

The peevish look vanished suddenly, and Wideawake Willy's face became thoughtful. He remembered now that the London express from Northaven would be dashing through Biggersteth in about twenty minutes' time. If he could get on that train it would save him over an hour in reaching London—a prospect that brought a warm glow to his frost-bitten cheeks.

The question was, how to get on the express? It seemed unlikely that he would be able to stop the train. No, the news wasn't important enough for such drastic measures. Yet Wideawake Willy determined that he would have to get on the express somehow.

"By gosh! I've got it!" he ejaculated suddenly. "It will be as easy as kicking a cheeky printer's devil down the foundry stairs! Glad I kept my eyes open!"

That is where Wideawake Willy scored. Wherever he was, he always made it a point to keep his eyes open and his wits tuned up.

Looking out of the window of the train that had brought him to Biggersteth early that

morning he had noticed that, on emerging from the mountain tunnel, the line ran down steeply through a deep cutting towards Biggersteth station, half a mile distant. He had, in fact, seen an express train climbing the gradient to get into the tunnel, and noticed what a stiff tug it was.

"Trains climbing that cutting can't go at much more than walking pace!" chuckled the young reporter to himself. "I'll nip along there, wait for the express, and board her while she's puffing up the hill. Gee! Nothing could be easier! Here's for it!"

Nobody was about. Wideawake Willy hastened to the end of the platform, jumped down on to the line, and next minute was swallowed up in the darkness.

A quarter of an hour's journey along the track through the wild night brought him to the top of the steep gradient, where the line entered the tunnel through the mountain.

Barren rock walled in the cutting on either side, and its edges were strewn with great jagged boulders covered with snow. Up above the wind was howling down from the mountains and swooping the snow about in miniature avalanches. Wideawake Willy, quizzing up at the black sky thought to himself that a storm was brewing.

"Whew!" he gasped, halting and beating his frozen hands together. "Some climb! It's a wonder the trains manage to get up at all, and—"

He broke off suddenly as three dark figures, detaching themselves from behind a mass of boulders, hurled themselves savagely at him. The men were muffled, and wore black masks across their faces. Willy turned, realised his danger quick as a flash, and put up his fists.

Then followed a sharp, fierce struggle on the railway-line. The young newspaperman's fists drove like hails among his assailants; but they were three to one, desperate, and they had the advantage. The boy was hurled down into the snow, and the masked men held him down. One, who was evidently their leader, looked at him in the glare of a flashing torchlight, and gave a short laugh.

"It's only a boy!" he muttered, with a note of relief in his thick voice. "I thought it was an infernal 'tec!"

"Only a boy—ugh!" snarled another, who was nursing his chin. "That boy can hit, chief!"

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" demanded the leader.

"Johnny Jones, of Paption. Walkin' along the line from Biggersteth to Paption, which is the next station the other side of the mountain," replied Wideawake Willy calmly. "Let me go!"

"Not yet, my buck!" came the muttered reply. "You've got to be roped up and kept quiet, out of our way. Fetch me over some of that rope!"

Rope was fetched, and Wideawake Willy was bound hand and foot, and gagged.

The masked men carried his prostrate form higher up the gradient, and dumped him on the flints just inside the black vault of the tunnel. There they left him, and retraced their steps down the cutting.

Left alone, Wideawake Willy did some quick thinking. It came to him who these men were and what their purpose was in prowling in the railway-cutting on such a

night. Train robbers—yes! But their game was a big one.

Willy, being a member of a newspaper staff, obtained many titbits of information that were unknown to the general public. And on the phone with Nutting the news editor, earlier that evening, he had heard that an extra car had been tacked on to the end of the Northaven express—a car containing half a million in gold bullion. The gold had been shipped from Morania, as an instalment on account of that country's war debt to the British Treasury. It had arrived at Northaven that afternoon, and had been loaded on a railway-car, to be taken to London, under an armed guard, by the night express, there to be at once transferred to the Bank of England.

The masked men in the cutting were after the gold car on the express. They had hit on the same idea as himself for boarding the train at that lonely spot.

The express was coming! As he lay there in the tunnel-mouth, bound and gagged, he heard it in the distance above the howl of the impending storm, snorting and rumbling up the gradient.

Willy's eyes gleamed. He was not the lad to take this sort of thing lying down. He tugged and worked desperately at his bonds. He was an expert at getting out of a tie-up. Many a time Wideawake Willy had entertained his colleagues at the "Wire" office by getting them to tie him up, and then he would shed ropes and chains as though they were so many elastic strands. It was one of the tricks he had picked up in the days when, as a boy acrobat, he had roughed it with a travelling circus.

A few minutes later Willy's ropes were lying in a heap by the side of the railway line, with the gag on top of them, and their former wearer was making his way stealthily out of the tunnel-mouth. The lights of the oncoming express twinkled through the gloom ahead.

The engine, snorting and shedding a hectic glare of light from its furnace, was hauling its load slowly up the gradient. In the red glare of the locomotive, Willy's quick eyes detected three lurking figures crouching at the side of the line, ready to spring.

He drew back as the thundering monster pulled into the tunnel at a speed of about seven miles an hour. It had another mile's climb before it yet, into the bowels of the mountain.

The train-robbers were by this time already on the train. Willy straightened took a leap, and landed on the footboard of one of the lighted compartments, his hands grasping the handrail.

Gritting his teeth, the youngster worked his way from carriage to carriage towards the rear of the train. As he went, a dull roar sounded in the tunnel from outside, down in the cutting, and Wideawake Willy wondered as he continued his course towards the back of the train, what the noise was.

He reached the guard's compartment and looked in. The guard was lying prone on the floor, insensible. The window was smashed, and Willy could see a broken glass bulb on the floor, with a dark bluish liquid staining the boards near it. Evidently, it was a drug, thrown in by the bandits, the

fumes of which had robbed the guard of consciousness.

Willy climbed to the next car—the bullion car. The window was protected by iron bars, and, looking through them, he saw the three armed guards who were travelling with the gold standing by the precious sacks, their hands above their heads. The three masked robbers held ugly-looking revolvers pointed at them. The opposite door had been blown in, bringing down part of the side of the car with it. Willy then knew what the dull noise was he had heard in the tunnel.

"You've got to help us get away with the gold," the leader of the bandits was saying in a hard voice to the guards. "If you don't do as I instruct you, there's a couple of bullets in this gun for each of you. Now, out with those bags!"

The leader looked on with the revolver menacing the guards while the five threw out bag after bag of gold into the blackness of the tunnel.

Wideawake Willy snapped his teeth down hard. He clambered to the back of the gold car, worked his way round to the other side, and crouched on the sagging footboard by the jagged opening where the door had once been. He took out his own revolver—a Colt that had been a pal to him on many occasions in his adventurous career as a newspaper stunt-hunter—and then, with a quick twist, he jumped into the car.

"Hands up!" His voice rapped out threateningly, and he took a stance by the opposite door, his gleaming weapon levelled at the masked bandits. "Don't move, or—"

He did not finish that sentence, for one of the three guards, a big, muscular fellow, whirled round on him suddenly. A huge fist came out and dealt the plucky youngster a blow on the temple that sent him like a log to the car floor, stunned.

"Good for you, Logan!" said the bandits' leader calmly. "It's a pity you had to let your two companions into the secret that you are in my pay, but it couldn't be helped! By heck! It's that confounded boy we left roped up in the tunnel-mouth!"

The other two guards, amazed at Logan's treachery, were kept back by the chief's revolver while Logan bound the unconscious boy again and threw him into a corner. When the young newspaper man regained his senses the express was still lumbering uphill through the tunnel, and all the gold had been thrown out.

The two scared guards, Logan, and the other two masked bandits, jumped down from the car, leaving Wideawake Willy alone with the chief. He leered at the prostrate boy.

"You're a wideawake kid, young 'un, but to-night I reckon you go to sleep for good!" he said. "You go to eternity in this car to-night! You see, I'm goin' to uncouple it, and—well, you can imagine the rest!"

"You villain! You wouldn't dare!" gasped the young reporter, struggling in his bonds. "You've got the gold, and—"

"Sure! My men are collecting it now and takin' it back out of the tunnel!" rejoined the other with an evil grin. "But dead boys tell no tales—and smashed gold cars leave no clues!"

Next minute the miscreant was gone through the hole in the side of the car.

The boy wrenched at the ropes that bound him. He heard the metallic jangle of couplings, then, to his horror, felt the car stop, then slowly reverse its course, as, freed from the rest of the train, it began to descend the gradient it had just been hauled up.

The gold robber had carried out his fiendish threat. The van, empty now save for the roped-up boy, was travelling backwards on the line with ever-increasing speed.

