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THIS WINS OUR TUCK-HAMPER!

"ORDERS IS ORDERS!"

The stationmaster of the East Indian Railway had been given strict orders not to do anything out of the ordinary without permission from the superintendent. This accounts for him sending the following telegram: "Superintendent's Office, Calcutta. Tiger on platform eating conductor. Please wire."—Leslie Fothergill, 35, Markham Avenue, Harehills, Leeds.

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WONDEROUS CHANGE!

"They tell me, Grimley, that your daughter sings with great expression." "Greatest expression you ever saw. Her own mother can't recognise her face when she's singing!"—S. E. Hull, 8, Ireton Street, Belfast.

JUST A SLIP!

"What do you mean by this, sir?" demanded the angry customer. "Why, what's the matter?" inquired the publisher of the county paper. "Well, look here, this advertisement of our delicious tinned meats from the best Colonial houses. You've made houses read houses!"—William Purvis, 28, Warton Street, Bootle, Liverpool.

A NARROW SHAVE!

John: "Last time we met you had a moustache. Why in the world have you cut it off?" Joe: "I remember you said it resembled a football-match." John: "Well, how now, then?" Joe: "I agreed it did resemble a football-match—eleven each side, with the nose as referee. But you don't see them to-day. They are playing away."—G. B. Taylor, 93, Denton Road, Hooley Hill, near Manchester.

THE LUCKY ONE!

"Sir, I have no home," began the seedy-looking man, "and—" "No taxes to pay, no rent, no coal-bills, no worry over the rise in milk prices! Permit me to congratulate you!" "I have no job, and—" "Lucky chap! No danger of being sacked!" "But I am serious. I have no money, and—" "No temptations to spend it foolishly on able-bodied beggars. Why, you are veritably a child of fortune! Good-day!"—F. G. Potts, 55, Bulkeley Road, Cheshire.

AT CHEAPEST RATES!

A New Yorker in England on business had the misfortune to be killed in a railway accident. By documents found in his possession it was found that he was a wealthy man, so the authorities cabled to his friends, who replied: "Send the body home." The authorities answered that the embalming would cost fifty pounds, but they could freeze it for ten pounds. Back came the reply: "Freeze him from the knees up for seven pounds, as his feet were frost-bitten last winter."—Albert E. Fitch, 145, Finnis Street, Bethnal Green, E. 2.

SIMPLE SIMON!

Simple Simon in Post Office: "Three-halfpenny stamp, please." Clerk: "Silly boy! Next desk!" Simple Simon (coming back with letter in his hand): "If I post this letter now will it be in London to-morrow?" Clerk: "Silly fellow, of course it will!" Simple Simon: "You're a bloomin' fibber! It's going to Perth!"—William Hare, 3, Clifton Terrace, Portobello, Scotland.



This is the last of a remarkable series of stories dealing with Tom Merry & Co's Barring-Out at St. Jim's. The story shows how Tom Merry's name was cleared—in quite a remarkable way. Written specially for the GEM by MARTIN CLIFFORD, the world-famous author, who also writes the St. Jim's stories in our Companion Paper, the "Popular."

CHAPTER 1.

The Majesty of the Law!

"BOBBY!"

"What?"

"It's a jolly old bobby!" said Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove!"

There was a rush to the windows on the second floor of the School House at St. Jim's.

Monty Lowther had been looking out, and he had sighted the new arrival—an imposing figure in official uniform, just coming in at the school gates.

Most of the St. Jim's juniors knew that gentleman by sight. It was Inspector Skeat, of Wayland town.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "What's the Head's little game, you fellows—spwingin' a jollay old peelah on us?"

Tom Merry smiled.

For weeks the barring-out at St. Jim's had gone on, and the rebels were still unconquered, if not yet victorious. They had been driven, after many an exciting combat, from the ground floor of the School House, and then from the first floor—and downstairs Mr. Railton's men were in possession. But the staircases to the dormitory floor were barricaded, and the Head was still barred out—the rebellion going as strong as ever. And Tom Merry did not think that the sight of Inspector Skeat's official uniform would make any difference.

If Dr. Holmes had sent for Mr. Skeat, in the belief that that gentleman would be able to awe the schoolboy rebels into submission, Dr. Holmes was making a considerable mistake.

The School House upper windows were crowded with grinning faces. Tom Merry & Co. were quite ready for the official gentleman if he chipped in.

The rebels' position, though reduced in extent, was as strong as ever—indeed, stronger, for the upper staircases were narrower and more easily blocked and defended. And almost every article of furniture in the upper rooms had been stacked on the barricades.

"The fact is, we've beaten the jolly old Head!" remarked Jack Blake. "He's at his wits' end now."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's really time he sent a flag of truce and begged for terms," remarked Manners.

"What a jolly beginnin' for the new term!" said Cardew of the Fourth. "When the Fifth and Sixth come back they'll find it rather excitin'!"

"There goes Railton!" said Levison.

From the windows the juniors had a view of Mr. Railton, the Housenaster, who met the Wayland inspector near the gates. The two gentlemen stood in talk for some minutes, both of them glancing towards the besieged School House. Then they walked towards the New House together, and Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, met them in the doorway of that House.

Tom Merry glanced round at his comrades.

"You fellows can see what the game is," he said.

"They're going to try to scare us with a giddy policeman."

"I guess they won't scare us worth a cent!" remarked Kit Wildrake, the Canadian junior.

"Wathah not," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emphatically.

"I shall certainly refuse to take any notice of Mr. Skeat!"

"It's the Head's last card," said Monty Lowther; "and the dear old gent will find that it isn't a trump."

"I'm blessed if I quite know how the matter stands from the point of view of the law," observed Tom Merry. "But I suppose we have the right to treat Mr. Skeat as a trespasser if he butts in here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll chance it, anyhow!" said Clive.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here he comes!" sang out Wally of the Third.

Mr. Skeat reappeared from the New House, and came across the quadrangle with slow and stately steps.

A number of Mr. Railton's men were on the School House steps—Sergeant Stuckey, Private Brown, and several more of the old soldiers who had been enlisted for the difficult task of dealing with the St. Jim's rebels.

They saluted Mr. Skeat as he came up, and the inspector returned the greeting with portly dignity.

Then he entered the School House, and disappeared for the moment from the view of the juniors at the windows above.

There was a rush of Tom Merry & Co. to the landing at the head of the barricaded stairs.

The landing swarmed with juniors, in a cheery and rather excited mood. So far from being scared by the majesty of the law, they seemed to be looking forward to an encounter with the majestic Mr. Skeat.

"Ere, you young swoops!" yelled Private Brown up the staircase. "Ere's a visitor for you!"

"Trot him along!" called back Blake. "We're ready for him!"

"Look out for chokey now!" yelled Mr. Brown. "This is where you get the handcuffs on. Jevern learn to pick oakum?"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "Have we done anythin' to be awstewed for, you fellows?"

"Hardly!" grinned Lowther. "It's only a bluff, and it won't wash! Have you got your lasso handy, Wildrake?"

"I guess so."

"Then drop it on the giddy inspector when he comes upstairs. We'll arrest him for trespass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of laughter from the rebels at the idea of arresting the portly inspector for trespassing on their domain.

"I guess that's a cinch!" exclaimed Wildrake. And in a few seconds his lasso—the famous "rope" the Canadian junior had brought with him from the Boot Leg Ranch—was in readiness.

Inspector Skeat was coming up the lower stairs, with slow and stately steps. He came along the corridor to the upper staircase, and stopped at the foot of it, staring at the stack of furniture piled irregularly between wall and banisters.

"Well, my word!" murmured the inspector.

Inspector Skeat had heard a good deal of the barring-out—it was much discussed in the neighbourhood of the school. But the reality of it surprised him. He stared up the staircase, over the barricade, to the row of grinning faces at the top.

"My word!" he repeated.

"Comin' up, old bean?" called out Cardew.

"Eh! I want Tom Merry," answered the inspector.

"Where is he?"

"Adsum!" called out Tom.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Come down here, Master Merry," said the inspector.
 "I can't crawl upstairs over all that stuff."
 "Bai Jore! What a nerve!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Does the awful ass weally think you will go down, Tom Merry?"
 Tom Merry laughed.
 "He is making a little mistake if he does," he answered.
 "Go it, Wildrake!" breathed Lowther.
 Kit Wildrake was "going" it. He leaned over the banisters, rope in hand. Whatever Inspector Skeat had been expecting, certainly he was not expecting to be "roped in" in the style of the "wild and woolly West." But that was what happened to him.
 The rope whizzed down, and the loop dropped round the inspector's portly form. It tightened in a twinkling.
 Mr. Skeat gave a jump.
 "Why—what—what—" he spluttered.
 "Pull!" yelled Lowther.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

A dozen juniors grasped the rope, and tugged with all their strength.

Inspector Skeat, dazed and dizzy, found himself swept off his feet.

The noose gripped him under the armpits, and the pull on the rope above lifted him from the floor.

He was swung up against the banisters, spluttering, not knowing whether he was on his official head or his heels.

The drag on the rope did not relax.

Over the banisters went the portly gentleman, sprawling and clutching and spluttering, his portly limbs coming into painful contact with the stacked furniture on the stairs.

With a final heave by a dozen study arms he was landed on the landing above, in the midst of the St. Jim's rebels. From below, Sergeant Stuckey and Private Brown stared on blankly. There was a chortle from some of the old soldiers. Apparently they saw something of a comic nature in this sudden elevation of the inspector.

If the incident was comic, its comicality was quite lost on Mr. Skeat. He sprawled breathlessly on the landing among the rebels, and fairly spluttered with rage.

CHAPTER 2. A Slight Mistake!

"SUWWENDAH!" commanded Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I guess you're our giddy prisoner, old scout," grinned Wildrake.

"Yow-ow-ow-wooop!" spluttered Mr. Skeat.

"Trespassers will be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law, my man!" said Monty Lowther, with great severity.

"Have you anything to say for yourself?"
 "Grooooooogh!"

"It is my duty to warn you," continued Lowther, "that anything you say may be taken down in writing, to be used in evidence against you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Grooogh! Ugh! Gug!"

"Bai Jove, the poor man seems to be wathah out of breath! Pat him on the back, deah boy."

Smack!

"Yaroooooh!"

Inspector Skeat scrambled to his feet, perhaps revived by that rather hefty pat on the back—or perhaps in dread of another.

"You—you young rascals!" he gasped.

"Weally, Mr. Skeat—"

"Secure the prisoner!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Sorry, Mr. Skeat, but you must stand your trial for trespass!"

"Wha-a-at!" gurgled the inspector.

"And if found guilty, you will be sentenced to be banged by a rope until you are red!" added Monty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young rascals! I—I—I—"

"Pway modewate your expressions, Mr. Skeat," said Arthur Augustus. "You are a twespasah heah, and you will be dealt with accordingly. You may wegard yourself as bein' taken into custody."

"You young idiot!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, "the prisoner has been caught in the act of trespassing on the dominions of the St. Jim's rebels, and frequenting the same with felonious intent. He is sentenced to be bumped three times—"

"Hear, hear!"

"If the prisoner should burst at the first bump, he will be let off the remainder of his sentence—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Collar him!"

"Look here—" roared Mr. Skeat.
 "Wats! Collah him!"
 "You young villains! You—you— Grooogh! Help! Oh!"

The laughing juniors surrounded Mr. Skeat, and collared him on all sides. The hapless portly gentleman struggled.

"Master Merry!" he yelled. "I—I— Stop them!"

"Sorry!" said Tom Merry politely. "As a member of the police force, Mr. Skeat, you ought to know that you mustn't trespass, especially in places occupied for military purposes by—"

"I—I—I came—"

"We know why you came, old fat bean!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "You came to scare us, and you're getting the scare."

"I came to speak to Tom Merry!" yelled the inspector. "I haven't anything to do with your silly tricks! No business of mine! Lemme go! Release me at once! I'll—"

"What?"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Didn't the Head send for you, Mr. Skeat?"

"No!" howled the inspector.

