

"THE SIEGE OF ST. JIM'S!"

This week's sensational story of Tom Merry & Co.

EVERY WEDNESDAY

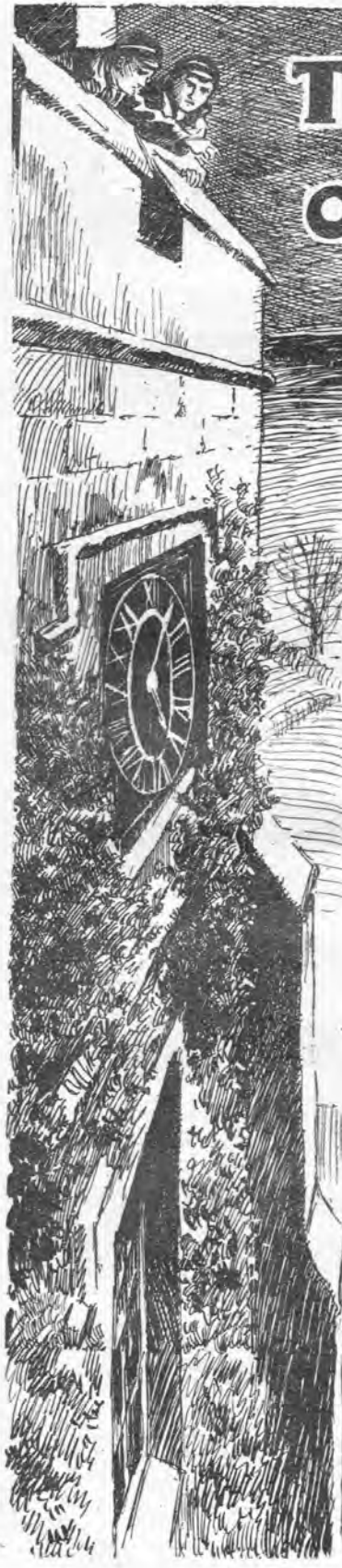
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THE GIANT 'PLANE THAT BROUGHT THE
RUSSIAN INVADERS TO ST. JIM'S!



THE SIEGE OF ST. JIM'S!

A Grand New Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, introducing Prince Rakovsky—the new boy from Russia.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

The Alarm!

"DAWN!"

"Thank goodness!" murmured Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry yawned deeply, and shivered.

The first ray of the wintry sun had just peeped over the distant trees, and the moon was sinking in a grey-streaked sky.

From the top of the old clock-tower at St. Jim's the bleak expanse of the countryside appeared shadowy and deserted.

A chill wind whistled round the ivy-clad tower, penetrating the thick overcoats which the two Shell fellows wore.

It was Tom Merry's second spell of duty, and Lowther, unable to sleep in the chilly attic over the clock, had joined him on the little stone balcony outside. Manners, more fortunate, was still asleep in his blankets.

In the cold light of the dawn the two juniors kept watch unceasingly, but in vain.

It would have been hard to recognise them now as their usual cheery selves. The Terrible Three were on duty, and minor discomforts had to be disregarded.

In the little attic, undisturbed probably for years previously, there was dirt and dust and grime in abundance. Cobwebs spanned the angles of the walls, and rats and mice scurried at intervals across the floor.

Each in his turn the Terrible Three had lain down on the floor, rolled up in blankets, and courted slumber. They had slept but little. The excitement of their position, coupled with the cold and discomfort of their quarters, had not conduced to sleep.

For the position at St. Jim's was unprecedented, unheard of, almost unbelievable!

A few days had seen an upheaval which was unparalleled in the school's history.

First, there had been the arrival of Michael Rakovsky, the prince from Russia. Then there had been the dense fog which had shrouded the whole district for several hours, under cover of which the Bolshevik enemies of the prince had made a landing on Wayland Moor in a giant aeroplane.

Cardew, Levison, and Clive of the Fourth Form, together with the Russian new boy Rakovsky, had fallen into the hands of the Bolsheviks, but, through Cardew's cunning, Rakovsky had escaped.

There had been the severing of the telephone communication between St. Jim's and Wayland, and the consequent isolation of the school.