Wideawake Willy flung off the ropes and jumped to his feet as the car flew past the gleaming torchlights of the bandits gathering up the gold-bags at the side of the line, and it shot out of the tunnel like a live thing. Willy dashed to the side and looked out with horrified eyes—saw the cutting receding swiftly; looked forward and saw that the runaway car was dashing down the steep gradient at breakneck speed, and he a prisoner in it like a trapped rat.

Setting his teeth grimly, and with nerves taut, he clambered out of the careering car and climbed up to the roof. He dared not jump, but he preferred to be in the open.

The car, with the boy crouching on the roof, tore like a flash through Biggersteth Station, and was gone in a second into the darkness beyond.

Willy saw, with a thrill of horror, that

the signal was down for the next train—the one he would have caught had he waited. It could not be far off now, on the same track as the runaway.

Straining his eyes, he saw in the distance ahead the winding gleam of a river. He remembered that the railway crossed the river on a suspension bridge, and a desperate thought entered his head—a plan for a last bid for his life.

Gradually the river came nearer. He stood up and balanced himself on the swerving roof of the runaway car. Beyond the river he heard the low rumble of the approaching train. As the runaway sped across the centre of the bridge the boy on the roof crouched and sprang out into space. The leap was well judged, for he cleared the iron girders, went over the bridge, and then hurtled through wind-whipped darkness into the river.

He struck the ice-cold water and sank. Coming up, he struck out for the bank, and as he did so, he heard a sickening crash in the distance, and the night darkness was lit up by a red, glaring light. He knew what it meant. The runaway car had run headlong into the train.

"I've saved my skin, at any rate!" he muttered, as he clambered up the river bank. "My word! It was the closest thing I've ever had in my life! And I must see that the 'Wire' gets the story in time for the morning edition!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Hut in the Mountains—On the Train Bandits' Trail!

WIDEAWAKE WILLY obtained a rub-down and some dry clothes at a house near the river, and then he hastened to the scene of the collision. The locomotive had been derailed and wrecked by the impact, and several coaches were over on their sides. The gold car was smashed to atoms, and there was a good deal of damage done to the train; but, fortunately, no serious casualties had occurred.

The young "Wire" reporter, with notebook and pencil busy, took down a brief description of the accident and then vaulted on a motor-lorry that was going to Biggersteth.

Arriving at the station there, he looked over the fence and saw his rival, Buzzard, stamping bad-temperedly up and down. He chuckled and went to the George Hotel, where he took possession of the telephone and was quickly put through to the "Wire" office in London.

The news that he breathed into the telephone made Nutting gasp with wonder and delight.

"There you are!" chuckled Willy. "It's red-hot news, and none of the other papers can possibly get wind of it till to-morrow—and it will already be out in the 'Wire.' 'Bullion Robbery from Night Express! Daring Raid by Train Bandits! Desperadoes

Set Empty Bullion Car Loose on Downhill Track! Dramatic Collision Follows! What price those headlines, Nutty?"

"They're prime, laddie! What about Buzzard?"

"He's kicking his heels on the station—frozen to his ears!" grinned back Wideawake Willy. "I'll see about him. Well, cheerio, Nutting! I'm off now!"

"Where are you going, young 'un?"

"I'm going to get on the track of those gold bandits. If I don't come back, you can send a search-party out into the wilds of the Northumberland mountains to look for my remains!"

"Great Scott! Do you think that's where the bandits have taken the loot?"

"I'm sure of it!" fired back Willy. "Where else would they go? After they set that truck loose they gathered up the gold-bags, with the help of the guards, and carted the stuff to some hiding-place in the mountains, from which they'll manage to get away with it sooner or later—probably sooner. Ta-ta!"

He rang off, and in the dark, snow-swept High Street came face to face with Buzzard. The "Morning Telegram" reporter was bunched up in a fur-lined overcoat, and his face was blue with the cold.

"That you, Freeman?" he shivered. "What's the matter with the trains? Ours has met with an accident up the line, I hear. Snowdrift, I expect."

"Yes, I expect so," grinned Wideawake Willy, winking into space. "I think you'd best put up here at the George, and wait for the first train in the morning. You've caught a cold!"

"Atchoo!" Yes, I have!" sneezed the "Telegram" man.

Wideawake Willy piloted his rival into the George Hotel, and left him sleeping like a top in bed, after giving him a stiff dose of brandy for his cold. Then, equipped with revolver, ammunition, electric torch, and taking with him some chocolate to sustain him through the cold night, Wideawake Willy set forth for the railway cutting where the train robbery had taken place.

Arriving there, he found ample evidence of what he had surmised, although the driving wind and the snow had by now obliterated the tracks made by the gold-robbers in their flight.

He consulted his compass, and picked on a northward trail he felt sure the bandits had taken. He set off pluckily, with shoulders hunched forward, into the whirling snow blizzard. Soon it became a howling, smashing hurricane that made progress terribly difficult. High up on the mountain ridge all was pitch black, and even with the aid of his electric torch he could not see because of the biting, swirling wind that drove the snow into his face like the lashes of a whip. But he kept doggedly to his course, clambering up rocks, wading waist-deep in snow through treacherous gullies. He found recently made men's footprints on the rocks and in the few sheltered places on the wild mountainside, and, encouraged, he struggled on into the hurricane-swept wilderness.

But the storm drove him off his course, and, with a groan of despair, he realized at length that he was lost!

For two hours he battled through the night with the angry elements, and after a nightmare journey he crossed the mountain ridge, and went staggering down the other side. He felt his strength giving out quickly now; the wind bit into him cruelly. But when he was on the point of exhaustion he saw a gleaming light somewhere in the darkness below, and he gritted his teeth and kept on. He heaved the light at length, and found that it came through the window of a crazy hut on the mountainside. The plucky youngster staggered up and crouched low against the wall of the hut to recover.

The thrum of men's voices came to his ears. He felt a warm thrill course through his chilled veins when he recognised the voice of the masked man who had set loose the gold-car.

"The storm isn't so bad down in the valley," the rascal was saying. "The lorry ought to have arrived by now, unless the storm has delayed it. As soon as Frampton comes with the lorry, we'll load the gold on to it, and take it to my place at Northaven. Who would suspect me, Raymond Hewart, chief of the famous Hewart Shipping Corporation, of having the stolen gold?"

This was followed by loud laughter from his confederates.

By this time Wideawake Willy had found a chink in the crazy wooden structure, and

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was looking eagerly in. The two gold-guards were lying bound hand and foot in a corner. The rest of the gang were sitting round a stove, drinking, and discussing their plan for getting rid of the gold.

The plan, which Willy soon gathered, was briefly this. One of the Hewart Shipping Corporation lorries, driven by Frampton, was expected in the valley road below. The gold was to be put into wooden boxes ostensibly filled with chemicals from the Tweed Valley Chemical Co., and taken to the docks of the Hewart Shipping Corporation at the great

black shadows of the wharf yard, and found his way quickly to the office building. It was locked and in darkness, for the clerks did not come on duty until nine o'clock. It was barely six now.

Willy took out a bunch of keys from his pocket, selected a skeleton-key, and quickly had the outer door of the building unlocked. Wideawake Willy was never without a revolver or a skeleton-key. The latter had often gained him admittance to places where he wasn't wanted, in his search for news.

He crept up the stairs, and found a telephone in the manager's office. A few minutes later he was asking for a trunk-call to London, mentioning to the operator that he was a Press man, and that the matter was urgent. He was not disturbed. How should Hewart guess that there was somebody in his office telephoning to a great London newspaper a story about him. Wideawake Willy soon got through to the "Daily Wire" office in Fleet Street.

"Hallo! That you, Nutting? Willy speaking. You got the train robbery stunt through O. K.?"

"Sure!" replied the news editor over the wires. "We've laid it on thick with a trowel on the front page, and it looks well!" "Good enough!" grinned Wideawake Willy. "Won't the 'Telegram' folk writhe when they see our morning edition? I left Buzzard sleeping like a top at the George, Biggersteth. He was fairly frozen when I met him. Say, Nutting, I've trailed the gold-robbers!"

An amazed gasp from the news editor came over the wires.

"Say it again, young 'un!"

Wideawake Willy said it again, and then swiftly outlined to Nutting all that had happened since he set off into the mountains to trail the bandits.

"I'm at Hewart's dock now," wound up Wideawake Willy. "They're unloading the gold, and later on they'll be stowing it aboard the Gilroy, which sails with the tide this

while the swirling current carried away the borrowed dinghy towards the mass of shipping beyond the breakwater. The young newspaper man swarmed up the mooring rope like a monkey, and clambered stealthily over the gunwale. He crouched low and moved silently across the shadowed deck of the Gilroy. A cabin boy was dozing among a heap of tarpaulins against a hatchway. The fo'c'sle was deserted, and the only other sign of life he saw aboard was a greasy ship's cook, only half awake, preparing breakfast in the galley.