"You didn't come to take a hand in the barring-out?" exclaimed Tom Merry blankly.

"No!" yelled Mr. Skeat.

"My hat! Then what the thump did you come for?"

"Bump him all the same!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"He's butted in, anyhow. Police-inspectors who are found wandering ought to be bumped as a warning."

"You cheeky young ruffian!" gasped Mr. Skeat. "I came here—ow!—to speak to you, Tom Merry. You young ass! By gad, I've a good mind to go away now, and let the case drop!"

"The case?" exclaimed Tom.

"You young dummy, I've come here to do you a service!" spluttered Mr. Skeat.

"Oh, my hat!"

"By gad, we seem to have put our little foot into it this time!" murmured Cardew.

Kit Wildrake hastily jerked the lasso off the portly form of the inspector. It was obvious that a little mistake had been made. Mr. Skeat, after all, had not come as an enemy; he had not been commissioned by the Head to scare the reckless rebels into submission.

What he wanted there at all was rather a mystery; but it was clear that his intents were charitable and not wicked, so to speak.

The portly gentleman, crimson with wrath and struggling, stood and pumped in breath, with thunder in his brow.

"Awfully sorry, Mr. Skeat!" said Tom Merry, as seriously as he could. "You—you see—"

"Yas, wathah! We thought—"

"Took it for granted—" said Monty Lowther.

"But what the thump does the man want, anyhow?" said Blake. "Let him explain that before we let him off."

"You young ass—"

"Look here—"

"Give Mr. Skeat a chair," said Tom Merry. "He seems a little out of breath. We really apologise, Mr. Skeat. But what are we to think? The Head has been up to no end of dodges, and we thought you wore a new dodge."

Mr. Skeat grunted.

He was by no means placated. His ascent of the barricaded staircase had been a rather painful one, and he was not of an age to enjoy gymnastics of that sort.

But he sat down on the chair Arthur Augustus politely brought for him, and gradually recovered his breath, and his temper along with it.

Blake, rather disappointed that the bumping had not come off, watched him. Jack Blake was privately determined that the bumping should take place, all the same, unless Mr. Skeat could give a good account of himself.

"I've a good mind to go, and let the whole matter drop!" said Mr. Skeat, at last, but in a more amicable manner, which showed that his plump good-humour was returning.

"But what—" said Tom.

"I've called to see you, Master Merry, about the robbery that took place in the New House a few weeks ago, of which you were accused."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom.

"You were found guilty by your headmaster of that robbery, and sentenced to be expelled from this school, I understand."

"Only the sentence has not been carried out," said Tom, with a smile, "and never will be carried out, so long as my friends stand by me."

"You bet!" said Wildrake.

"Hear, hear!"

"We're standing by old Tommy to the last shot in the locker," said Digby. "You can tell the Head so, Mr. Skeat."

"And tell him," added Herries, "that we'll sack him before we'll let him sack Tom Merry!"



A dozen Juniors tugged at the rope with all their strength. Inspector Skeat, dazed and dizzy, found himself swept off his feet. He was swung up against the banisters, not knowing whether he was on his official head or his heels! "Heave, deah boys!" roared D'Arcy. "One moah heave!" (See page 4.)

"Yaas, wathah!"

The inspector grinned.

"I've nothing to do with this affair," he said. "Dr. Holmes has not asked me to interfere, and it would be outside the scope of my duties, in any case. But you young rascals had better be a little more careful how you lay hands on a member of his Majesty's Police Force. I've a good mind to run you all in for assault!"

"Oh cwumbs!"

"Oh, don't, Mr. Skeat!" murmured Monty Lowther meekly.

How the inspector would have "run in" a couple of hundred sturdy fellows was a question it was not necessary to enter into. Evidently Mr. Skeat was there as a friend, not as an enemy, and as a friend he was entitled to a little "soft sawder."

"Please don't!" murmured Cardew.

"We vewy much wegwet our mistake, my deah sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "These fellows are wathah thoughtless youngstans, and you must twy to excuse them."

"Fathead!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewvies—"

"Well, I'll look over it," said Mr. Skeat. "As I was saying, Master Merry, I am here to speak to you on the subject of the robbery. It now appears that you may not have had a hand in it, and I have every hope of getting hold of the right man."

There was a roar from the schoolboy rebels.

"Hurrah!"

CHAPTER 3.

Light Ahead!

TOM MERRY'S face was bright.

He had hoped that, somehow or other, his innocence would come to light—that the Head would realise that a terrible mistake had been made. It had seemed to him impossible that, innocent of wrongdoing, he should continue to lie under the shadow of a black suspicion. And it looked now as if his hopes might be realised.

"And—and that's why you came, sir?" exclaimed Manners.

"That's why."

"And we—we— Oh, we're awfully sorry, Mr. Skeat!" said Manners, with very sincere penitence.

"Feahfully sowwy, Mr. Skeat!"

"We apologise all round," said Cardew.

"All right—all right!" said the inspector genially. "It was a mistake. Rather rough on me. I'm a little too old for such monkey-tricks. But never mind—never mind! Now, Master Merry, I will tell you how the matter stands. Dr. Holmes sent for me, as you know, when the robbery took place, and asked my opinion. I had to tell him that, in my opinion, Mr. Ratcliff's study in the New House was entered, and his desk broken open, by an unskilled hand—that it was no genuine cracksmen who had done the job. That certainly was the case. And there the matter ended, so far as I was concerned. Now I want to hear your version."

"The Head knows it," said Tom. "I can tell you in a few words. I missed Manners from the dormitory that night, and went out to look for him. Manners was wild with Mr. Ratcliff for smashing his camera, and I thought he had gone to play a trick on Ratty—I mean, Mr. Ratcliff. I found Mr. Ratcliff's study window open, and heard somebody moving inside. I thought it was Manners, and went in for him."

Mr. Skeat listened attentively.

"And where was Manners?" he asked.

"It turned out that the silly ass was in the dark-room downstairs in this House, tinkering at his blessed camera," said Tom ruefully. "Of course, I couldn't guess that."

"You're a bit of an ass, old chap!" said Manners.

"Fathead!"

Inspector Skeat raised his hand.

"You young gentlemen can exchange compliments after I am gone," he suggested. "My time is of some value."

"Sorry!" said Manners. "Carry on."

"What happened after you entered Mr. Ratcliff's study, Master Merry?"

"Somebody was there, in the dark," said Tom. "He collared me suddenly, and pitched me over, and then I knew it wasn't Manners. I heard some coins drop on the floor. The man—whatever he was—bolted out of the window and scooted."

"You could not see him?"

"Only a sort of fitting shadow for a moment."

"Then you could give no description of him?" asked Mr. Skeat.

"I'm sorry—none."

"And then—"

"The House was alarmed by the row I made tumbling over the furniture," said Tom. "I cleared off, and got back to the School House. The next day it all came out, and I was accused of the robbery."

"Utah vot, you know!" commented Arthur Augustus.

"Then I was expelled," said Tom. "They didn't believe there had been a man in the study at all; and I must say it looked a good bit as if I had been romancing. Only I think that the Head, knowing me, ought to have taken my word, and oughtn't to have thought me a thief."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"None of the fellows believed it against me," said Tom. "They all stood by me, like real bricks, and we've barred-out the Head ever since."

"It seems that Mr. Ratcliff had fifty pounds in gold locked up in his desk," said Mr. Skeat.

"Yes."

"This was known to you?"

"Naturally. It was a point against me; but there was nothing in it. All the school knew about it," said Tom. "A New House fellow had seen Mr. Ratcliff counting the money one day. It was the talk of the school at one time, and fellows were down on Ratty for hoarding gold."

Mr. Skeat smiled.

"It was not a patriotic action," he said. "However, Mr. Ratcliff doubtless knows his own business best. It seems, from what I have been told, that some of the sovereigns were picked up afterwards on the floor of the study, but that forty-six were missing."

"That is so."

"And supposed to be in your possession?"

Tom Merry flushed.

"Supposed to be," he assented very quietly.

"Something has happened since then," said Mr. Skeat. "Your schoolfellow, Kerr—he is not here now?"

"No. He went out with Figgins and some more fellows to get in supplies of grub. They were bagged, and sent home."

The inspector nodded.

"Master Kerr called on me in Wayland on that day," he said. "He informed me that he and his friends had fallen in with a disreputable, drunken character on the footpath in the wood. There was trouble, and in the tussle the man dropped some gold coins. Golden sovereigns being extremely rare, it occurred to Kerr that the ruffian must have stolen them, and that probably they were Mr. Ratcliff's sovereigns."

"Good old Kerr!" said Tom. "I think it's very likely. The kind of man you describe wouldn't be likely to have a lot of money of his own, and certainly not in gold."

"Quite so. Master Kerr was able to give me a very complete description of the man," continued the inspector. "I have succeeded in tracing him. The description is that of a man known as Gadgett, a loafer who haunts the Black Bird in Wayland. I have ascertained that this man has been in possession of considerable money lately, and that he has spent a great deal in drink at the Black Bird—in sovereigns."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"Naturally, it was a good deal remarked upon in the public-house," said the inspector. "It is very uncommon for a drunken waster to pay for his drinks in gold."

"I should think so!" said Tom, with a smile.

"I have further ascertained that this man Gadgett was employed by Taggles, the school porter here, for a couple of days last December, to saw logs," said Mr. Skeat. "He was asking for work, and Taggles gave him that job. On this occasion he may have spied about the school, with a view to committing a robbery. He has already been in prison several times for larceny."

"Likely enough!" said Blake.

"On that occasion he may have heard of Mr. Ratcliff's hoard," went on the inspector. "It was probably known to Taggles, as you say it was the talk of the school at one time—and Mr. Taggles is a very chatty old gentleman, I believe."

"Very!" said Tom, smiling.

"That would account for Gadgett's knowledge of the money and where to look for it," said the inspector. "A warrant has been issued for Gadgett's arrest—"

"Oh, good!"

"It is clear that the gold did not come honestly into his hands, whether it was Mr. Ratcliff's or not," said Mr. Skeat. "He will be charged with theft, in any case—and it seems

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very probable that the theft took place in the New House at this school."

"Bai Jove! You weally beat Sherlock Holmes, Mr. Skeat!" said Arthur Augustus admiringly.

The inspector smiled.

"Unfortunately, now that the matter has been investigated and the warrant issued, Gadgett has disappeared from his usual haunts. But it is fairly certain that he is still in the neighbourhood—and he is being searched for," said the inspector. "I expect to hear news of his arrest at any moment. There is every hope, Master Merry, that your innocence may be proved."

"That's jolly good news, sir."

"Huwah!"

"I should have been glad to have a description of the man you saw," said Mr. Skeat, rising. "But if you cannot give it, it cannot be helped. I fancy, however, that something may be done with finger-prints. Mr. Ratcliff's desk was turned out, and something handled by the thief may give us a clue that will not be neglected. At all events, if Gadgett is the guilty party, his guilt will be brought home to him. You need have no manner of doubt about that."

"I am suah we can leave that in your hands with every confidence, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"You may!" said Mr. Skeat, with a smile. "Now, how am I to get down these confounded stairs? I am too old for acrobatics."

Tom Merry considered.

"We can't clear the stairs, or those bounders below will make a rush," he said. "Perhaps you'd like us to lower you over the banisters with Wildrake's lasso?"

Mr. Skeat made a wry face.

"I think I have had enough of that gentleman's lasso," he answered. "I will try the stairs."

And Mr. Skeat with an activity surprising in so portly a gentleman—clambered over the stacked furniture, and picked his way carefully down the staircase. Private Brown gave him a helping hand at the foot of the stairs.

"Ain't running them in, sir?" asked Mr. Brown.

"No," said Mr. Skeat.

"Well, I ain't grumbling. This 'ere job suits me, and I don't care how long it goes on," said Mr. Brown confidentially. "Ten bob a day and all found ain't to be sneezed at in these 'ard times, what?"

The inspector agreed that it wasn't, and went his way. Private Brown winked up the staircase at the schoolboy rebels.

"Coming for you soon!" he announced. "We're going to have you out of that before long."