By a series of utterly daring, though cleverly planned, surprises, the Bolsheviks had cut off St. Jim's from the outside world. They knew—as the St. Jim's juniors now knew, that Rakovsky had concealed the vast treasure of his family in the chapel vaults, that the crown and regalia of the throne of Igor lay within the school—to be precise, in Study No. 2 in the Shell passage.

And it was to gain the treasure of the Rakovskys—together with the person of the prince, who had sought refuge from the Soviet Government in France—that the Russians had surrounded the school.

They had laid their plans well; how well the juniors were now aware. The masters had been trapped in the Head's study and spirited away in the night under an armed guard. The seniors, under Kildare, had encountered

the Bolsheviks only a few hundred yards from the gates of St. Jim's, but they had been overpowered and taken to the Russians' camp in the gully on the moor.

The old school was occupied now by the juniors alone. It was only a question of time before the Russians made their final assault and the fate of the prince was decided.

Possibly the Russians imagined that their task in dealing with a handful of juniors would be fairly simple, though they were careful not to spoil their chances by haste. Celerity was necessary, for they could not hope to remain undiscovered in their hiding-place for more than three or four days at the most; but at the same time, it was essential to prevent any outside help from reaching the school.

It was Tom Merry's opinion that the Russians would not dare to use firearms, and the whole garrison hoped that he was right.

But the enemy were desperate; they would not be likely to hesitate when their quarry was so close at hand.

It was necessary to take all precautions, and Tom Merry had ordered Blake to issue cadet rifles to each fellow, with a supply of blank cartridges. If the enemy wished to avoid noise, that measure might prove efficacious. If it came to firing in grim earnest, the garrison were coolly determined to defend their new school-fellow to the last.

There were guards in the School House, but nobody was more glad to see the sun rise than the captain of the Shell and his chums.

"I half expected to see something of them before this, Monty," said Tom Merry. "I'm jolly glad, though. We can see the boundaries in the daylight—that's something!"

"I imagined I saw them several times when I was watching," said Lowther. "But it was only a shadow. Groo! Even a scrap would warm a fellow up just now!"

"Hallo! Is it the Russians? Wharrer you fellows jawing about?" came Manners' voice sleepily from the attic.

"It's all right, old chap. Take another forty winks. Monty can't sleep, that's all."

"Neither can I," mumbled Manners. "I'm covered in cobwebs and dust, and I believe a mouse was nibbling at my ear when I woke up!"

"Come out and get a breath of air," advised Lowther. "The dawn's breaking."

"We shall have to clean that place out to-day," said Tom Merry decidedly. "Can't sleep among all that dust again."

"I should say not!" grunted Manners, appearing in the doorway leading on to the balcony. "Br-r-r-r! A fellow wants some exercise to get warm!"

"Keep smiling!" grinned Tom Merry. "Worse things happened in the trenches, you know! Where's your tin hat?"

"My what?"

"I brought up three out of our property box," explained Lowther. "Yours is in the guard-room, I expect. Shove it on—you never know your luck if the Bolshies do start to fire!"

"Ass!"

"Oh, shove it on," urged the Shell captain. "Can't do any harm, and Monty's right—this isn't a game."

"Oh, all right. I thought perhaps it was!" said Manners sarcastically.

Owing to his cramped sleeping quarters, Manners' circulation was out of order, and his temper appeared to be out of order, too.

Tom Merry's keen eyes were searching the fields and lanes as the sun rose gradually over the horizon. The long, low rays lit up the scene, spread below the juniors like a map.

"What's that?" ejaculated Lowther.

"Just what I was wondering!" snapped Tom Merry.

He stared hard at the shadow which had caught his and Lowther's gaze—a shadow that moved, and appeared to take on a human shape.

Manners came out of the attic, still looking sour, but he, too, started as he looked over his chums' shoulders.

"They're coming!" breathed Lowther.

"My hat!"

"One, two, three—" counted Tom Merry, every nerve taut.

"There's a whole lot of them," said Manners coolly. "I can see a score or more—creeping under cover of the hedges. It's the Russians, right enough!"

"Get down and tell Blake and the rest, Manners!" rapped

Tom Merry. "Lowther and I will come down and join you as soon as they get close. We don't want them to spot us up here—it would be an easy shot for a marksman!"

"Phew!" murmured Lowther.

"They wouldn't hesitate," said the Shell captain grimly. "We can see all they do from here—and that would draw their fire, if anything would. Cut off now, Manners, old chap."