Wideawake Willy chuckled and crept silently below. Rats scurried away in fright as he clambered down into the dingy, stuffy hold in the nether depths of the ship. Most of the ship's cargo was already installed. It consisted of chemicals and explosives destined for an arsenal firm at Blackheath, London.

"Guess there's enough here to blow up the whole of Northaven!" mused Willy as he trekked into the next hold. "Ha! This is where I hide!"

He settled himself comfortably in No. 2 hold and waited.

Darkness gave way to daylight and he heard some men aboard. By their voices he recognised them to be the same men who had carried out the robbery from the express. Soon after that the winches of the Gilroy nosed at headlong speed as they hauled the stolen gold aboard. The boxes were dumped in No. 2 hold, where Wideawake Willy was hiding. But he remained secreted in the shadows and was not discovered.

He heard Hewart give his final instructions to Captain Jervis and the rascally crew before he went ashore.

At 11.30 precisely the Gilroy slipped her moorings and drew out of Northaven Harbour, headed south, the cargo in her holds consisting of chemicals, explosives, stolen bullion, and Wideawake Willy.

Willy spent a lonely day in the hold. Towards evening the monotony of his vigil was relieved by one of the crew in the fo'c'sle vigorously playing a mouth organ. Willy munched some chocolate and enjoyed it as though it were an opera.

Evening deepened into night and before the last dog watch was over, the Gilroy was riding in a sea hurling its waves mountains high and was buffeted by a shrieking gale that whipped the wavecrests to boiling foam. The Gilroy rolled and staggered under each crashing impulse of the waves. Captain Jervis crouched behind the weathersheet on the bridge, his face dripping and showing haggard in the binnacle light as through trumpeted hands he shouted orders to the crew. Men scurried about the careening decks removing loose tackle and batten down hatches until the tumbling tons of water that crashed over the sides sent them scurrying below for their lives. Lightning split the black heavens in jagged flashes and the crashing of thunder added to the already deafening uproar of the storm.

The young stowaway in the hold, held on grimly to a bulkhead to prevent himself being hurled about and stunned by the lurching of the storm-driven ship. Suddenly came the quick pounding of men's footsteps above, and a trio of hard-faced men came down the ladder to see that the cargo was tight.

Wideawake Willy crouched under a heap of sacks and held on, his heart thumping. Would he be discovered? The men were

IT WILL BE SAID—

seaport of Northaven. Then, in the morning, the boxes would be loaded with other cargo of real chemicals on board the s.s. Gilroy, a freight-ship belonging to Hewart, and taken to London, where Hewart's agent would collect the gold and keep it secretly until means were found for its disposal.

Captain Jervis, the master of the Gilroy, was one of the masked men who had effected the gold robbery from the express. The rogues, as they sat in conclave, little suspected that the boy they imagined they had sent to his death was all the time listening outside the hut, and formulating plans of his own to forestall them, and at the same time get one of the biggest "scoops" on record for the "Daily Wire."

Half an hour passed, and then a man, clad in a leather motor-suit, climbed up the snow-clad mountain-path to the hut, and proclaimed that the lorry was in the valley below, waiting.

The gang commenced the task of transferring the gold-bags from the hut to the lorry. The storm was all to their advantage, for their footprints in the snow were swept up by the blizzard almost as soon as they were made. It was also useful to Wideawake Willy, for the very same reason. He crept down the mountain-path to where a large motor-lorry was waiting. He crouched behind some bushes, and watched the gang load the bags of gold into the empty wooden boxes that were already in the lorry. These boxes, when filled, were nailed down and stacked in rows, and the lot covered with a tarpaulin.

The lorry having been loaded, the gang returned to the hut for refreshment. This gave Wideawake Willy the opportunity he was waiting for. He clambered up into the lorry, and hid himself snugly under the tarpaulin.

Not long after that the gang came down the mountainside, and got aboard the lorry. They left the two guards prisoners in the evacuated hut.

The lorry drove off at a swift pace towards Northaven, and Wideawake Willy, safe in hiding on board, wondered how this adventure would end.

CHAPTER 3.

Willy's Plan—The Stowaway—Snatched from Destruction—The Round-Up.

THE early hours of the morning showed the lorry driving into the dockyard quarter of Northaven. Lights were glimmering about the wharves, and the streets were already alive with vehicles, for work started early at the great northern seaport.

The Hewart Shipping Corporation lorries were always busy, day and night, with their freights, so that the arrival of the gold-laden lorry excited no suspicion. It drew into the large yard of the Hewart wharf, and Wideawake Willy slipped from under the tarpaulin and dropped off the lorry before it drew to a standstill. He found a hiding-place behind some crates, and watched, in the semi-darkness, the unloading of the stolen bullion.

At the landing-stage near by, a large tramp-steamer was drawn up, and in the light from the quayside lamp Willy read the name of the ship—s.s. Gilroy.

"That's the ship they're going to load the gold on!" he muttered; and his eyes gleamed. "By Jove! If only I can get through to the 'Wire' office—"

He moved away like a wraith through the

THAT "THE MISSING WORLD'S CHAMPION!"

IS—

morning for London. I'm not goin' to stop 'em. I'm goin' to hide aboard the Gilroy—"

"Whew!"

"I shall be able to keep an eye on the gold—see? The 'Daily Wire' will send out its own ship, the s.s. Wireworm, to hold up the Gilroy, capture the gang, and transfer the gold to its own hold. Get me, Nutting?"

"By heck, I get you, kid!" gasped Nutting. "You suggest that the 'Wire' carries out this stunt all on its own—captures the gold-robbers and returns the gold? Great Scott, what a scoop for our paper! It will make the biggest story in newspaperdom—'Gold Bandits Trained by Our Own Reporter!'"

Nutting's voice was vibrant with excitement. "We'll pull it off, Freeman, and make the other papers turn green with envy. You can rely on me to put it to the Old Man, and we'll have the Wireworm in commission immediately!"

"That's the talk!" grinned back Wideawake Willy. "I'm goin' now to get some breakfast and then nip aboard the Gilroy. Cheerio, Nutting!"

The young newspaper reporter rang off and crept from the Hewart wharf office. There was nobody about to see him. Ten minutes later saw him in a dockside eating house not far away enjoying a hot breakfast.

The first grey of dawn was streaking the sky across the North Sea when a small boat slipped out of the shadows at the harbour side at Northaven and went unseen into the morning mist that hung over the seaport like a pall. Wideawake Willy had cut the boat loose from its moorings at a deserted quay, and commandeered it for his own use.

The presence of the boat in the harbour, even if it was seen, awakened no suspicion. Winches, slings, and cranes were clacking noisily all over the harbour, where the day's work was now well started. Willy rowed round to the far side of the s.s. Gilroy, stood up in the boat, then sprang out and clutched the Gilroy's mooring cable. There he hung,

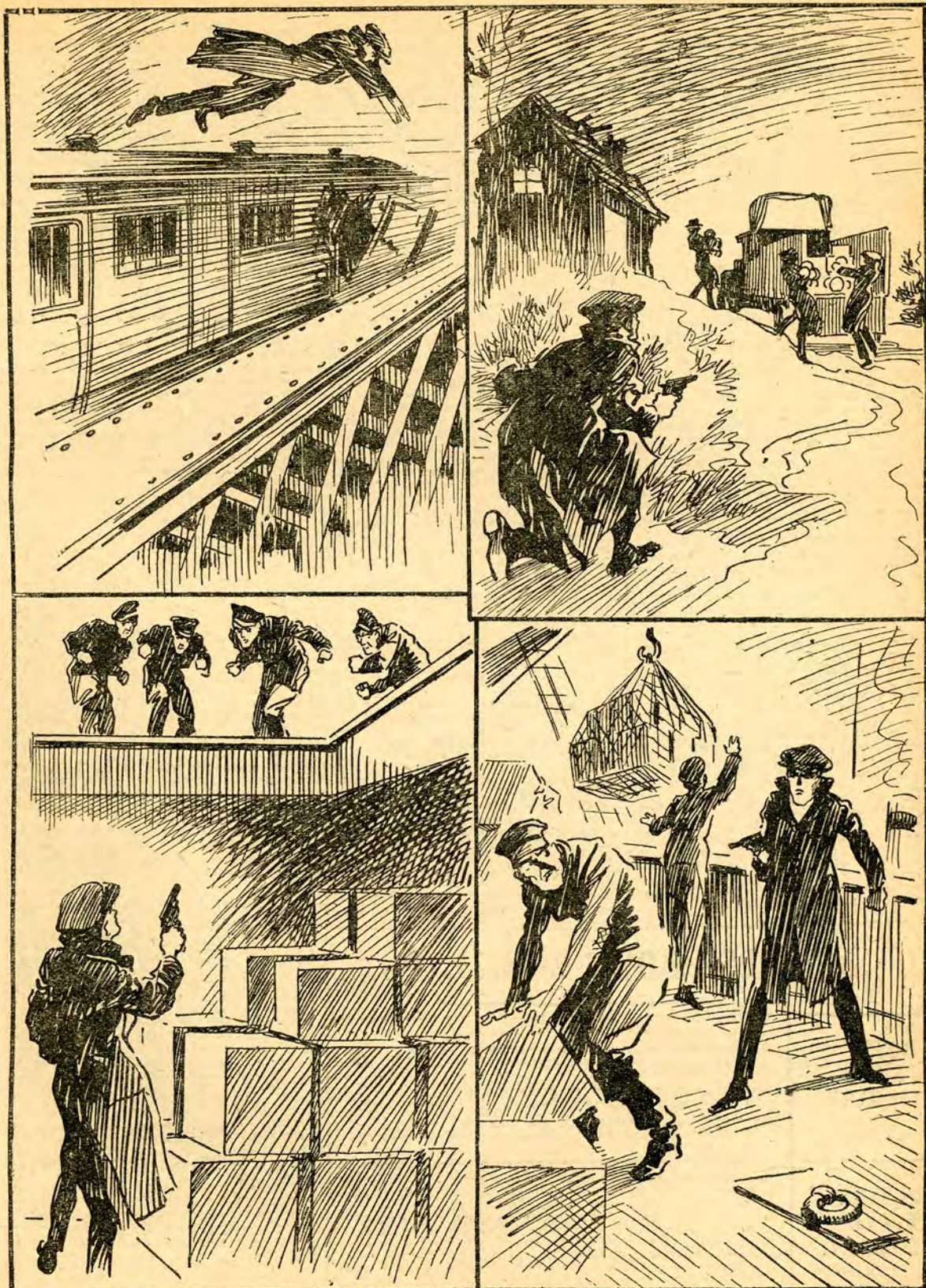
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(Look out for next week!)