"Come now, old bean!" said Cardew. "I've got a bucket of water and ink and soot here, and you're welcome to it on your napper!"

The prospect did not seem to tempt Private Brown. He lighted a cigarette and turned away—and for the present at least the rebels of St. Jim's were left to their own devices.

Tom Merry & Co. were in cheerier spirits than ever now. They were prepared to hold the fort indefinitely—to carry on all through the new term if necessary, rather than surrender. But it looked now as if the silver lining was showing through the cloud, and that Tom Merry's fight for his honour was to end in triumph.

CHAPTER 4.

A Chance for Mr. Ratcliff!

"IT may be so!" said the Head dubiously.

"To my mind, sir, it appears practically certain now that Tom Merry is innocent!" said Mr. Railton.

"I hope so. I trust so. But—"

"But that does not alter the fact that the school is in a state of rebellion!" said Mr. Horace Ratcliff sourly. "And I, for one, cannot look at the matter as you do, Mr. Railton."

"I have an open mind on the subject," said Dr. Holmes. "No one would be more pleased than myself to find Merry innocent. But we cannot wait, Mr. Railton. The new term is so close at hand now, and the school cannot reopen under these circumstances. All through the vacation this rebellion has been going on. It cannot be allowed to continue in the new term."

Mr. Railton was silent.

It was easy for the stately Doctor to declare that the schoolboy rebellion could not be allowed to continue. It was not so easy to say how it had to be ended.

The three masters were in Mr. Ratcliff's study in the New House. It was the day following the visit of Inspector Skeat to St. Jim's.

Over in the School House, affairs were still in "statu quo." The ground floor and the first floor of the rambling old building were occupied by Mr. Railton's "army," but the upper part of the house was still held by the rebels—undaunted and unconquered. And Dr. Holmes, thinking of the opening day of the term drawing nearer and nearer, was perplexed and exasperated.



The sergeant and his men came running to the wall as there sounded a slight thud as if someone had dropped into the quad. "It ain't one of them rips!" shouted the sergeant suddenly. "Here—what do you want here, my man?" (See page 10.)

"I see little or nothing in what we have heard from Mr. Skeat," said Horace Ratcliff sourly. "To my mind, Merry's guilt is as clear as ever."

"It was never clear to my mind," said Mr. Railton, "and it appears to me now very doubtful indeed."

Mr. Ratcliff curled his lip sourly. He was by no means eager to hear that Tom Merry was, after all, innocent. Mr. Ratcliff had been hardest upon him—surest of his guilt—an advocate of the severest punishment. It was very unpleasant for Horace Ratcliff to envisage the possibility that he had been hopelessly mistaken and in the wrong.

Moreover, Mr. Ratcliff believed that his missing sovereigns were still in Tom Merry's possession, and could be recovered when the captain of the Shell was secured.

If it turned out as Mr. Skeat supposed—that the wastrel, Gadgett, was the thief—most of Mr. Ratcliff's stolen sovereigns had already gone beyond recovery. The punishment of the thief would not recover them. "Ratty" was not likely to believe that if he could help it. Certainly he would have preferred to know that Tom Merry was guilty—with a possibility of the recovery of the missing money.

The Head was uncertain. But on one point he was quite determined—the barring-out had to end. St. Jim's could not remain in that state of wild confusion and uproar when the new term opened. It was, in fact, impossible for the school to reopen till the barring-out came to an end. There had been rather grim communications from the Governing Board. The governors could not understand why this riot had been allowed to last so long—not understanding the difficulty of the task of subduing rebels who did not mean to be subdued.

Mr. Railton had done yeoman service, but he had not succeeded in conquering the rebels. And Mr. Ratcliff, though always ready with a shrug or a sneer, had no better methods to suggest.

Dr. Holmes rose to his feet.

"Something must be done, and at once," he said.

A pledge to Merry that he should not be sent away from the school?" suggested Mr. Railton.

"That would be a surrender to rebellion!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

Dr. Holmes shook his head.

"Impossible, Mr. Railton. Merry, in the case of his innocence being proved, would be pardoned for his rebellion and allowed to return to the school. But until then my sentence must stand."

"I should indeed think so!" said Mr. Ratcliff tartly.

"Very well, sir!" said the School House master. "But I may remind you that the man Gadgett is being searched for—that he is known to be in concealment somewhere in the vicinity, and that he may be traced and caught this very day, or to-morrow—"

"We cannot wait!" said the Head.

"It is, of course, for you to give orders, sir!" said Mr. Railton, without any outward sign of impatience.

"Mr. Railton seems to feel a very peculiar sympathy for rebels," remarked Mr. Ratcliff.

"I admire the courage and devotion of Tom Merry's friends in taking so many risks for a schoolmate whom they believe to be innocent," said Mr. Railton calmly. "Their conduct is lawless, but it has a very admirable side. And granting that Tom Merry is innocent, I scarcely think that he can be blamed for refusing to be expelled as a thief."

The Head frowned a little.

"That admiration and sympathy on Mr. Railton's part may account for the success of the rascally rebels hitherto!" sneered Mr. Ratcliff.

The School House master flushed.

"Mr. Ratcliff, if you mean to infer that I have not done my best to assert the Head's authority—" he began hotly.

"Come, come, gentleman!" said Dr. Holmes hastily. "No dispute, I beg. That will serve no purpose. I am assured you have done your very best, Railton, though with limited success hitherto."

"The task was not easy," said Mr. Railton. "It is possible that Mr. Ratcliff might have dealt with the matter more successfully—"

"Quite possible, I think!" interjected Mr. Ratcliff.

"I am willing to admit the possibility, sir," said the School House master, "and to leave further measures to be taken by you, Mr. Ratcliff."

"Perhaps that will be advisable," said the Head thoughtfully. "Mr. Ratcliff is of opinion that he could deal with the situation, and I am prepared to catch at any straw to end this disastrous state of affairs. Mr. Ratcliff, will you take the matter in hand?"

Horace Ratcliff's face was a study for a moment or two.

He had never taken the trouble to conceal his contempt for his colleague's want of success in handling the schoolboy rebellion; but apparently Mr. Ratcliff regarded himself as critic-in-chief, and had no desire to distinguish himself in the danger zone.

But it was scarcely possible for him to refuse.

"If—if you think it advisable, sir," he stammered.

"Certainly! I am sure that Mr. Railton will congratulate you if you succeed where he has failed."

"Most decidedly," said Mr. Railton.

"I—I will certainly make the attempt!" said Mr. Ratcliff, with a bitter glance at his colleague. "I shall not, at all events, be handicapped by any feeling of sympathy for the rebels."

"I will speak to the men and tell them to take their orders from you, Mr. Ratcliff," said the School House master, rising.

"Thank you!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

The New House master hurriedly retired from the study, wishing from the bottom of his heart that he had not quite so freely indulged in sneering criticism. He was far from yearning to distinguish himself as a leader of attack. But he was in for it now.

Half an hour later—the interval having been spent by Horace Ratcliff in screwing up his courage to the sticking-point—he crossed over to the School House to take the matter in hand.

CHAPTER 5. The Attack!

"RATTY!"

"Here comes Ratty!"

"Bai Jove, it's jollay old Watty, you know!"

Tom Merry & Co were on guard, and on the watch. The sight of Mr. Ratcliff's lean, angular form striding into the School House roused all their interest.

"You can't call it fair play to spring a face like that on anybody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Some of the soldiers grinned. They had seen enough of Mr. Ratcliff not to like him. Their grins did not please the New House master.

"I have been placed in charge of this matter, men!" he said acidly. "It is high time that an end was put to this rebellion."

"At your orders, sir!" said Private Brown, with a private wink to his comrades. "Foller your lead like anything, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff did not seem to hear that remark. It was not his intention to give a lead to be followed.

Like a great general, Mr. Ratcliff intended to direct operations from the base, as it were, leaving the humble duty of handling the enemy to more common persons.

"You will proceed to—er—go up this staircase," he said.

"Yes, sir!" said Sergeant Stuckey.

"And—remove this barricade—"

"Eh?"

"And—then reduce those young rascals to submission," said the New House master.

Sergeant Stuckey looked at him with an eye that would have terrified Mr. Ratcliff had Ratty been a member of the sergeant's old squad.

"Would you mind tellin' us 'ow we're to do all that, sir?" asked the sergeant, with sulphurous calmness.

"If you are afraid of a set of mutinous schoolboys—" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

The sergeant gasped.

"Enough time has been wasted in talk," said the New House master. "Carry out your orders at once."

"Waiting for you to start, sir!" said Private Brown.

"I—I am not taking part—a personal part—in these—these disorderly proceedings," said Mr. Ratcliff. "You will carry out my directions."

Sergeant Stuckey drew a deep breath.

"Come on, boys!" he said. "We're drawing Dr. Holmes' pay, and we're bound to carry out the gentleman's orders."

"We're, arter' you, sergeant," said Mr. Higgins.

"Ear, ear!"

THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME! YOU SIMPLY MUST HAVE THE "MAGNET" NOW ON SALE.

They could scarcely believe that the attack was coming with Horace Ratcliff in the ranks of the enemy. It really seemed too good to be true. There was not a fellow in the garrison who was not anxious for a "chance at Ratty." It was Mr. Ratcliff, with his miserly hoarding of gold, who had been the cause of all the trouble. And Ratty was exceedingly unpopular, even with fellows who belonged to his own House.

"If only old Ratty will go for us!" said Jameson of the Third, a New House fag.

And he grinned ecstatically.

"If only!" chuckled Wally D'Arcy. "No such luck!"

"I've got a mop ready for him," said Jameson. "I'll put some special soap on it for Ratty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a stirring below; the enemy were getting into motion. The staircase gave on a broad corridor, and that corridor was crowded with the "army"—Sergeant Stuckey, Privates Brown and Higgins and Suppers and Green and the rest. They were all there in great force, nearly thirty powerful fellows who had all seen real warfare in Flanders in their time, and to whom the tussle at St. Jim's was only a "lark."

But even fellows who had been "over the top" in France and Flanders realised that it would be no joke to storm the barricaded staircase with a swarm of determined rebels above. Flanders methods, of course, could not be used, which made a great difference. Storming the barricade with their bare hands was quite a different proposition from shifting "Fritz" with fixed bayonets.

Mr. Ratcliff scowled up the staircase and coughed. There was a yell from the swarm above.

"Come on, Ratty!"

"This way, Bones!"

"Only take your face away, Ratty!" implored Cardew.

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Sergeant Stuckey, at all events, was not loath to lead. He threw off his old Army overcoat and started.

There was a cheer, and the old heroes of Flanders rushed after him, and there was a wild scramble up the barricaded stairs.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Railton had refrained from ordering that attack, because he was well aware that so long as the defenders were resolute, it had scarcely any chance of success, or of any result but hard knocks for the attackers. But Mr. Ratcliff ordered it very much at his ease, as he intended to take no part in it. Like the Duke of Plaza-Toro, Mr. Ratcliff led his regiment from behind, because he found it less exciting.

"Stand up to them!" shouted Tom Merry.

"I guess so!"

"Hurrah!"

"Give 'em beans!"

Whiz, whiz, whiz! Splash! Swoosh!

All sorts of missiles rained down on the attackers with the contents of inky buckets of water. Monty Lowther, with a big garden squirt filled with ink, did great execution. Boots and tomato-tins and school books whizzed at the enemy, and wild howls answered them. Liddell and Scott—a huge volume—smote the sergeant on his unhappy head with great effect, and Mr. Stuckey almost collapsed under the weight of Greek learning. Before that moment Mr. Stuckey had been in happy ignorance of Liddell and Scott, abridged or unabridged, but at that moment assuredly he would have preferred the abridged edition.

"Yooocoo!" roared Mr. Stuckey dismally, and he rolled over.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wight on the wicket, bai Jove!" howled Arthur Augustus. "Give them some more, deah boys! Heah's Todhunter's Algebrwah—"

Todhunter caught Private Brown on the ear. The fearful howl uttered by Mr. Brown showed that he did not care for algebra taken in that manner.