"Right-ho!"

Manners disappeared within the attic, and his footsteps could be heard descending the spiral stairs at breakneck speed.

Tom Merry and Lowther turned again to the stone parapet, and watched the oncoming enemy with set lips. The Russians were near the school now, and their object was plain. They made directly for the gates, with the evident intention of forcing them open and making a frontal attack.

At that early hour they probably hoped to effect a surprise, and at the same time there was little risk of interruption. The light of the dawn was sufficient to see dimly how the land lay.

"Keep your head down!" whispered Tom Merry, crouching behind the parapet.

"Here they come! Over fifty of the rotters!" murmured Lowther.

"We're not dead yet!" said Tom Merry coolly. "Don't forget that we're inside, under cover—and they're not."

"Time to get into the House," said Lowther. "They'll be at the gates in a shake."

"Get on," said the Shell captain.

He took a last glance at the oncoming Russians, and followed his chum.

The descent of the staircase was a matter of moments, and the juniors darted out of the big door and sprinted for the House. A window was held open for them, and they scrambled in just as the leader of the Russians appeared at the gates.

"Everybody armed, Blake?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yes. What if they don't stop when we start to fire the blanks?"

The junior captain hesitated.

He knew that there was little likelihood of the enemy being dismayed by the "blanks" which the garrison intended to fire. If it came to a hand-to-hand encounter, the rifles would be useful as clubs, but Tom Merry had a feeling that it would be but a forlorn resistance. The Russians had the advantage both in weight and numbers.

There was a good supply of "live" cartridges, such as were used for range practice. But to use them would amount to warfare proper—and the shedding of blood was to be avoided at all costs.

"We must fight with our hands!" said a quiet voice at the Shell captain's side.

It was Rakovsky!

"We'll stick it out to the last man!" said Tom Merry grimly. "Rely on us, old chap!"

"Remember—if it is defeat, do not soil your hands with their lives!" said Rakovsky calmly.

"Look!"

There was a rush to the windows.

Swiftly, silently, the enemy were entering the school. They had tried the gates, and found them immovable. But the wall was fairly easy to scale, and one by one the men were dropping into the quadrangle. The leader, a heavily-built man with a short black beard, glanced triumphantly towards the School House.

"Up with the windows!" shouted Tom Merry. "Are you ready? Fire!"

A shattering roar was the response.

Every junior in the garrison was armed, and it was a volley that greeted the Bolsheviks as they dropped from the wall.

They had been advancing, with the man Varakoff at their head; but they stopped short as the rifles spat.

For a moment Varakoff's face went pale. He had not bargained for anything so desperate as this. But as the smoke cleared off, and none of his followers showed signs of injury, he smiled.

Get Ready to Cheer, Chums, for

NEXT WEDNESDAY

WE CELEBRATE OUR

1,000th ISSUE.

**That'll be something to shout about—
so don't miss next week's number!**

It was a bluff—the juniors would not dare to fire on them. With a gruff shout, the Russians advanced at the double. A few seconds, and they would have reached the windows. But Rakovsky, a glint in his dark eyes, seized a rifle. To load it was the work of a moment. As the man Paul Varakoff came on, Rakovsky's rifle covered him.

Crack!

A howl of pain was the response to that. Varakoff stopped, his hand to his wrist, his face contorted with agony. His followers, for a moment, wavered.

In that moment, every rifle in the garrison was turned upon them—loaded with live cartridges this time. Now that the enemy were still, it was easy enough for those juniors who had practised on the range to take aim.

"Let any man move who dares!" snapped Tom Merry coolly.

Whether all the men understood English or not, they understood the menace of the rifles only too well.

It was cheek—and Varakoff, with his wrist running blood, had no heart to lead them on in the face of bullets. His eyes glittered at Rakovsky as he bound a rag round his wound.

The schoolboy prince returned his gaze coolly.

"Every man will get back—unless he wishes to be shot where he stands!" rapped Tom Merry.

Blake waved his hand, and the Russians understood that well enough. There was a general move to retreat, though Varakoff, his face working, stood his ground.

"My hat! He's our prisoner!" ejaculated Blake exultantly.

"Good wheeze! We'll hold him as a hostage!" grinned Lowther.

"Look!" said Tom Merry.