down now, staggering from side to side and holding on to the boxes as the great flogging waves caught the Gilroy in their fling and made her reel.

The boy gave a groan as one of the men lost his hold of the boxes and came down heavily on the sacks to land near where Willy was hiding. The seaman gave a yell that brought up the other two. Wideawake Willy saw that the game was up—the hiding game, at any rate. He jumped up, back to the bulkhead, and whipped out his Colt.

"A darned stowaway swab!" roared the man who had fallen. "By gosh, 'e's only a



(1) Wideawake Willy crouched and then sprang into space. Clearing the girders, he went over the bridge into the swirling waters below. (2) Crouching behind cover, Willy watched the gang load the bags of gold into the empty boxes. (3) Willy smiled as he levelled his revolver at Captain Jervis and the other snarling men who were looking down on him. (4) Under Willy's supervision, the cowed crew of the Gilroy transferred the boxes of stolen gold from their own ship to the holds of the Wireworm.

kid, too! Come out, you slimy young rat and—"

"I reckon I'm doing the ordering about here!" rapped back Willy, pointing his revolver at the three amazed men. "Up that ladder, the three of you, sharp! This gun's loaded, and I'll drop the first one who doesn't obey!"

The seamen hesitated, and Willy sent a bullet between the legs of one of them that made all three hop in double-quick time for the ladder. They scrambled up it one after the other and disappeared from view.

"Reckon I've got to hold the fort here till the Wireworm comes on the scene!" mused Willy. "Still, I don't care a rap. Here's the gold, here's my revolver and—patting his pocket—"I've plenty of ammunition. Hallo, you above!"

Captain Jervis and a number of snarling men were looking down. Wideawake Willy smiled up at them along the barrel of his revolver.

"Rotten night, Jervis—what?" he chuckled. The rascally captain's eyes started from his head when he saw who the stowaway was.

"It's the boy we left on the runaway gold ear!" the words rasped through a kiln-dry throat. "How the dickens did you escape, and get here!"

Wideawake Willy's smile broadened. "That's got you guessing, Jervis—eh?" he laughed. "Well, anyway, here I am and here I intend to remain to guard the gold. I've plenty of ammunition for my gun here. You see, I know all your plans and have acted accordingly."

Jervis' face blanched. A chorus of rage arose from the others. Jervis had a revolver he would have loved to be able to use, but he dared not.

"We might come to terms," said the captain thickly after a pause. "Will you take five hundred pounds to keep quiet about this and join us?"

"Not much! I'm out to round up the gold, and round you up—Hewart as well."

"You know about Hewart, then?" roared the captain.

"Sure! I know everything! That's my business! You see, I'm a newspaper reporter, Wideawake Willy, of the 'Daily Wire'!" grinned up the youngster. "You may, or may not, have heard of me!"

"We're done, Jervis!" snarled one of the gang. "The game's up!"

"You'll stop down there till you starve!" hissed Jervis at Wideawake Willy. "You may have supplies for your gun, but you've got none for yourself. We'll leave it at that!"

They drew away from the hatch opening and Willy was left alone.

The storm raged all night, and only abated towards morning. It left in its wake, however, a thick, grey fog that was worse than night. The Gilroy crawled through it, the sea invisible a few yards beyond her bows.

Down in the captain's cabin Jervis and the rest of the gang held conclave.

"We've already had our picking of the plunder, so the best thing we can do is to make a quick getaway and leave Hewart to look after himself," said Jervis with a snarl. "And we'll leave no trace, either. There are explosives aboard. There are plenty of fuses, too. During the morning, when we have all cleared off in the lifeboats, the Gilroy will blow up, and it will be thought that we went up with it. As a matter of fact, the only person to go up with the ship will be that infernal boy! He won't know anything till the explosion takes place—and he'll sure know nothin' afterwards!"

This was greeted with nods and grunts of approval and evil grins from the other rascals.

The fog did not lift all the morning. Jervis ordered all the lifeboats to be swung down from the davits. He and an accomplice, Munday, went below and laid a fifteen-minute fuse among the explosives and chemicals in the centre hold, taking back with them sufficient explosives to blow up the lifeboats before they landed at the shore.

Jervis ganged their position to be no more than a mile from the lonely Lincolnshire coast to the starboard side.

The fuse was lit, and the captain and crew prepared to evacuate the ship. Suddenly, out of the swirling fog, which was now thinning, loomed the dark hull of another ship. Jervis shouted hoarsely and sprang up to the wheel. The Gilroy yawned drunkenly across the bows of the other craft, but it was skillful manoeuvring from the other that avoided a head-on collision. The captain and crew of the Gilroy watched the other craft through narrowed eyes. She did not pass out of sight as they expected, but drew slowly alongside. It was a beautiful piece of seamanship. The fog was lifting rapidly now, and the rascals aboard the Gilroy could read the name of the other ship the Wireworm. The name conveyed nothing to them, consequently it came as a great shock to Jervis to see a short, fat, round-faced little man grinning down at him from the bridge of the Wireworm and holding a couple of revolvers menacingly towards him.

"What do you want?" yelled Jervis. "What's the game?"

"Guess you're our game—and the gold you've got stowed away in your holds!" came the smiling retort, with a threatening note in it. "Hallo, here's young Freeman!"

"Gosh! It's the editor himself!" gasped Wideawake Willy, who came tumbling excitedly up the companion, revolver pointed straight ahead in case of trouble. "You couldn't have planned it better, sir! The gold's safe and sound below, and I reckon I can see there's no treachery with my little gun here. Jervis, my boy, the game's up!"

Jervis' face blanched. He looked round wildly, and saw a line of grinning men pointing revolvers at him from the deck of the Wireworm. He made a break for the side to jump overboard, but Wideawake

Willy dug his Colt into the rascal's ribs and jerked him back.

"Let me go!" screamed Jervis. "The ship will go up any minute now! We shall all be blown to atoms! There's a fuse burning in the middle hold, among the dynamite and chemicals—"

"You fiend!" shouted Wideawake Willy, and he darted away.

A shout of alarm came from the Wireworm's decks, but the boy did not turn back. He dashed below and looked fearfully down into the centre hold. The fuse was almost burnt down now. It was a matter of seconds before the whole dump exploded. With a sobbing cry the boy jumped headlong into the hold, and even as the deadly sparks ate their way to the end of the fuse, he snatched it away and hurled the detonator through the open hatchway. He stepped back and drew a deep breath. He had saved the ship.

Calmly he swung himself up the ladder and returned to the deck. Grey, anxious faces met him.

"It's all right," he said grimly. "I got the fuse away in time!"

Jervis swung round with a savage snarl, but the "Daily Wire" men came swarming over on to the Gilroy's deck. Jervis' men made as if to fight, but drew back under the menace of the raiders' revolvers.

On the bridge of the Wireworm the fat, smiling little editor, Victor Derrington, stood with his revolver in hand to direct affairs. Wideawake Willy leaped up and joined him, and the two shook hands.

Derrington pointed to the hatches of the boat alongside.

"Get those covers off, you scum!" he rapped, addressing the cowering crew of the Gilroy, "and unload that gold as sharp as you can. I'll have it over here, and let there be no mistake about it. You go over, Willy, and superintend operations while I keep a watching eye from here."