"Well bowled!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Private Higgins. "This 'ere is 'ot work! You young rips— Yaroooooh!"

Private Higgins sprawled among furniture, as Aeschylus—the Head's own Aeschylus—landed on his nose.

Some of the enemy were within reach now, and charging brooms and mops lunged at them, and sent them whirling back. Buckets of water from the tap in the passage, constantly refilled, swamped down on them. And a packet of pepper, hurled by Cardew, burst over them, and there was a terrific outburst of sneezing.

It was too much!

Back went the attack—back, and farther back—the old heroes of Flanders scrambling frantically from the stacked furniture, and jumping down into the corridor.

There was a roar of triumph from above.

"Licked!"

"Go home!"

"Hurrah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy waved his eyeglass in exuberant glee.

"Thwashed!" he howled. "Huwway! Licked to the wide! Hip-hip-huwway!"

CHAPTER 3. Rough on Ratty!

THERE was a chorus of groans at the foot of the well-defended staircase. Every member of the "army" had had a hard knock or two—some of them a dozen or so. They were tough material, but there was a limit. A frontal attack on the staircase was useless, and the old soldiers knew it, if Mr. Ratcliff did not. They groaned and grouched and rubbed their bruises, while the rebels above shouted and cheered.

"Men," Mr. Ratcliff almost shrieked, "what does this mean? You—you have come down, instead of going up! Are you afraid?"

"Shut up, you old idjit!" roared Private Brown, quite

not have dragged him up the staircase to within reach of the rebels.

He sprawled on the stacked furniture, howling for help, while a regular shower of missiles from above landed on him. The juniors crowded one another at the landing, eager to "get in one" while such a glorious chance offered.

Wild yells rang out from Mr. Ratcliff.

His long legs slipped down among the furniture, and he could not extricate them, and he remained there, pinned, a target for the rebels. The schoolboy rebels did not neglect their target, and they scored an immense number of bullseyes upon the hapless Housemaster.

"Help, help! Yooop! Goodness gracious! Yow-ow-ow!" wailed Mr. Ratcliff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sergeant Stuckey came to Ratty's rescue at last. Gallantly facing the storm of missiles, the sergeant extricated the Housemaster and dragged him back to the corridor.

Mr. Ratcliff reeled against the wall, panting for breath.

He was in a dazed and dizzy state, and wondered whether this was some fearful nightmare.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow—wow!"

"Come on, Ratty!" roared the juniors.

"Waiting for you, Ratty!"

"Ain't you leading us on, sir?" asked Private Brown sarcastically. "We're hanging on, jest waiting for you, sir!"

"Ow, ow! Wow!" was Mr. Ratcliff's reply.

As soon as he had recovered his breath, or some of it, Horace Ratcliff limped away. He had had enough of distinguishing himself as a general-in-command.

He was gasping and limping and spluttering when he came into the New House. There the Head and Mr. Raiton met him.

"You have succeeded, Mr. Ratcliff?" asked Dr. Holmes eagerly.

"Groooooooh!"

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated the Head.

"Apparently Mr. Ratcliff has not succeeded," remarked Mr. Raiton dryly.

"Oh! Ow! Gggggrrr!" mumbled Mr. Ratcliff. "I—I—I have been set upon by your hired ruffians, Mr. Raiton! Ow! I refuse to take any hand in such proceedings—oooh!"

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exasperated by Mr. Ratcliff's ragging, added to a fine assortment of bumps and bruises and a dose of pepper.

"What? What?"

"Try it on yourself, old bag o' bones!" howled Private Scuppers.

"What? How dare you—"

"There's nothing doing, sir," said the sergeant as respectfully as he could. "You can see for yourself—"

"I can see that you have allowed yourself to be defeated by a set of junior schoolboys!" said Mr. Ratcliff bitterly. "I am surprised—shocked—disgusted! I feel nothing but contempt—"

"Do you, by gosh!" said Private Brown, quite at the limit of his patience now. "Then lead the way, sir, and we'll follow."

"Foller you wherever you go!" said Mr. Higgins.

"I shall do nothing of the sort! I order you—"

"Won't you?" said Mr. Brown. "Well, you jest will, whether you like it or not! See? Here goes!"

And the exasperated Mr. Brown collared Mr. Ratcliff and shoved him forcibly towards the barricade.

There was a yell of delight from above.

"Go it, Brownie! Send Ratty up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff struggled frantically.

"Let me go! Release me! I refuse— I—I order you— I command— Help! Oh dear! Ow! Good heavens! Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Privates Higgins and Brown and Scuppers had hold of the hapless New House master. They lifted him, by main strength, and sprawled him on the barricaded stairs.

"Now, lead the way, old codger!" shouted Mr. Brown.

"We'll foller fast enough if you lead!"

"Carry on, bones!" yelled Private Scuppers.

But Mr. Ratcliff did not "carry on." Wild horses would

And Mr. Ratcliff limped away to his room, leaving the Head staring and Mr. Raiton smiling.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

Mr. Raiton crossed over to the School House. Evidently Mr. Ratcliff did not wish to continue in command, and the leadership fell to the School House master again. He found his "army" engaged in attending to their injuries, which were many and various.

"We done our best, sir!" said Sergeant Stuckey.

"I am sure of that," said the School House master. "Some of you keep a watch here; and after dark, please see that a watch is kept on the windows from without, so that the boys will not have an opportunity of smuggling in food. For the present there is nothing else to be done."

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Raiton glanced up the barricaded staircase, and some of the rebels at the top waved their hands to him. Then he walked away. The struggle for the present was over; and Tom Merry & Co. rejoiced in their victory.

CHAPTER 7. Cornered!

"A T it again!" grunted Sergeant Stuckey.

The sergeant's voice sounded cross.

It was late in the evening, and the winter darkness brooded over St. Jim's, broken only by the glimmer here and there of a star.

Sergeant Stuckey was making his rounds, with Privates Brown and Green, in the dusky old quadrangle.

A very careful watch was kept every night to prevent a "sortie" on the part of the schoolboy rebels. A few nights before Blake of the Fourth and his comrades had succeeded in getting a "convoy" of provisions into the besieged School House, thus giving the garrison a new lease of life, as it were. If all else failed, the Head hoped to see the rebels

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reduced to surrender by want of food; but Blake's success had at least deferred that consummation which was so devoutly to be wished. And ever since the watch had been doubly vigilant, and at all hours of the night sentries walked their rounds in the precincts of the school, to watch for and cut off any stragglers from the garrison.

There had been a light fall of snow that afternoon, and the ground glimmered white with it. A cold wind blew over the quadrangle, and scattered lightly-falling flakes.

It was the sound of scrambling at the school wall that caught the keen ear of the sergeant, and convinced him that the rebels were "at it again," as he expressed it.

At a spot where the school wall bordered the road, Mr. Stuckey had caught a sound of running feet outside, and paused to listen.

The running foot stopped at the wall, and there was a sound of scrambling in the darkness.

The sergeant smiled grimly. "One of them young rips," he murmured. "This way; he'll drop fairly into our hands."

And the trio approached the wall quietly, grinning in the darkness, prepared to catch the venturesome junior as he dropped on the inner side.

Thud! A figure dropped from the wall, not precisely into their hands, but on the sergeant's foot. A heavy boot ground on Sergeant Stuckey's favourite corn, and he gave a howl of anguish.

There was a startled, muttered curse in the gloom, starting enough to the old soldiers, who supposed that they had a schoolboy to deal with. But the next moment they realised that the shadowy intruder was far from being a schoolboy.

Private Brown clutched him, and held him fast, and an aroma of rum and tobacco was breathed over Mr. Brown.

"Who the thunder—" ejaculated Mr. Brown.

"Let me go, 'ang yer!" came a panting voice, and the man in the private's grasp struggled desperately.

Private Brown grinned, and tightened his grip.

"Not 'arf!" he answered.

Another curse was hurled at him, and the man struggled desperately to escape.

But Private Green took a grip on him, and he had no chance against the two sturdy fellows.

"Show a light 'ere, sergeant," said Mr. Brown. "This 'ere ain't one of them young rips. Some blooming tramp dodging in to pinch something."

Sergeant Stuckey turned on the light of his electric torch. It gleamed on a purple-coloured stubbly visage, narrow, foxy eyes, one of them with a cast in it. The three old soldiers stared at their capture in grim disgust. He was not pleasant either to look at or to touch.

"Now, who are you, and what's your game 'ere, my man?" demanded the sergeant gruffly.

"I—I'm doing no harm!" gasped the ruffian. "I—I just dodged in over the wall, because—because—"

"Because you thought there was chickens to steal?" asked Private Brown humorously.

"Or was the coppers arter you?" asked Mr. Green.

"No! I—I— Some blokes was arter me, for a lark; that's all, on my davy—"

"Your davy ain't much good, from the look of you!" said the sergeant contemptuously. "I reckon you're a sneak-thief. We'll take you to Mr. Railton, anyhow."

"I—I tell you—"

"That's enough! Bring him along."

"Old on!" said Mr. Brown. "Sounds as if his yarn might be true. There's somebody running along the road outside."

Sharp footsteps were ringing on the frosty road, and there was a calling voice, in excited tones. The footsteps passed, and then returned, and finally stopped.

Private Brown, leaving the prisoner to his comrades, clambered up the wall, and looked over into the road. Three or four figures could be seen there, shadowy in the gloom.

"He's dodged us!" came an angry voice. "Has he cut across the fields?"

"Cut across this wall, more like!" It was Inspector Skeat's voice. "Look! His track's in the snow up to this point."

"Could he have dodged into the school grounds, sir?"

"Any port in a storm, I fancy. We were close behind, and Johnson was in front, heading him off. I fancy he climbed the wall. Why—?" The inspector uttered a sharp exclamation, as he detected Private Brown's shadowy form on top of the wall. "There he is!"

Private Brown chuckled.

"This isn't a laughing matter, Jem Gadgett!" exclaimed the inspector sharply. "Come down out of that!"

Another chuckle.

"You hear me!" exclaimed Mr. Skeat. "We've got you, my man! Better take it quietly."

"I 'ear you, cocky!" answered Private Brown cheerfully.

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"Who may you 'appen to be, when you're at 'ome on a Sunday?"

"That's not his voice!" said the puzzled inspector.

"It's mine!" said Private Brown. "The only one I've got, and I use it a good deal."

"Who are you?" snapped Mr. Skeat.

"Jack Brown, once in the Leamshire Regiment, now a blinking bricklayer!" answered Mr. Brown cheerily. "If you've got a job laying bricks, old nut, I'll undertake to lay them as fast as a turkey can lay eggs."

"Oh! You're one of Mr. Railton's men," said the inspector.

"Jest at present I'm lending a 'and to my old chum Railton!" assented Mr. Brown. "Ten bob a day and grub, as I told you yesterday, Mr. Skeat. Now I look at you I know you again—couldn't mistake that nose."

Inspector Skeat breathed hard. But he did not waste time bandying words with the humorous and cheerful Mr. Brown.

"We're after a man," he said. "Did you see anybody dodge over the school wall a few minutes ago, Brown?"

"Old man, you've come to the right shop!" assured Mr. Brown. "We've got him tight, if you want him. What's he done?"

"You've got him! Good! Keep him till I get in!" exclaimed the inspector joyfully; and he rushed away to the school gates with the constables.

Private Brown dropped on the inner side of the wall.

"Peelers," he said. "They're arter this cove; seem to want him bad. Your number's up, old coddler!"

There was a savage curse from Mr. Gadgett; apparently his customary solace in time of trouble.

"Look 'ere!" he panted. "Let me go! Give a bloke a chance! I'll stand you three quid each."

"Yes, you look as if you could 'and out nine quid in a lump, I don't think!" grinned Private Green.

"I've got the money!" said Mr. Gadgett hoarsely.

"Golden sovereigns! Give me a chance—"

"Whose are they?" chuckled Mr. Brown.

"I tell you—"

"Stow the gab!" said the sergeant. "Bring him along!"