Varakoff, perhaps anticipating the juniors' thoughts, had drawn a handkerchief from his pocket, and was folding it aloft with his sound hand.

It was the flag of truce.

CHAPTER 2.

The Terms of the Russians!

"KEEP him covered!"

"He wants a parley!" said Blake.

"That's all very well, but he's our prisoner!" ejaculated Lowther.

"Not yet, dear boy!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"The othah wottahs have wevovahs, I believe."

Tom Merry regarded rather grimly the white flag which the man Varakoff held up.

Certainly they could not fire upon a wounded man. If he wanted a parley, he was entitled to it by the laws of warfare. But Tom Merry did not trust the man or his followers. He knew there was little in the way of fair play to be expected from them.

"I wish to speak with your leader!"

Varakoff's tone was cool; only his gleaming eyes showed the rage and disappointment he was feeling.

"Go it, Tommy!" murmured Lowther. "Put it to him straight; the sooner he clears off the better for his skin."

The captain of the Shell appeared in the window, and nodded to the Russian, who lowered the white flag.

"I am in command here," said Tom Merry coolly.

"What have you to say? I warn you, any trickery, and you drop in your tracks!"

Varakoff smiled and bowed ironically.

"I intend no trickery," he answered calmly. "I wish to give you an opportunity of escaping trouble by standing out of our path!"

"We shall resist you to the end," said Tom Merry. "If that is all you want to know, you've got it in a nutshell!"

"Wait till you have heard my terms," suggested Varakoff, with a wave of his hand.

"You rotter! We're the ones to dictate terms, if anybody!" growled Blake.

"Please, please! My terms are simple—merely that you hand into our charge the Prince of Igor, whom we are deputed to take back to Russia—"

"And what would you do when you got him there?" ejaculated Herries.

"His Highness knows best!" answered the Russian, with a shrug. "That does not concern you—you are English boys. I shall not harm you in the least if you consent to this—"

"I'd like to see you hurt me, you hulking rotter!" roared Grundy ferociously.

"The only other stipulation I make is that his Highness shall reveal to us the hiding-place of the treasure of his family. I have reason to believe it is concealed somewhere at this school."

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"Go on believing, then," suggested Blake. "No harm in that!"

The Russian's eyes gleamed, and his sound hand closed on the butt of a revolver that hung in his belt.

"Put your finger on that and I'll blow it off!" remarked Herries coolly, aiming out of the window.

Varakoff's hand came away from his belt rather quickly. He began to realise that he would have to tread carefully.

His smile was as ready as ever when he spoke again.

"We are wasting time. I have stated my terms; they are generous. What is this boy to you? He is a Russian—one of my own countrymen—and you cannot interfere in our affairs. You will not be harmed, any of you. I give you my word on that point."

"And how much is that worth?" inquired Grundy.

Varakoff gulped before replying to that. But he kept his temper with an effort. With success so nearly in his grasp, he could not afford to take risks.

"I demand the surrender of his Highness!" he exclaimed. "You are boys; you will have no chance in case of violence! I advise you to recognise my authority."

Rakovsky's eyes flashed.

"What authority?"

"That of the Soviet Government!"

"A toss for the Soviet Government!" exclaimed Rakovsky. "I am a prince of the blood of Igor. You shall take only my dead body to your masters!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Lowther.

"Leave this to us, Rakovsky," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Look here, you ruffian. We are not submitting—that's straight from the shoulder. And I advise you to keep your paw away from that revolver!"

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Herries.

At that moment George Herries wore quite a blood-thirsty look, reminiscent of his bulldog, Towser. Varakoff kept his "paw" away from the revolver. But his gaze was savage as it turned on the prince.

"So you skulk behind these boys?" he ejaculated scornfully. "You will drag them into your affairs—let them die, probably, in your defence? So. You may expect no mercy from me, my friends. I shall go."

"One moment!" flashed Rakovsky.

His face was crimson under the taunt of the Russian.

"Shut up, old chap!" remarked Manners. "We're dealing with this rotter!"

"I have been insulted!" said Rakovsky, suppressing his anger with difficulty. "I wish to say that I am more than willing to become the prisoner of these men than let any fellow run into danger on my behalf. Let me go, Tom Merry!"

"Not yet, old bean!" said the Shell captain, grinning. "Get away from the window, you ass! They may pot you. You're not going!"