"What-ho, Chief!" grinned Wideawake Willy.

The young newspaper reporter went back to the Gilroy and took charge of the unloading. The winches rattled, and derrick-ropes sighed busily as the cowered crew of the Gilroy transferred the boxes of stolen gold from their own ship to the holds of the Wireworm.

Wideawake Willy rapped out his orders and kept the gang hard at it. Jervis beamed a hand with the rest, and he kicked him in approved seaman fashion when he showed signs of lagging.

At length the whole of the bullion was taken over by the Wireworm. Her men then swarmed over with ropes and chains, and after a short struggle made Jervis and his gang prisoners.

Then, as the sun shone out through the dispersing fog, the Wireworm's engines reversed, and she turned round, took the Gilroy in tow, and then proceeded towards London.

Wideawake Willy sat in "Big Gun" Derrington's editorial office in the large "Daily Wire" building in Fleet Street. He was chuckling over a special edition of the "Wire." It gave a thrilling account of the gold robbery, and how the gold had been recovered. Willy's photograph was printed large underneath screaming headlines. The story had thrilled all England, and made the rivals of the "Daily Wire" rub their eyes and wonder at the magnificent scoop.

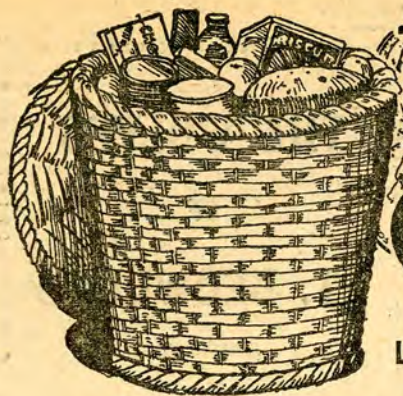
"Scotland Yard has rounded up Hewart and his London agent," said Derrington, smiling through a cloud of cigar smoke. "The rest of the bullion has been recovered, and the Treasury has tendered its thanks to the 'Daily Wire,' and have awarded one Willy Freeman, special correspondent to England's leading newspaper, a reward of five thousand pounds for services rendered. Hope it won't start you thinkin' of retiring, young 'un!"

"Retiring!" grinned back Wideawake Willy. "Not me, Chief! Hey, Nutting"—as the news editor entered just then—"the Chief's talking about me wanting to retire. Why, I'm only just getting my hand in, ain't I?"

"Sure! But you've got it in pretty deep!" chuckled Nutting. "The 'Wire's' selling like hot cakes—and, say, Willy, you come right down now and get out a couple of columns of 'My Ride to Death, or What It Feels Like to Be Aboard a Runaway Railway Car.' The public's clamouring for it!"

THE END
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QUITE SATISFIED!

A young footballer was returning home from a local football-match with his arm in a sling, and his leg and head damaged. On turning a corner, he came across a small newsboy, who cried: "Football results, guv'nor?" "No, thanks," came the stern reply. "I've got plenty, thanks!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Rosewell, 37, Russell Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.

MUTUAL BENEFIT!

There was keen rivalry between the two village teams, and when they met for the important match there was a record crowd to see the fight. At half-time there appeared some danger of the light giving out, and the rival captains became nervous, but the referee evinced no anxiety for a resumption. "Surely time must be up now, referee?" said one of the players at last. "I'm sure we've had more than forty-five minutes." The referee put his hand to his ear, and looked across to a wooden erection on wheels in the corner of the field. "We don't go by minutes when I'm refereeing 'ere," he replied. "What on earth do you go by, then?" was the angry query. "By the coffee urn yonder," came the answer. "When the chap at the stall 'ollers 'right away!' 'e's sold out, and we make another start. 'Im and me's partners!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Edgar Ward, 2, Beaconsfield Street, Mexborough, Rotherham.

THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER.

SAY IT TO MUSIC!

The nervous-looking seaman went up to the skipper and began: "P-Please, s-sir—"

"Get off!" roared the skipper. And the man hurriedly made his retreat. About an hour later the man again approached, and began stammering.

"Oh, sing it!" cut in the irate skipper. To the tune of "Auld Lang Syne," the sailor immediately commenced:

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot an' never brought to min'.

The bloomin' cook's fell overboard, and's fifty miles behind!"

Sent in by Harry Cohn, 74, Camp Road, Leeds.

NOT HER FAULT!

The bride at a wedding got her own back very neatly on the groom. As they were standing by the window after the ceremony there passed down the street a donkey, slowly dragging a cart. The bridegroom, who seemed to have a great idea of his joking powers, called his newly-made wife and said: "Say, Betty, there's a relative of yours outside!" "Where?" asked his beloved. "I don't see anyone at all." "Why, what about the donkey?" asked the husband. "Can't you see the joke?" "Oh, is that it?" replied the fair one. "Well, it must be a relation by marriage. You can't expect me to know all your people yet!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Brodie, 23, Cambridge Road, Aldershot.

THE RETORT COURTEOUS.

One day Jones marched into his tailor's shop, and said: "I bring you back these trousers, Mr. Green. I want you to re-seat them. I sit a lot, you know." "Very good," said Mr. Green; "and if you bring back that bill I sent you some time ago I also will be pleased to receipt it. I stand a lot, you know."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Ethna MacGovern, Hanover Square, Carlrow, Ireland.

INSULT TO INJURY!

"Move on, there!" cried the driver of the smart carriage to the loiterer in the narrow street. "Move on, yourself!" called the loiterer, whose burly form prevented all vehicular progress. "I'll move on when I'm ready!" An important-looking man in a top-hat popped his head out of the window. "Do you know who I am, sir?" he shrieked. "Do you know that I have M.P. at the end of my name?" "Oh," returned the loiterer, "that's nothing; every jolly old shrimp has that!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. C. Wright, Cedar Cottage, Blackwell, near Bromsgrove.

AN UNFORTUNATE MISUNDERSTANDING!

A rich business man, who had only recently been married, was accompanied by his wife as he entered the dining-room of the hotel famed for its excellent cuisine and pretty waitresses. His order was served promptly, but the fried chicken he had been telling his wife so much about was not in evidence. "Where is my chicken?" he asked somewhat irritably. The waiter, leaning over and bringing his mouth in close proximity to the ear of the stockbroker which was farthest from his wife, replied: "If you mean the little girl with blue eyes and fluffy hair, she doesn't work here now!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Squires, East Street, St. Neots, Hants.

AN AWKWARD PREDICAMENT!

"Jones," said the manager of the bank, "there'll be a vacancy at the head office very shortly, and I'm thinking of nominating your twin brother for the job." "My twin brother, sir!" exclaimed Jones. "But—" "I mean the one I saw watching a football match yesterday, while you had gone to seek advice from your doctor," said the manager. "Oh—er—yes," said Jones. "I—I remember, sir. I—I'll go round and fetch him." "Good," said the manager, "and don't come back till you've found him."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Percy Lynch, 8, Greenhough Street, Ancoats, Manchester.

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THIS IS A REAL "LIVE" SERIAL, BOYS! START IT TO-DAY!



DEMPSEY, IN SUMMER RIG, CREATES A SCARE!

Introduction.

Jack Wabbygong, James Ready, Sweet, and a Chinnee named Lung, chums together in the great school of St. Beowulf's, together with Viscount Waffington, a relation of the Countess of Castlewood, are instrumental in bringing about the capture of a gang of International burglars.

John Lincoln, one of the governors, takes an interest in the lads, and arranges to take them on a world tour.

The great day comes, and aboard the Pole Star the happy party set off on their great adventure.

After an exciting sea trip, the Pole Star drops anchor at San Carlo. The chums go ashore, where, through Wobby's inquisitiveness, they get arrested and made prisoners in a strange little cage projecting from the tower of the town hall.

Mr. Hobbs, who is in charge of the party, sets off in search of Wobby & Co. His clever wit leads to their rescue, and they make a dash for safety. They escape after being swept off a viaduct, and make their way back to the ship. Here they are told they're bound for another adventure. They change ships, and their pet kangaroo punches Wobby in the eye at the very start.

(Now read on.)

Wonderful News!

"RESCUE!" shouted Wobby, mopping his damaged eye. "He won't hurt you! Why, that kangaroo is as safe as a kitten! Jim, bunk to the butcher and ask him to give you a pound of steak for my eye. Give him my love, and tell him that the kangaroo has biffed me one with his dirty left, and that if I don't clap a lump of 'Joe Blake' on the injured optic, I'll have an eye on me like a tomato!"

Jim sped off on his errand as Wobby again cautiously approached his pet.

"Steady, now, Siki!" said Wobby soothingly, as the puzzled kangaroo reared up, and Stickjaw promptly got out of the way.

Dempsey, the bear, more intelligent at penetrating disguises, rose on his hind legs, grunting with delight, at meeting Wobby. He was very fond of Wobby, and he could smell bullseyes in his pocket.