Mr. Gadgett, vainly pleading and promising golden sovereigns, was hustled away through the elms. Inspector Skeat and his men had got in at the gates by this time, and were coming along the drive. At the sight of the police helmets in the gloom, Jem Gadgett made a furious effort, and tore himself loose.

"Old him!" yelled Private Brown.

"Arter him!" roared the sergeant.

The hunted man made a desperate leap out of reach, and ran for it. There was a shout from Inspector Skeat.

"After him! Don't let him get away!"

The constables and the inspector, the sergeant and his men rushed in pursuit. Two or three of Mr. Railton's men, who were on sentry-go in the grounds, closed in from various directions. Once, twice the hapless Mr. Gadgett was headed off, and the pursuers closed in on him, penning him in against the wide facade of the School House. Inspector Skeat's grip was almost on his shoulder, when Gadgett made a spring up the School House steps and rushed into the House. He could scarcely have hoped for any avenue of escape that way; but it was neck or nothing now—his escape was cut off in all directions. He dashed into the House, panting and cursing, and after him swarmed the pursuers—sure of him now.

CHAPTER 8.

Stop Thief!

TOM MERRY stared over the barricade on the stairs, listening to the shouts and tramping of feet that rang out below. Something evidently was "up," and Tom wondered what it was.

"They seem to be wathaf excited!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Can't be scwappin' with one another, I suppose?"

"If they are, more power to their elbow!" grinned Cardew. "Sounds more like foot-racin', though."

"Arter him!" came a yell from below. "He's up the stairs!"

"Stop him!"

"Stop thief!"

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!

"Blessed if I can guess what's the row," said Tom Merry, in perplexity. "They're after somebody. Hallo!"

"Bai Jove!"

At the foot of the staircase a panting man came into sight, and stopped as he saw the stairs barred before him. The juniors stared down at him in amazement.

He was a stranger to them—though had Figgins & Co. been there, they would have recognised the man as the ruffian they had encountered on the footpath in Wayland Wood.

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Gadgett clambered desperately up, and the sergeant started clambering after him, followed by Private Brown. But the juniors chipped in at that. "Back out, old top!" called out Monty Lowther. "You're not coming up here!" "He's a thief!" howled the sergeant. "Old him!" (See this page.)

On the lower stairs there were hurried trampling footsteps in chase. Sergeant Stuckey and all his men were entering into the pursuit of the fleeing thief with great gusto—a good deal like a crowd of merry schoolboys.

The desperate man had dodged up the stairs, perhaps in the hope of finding some hiding-place, or of escaping from a window and eluding his pursuers. But the chase was close behind, and he had no time.

He was about to dash up the upper staircase, when he discovered that it was blocked with stacked furniture—probably a very surprising sight to Mr. Jem Gadgett.

He stopped, panting, and the rushing footsteps behind came along the corridor, and there were more shouts.

"Collar him!"

With a snarl, the hunted man sprang upon the barricaded stairs, clambering desperately up.

There was little hope for him, or none; but the grasping hand of the sergeant was only a few feet away, and the alternative was immediate capture.

"Who the deuce is the fellow?" asked Cardew. "Are we lettin' him come up here?"

"Oh, let him come," said Tom. "He can't do any harm—but collar him as soon as he gets over, till we find out who he is and what he wants. It might be a dodge of the enemy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Gadgett clambered desperately up; and the sergeant started clambering after him, followed by Private Brown. But the juniors chipped in at that. Missiles whizzed down the staircase, over Gadgett's head, and smote Mr. Stuckey and Mr. Brown right and left. They roared with wrath.

"Stop that!" yelled the sergeant.

"Back out, old top!" called out Monty Lowther. "You're not coming up here."

The sergeant and Mr. Brown scrambled back. In the excitement of the chase, they had forgotten, for the moment, the barring-out.

Jem Gadgett had almost reached the landing, clambering on with desperate hurry.

"Stop that man!" panted the sergeant. "Do you 'ear me?—He's a thief with the police arter him."

"Bai Jove!"

"Not a little dodge of yours, to get through, what?" chuckled Blake.

"No!" howled the sergeant. "Stop him! Hold him."

"We'll hold him fast enough, anyhow," said Tom Merry. "But you fellows keep your distance, or look out for squalls."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Gadgett, breathless, rolled over the barricade on to the landing. At once half a dozen hands fastened on him.

Tom Merry & Co. did not know in the least what to make of the strange affair; but they were prepared to secure the fugitive till they learned more. His looks alone showed sufficiently that he was a man who would bear watching.

"Hold on, old bean," said Cardew genially, as he grasped the man's rough collar. "We've got you."

"Let go!" panted Gadgett.

"Wats, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "You are wequahed to give an account of yourself."

"What do you want here," demanded Tom Merry.

"Who are you, and where did you spring from?" asked Levison of the Fourth.

Gadgett stood panting, in the hold of the juniors. The pursuers were gathering now at the bottom of the staircase. With a sudden, powerful effort, the ruffian tore himself loose, and dashed away along the upper corridor.

"Bai Jove! The wuffian—"

"Seize that man!" It was Inspector Skeat's voice.

"Seize him! He—"

"Keep guard here!" said Tom Merry. "You, Talbot—don't let those bounders come up!"

"Leave it to me!" said Talbot.

Tom Merry dashed away along the corridor in chase of Mr. Gadgett, with a dozen fellows at his heels. Talbot of the Shell remained on guard at the barricade, with most of the garrison.

Gadgett panted along the dormitory passage, and reached a window at the other end. But the window was fastened, and barricaded with bedsteads—another surprise for Mr. Gadgett. There was no egress that way, and Gadgett doubled back, and dodged into the Shell dormitory. Tom Merry & Co. rushed in after him.

Probably the man had some hope of breaking out of a window, and crawling on a roof or a wall, and yet eluding the chase. But the windows were all barricaded more or less, for defence against a possible attack by ladders. And as the ruffian stopped, beaten, panting, and desperate, Tom Merry & Co. closed in on him.

"Collar him!"

Gadgett struggled savagely as the juniors seized him. But he went to the floor with a crash, and the St. Jim's fellows sprawled over him, holding him down.

"Got him!" grinned Herries. "The game's up, my man! Better take it quietly."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy."

Gadgett panted and spluttered in the grasp of the juniors. The game was up for the rascal, there was no doubt about that.

"Old on!" he gasped.

"We're holding on all right!" grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You let me go!" panted Gadgett. "Let me out of one of them winders, and I'll beat them yet. I'll make it worth your while."

"Bai Jove! How can you make it worth our while, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"I'll stand you a quid each."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Let me go, and I'll shell out!" panted Gadgett. "I've got the dibs—I'll hand you a quid—a golden quid—each of you! I've got the money."

Tom Merry gave a jump.

"You've got the money—sovereigns!" he ejaculated.

"Yes—yes—let me go—"

"Hold him!" panted Tom. "I think I catch on now—this must be the man Mr. Skeat was speaking of—the man Gadgett—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Blake. "And he's dodged in here to get away? Here, of all places! Great pip!"

"Mind he doesn't get away—"

"What-ho!"

And with a very firm grip on Mr. Gadgett, the juniors marched him out of the dormitory, and back to the barricaded landing.

CHAPTER 9. Light at Last!

INSPECTOR SKEAT stood staring up the staircase, anxious and exasperated. The garrison on the landing did not intend to allow anyone to come up the stairs, even the inspector. They had no intention of allowing the position to be rushed, for any reason whatever. But the inspector's face cleared when Tom Merry looked over the barricade at last, and the tousled head of Jem Gadgett showed there also.

"Got him, Mr. Skeat!" called out Tom.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed the inspector, in great relief.

"Is it the man you told us about?"

"That's the man. Mind he doesn't get loose!" said the inspector anxiously. "I've got a warrant for him here, and he's given us no end of trouble."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not likely to let him get loose!" he said. "He's been offering us golden sovereigns to let him go—Mr. Ratcliff's sovereigns, I suppose."

"Bai Jove! It's the awful vascal who wobbled Watty, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus.

"And he's got Mr. Ratcliff's quids in his pockets now!" chuckled Wally of the Third. "What luck!"

Jem Gadgett gave a start.

"Ow do you know—" he began.

"We know all about it, you awful vascal!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bettah chuck him down the stairs to the inspectah, deah boys."

"Good egg!"

There was a howl of alarm from Mr. Gadgett.

"Do you want to break my blinking neck?" he howled.

"Your wotten neck is of very little value," said Arthur Augustus. "I refuse to pay the slightest wegard to your neck!"

"Look 'ere—"

"I'm coming up!" called out the inspector, and he started clambering up the barricade, eager to get his official hands—and handcuffs—on the elusive Mr. Gadgett.

"Right-ho!" called back Tom Merry. "You can come up, Mr. Skeat, and welcome. Nobody else, though. We can't take risks!"

"Wathah not!"

Inspector Skeat came up alone, the constables waiting at the foot of the stairs, with Sergeant Stuckey and his crowd. By this time Mr. Railton had arrived on the scene, and Private Brown explained to him what was happening. The Housemaster listened in astonishment, but very evident satisfaction.

"Merry!" he called out.

"Yes, sir?"

"I desire to see this man. I will ascend," said Mr. Railton. "I will give you my word to retire when the man is taken away."

"Right-ho, sir!" said Tom Merry at once. "We know we can trust you, sir."

"Yaas, wathah! We wouldn't twust Watty, but we know that you are wight as wain, Mr. Wailton!" said Arthur Augustus graciously.

Without replying to that, Mr. Railton followed the inspector up the stairs—a rather difficult task over the stacked furniture. He dropped on the landing beside the breathless inspector. Jem Gadgett eyed Mr. Skeat with surly animosity; but his struggles were over; a dozen pairs of hands were grasping him, and he was quite helpless.

Mr. Skeat jerked the handcuffs from his pocket.

"Wrists!" he said laconically.

Click!

"Well, you've got me, old covey!" said Mr. Gadgett.

"I've given you a run for your money, any'ow!"

"You have!" assented the inspector. "You might as well have let me take you into custody at the Black Bird three days ago, Jem. But here you are at last!"

"Ere I am," said Gadgett coolly. "And now I'd like to know the blooming charge!"

"Your old game, Jem—larceny!" said Mr. Skeat cheerily.

"You've got to account for a sum of money in gold, now in your possession. What's left after the amount you've spent at the Black Bird?" The inspector ran his nimble fingers through the ruffian's pockets. "Nine—ten—twelve sovereigns. Is that all that's left out of the forty-six, Jem?"

Gadgett burst into a hoarse laugh.

"Ow you know there was forty-six beats me!" he said. "That's all that's left, any'ow, Mr. Skeat, and, as it turns out, I wish it wasn't left, blow me! I never knowed you was on the case. Ain't I been looking in the papers, and never a word was said about the robbery, and I reckoned it had blown over somehow. Don't you worry, Mr. Skeat. I know I'm booked for three months' ard, and I'm ready!"

"I'm bound to warn you—" began Mr. Skeat.

Gadgett laughed again.

"Slow it!" he said. "I ain't no mug. I know it's a clear case. The beak ain't going to believe that I've saved up a pocketful of sovereigns, I suppose, out of my wages, is he?"

The inspector grinned.

"Probably not!" he assented.

"You've got me; but I've given you a run for it," said Mr. Gadgett, apparently deriving some solace from that circumstance. "You've been very deep, Mr. Skeat—nothin' being said about the robbery, and arter a few days I reckoned it was safe to spend the money. And I's pose you was lying low all the time, waiting for me to put my foot in it—what?"

Inspector Skeat coughed, and did not answer. As a matter of fact, Mr. Gadgett was attributing to the inspector a deep sagacity to which Mr. Skeat had no claim. But for the discovery made by Kerr of the Fourth, it was doubtful whether Mr. Gadgett would ever have attracted the attention of the inspector at all.

"Which I've had a good time on the dibs, any'ow," continued Mr. Gadgett, quite affable now. "It was worth the three months' stretch. And as for the feller who lost the money, he fair asked for it—hoarding up golden quids in his desk, and letting everybody know he was a-doin' of it! Why don't he keep his money in the bank, and not put temptation in a man's way?" demanded Mr. Gadgett. "Fair asked for it, Mr. Ratcliff did, and he can't deny it."