"Think!" said Rakovsky soberly. "You are risking injury for me; it is not right that I should be the cause, perhaps, of deaths among you!"

"Oh dear!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Cheerful, aren't you?" ejaculated Manners.

"It is useless to blind ourselves to facts. Some of you may be hurt if you resist; would it not be better to let me surrender, as Varakoff demands? I am ready."

Outside the window, Varakoff smiled. He had played a cunning card; what might only be gained by fighting and loss of life among his men, might be gained in this way. He had no quarrel with the St. Jim's juniors personally; the treasure and Rakovsky were his sole objects.

There was a short silence among the garrison. But it was soon broken. The seriousness of Rakovsky's words had impressed them, but the threat of danger had quite an opposite effect on the majority.

Grundy took the lead with a roar.

"Who's funky? Who wants to give up Rakovsky to save his own skin? Follow me, and down with the rotters!"

"Britons never shall be slaves!" came from fifty or sixty throats in a devastating roar.

Varakoff's expression of triumph faded as that roar burst upon his ears. He did not need telling that it meant defiance.

And he was well aware that his present position was very precarious. He was covered by a score of rifles, and although he and his comrades were armed, the garrison appeared most likely to get in the first shot. And the Russian had no desire whatever to be the recipient of the first shot.

He edged back from the window.

"Stop!" rapped Tom Merry.

Varakoff halted. He had no alternative.

"We reject your terms!" said the junior captain coolly.

"You were practically our prisoner when you shoved up the flag of truce, but we respect it."

"I will go, then!" said the Russian, in great relief.

"Not so fast!" snapped Tom Merry. "We're letting you



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and the rest go, though I'm not sure that we ought to. But first, you will throw down your weapons here, in a pile!"

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" shouted Varakoff furiously.

"If you don't, you're our prisoner!" chuckled Blake.

"Take your choice!"

"I—I—"

The Russian leader fairly stuttered with chagrin. Deprived of armaments, his force would have no alternative but to fly for safety—their project would have failed. They could not hope to carry an armed fortress, such as the School House had become, by force.

Varakoff calmed himself again. He had made his attempt on this occasion without much care—relying on the fact that he had only a few juniors to deal with. He realised now that the juniors were proving the hardest proposition of all—and that all his cunning would be needed to extract himself from his present position.

He glanced at his men, who were standing at a distance. It was useless to call on them—they, too, were covered.

The Russian bit his lip, and inclined his head to Tom Merry.

"I am your prisoner, then," he answered calmly.

"Well, my hat!"

"Easy as pie!" observed Grundy, with great satisfaction. "Where would you fellows be without me to keep your spirits up?"

"Yank him in at the window!" said Lowther. "You take his ear, Kangy—and you get a grip on his hair, Manners. All together!"

"Look out!" roared Grundy. "The rotters are bunking! Fire, you dummies! Gimme that gun, Wilkins, you idiot!"

"Wha-a-a-at? What the thump—"

"They're hooking it! My hat!"

"Yah! Wooop!"

"Oh, you ass! Yarooooop!"

Bump!

Crash!

For one wild, whirling moment the garrison was thrown

into confusion. At a sign from their leader, the Russians had made a sudden dash for the gates, thus attracting the juniors' attention.

There were two separate and distinct bumps as Varakoff, twisting free, jerked Lowther and Kangaroo off their balance. As the two Shell fellows hung on grimly, they were dragged through the window, to land on the hard quadrangle three feet below!

Crack, crack, crack!

It was perhaps fortunate for the Russian that Grundy of the Shell was not a dead shot with a rifle. In the excitement of the moment, Grundy blazed away recklessly.

"Stop him, the dangerous maniac!" rapped Tom Merry.

"Chuck it, Grundy!" roared Blake.

Wilkins and Gunn made a leap for their study-mate and dragged down his arm.

"What—what—you silly idiot, Wilkins! Couldn't you see I was just going to pick that one off the top of the wall?" boomed Grundy.

"My dear chap, think of the risk!" said Gunn. "You never do hit anything, but you might, you know! Whoooooop!"

Cuthbert Gunn sat down as Grundy's leg-of-mutton fist smote him.

"Wow-wow! Help a chap in!" came from the window. "Wait till I catch that rotter again! I'm all bumps and bruises!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Funny, isn't it?" inquired Lowther sarcastically.