"Wouf!" grunted Dempsey, clapping his paws on Wobby's shoulders and licking his black face.

At the sight of this demonstration of affection, and the sound of his master's voice issuing from this strange nigger, Nobby, the kangaroo, was reassured. He

dropped his gloved paws, and his sensitive nose muzzled over Wobby.

He allowed Wobby to detach his chain from the stanchion as the bell of the Kipper King started to ring impatiently.

Jim came rushing back with a huge piece of steak. Greasy, the butcher, sorry to part with these merry boys, had done Wobby well. He had cut him a porterhouse steak.

"Here you are, Wob, clap this on your eye!" laughed Jim.

"Crumbs! I asked for a bit of steak—I didn't ask for a blanket!" exclaimed Wobby. "But throw it up!"

Jim threw the steak up and Wobby reached to catch it.

Dempsey had scented the steak. His great shaggy head popped up, and he intercepted it with a single snap. There was a gobble and it was gone!

"There!" exclaimed Wobby. "I shall have to have a black eye after all. This is not my day out!"

"Hurry up, young gents!" shouted Mr. Hobbs, who was dragging a canvas sack along the deck, whilst he nursed an accorcion and his sea-boots under his arm. "Hurry up, if you don't want to get left behind!"

"What, me old 'Ob!" cried Wobby, delighted. "You coming, too?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Hobbs, rather sourly. "One fool makes many. The governor said I could come if I liked to see a bit of life. He said that maybe I'd come in useful to look after you boys!"

"I thought you said that you would never run with such a gang of corner-boys again, Hobbs!" said Wobby with a smile. "But never mind, 'Ob! You come along with us. We'll show you a bit of the world!"

The boys stumbled along a narrow, littered deck.

The warps were cast off, the Kipper King went astern, and they saw the glittering lights of the Pole Star draw together in the darkness as the ships parted.

Mr. Hobbs then chased them up to stow away the stores that were choking the decks.

Wobby took a squint at the stars. The Kipper King was steering a southerly course, and the flash of Cape St. Vincent had died away under the dark horizon astern.

"We are going after the slavers on the West Coast of Africa," said Wobby. "Someone has been playing hank on the governor up one of these big rivers, and he's going in on this little ship to see about it."

THE WOLVES OF ST. BEOWULF'S

A thrilling serial of
adventure on Land
and Sea.

By
DUNCAN STORM.

But Stickjaw shook his head.

"We are bound for the Morocco coast," he said. "I heard the governor talking to Mr. Wiles about camels. But where are we going to sleep to-night?"

Stickjaw was sitting on a small booby hatch with a lifting lid. It was suddenly thrown up, lifting him head over heels.

It was Slusky's head which had appeared out of this companion-way.

"Bress ma' soul, Massa 'Tickjaw!" he said. "Sure I didn't know you were a-settin' on de top ob de hatch. Now, you young gents, come down to supper."

The boys peered down the steel ladder by which Slusky had made his appearance.

"What's the game, Slusky?" asked Wobby. "That's the coal cellar down there."

"Good place for black gentlemen like you an' me, Mars'r Wobby," replied Slusky. "But you come down. Here an yo' quarters."

The boys climbed down into the Glory Hole. It was a hot and foggy little cabin.

It was indeed snug, for the thermometer on its steel walls stood at ninety-five in the lamplight. Down here were their berths, their saloon, and Slusky's pantry and galley. The table was laid and brightly lit, and the whole interior looked snug, if a bit dirty.

A cockroach which had been trying to commit suicide in the lamp was crawling round in circles on the table-cloth, and the opening of a small panel in the end of the cabin let in a whiff that told there was steak and fried onions for supper.

The boys seated themselves at table, perspiration streaming from their faces.

Even Wobby was sweating through the black which covered his face, so that he looked as if he had been freshly done over with burnt cork.

"My word!" sighed Wobby, fanning himself with a plate that was ominously made of enamelled iron. "This is Fugville-on-Sea! Here, what's this? There's no room for any more down here!"

A huge back view of Mr. Hobbs appeared coming down the steel ladder.

"Make room for a little 'un, kids!" he said, introducing his huge body at the already crowded table. "Tell ole Nanook of the North to hurry up with that there steak and onions!"

A narrow door opened in the bulkhead, and the grinning Eskimo slipped in with a huge dish.

"Crumbs!" said Wobby, panting. "He's all at home. He'll be thinking that he's back in Greenland in the old igloo, raising a Greenland fug and eating seal blubber off the lamp! But he's not coming to sit with us at this table unless he takes off four

ANSWERS
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or five pairs of those hairy trousers. He's too hot for this climate."

"Me no sit at table," answered Ingakook grinning. "Me steward."

"Right-ho, Archibald," replied Wobby; "you keep the train oil out of the plum duff, and we'll get on all Sir Garney. Now, Hobbo," he added, "have you got any news for us? Where are we off to? You know! I can see it in your eye!"

Mr. Hobbs leaned over the table. His mouth was full of steak, and his eye was filled with the light of adventure.

"I can tell you where we are going now, young gents!" he said. "The buzz is all over the ship. We are off to the Soos Coast!"

"Where's that?" demanded Wobby.

"Don't they teach you boys geography at school?" demanded Mr. Hobbs, sword-swallowing his knife as he punished the onions. "Ain't you ever heard of the Soos Coast?"

"No!" answered Wobby.

"Then what's the good of all that money that Mr. Lincoln's spent on your education?" demanded Mr. Hobbs. "Why, the Soos Coast is where Robinson Crusoe and Boy Xury cruised, and it's about as rough to-day as it was then. It's the proper old Barbary Coast and we're going to clean up the last of the Barbary pirates!"

The eyes of the boys glistened in the lamplight of the stuffy little cabin.

"Pirates!" they exclaimed together.

"Yes!" replied Mr. Hobbs with relish. "And I should say that if we all live through the night after this steak and onion supper, we'll run through about the hottest bit of film that's ever 'appeared outside the movies. We are in for a bit of the real hot. Have you never heard of Suini Baba?"

"Any relation of Sweeney Todd, the Barber?" asked Wobby, greatly interested.

"E's no relation," said Mr. Hobbs, "but he's got the same little ways about 'im. E's very fond of cutting throats and chucking his customers down in the cellar. He's robbed the governor's trading station on the coast, and carried the staff off to his castle in the mountains. He's also sent saucy

messages to the governor telling him he wants ten thousand pounds ransom for them or he'll cut their ears and noses off. Then he'll want twenty thousand and he'll go on cutting them up and putting up the price till there's nothing left to ransom."

"And is the governor going to ransom them?" asked Wobby.

Mr. Hobbs winked.

"He's going to ransom them with a brick in a handkerchief," he said.

"But what's Mr. Travers got to do with it?" asked Jim.

"Why," replied Mr. Hobbs, "this 'ere Suini is wanted for murder in England. It's a Scotland Yard job."

"In England!" exclaimed the boys in astonishment.

"Did you never read about that lady who was found dead in her bed in a London Hotel, of snake bite, and all her jewels gone?" asked Mr. Hobbs.

"Yes!" exclaimed Wobby, who loved crime stories.

"Well, you find some queer things in hotel beds," said Mr. Hobbs, "but you don't find a certain snake that bites in a certain way with a certain sort of pizen with certain symptoms—the blue adder that's only found in the mountains behind the Soos Coast! And there was a case in Berlin, another case in Stockholm, and another case in a big English country house, that the doctor returned as heart disease but it wasn't! Mr. Travers has had charge of the case, and he's traced it all to this wild patch of the Barbary coast. That there Suini Baba is the Big Thief and the Big Murderer of the world, and it's the Wolves of St. Beowulf's that the governor's chosen to fetch him out of his stronghold!"

A great sigh of delight went up from the boys.

Here indeed was adventure come to meet them.

"If none of you young gents want any more of those fried onions," continued Mr. Hobbs, "it's a pity to waste them. Pass the dish and let loose the cheese!"

Dempsey Loses His Fur.

FOR twenty-four hours the Kipper King steamed slowly and leisurely southward over a smooth and oily sea.

To the boys it seemed to grow warmer and warmer every minute. The Kipper King was a fine trawler, one of the last built for the mine sweeping operations of the Great War. But a trawler is not a hot weather boat, and they were now steaming down to what the Spaniards call the "Ladies' Sea," where the water is as blue as paint and the sun, at all seasons of the year, begins to draw the pitch from the decks.

The Wolves of St. Beowulf's made themselves as comfortable as they could. Awnings were spread, and Slushy produced bottles of lemon-squash and other cooling drinks. Even Wobby, accustomed as he was to the heats of his native Queensland, panted.