Mr. Railton fixed his eyes on the man.

"You confess, then, that you committed the robbery at this school a few weeks ago, Gadgett?" he said.

Gadgett stared at him and grinned.

"Course I do!" he answered. "Can't it be proved as easy as wink? I'm not the man to give the magistrates a lot of trouble—not when the game's up. Comes 'arder on a man. Might be six months' stretch instead of three if a bloke gives a lot of trouble. F'raps you ain't never been in trouble with the police, sir?"

Mr. Railton jumped.

"I? Goodness gracious! Certainly not!"

"Well, sir, if you ever comes to it, I'll give you a word of advice," said Mr. Gadgett. "Keep out of their 'ands as long as you can; but when they've got you tight, don't give more trouble than you can 'elp. That's a good tip, sir, and may be useful to you some day."

The expression on Mr. Railton's face as Jem Gadgett gave him that valuable "tip," was extraordinary.



The inspector's face cleared when Tom Merry looked over the barricade at last, and the tousled head of Jem Gadgett showed there also. "Got him, Mr. Skeat!" called out Tom Merry. "Is he the man you told us about? He's been offering us golden sovereigns to let him go!" "Don't let him loose!" said the inspector. (See page 12.)

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Well, I'm ready, inspector!" said Mr. Gadgett. "You've got me fair and square. I s'pose old Ratcliff will 'andle them twelve quids, what I'm sorry is left. Tell him I've 'ad a good time on the rest, won't you?"

"You can tell him that when you see him in court," said the inspector. "Come along."

"Ready and willing, sir," said Mr. Gadgett. "But 'ow am I to get down them blinking stairs with the bracelets on? Nice goings on in this school, I don't think! Rotten state of affairs 'ere!"

"I think you may clear the stairs now, Merry," said Mr. Railton. "This man's confession clears up the whole trouble."

"Looks like it, sir," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "This is the man I found in Mr. Ratcliff's study that night, sure enough."

Mr. Gadgett gave Tom a look.

"You the kid what butted in that night when I was clearing out the old codger's desk?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom, smiling at the man's cool impudence, "I'm the very kid."

"You ought to have been in bed," said Mr. Gadgett. "I'd 'ave made a cleaner sweep if you 'adn't butted in."

"You feahful wascal!" said Arthur Augustus. "Are you awah that Tom Mewwy was suspected of the howwid theft you committed?"

"My heye!" said Mr. Gadgett.

"And that our headmastah condemned him for it, you feahful wottah?"

"Did he?" said Mr. Gadgett. "Then you can tell him from that he's a hold hass!"

"Bai Jove!"

"That will do!" said Mr. Railton, frowning. "Boys, kindly clear the stairs for this man to be taken down."

The juniors looked to Tom Merry for orders. Tom nodded. It was clear now that the long trouble at St. Jim's was at an end. Tom Merry's innocence was clear as the sun at noon; the barring-out was over. The St. Jim's rebels set to work clearing the stairs of the barricade, to allow a passage for the inspector and his handcuffed prisoner.

Inspector Skeat marched the man down at last, and departed with his prisoner and the constables. Mr. Railton hurried away to the New House, to acquaint the Head with the startling turn affairs had taken. And Tom Merry & Co.

rejoiced—though from Wally of the Third were heard some regrets that the barring-out was not to continue through the new term.

CHAPTER 10.

Burying the Hatchet.

"THE Head!"

"Heah comes the Head, deah boys!"

"Shall I heave a boot at him, captain?" asked Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Order!" said Tom Merry hastily.

Cardew sighed.

"Then it's all over?" he said. "No more giddy barring-out! Latin and maths next term, instead of giving House-masters the kybosh! I don't call that a change for the better."

"Rotten!" said Wally of the Third.

"Perhaps the jolly old Head will still have his back up, though," said Cardew hopefully. "He can't keep up his old game—can't expel old Tommy, because Mr. Gadgett annexed Ratty's quids. But he may keep on being rusty about the barring-out."

"Let's hope not!" said Tom Merry.

"Bow-wow! Let's hope he will! If he won't come down off the high horse, the barrin'-out goes on, and more power to it!"

"Weally, Cardew, you ass—"

"Dry up, Cardew!" said Levison. "Here comes the Head!"

The stately figure of Dr. Holmes appeared at the foot of the staircase. He picked his way upward, among the fragments of damaged furniture that still cumbered the staircase. The juniors stood silent as he came. Exactly what the Head had to say they did not know; and a few reckless fellows like Cardew hoped, perhaps, that reconciliation was not the order of the day. But Tom Merry and the great majority sincerely hoped that the trouble was at an end.

A dozen candles burned on the landing, and a bike lamp or two. Dr. Holmes stepped on the landing, his face very grave. The juniors waited for him to speak.

"Merry!"

"Yes, sir!" said Tom respectfully.

(Continued on page 17.)

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EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

My Dear Readers,—Life, according to certain folk, is a long series of troubles and trials. Some of the fellows at St. Jim's have been having their trials lately—at the School House Court Martial. A report of these stirring proceedings appear in another page. Law and justice were meted out with firmness and equity and one or two old offenders got it in the neck!

Courts martial are great fun—when they take place at school, or under other amateur conditions. But the real thing is a different matter altogether. As many sad tales are told and as much tragedy is enacted at a court martial as at any civil court. Courts martial are, of course, in reality confined to the Navy and Army, and exist for the trial of offenders in His Majesty's services. The honour of a gallant officer or the future of a sturdy sailor or soldier may hang on the result of a court martial decision. Spies, traitors, and deserters are tried and sentenced at courts martial. The revelations made at some of these trials are as dramatic and sensational as any fiction. Most of the reports of these proceedings, however, are not given to the public. But truth, indeed, is stranger than fiction!

We don't mind broadcasting the stirring happenings at our own school court martial, though! Of course, it was really a big rag, but while writing on the subject it seems to me that the idea, if carried out seriously at schools, would be productive of useful results.

Let's look at it in this way. Kids at school very often commit offences which, although deserving punishment, never get to the ears of the masters or prefects because of the code of honour of every schoolboy that sneaking and tale-bearing is a heinous crime. Thus it is that, although the delinquent's offence is known among his schoolfellows, he very often gets off very lightly with a bumping, or being sent to Coventry, or escapes scot free.

Now, if a court martial, or a committee of responsible heads of the various Forms were held, and the offender hauled up for judgment, he could be tried as he justly deserved and punishment carried out without resort to sneaking to the powers that be. Of course, if his offence were really serious, then it would be the duty of the court martial or committee to make a report in the proper quarter.

We have yet, however, to convince Dr. Holmes of these arguments. Until we do, our courts martial at St. Jim's will continue to be held secretly as of yore, in the Rag, the dormitory, behind the school chapel, or down in the vaults!

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A COURT MARTIAL FIASCO!

By R. A. DIGBY.

The Court is assembling, Percy Mellish is trembling,

His knees a tattoo start to knock!
The judge and jury are in a great fury,
And glare at accused in the dock.

"This chap can't be pardoned, he's thoroughly hardened,
And he's got to be stopped at his tricks!"

Says the wise prosecution, with fine elocution—
Jack Blake of far-famed Study 6.

"He's a spy and a traitor and a thorough low-rater,
Our plans for a rag to disclose
To those rotten barbarians, the Rylcombe Grammarians,
Who balked us, and gave us the hose!"

"Give the blighter C.B.!" shouts out Manners, K.C.

"Hear, hear!" comes an answering shout.

His Worship says "Topping! Instead of a whopping,

He shall scrub the Common-room out!"
They give Mellish, not quarter, but a large pail of water,

A huge chunk of soap and a brush.

"I won't do it!" he bellows. "Yow-ow! Look here, you fellows—"

But they whirl him away with a rush.

To his labours he's taken, protesting and shaken,

And dumped on the Common-room floor.

Then while Mellish is scrubbing and wiping and rubbing,

Gerald Knox dashes in at the door!

Tom Merry & Co. scatter, pail upsets with a clatter,

Knox slips on the soap—down he goes!
He lands in a puddle, he and Mellish both struggle,

The scrubbing-brush thuds on his nose!
Well, Knox gets a soaking, with wrath fairly choking,

And soapsuds all over his dial!
We get lickings galore, and now we deplore

The results of that afternoon's trial!

WHAT I THINK OF COURTS MARTIAL.

Contributed by request by various celebrities and notorieties.

H. Manners: "The plural of 'court martial' sounds awkward. 'Courts martial' is technically right, but who wouldn't rather say, 'court martials'?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy: "I wathah approve of holdin' twials, an' you can always rely on me to assist at any court martial held at the coll, deah boys. As a fellah of tact an' judgment, I considah myself best suited to be judge, and not shoved on the wotten juwy, bai Jove! In fact, I am seriously considerin' becomin' a lawyah in aftah life. Theah's only one drawback to bein' a judge or a bawwistah—a fellah's haiah is bound to get most frightfully wuffed in weavin' a wig!"

Baggy Trimble: "I think that prizoners at kort marshes should be treeted as suns of misfortewn, and not as hardened krimminals. Each prizoner shoold be given a jolly good feed before his kase comes on, to fortyfy him for the ordeel of his triul. Kounsel for the prosekushon ought to let bigons be bigons, and not rake up a prizoner's parst. The poet Shakelfellow sed, 'The kwality of mercy is not staned,' which means that all prizoners shoold be aloud to leave kort without a stane on their karrackers. Also, the poor box shoold be put within eesy reech of the dock, so that grateful prizoners could kontribute." (You mean so that they could help themselves, as you would do, Baggy, you artful young dodger!)—T.M.)

Taggles: "Wot I says is this 'ere—the lor is a hass!" (We've heard this before somewhere)—T.M.)

R. Kildare: "You can always trust me to put a masterly finish to any court martial proceedings—with a cane and my strong right arm!"

Fatty Wynn: "The duties of the jury would be made a great deal more interesting and bearable if an up-to-date buffet were installed in every court of law—in the immediate neighbourhood of the jury, of course!"



The School House Court Martial.

A Breezy Report of Cases tried in the Rag.

By HARRY MANNERS.

LAST Wednesday afternoon, the weather being putrid and the playing fields several inches under water, Mr. Justice Merry, having nothing better to do, summoned a Special School Court Martial in the Rag. Proceedings were timed to commence at 3.30 sharp, but Knox and one or two other prefects, who had got wind that there would be something doing, were on the prowl, and it was 4.23 precisely before the scouts announced that the coast was clear, and the Court assembled, *quid pro quo* and *habeas corpus a la qui vive*, whatever those exprestious mean. Some delay was experienced at the outset by his Honour having mislaid his wig. This was eventually discovered in the hands of the Clerk of the Court Martial (Kerruish) who was using said wig to mop up a puddle of ink he had spilled from his fountain pen. Having mopped up the Court floor with Kerruish, and then ejected him on his neck, his Honour adjusted the wig on his napper and, quite oblivious to the fact that a stream of best blue-black was gently trickling into his left ear, he opened the proceedings.

At this juncture a fellow by name of Roylance asked leave of his Honour to be excused from serving on the jury.

"What cheek!" exclaimed Mr. Justice Merry. "Aren't you aware that failure to appear for jury service entails a minimum penalty of six licks with a cricket stump?"

"Oh, rats!" retorted Roylance. "I'm supposed to be in the Form-room. Railton detained me. Those silly duffers Lowther and Blake yanked me away without giving me a chance to explain. If Railton finds me missing and comes to find me—"

"Ahem!" coughed his Honour. "Quite so! That alters matters! We don't want Railton haring in here, or there'll be a rumpus. You are excused. Hop it!"

Mr. Roylance playfully knocked his Honour's inky wig over his eyes and departed amidst laughter from the Court and loud roars of wrath from Mr. Justice Merry. Order having been restored by the Court Ushers, the first case was brought up.

Old Offender Charged.