"It reminds me of home," he said, as they lounged on the deck trying to get a bit of coolness from the slight breeze. "But it's a different sort of heat that we have at home. All you have to do there is to put your steak on a boulder at twelve, and, if nobody pinches it, it is done by one o'clock."

Dempsey, the bear, was miserable. So was Ingakook, the Eskimo, who was still wearing his thick sealskin clothing and his fur hood. They had not long come down from the Arctic, and they felt the change in the weather even more than the boys.

Dempsey's tongue was hanging out like a strip of red fannel. Ingakook was sweating train oil.

"That there bear will get a heat stroke if you don't watch it, young gents," said Mr. Hobbs, who had stripped to his shirt and trousers, and was smoking his pipe in comfort.

"So will old Cooky," added James Ready, pointing to the unhappy Eskimo who was

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What You Have to Do!

Here is a splendid new competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of Sunderland 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 "Sunderland" Competition, GEM Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C.4, so as to reach this address not later than THURSDAY, February 15th, 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.

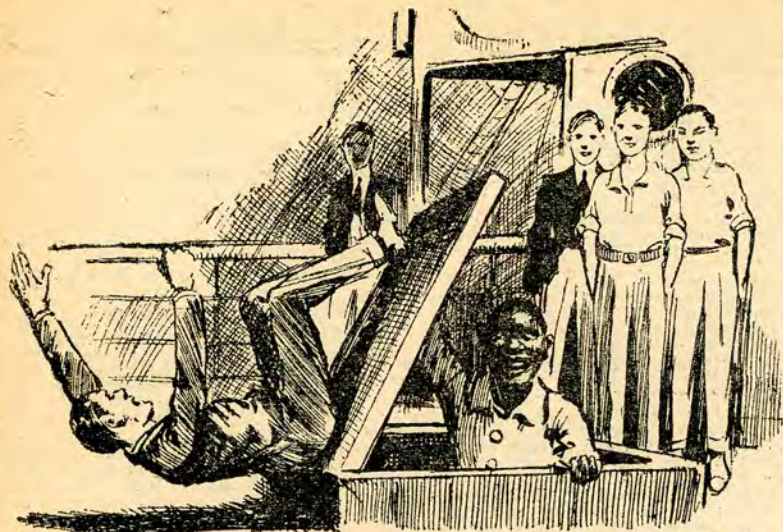
This competition is run in conjunction with "Boys' Friend," "Magnet," and "Popular," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.

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

Name

Address

G



Stickjaw was sent toppling over as the lid of the hatchway suddenly lifted upwards. Then Slushy's head appeared out of the companion way. "Bress ma soul, Massa Stickjaw!" he cried. "Sure, I didn't know you were sitting on de top of de hatch!"

trying to keep himself cool by pouring buckets of sea water into his hood.

He soon had to stop this though, for his tight sealskin clothing swelled out like a balloon, and he could hardly walk for the weight of the water.

"Why don't you take your clothes off and be comfortable, Cooky?" asked Mr. Hobbs. "Me catch cold," replied Ingakook.

"Nonsense!" replied Mr. Hobbs. "You must be silly walking about in winter furs like a swell lady when the thermometer's up to 113 in the Glory Hole. Come out o' that, you pat o' margarine, or you'll melt!"

He pulled Ingakook out of his hood and trousers and boots, and dressed him up in a pair of shorts and a vest. Then from the ice-room he brought up a great lump of ice with the tongs.

"There's a camp stool for ye, old Dripping Pot!" he said. "You can sit on it till it melts."

Dempsey, who had been sitting on the deck in a curiously human attitude, with a paw on each hairy leg, thought this was a very good idea, and that he would like to sit on the block of ice alongside the perspiring Ingakook.

He tried to rise from the deck, but the exuding pitch from the seams had soaked into his thick fur, and with an angry growl Dempsey strove to rise from the deck in vain.

"Crums!" said Mr. Hobbs. "He's stuck down like an Insurance stamp."

Dempsey got angry, and, growling fiercely, rolled over, pulling the pitch from between the planks in great strings. But he only rolled into a worse predicament, for on the fo'c'sle head where they were sitting, the deck planks narrowed and every seam was bubbling pitch.

Dempsey was caught again, and the more he rolled the worse he got glued up.

"That bear will growl 'isself into convulsions if we don't do something for him!" said Mr. Hobbs. "I'll 'ave to spring him another block of ice to harden the glue. Then we'll cut him free. Where's his muzzle, Master Wobby?"

"I've forgotten it," replied Wobby. "Left it aboard the Pole Star!"

"I ain't going near that bear till 'e's muzzled," replied Mr. Hobbs, regarding the growling and slaving Dempsey with a critical eye. "I've a notion that 'e's going in for hydrophobia. Look at the foam round 'is jaws. I don't want to be bit by any mad bear, I don't!"

"Put his head in a bag," suggested Waff.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 733.

"Haven't you got any handcuffs, Hobbo?" asked Stickjaw.

"Now you are talking, young gents," said Mr. Hobbs. "It's my opinion that, if you don't get the coat off that there bear, 'e'll go barmy with the 'eat. Stands to reason now, don't it? Jus' look at 'is coat. He's been up to the Arctic an' 'e gets 'is winter clothes on. Then 'e comes down South with a foot of fur on him. Why, it's like going down the Red Sea in yer winter pants!"

Mr. Hobbs dodged below. He dragged another large mass of ice on deck and broke it round the unhappy bear, so that he laid in a bed of cracked ice, like a fresh haddock. Then Mr. Hobbs brought out the two largest pairs of handcuffs on the ship, the sort that they use for chaining down Finns and big Germans. These he neatly clipped round the paws of the panting bear.

Dempsey was feeling better now. He ceased to growl, and licked up lumps of ice with his tongue. The ice also hardened the marine glue so that it broke away like sealing wax, and the boys were able to tear him from the deck and to cut him away with their penknives.

Wobby had dived down below and now reappeared holding a large pair of those spring shears which are used for clipping grass borders.

"You'll leave him to me, boys," he said. "I've sheared many a sheep down under, and I guess I can shear a bear. Two of you sit on his head and scratch it, and sing to him. He likes that."

Stickjaw and Waff volunteered for this dangerous seat. They sat on Dempsey's head, throwing him to the deck, whilst Wobby, with admirable skill, set to work with the shears and opened the huge mass of fur right down the stomach.

It was wonderful to see Wobby set to work. As a matter of fact, Wobby, for three years, had won the Boys' Sheep Shearing Championship of the Bullamoolooloo District, Queensland, and held two silver cups for sheep shearing.

It was wonderful to see the keen shears working like lightning, clipping away the thick over and under coat of fur, Wobby skillfully rolling it back like a great pad of felt.

"What on earth are you boys doing with that bear?" demanded Blackbeard Teach, who had seen the beginning of operations from the wheelhouse, and who had strolled along the deck to see what was doing.

"I'm taking off his waistcoat now, sir," replied Wobby, looking up with a grin. "I'll tackle his trousers later on. He's all over pitch."

"What will he do if you cut him?" asked Blackbeard, greatly interested.

"He won't do anything to me, sir," replied Wobby, "but I expect he'll chew the seat out of Waff's trousers. If we happen to give a sheep a clip with the shears we give him a touch of tar on the spot. There's nothing like tar. But I don't often make a slip," added Wobby modestly.

He made no slip as a huge pad of fur was gradually cut and rolled off the panting bear.

"Over you go!" cried Wobby, when he had rolled the fur off one side.

Dempsey rolled over, grunting quite amiably.

"You see, he feels all the better for it already, sir," said Wobby. "And I clip like this, and like this, and like this!"

He suited the action to the words, and a cheer went up from the boys as the huge slab of frowsy fur, large enough to stuff a couple of sofas and an armchair, was rolled off the bear's back and chucked overboard, where it went floating away astern like a hair mattress.

Dempsey looked awful now. His pink body showed through what was left of his coat, and he sat up, looking like a fighting man in a pair of fur trousers.

Ingakook, who was feeling better since he had sat on the lump of ice, grinned.

"Bear, him like me!" he said.

"You wait till I get his trousers off," replied Wobby, grinning. "His own mother wouldn't know him then!"

Clearing the bear's legs was a more difficult matter, for he was matted with tar, but with the help of a penknife, a pair of scissors, and a pair of horse-clippers, borrowed from the engineer, he was soon made respectable, and four more buckets of bearskin were ready to be thrown overside.

The bear looked horrible now.

Wobby stood back from his handiwork with a critical eye.

"My word!" he said. "He looks about the limit, doesn't he? Like a turkey left over from last Christmas!"

"What about shaving him?" asked Waff.

"Sound notion," replied Wobby. "It would take off that nasty plush effect. He looks fair mangy now. But what about razors?"

The boys looked at one another. They had not a razor between them.

"Hobbo's got plenty of razors down in his bunk," said Stickjaw.

This was quite true. In his day, Mr. Hobbs, who had a very blue chin, had prided himself on being the best-shaved man in his Majesty's Navy.