Bagley Trimble, a fat youth of slovenly and grubby appearance, described as a vagrant vagabond and a deserter from the ranks of the School House Boy Scout Troop, was hauled, howling and kicking desperately, into the dock by constables Digby and Lennox. When prisoner was at last got into the dock, the crazy stricture almost collapsed under his enormous weight, and it had to be supported on an extra pile of books and a ginger beer crate before it was pronounced to be safe. Mr. Jack Blake, K.C., counsel for the prosecution, then stood up.

"The list is somewhat lengthy, your Honour," he said in commencing. "I would point out that accused is an old lag with a big collection of misdemeanours to his discredit. He is notorious in this neighbourhood as a swindler, fraud, thief, cadger, spy, prize pig—"

His Honour: "Oh, cut the cackle and get to the horses, for goodness sake!"

By the time Mr. Blake, K.C., reached the thirty-ninth item on the charge sheet, the Court began to feel fed up.

His Honour: "Here, half time, Blakey! We're not here for the duration, you know! How many more charges are there against this miserable apology for an Air Force kite balloon?"

Mr. Blake, K.C.: "Three hundred and seventy-seven more, your Worship. Charge Number 40—That prisoner did, by fraudulent

means, and with deliberate dishing and diddling aforethought, obtain, pinch, and purloin a parcel of tuck belonging to the Commissariat Department of the School House War Office, which had been ordered by the O.C.G.S. (Officer Commanding Grub Supplies) from Mrs. Mimble, proprietress of the tuck emporium attached to this famous seat of learning." (Cries of "Cheese it!" "Put a sock in it!" etc.)

"Mrs. Mimble, interviewed by Military Policeman Sidney Clive, stated that the parcel was sent to the O.C.G.S. by a messenger known as Toby. The said Toby, cross-examined by the aforementioned human bloodhound, M.P. Sidney Clive, stated that while he was carrying the parcel along the lower corridor of the School House, prisoner rolled along with a look of great terror on his face and informed him that the school was on fire and that he (Toby) should run for his life. Toby did so, dropping the parcel in his haste to depart. On discovering that there was no fire, Toby returned to find that he couldn't find the parcel."

Mr. Justice Merry: "That's ambiguous, old top!"

Mr. Montague Lowther, K.C.: "Good word that, your Worship! Worth a guinea a box!" (Laughter and cries of "Order!" from the "shers.")

Mr. Lowther, K.C., having been admonished by his Worship to ring off, counsel for the prosecution proceeded:

"As I was saying, your Worship, when some burbling fathead barged in with remarks about my words being too-boguous—" (Renewed laughter.)

His Honour: "I'll punch your silly head, you chortling jabberwock!"

Mr. Blake, K.C.: "Oh, keep your wig on, your Honour! I forgot that you were the silly ass referred to—ahem! As I was saying, Toby couldn't see any trace of the parcel, so he immediately reported the matter to Detective Talbot who, suspecting the accused, went in search of him. He eventually trailed prisoner to the Form-room—he was attracted there, in fact, by hearing loud snores coming from behind the door. Looking in, he discovered prisoner fast asleep at Mr. Lathom's desk and all around him were evidences of a recent slumber. The brown paper found in the waste-paper basket corresponded to the wrapping put round the missing parcel. Detective Talbot clucked Trimble off the chair and arrested him on suspicion. Prisoner has since confessed, having been lammed with his own study poker by myself and Detective Talbot." (Loud laughter and jeers.) "His crime merits at least ninety-nine strokes of the 'cat', and a week's onkum-picking in the quad!"

Prisoner: "Yarooogh! Wow! Lemme go! I never knew the parcel belonged to you! I happened to run across it in the passage. Finders keepers, your honour!"

His Honour: "Rats! That yarn won't wash with me, you fat spoof! Jury, consider your verdict!"

Foreman of the Jury, promptly: "We find the prisoner guilty, me Lord, on all charges."

His Honour: "Do you recommend him to mercy?"

Jury, in chorus: "No jolly fear!"

Mr. Justice Merry then put on the black cap.

"Prisoner at the bar," he said in deep, solemn tones, dexterously dodging an apple core hurled at him by a refractory flag member of the public at the back of the room, "you have been found guilty on all the five thousand nine hundred and umpty-three charges. The sentence shall be a severe one. You shall be hung, drawn, and quartered!"

Prisoner: "Groooogh! Wow! Mercy!"

His Honour: "The hanging shall take place in the very room. Your fat carcase shall be suspended from the middle rafter and the members of the Court will take it in turns to march round and swipe you with cricket stumps!" (Loud shouts of enthusiasm from

Court.) "You shall then be drawn down to the cells—in other words the school coal-hole—and quartered there in solitude till bedtime!" (Cries of "Hear, hear!" and groans from prisoner.)

The warden, held prisoner while ropes were procured, then prisoner, struggling and howling blue murder, was roped securely and suspended on high from the rafter.

His Honour reached out for a cricket stump and he took the first swipe. Mr. Jack Blake, K.C., and other learned counsel followed, then the jury each took a turn at swiping the prisoner, and several members of the public also insisted in having their whack. By the time the chastisement was over, prisoner's moans were quite heart-rending. He was then led down and handed away by the military police and slung into the school coal-cellar, to bemoan his lot in gloom and solitude—not to mention the rats!

Grave Charge Against Flag.

A whimpering youngster whose name on the charge sheet was given as Stanley Gibson of the Third Form, was hooted into the dock.

Military Policeman Dick Julian: "I charge this young sweep with horse-stealing, your Honour!"

Mr. Justice Merry: "Great pip! Horse-stealing!"

M.P. Julian: "Yes, your Honour. I saw him pinch the horse off another kid in Rylcombe Lane, pull its tail out and chop one of its hind legs off with a penknife!"

Prisoner loudly protested that he had received provocation for his crime inasmuch as the owner of the horse clucked a lump of turf at him which hit him (prisoner) in the eye. Moreover, the horse was of the wooden, and not the catsmeat, variety.

His Honour: "That makes no difference. You young rascal! You ought to be charged with cruelty to deaf and dumb animals! You are fined tuppence!"

Prisoner, bursting into tears: "I am penniless, your Honour. All I'm blessed with is a ha'penny and a farthing with a hole in it!"

His Honour: "Hand 'em over! I'll give you a fortnight in which to pay the rest of the fine!"

Prisoner paid up and left the court weeping copiously.

Disorderly Conduct in Quad.

Master Walter D'Arcy, an inky young chump also belonging to the Third, was charged with having been drunk and disorderly in the quadrangle.

Military Policeman Manners, giving evidence, stated that on the night of the 11th inst. he found prisoner in the quad, making a fearful din and trying to imitate the squealing of Mrs. Kebble's cat. On being arrested, prisoner, who was quite unable to walk straight, dotted him severely on the back and then set his dog, a ferocious mouse-bound called Pongo, upon him. He (prisoner) had to huff prisoner on the napper with his thumb and whistle for help.

His Honour: "Most disgraceful conduct, young D'Arcy!—and in one so young! What have you got to say for yourself?"

Prisoner: "I wasn't squilly, you silly dunder! My dog Pongo got loose from the stables and I went after him. I had to chase him round and round the fountain, and after five minutes of it I got dizzy and had to give it up. I started making noises like the Matron's cat so as to attract Pongo—be always goes for that miserable moggy."



The prisoner was roped securely and suspended on high from the rafter. "Now get busy with the stumps!" said his lordship the judge.

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Then Manneq barged up and started a fuss. I admit I couldn't walk straight, and neither would you if you'd been chasing a dog round a fountain for five minutes. I also admit I punched his nose, and I'll do it again if— (Cries of "Order! Order!")

His Honour: "The case is dismissed without costs! But you will be bound over in your own recognisances to keep the peace, young Wally. Now mizzle!"

Prisoner mizzled, but before doing so he kicked away the ginger beer crate supporting the dock and got away safely in the confusion that followed.

Brief Reports.

Several other cases of minor importance then came on.

Herbert Skimpole, described as a raw and rabid Socialist, was charged with using language calculated to give his listeners the ear-ache. When in the dock prisoner requested leave to read the four hundred and seventy-third chapter of Professor Balmyn's Disquisition on the Determination of the Mass, which took two warders to lift it, and the jury then considered their verdict, which only took two ticks or thereabouts.

Foreman of the Jury: "We are all of the same mind, Your Honour—violently insane!" (Loud laughter from all parts of the Court, except from Jury.)

Prisoner was put on probation, pending the arrival of a suitable strait-jacket.

A burly youth, whose huge feet were the envy of all the constables present, and an elegant young dandy were charged together with persistently disturbing the public peace. Their names were given on the charge sheet as George Herries and the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, both of Study No. 6.

Complaints, said prosecuting counsel, had come from all sources concerning Herries' constant playing, which no words could describe. The second prisoner, however, beat the band with his tenor solos. He pleaded that they should be put under immediate restraint, or the whole School House would go balm.

Interruption from Figgins of the New House: "Well, what are they now?" (Cries of "Squash him! Kick him out! Sit on him!" etc.)

Interruption and his gang were ejected after a violent scuffle with the Ushers and respectable (School House) members of the public.

Both prisoners conducted their own defence.

Prisoner Herries: "My cornet playing's all right! It ought to be a pleasure to everyone to listen to it! I can quite understand why you want to give it to Gussy in the neck for his rotten tenor solos—"

Second prisoner, glaring at first ditto through his monocle: "Weally, Herries, I considah my solos far superior to your cornet playin'! When I was a waddler, these burblin' chumps I was singin' 'Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes'—"

His Honour: "You'll take a pair of sparkling black eyes, Gussy, if you don't put the stopper on your tenor solos. We know 'em—and they're worse than a squawky gramophone! The sentence of the Court is that both prisoners shall receive a severe bumpin'!"

Second prisoner, pushing back his cuffs in a wilful manner: "Bai Jove! If any waddler wishes to give me a bumpin', there'll be twouble! I weghad the charge as uttahnly wild, and these proceedings a howlin' farce! Tom Mewry, I considah it my painful duty to give you and these othah boundahs a fearful thwashiin'!"

Whereupon prisoner, backed up by Herries, made a violent rush at his Honour, and bowled him over like a naphtha. The Judge yelled to the others to back him up, and soon the whole Court was scrapping.

In the midst of it, Mr. Lowther, K.C., and a number of other humorously inclined members of the Court, who had been absent during the last few cases, came in with Billy, a violent goat belonging to a local farmer. The goat was to be charged with bliffing over a tent belonging to the School House Scout Troop and knocking a hole in the bottom of the trek cart. The Court, however, was pretty nigh smashed up by the time the goat prisoner arrived, and Billy, entering into the spirit of the thing, broke free from his warders and commenced to butt in his great ivory tusks. The goat charged round the court room had the effect of clear-

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"You're bound over to keep the peace, young Wally!" said his Honour. "Now mizzle!"

ing it quicker than a cyclone. Within the space of three minutes, nothing remained but the smashed dock, judge's bench, etc., and the snorting goat looking round, like Alexander of old, for fresh worlds to conquer.

Then Mr. Linton and Kildare came in to see what was going on, and it was marvellous to see the way they streaked out again with Billy on their track. They ran a Marathon down the stairs and round the quad, the goat still snorting behind, and it took nearly all the Lower School as well as the prefects to round the goat and return him to his owner.

Later a notice appeared on the board, signed by Mr. Justice Merry stating that the Court, having risen, would not sit again until further orders!

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR COMPETITION RESULT.

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

T. JOBBSON.

2, Charlotte Street,
Tidal Basin, E. 16.

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

E. Ashworth, 756, Oldham Rd., Failsforth, Manchester; Edwin Jesty, 2, Douglas St., Birkenhead; C. J. Isherwood, 16, Bank St., Clayton, Manchester.

The ten prizes of 5s. each have been divided among the following twenty-two competitors, whose solutions contained two errors each:

Percy Ashworth, 756, Oldham Rd., Failsforth, Manchester; Mrs. Foster, 44, James St., Doncaster; N. Phillipson, Suggitts Lane, Cleethorpes; R. Buttery, 70, Victoria Avenue, Hull; Leonard Hayes, 4, Little Church St., Coventry; H. Knighton, 46, Wellington Rd., Northampton; W. G. Jeffrey, 14, Park St., Southend-on-Sea; J. A. Calvert, 2, Temperance St., Broadbottom, nr. Manchester; Leslie Varah, 10, Ainsley Road, Crookmoor, Sheffield; John Thomson, 135, Naburn St., Glasgow, S.S.; R. Jones, 35, Cedar St., Bootle, Liverpool; W. Guyatt, 143, Queen's Rd., West Croydon; A. E. Crooks, West St., Banwell, Somerset; A. Butters, 245, Robert's St., Grimsby; C. Kelly, 5, Hands St., Litherland, Liverpool; C. Cook, 38, Seymour Place, London, S.W. 10; Ernest Shooter, 15, Manor Rd., New Village, Asken, nr. Doncaster; Albert Earp, 163, Holland St., Newton, Manchester; H. Broadbent, 8, Crosby St., Stockton-on-Tees; Arnold Harris, 39, Salisbury St., Pelaw-on-Tyne; A. Richardson, 23, Newstead Rd., Lee, S.E. 12; Maurice P. Hales, 45, Artillery St., N. Colchester.

SOLUTION.

Tottenham Hotspur at one period had the reputation of being one of the luckiest football teams in the country. The club enjoys wonderful popularity and is very wealthy. One or two of its star players have cost huge sums. The Spurs have won the English Cup twice

HOW TO RUN A COURT- MARTIAL!

By Monty Lowther.

Always choose the spot for your court martial where you are least likely to be interrupted, because you are bound to make a din, especially when you have hardened characters to deal with, who simulate violent desires to punch the judge's boko.

The best way is to have a couple of marshals patrolling outside the court to keep cave. If a master or a prefect or a policeman comes along and nabs you, you then become a caught marshal. (Rotten pun!—T.M.)

A court martial consists of:

Prisoners: These I've put first, because they are most important. You can't run a court martial without prisoners. These can be found anywhere, but some discretion is required, of course, as to the choice of prisoners. It is an unwise plan, for instance, to drag in the local prizefighter for trial. He might get ratty and smash up the court.

Judge: No high standard of intelligence is required for this job, though if you have the propensity for cracking stale jokes, so much the better. (In this line, then, Monty, you should excel!—T.M.) (Look here, Tom Merry, if I have any more interruptions from you, I shall turn the job in and let you get on with it yourself!—M.L.) To resume:

Clerk: His duty is to sling ink and wake the judge at suitable intervals, or when he snores.

Jury: Twelve chaps form a jury, but you can have as many reserves as you like. A jury decides whether prisoner is guilty or not guilty. In the case of suicides, the proper verdict to be given is "felo de se." This does not mean "fell in the sea."

Usher: This merchant's job is to yell out, "Ush!" whenever there's a noise in court.

Counsel: There are two counsel in a case—one for the prosecution, and the other for the defence. The former has to pile on the agony about accused and get him convicted. The latter tries to get him off, whether he's done the crime or not. Should counsel have a stand-up fight during the proceedings, the judge is expected to act the part of timekeeper.

Dock: The thing the prisoner is shoved into. It can be a Tate sugar-box, or merely a chalked square.

Warders: They have to keep prisoner in dock and see that he doesn't tip over the judge's seat or perform any other such playful tricks. Warders are usually armed with cricket-stumps, pckers, or any instrument conducive to strong argument.

Proceedings are opened by the charge being read over to the prisoner. Then prosecuting counsel has his innings. He usually has a good run—especially if prisoner gets free and chases him. Then defending counsel says a mouthful, and the jury toss up for it. Judge then pronounces the penalty, off-side, free kick, or whatever he thinks fit.

Prisoner can either be found, bowled, kicked, chased, or bailed out.



"THE REBELS' VICTORY!"

(Continued from page 13.)

"Mr. Raitton has acquainted me with what has taken place. It now appears to be established, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that you were innocent of what was laid to your charge."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Your story of what happened that unfortunate night turns out to be perfectly true and correct," said the Head, with some emotion in his voice. "Merry, I can scarcely blame myself for having condemned you, on such overwhelming evidence. But I will say that I am thankful that your school-fellows had such immense faith in you."

"Oh, sir!" said Tom.

"Your innocence is, of course, fully established now," said the Head. "I am afraid you have been greatly wronged, my boy. I am sorry."

There was a pause.

"I'm glad the truth's come out at last, sir," said Tom quietly. "And, in the circumstances, I hope you will forgive us for having taken the law into our own hands."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I can scarcely do otherwise," he said. "The proceedings of yourself and your friends have been very lawless. But I cannot lose sight of the fact that this rebellion has saved me from having committed what proves to be a great injustice. I need hardly say that your sentence of expulsion from the school is now rescinded."

"Thank you, sir."

"You will remain," said the Head, "and I am glad of it. Of the rebellion nothing more will be said, and no punishment will be administered—on condition, of course, that order is restored at once."

"That's all we want, sir!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"To-morrow morning, then," said Dr. Holmes, "you will all disperse to your homes for the remaining days of the vacation. You will return to St. Jim's for the new term, Merry, in the ordinary way. I shall make it a point to forget all that has taken place, and nothing will be remembered against any boy for what he has done during this rebellion."

"Bwavo!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

The Head smiled.

"That is all I have to say!" he added, and he held out his hand to Tom Merry, and shook hands cordially with the hero of St. Jim's.

Then, stately as ever, the Head descended the stairs.

"Three cheers for the Head!" shouted Arthur Augustus. And there was a roar at once, and it rang pleasantly enough in the ears of Dr. Holmes as he quitted the School House.

"Victory all along the jolly old line!" said Ralph Reckness Cardew. "Jolly good—no end rippin', in fact—but there's no more barrin'-out! Sorry for that, but every good thing comes to an end."

"Weally, Cardew—"

Tom Merry's face was very bright. "All's well that ends well!" he said. "We've won, and the Head has taken it like a little man!"

"Hear, hear!"

"He's a good old sort," said Tom, "and though he made a pretty serious mistake, I don't know that I can blame him much, considering how the matter looked at the time. Thank goodness it's turned out as it has. And it's been jolly good fun while it lasted, too—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And now it's all over," said Tom, "I want to thank you fellows for standing by me as you did—like real bricks."

"Hurrah for little us!" said Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But for the barring-out, it's pretty clear that matters would never have come right," said Tom. "You fellows stood up for me, and we've pulled through; and I sha'n't forget it. And now—"

"Now," said Fatty Wynn, "I've got a suggestion to make."

"What's that?" asked Tom, with a smile.

"We're clearing out to-morrow, so we sha'n't want to ration the grub any more," said Fatty, with a beaming face. "I suggest standing a big spread with what's left, as a celebration of the giddy victory."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A victory ought to be celebrated," said Fatty, "and how can you celebrate it better than with a stunning spread?"

"Hear, hear!"

"I wish Kerr and old Figgins were here. But we can tell them about it next term, anyhow—"

"Passed unanimously," said Blake, with a chuckle. "And we'll ask Private Brown and the sergeant and his gang to the spread. We've buried the giddy hatchet now, and they're good sorts!"

"Hear, hear!"

Fatty Wynn's valuable suggestion met with universal approval. All the supplies that remained were pooled for a celebration spread; and Arthur Augustus trotted downstairs to invite Sergeant Stuckey & Co. to join in it. The sergeant and his men were departing on the morrow; their services, fortunately, being no longer required at St. Jim's. They accepted the invitation in the same cheerful spirit in which it was given, and crowded up the stairs, on the most amicable terms with the schoolboy rebels, with whom they had so lately been engaged in conflict.

It was a glorious spread, and there was high good-humour on all sides; even the grim sergeant unbent, and grinned cheerily, forgetful of the bump on his head caused by the violent impact of Liddell and Scott. Mr. Raitton looked in during the feast, and was pressed to stay, and smilingly consented. The hatchet was buried at last, and all, so to speak, was calm and bright.

CHAPTER 11.

All Serene!

ST. JIM'S broke up the next day. It was a very late break-up; only a few days more remained of the vacation.

But every face was bright and cheerful. If there was one exception it was in the case of Mr. Horace Ratcliff. That gentleman was still feeling the effects of his involuntary essay as a fighting-man, and his temper was sore, as well as the rest of him. Possibly Mr. Ratcliff was pleased that the truth had come to light, and that Tom Merry was cleared, and that the trouble had ended with good feeling all round. But if Mr. Ratcliff was pleased he gave no visible sign of his pleasure.

But nobody was bothering his head about Mr. Ratcliff. Ratty was left to grunt over his injuries and his grievances, disregarded and forgotten by the merry crowd of St. Jim's fellows.

Brakes rolled away to the station, crowded with cheery juniors, and the Head saw them off with a smiling face. The end of the barring-out was an immense relief to the Head, though what remained of the vacation was not to be a holiday for him. Very extensive damage had been done in the School House during the rebellion, and the Head was likely to be busy for some time superintending an army of workmen engaged on repairs.

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The juniors cheerily left him to it. The Terrible Three were the most joyous of the joyous crowd that poured into Wayland Junction. Tom Merry's face was very bright, and Manners and Lowther fully shared his cheery satisfaction.

"No end of a game while it lasted," Monty Lowther remarked. "But it's a jolly good thing it's over—in this way! I suppose we shall never spend another Christmas vac in that style."

Tom Merry laughed. "Let's hope not," he answered. "And let's be glad it didn't run on into next term; it would have mucked up the football."

"Jolly good while it lasted," said Monty. "Only one serious drawback."

"What's that?"

"The tenor solo that Gussy sang on Christmas Day. That was a rather painful episode!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Hallo! Is that you, Gussy?" said Monty Lowther affably. "I was just telling these chaps what a ripping solo you sang!"

"Bai Jove, I should not have judged by your remark. Lowthah, that you regarded my tenor solo as wippin'," said the swell of St. Jim's severely.

"My dear chap, it was awfully ripping," assured Monty Lowther. "What surprised me was that it didn't rip the roof off!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus. "Good-bye, you fellows! I am catchin' the next twain. I've got to look for Wally. Good-bye, Tom Mewey, and congratulations, old bean. I trust—" Arthur Augustus' noble countenance became very serious—"I trust that you fellows will play up next term, and wemembah to be vewy respectful to the Head, and old Wailton, and even to howwid old Watty. It is up to us to show that we know how to respect law and ordah, you know, although we have cawried out a rebellion when driven to it."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Pwax beeth my warmin' in mind," said Arthur Augustus kindly. "I felt bound to speak a word in season to you thoughtless young-stabs!"

"Ass!" said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Thanks no end, Gussy!" said Tom Merry gravely.

"Good-bye, deah boys!"

"Hold on a minute, Gussy!" exclaimed Lowther, as the swell of St. Jim's stepped back from the carriage window.

"Yaas, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus turned back from the window.

"What is it, Lowthah?"

"Only this, old fellow!" answered Monty affably, as he tilted Arthur Augustus' beautiful silk topper over the back of his head.

"Oh ewmbs! You uttah wuffian!"

Arthur Augustus rushed to rescue his topper from innumerable feet. The train started with three laughing faces at the carriage window. The last glimpse the Terrible Three had of Arthur Augustus showed that noble youth holding up something that looked like a concertina, but was doubtless what remained of his silk hat.

The new term came, and Tom Merry & Co. gathered once more at St. Jim's, finding the old school newly swept and garnished, as it were, and showing few traces of the slemous doings that had taken place there during the barring-out.

That barring-out was a thing of the past now; but it was not soon forgotten. For a long time the favourite topic in study and common-room was the St. Jim's rebellion and the triumph of Tom Merry & Co.

THE END.

Now that Tom Merry & Co. have ceased to be rebels, you would expect peace and quietness to reign supreme at the old school. When you read next week's exciting story:

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Here is a splendid new competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of Notts County 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 "Notts County" Competition, Gem Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C.4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, February 22nd, 1923.

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

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