Stickjaw looked round. Mr. Hobbs had gone off on his round of duty, which took him down to the engine-room to have a smoke with the first engineer.

"Hobbo won't mind," he said.

"Won't he," said Wobby. "Hobbo's very particular about his razors, and if he knew that we'd taken them to shave a bear, he'd cut our throats with what was left of 'em!"

"I'll risk it," said Stickjaw. "You chaps mix up some of that soft soap in a bucket and scrub Dempsey with it. There's a tittler lying there!"

Stickjaw pointed to one of those long, flexible witch's brooms which are used on ships for scrubbing out corners, the very thing to whip up a good lather.

Soon the lather was foaming in the bucket, and the bear was scrubbed over till he looked like a snow man.

Dempsey liked this. He panted and he howled and showed that he was thoroughly enjoying this thorough haircut and shampoo.

Stickjaw soon nipped on deck with a pocketful of Mr. Hobbs' best razors. Then he set to work shaving Dempsey's carcass till he was as bald as an egg from his neck to his hind paws.

Dempsey was tremendously pleased. He liked the soft tickling of the razor and the swish, swish! of the keen blade as it passed over his skin.

He soon took the edge off the first razor.

"Crums!" exclaimed Wobby, testing the edge. "He'd bust up a mowing-machine! He's got a lude on him like a coconut mat!"

He put another razor into use and wiped the edge off it. Then another and another,

till at last Dempsey, pink and beautiful, looking more like the bad dream of a pantomime than a live bear, frisked round the deck, delighted with his new coolness.

"We have done in Hobbo's razors," said Wobby, grinning. "Put 'em back in his bunk, Stickjaw. That's your funeral!"

Wobby had another squint at Dempsey's pink carcass.

"That bear don't look finished," he said.

His eye suddenly fell upon two pots of red and bright blue paint, which had been used for tickling up the funnel of the Kipper King.

"Come here, Demp!" he cried. "We'll put some pictures on you. We'll make you some bear!"

Taking a brush of vermilion, Wobby painted in stripes of a tigerish character which gave the bear a terrible appearance. He now looked as if he had been run through a mincing-machine.

"I say, Wob. He looks awful now!" protested Jim Ready. "He looked pretty did before, but you've about put the lid on him now!"

"You wait till I've put in the blue stripes and a bit of spot work," said Wobby. "He'll look like an animal out of a Noah's Ark!"

He swiped in thick, juicy stripes of bright blue paint between the red stripes, filling in Dempsey's stomach with decorative scroll work after the fashion of Maori tatooings.

Dempsey liked the scrubbing of the brush. It made him scratch his ear.

The boys fell back on the deck, helpless with laughter.

"Looks a bit of a lad now, doesn't he?" exclaimed Wobby with great satisfaction. "If anyone meets him suddenly they'll think they've got sunstroke!"

Then he patted the bear's shaggy head.

"Off you go, Demp!" he said. "Go and show yourself in the galley to Uncle Slushy, and I wouldn't be at all surprised if he don't give you a cake!"

Dempsey knew exactly what Wobby was saying.

He gave a frisky "Wouf!" and bounced off

along the deck to the galley, where Slushy was busy with dinner.

There was a roar of laughter along the deck as he made his appearance, and a yell of fear from the galley as he bounced in at the door.

Slushy, who had just taken a baking of cakes from the oven, turned to see this fearful creature bouncing in at the door. Things had been going wrong all the morning with Slushy, and the superstitious nigger was sure that someone had put the Obi on him.

At the sight of the apparition, he gave one yell and leaped for the scuttle by way of the galley-table, trying to dive through it.

"Law sakes!" he yelled. "It am de Ju-Ju Man come fo' poor old Slush! It am de real Obeah man!"

He stuck fast in the scuttle, his head and shoulders hanging out, and his legs kicking frantically inside the galley to keep off the supposed Ju-Ju.

"Law sakes! I'll be a good niggah in futnah!" yelled Slushy, scared nearly out of his wits. "I'll gib up de rum, an' I won't go to no moah music-halls! Oh, Mister Obi man, doan' you take me!"

Dempsey wasn't worrying about Slushy, though. He reared up on his hind legs and licked a two-pound cake off the tray.

It was hot, and the bear loved hot cake. Another lick, then another, and in a few seconds the whole baking of cakes was gone.

There was a rush to the galley, and Slushy was nearly pulled in halves as the yelling, laughing crew hauled him through the scuttle. Dempsey saw his chance of getting away.

He made a bolt along the deck, upsetting men left and right. Then he jumped for the rigging, and, climbing like a sailor, made for the crow's-nest that was fixed in the cross-trees of the stumpy foremast. The flaps in the floor lifted and fell with a bang, and Dempsey was safe from pursuit.

(Another grand instalment of our serial next Wednesday.)

RESULT OF "BURNLEY" FOOTBALL COMPETITION.

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

S. J. EVANS,
44, Regent Street,
Gloucester.

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

Leonard Hayes, 4, Little Church Street, Coventry; James Cleaver, 29, Gun Lane, Stoke Heath, Coventry; Wilfred Alworth, 8, Crieff Road, Wandsworth, S.W. 6; W. Titlow, 26, Boston Road, Ipswich.

The ten prizes of 5s. each have been divided among the following fifteen com-

petitors, whose solutions contained two errors each:

T. Foot, 77, Hills Road, Cambridge; W. E. Dalby, 7, Spring Road, Ipswich; A. Watson, 6, Withpoll Street, Ipswich; W. Foot, 25, Quilter Road, Felixstowe; W. de Gruchy, Market Street, Woodstock, Oxon; Leopold Hall, 11, Cranleigh Gardens, Bridgwater, Somerset; Rowland Hill, North Kyme, Lincoln; Thomas Williams, 43, Glanmor Road, Llanelli, S. Wales; Miss E. Ekless, Queens Cafe, Chertsey, Surrey; John Gunn, 15, Waverley Park, Edinburgh; Mrs. A. Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; W. F. Pallett, 7, Sigismund Street, E. Greenwich, S.E. 10; G. E. Barnard, 9, High Street, Chesterton, Staffs; G. Stanley, 16, Madrid Place, London, S.W. 8; George Robertson, 40, Wardlaw Avenue, Rutherglen, Scotland

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"THE CASE OF THE PARISIAN GUEST!"

(Continued from page 15.)

those bracelets on him. We'll separate, Conyers, if you don't mind. You make round to the left, and I'll go this way."

They went off in different directions, and in a short time the detective thought he heard a faint noise just ahead. He stole forward quietly to investigate.

Then the noise abruptly ceased, as Sharpe crept cautiously in the direction he fancied it had come from. The early sun, shining brightly through the branches overhead, cast his shadow on the ground in front, and presently Sharpe became unpleasantly aware that a second shadow had joined his own!

With a slight gasp he swung round, but was hardly quick enough to avoid Slippery Sam, who, one shattered manacle dangling from his wrist, was even then in the act of bringing a large stone down on the back of his enemy's skull. He had stolen up from behind, his footsteps making no sound on the short, mossy grass which covered the ground hereabouts, and, save for the double shadow, Sharpe had been taken completely unawares. The detective ducked, but just a fraction of a second too late. The rock caught him a glancing blow on the side of the head and he dropped to earth, half stunned.

"Help!" he cried thickly. "Help, Conyers!"

That was all he could manage. Next moment Slippery Sam's fingers were at his throat and effectually choked his further utterance.

The pressure on the detective's throat was growing tighter, and his adversary's knees were digging painfully into his ribs, when all at once a pattering sound was heard, and the Honourable Gus, followed hotfoot by a couple of hefty gardeners, came hurrying through the trees to his assistance.

Slippery Sam saw plainly that the game was up for good this time, and did not attempt a fresh bid for freedom. He submitted to his captors with what grace he could, and was marched off to the Sanchester police-station by the two workmen, whilst Anthony Sharpe and Conyers followed closely behind.

"Thanks, old man!" said the former, as he loaded his pipe with thick, strong tobacco. "How did you know the identity of the thief, Sharpe?" the Honourable Gus asked. "I mean, were you aware of it before you stripped him of his disguise?"

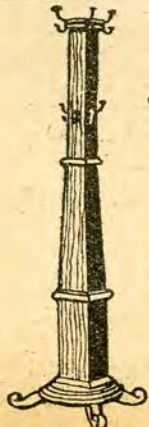
"I began to suspect his real identity when I found the croquet balls in that tin trunk up in his bedroom," replied the investigator. "Most criminals have their peculiarities, and this helps enormously in crime investigation. Slippery Sam's peculiarity lies in his originality and out-of-the-way stunts, you understand?"

Conyers nodded.

"Quite," he said. "By Jove, but your game in life is an interesting one, old man!"

"Almost as interesting as a game of croquet!" laughed Sharpe.

THE END.



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