"You grinning idiots!" grunted Kangaroo.

"What did you let the rotter go for?" hooted Grundy indignantly. "Just like you fooling fatheads! I missed him by an inch as he cut for the wall!"

"Well, you hit the wall!" grinned Blake. "That's quite good for you, Grundy!"

"Huh!"

"They're gone," said Tom Merry calmly. "We've repulsed them once, anyhow. But they're sure to come again. I propose to form a council of war to decide on our

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methods of defence. If we can't get help from outside, we may be able to hold the fort till the Russians are either discovered or have to get off. Who wants to be on the committee—don't all speak at once!"

"I do!" squeaked Trimble. "I'll run the whole thing for you, Merry. With my brains and judgment—"

"Talbot!" rapped Tom Merry.

"Pway include me, deah boy!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gracefully. "A fellow of weady tact an' judgment, you know—"

"Blake!"

"I'll take the lead, of course!" remarked Grundy calmly. "You fellows will just have to take your orders from me, and set your minds at rest. Being the only fellow here with any brains—"

"Figgins!" said Tom Merry. "I think that will be enough. Council chamber, Study No. 10. Come on!"

"But, I say, you rotter—"

"Weally, you know—"

"Here! What's this game?" ejaculated Grundy, as the members of the council brushed past him.

"Sit down, Grundy!" smiled Blake sweetly.

He tripped Grundy, and Grundy sat down—hard.

"Yaroooooop!"

The council walked on to Study No. 10.

CHAPTER 3.

An Interrupted Council!

"WE have met—"

"Hear, hear!"

"We have met to decide—"

"Go it!"

Tom Merry glared.

"Well, go it, old man!" said Blake encouragingly. "We're no end keen to hear it!"

"This is a serious meeting!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"Not an occasion for potty jokes, Blake!"

"Oh, keep smiling!" grinned Blake. "Are we down-hearted?"

"No!" responded the council, in complete agreement.

"There's a lot to be thought out," said the Shell captain, breathing a little hard. "We sha'n't get any forrader by ragging!"

"Serious as a judge," assented Blake. "Let's get down to business, then. What is there to discuss?"

"First, our fighting policy," said Tom Merry.

"Not a great deal to be thought about in that!" remarked Figgins. "Stick together to the last man, what?"

"Taken for granted," agreed Tom Merry. "But what plan shall we adopt? At present we're besieged—we daren't move outside the school for fear of being nabbed. If a fellow could get news to the police, the Russians would be cornered."

"Worth trying!" said Figgins thoughtfully. "As it is, we're penned up like a lot of sheep!"

"Wait a minute," said Tom Merry coolly. "That's what we've got to decide. Every hour the risk of somebody discovering that the Russians are here increases—they can't possibly hang on for more than another day or two without getting caught."

"That lets us out, then," said Blake. "We stick it out till they do!"

"It's certainly the safest policy," said Talbot. "But there's always the risk of the Russians breaking through our defences and making off with Rakovsky and the treasure."

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"They've got, at the most, two days to manage it," said Tom Merry. "If we can hold out, the odds are that we shall be relieved by then. It may happen before—or the Russians may break in before, in which case it would be all up with Rakovsky!"

"I'm game to take a chance and try and get through to Wayland, Merry!" said Figgins coolly.

"I'd let you go if I thought there was a ghost of a chance," said Tom Merry. "But, frankly, I don't think there is. The Russians are watching the gates—they've surrounded the school. You'd be spotted getting over the wall, for certain."

"I'll risk that!"

"It goes by the vote," said the junior captain. "It isn't only the risk of capture—the Russians are getting desperate now, and any fellow falling into their hands might—"

"Pay for Varakoff's smashed wrist?" suggested Blake. Tom Merry nodded.

As the juniors looked at the matter, the probability seemed to increase. Varakoff had been hurt and humiliated before his men. It was only too likely that any of the defenders who fell into his hands now would be made to suffer for the rest.

And nobody was willing to sacrifice Figgins in that manner. The chance of his getting through, as Tom Merry had pointed out, was faint. It was manifestly not worth it.

"I'm game!" repeated Figgins obstinately. "There's a chance!"

"Too jolly thin!" remarked Blake.

"Nothing doing, old man," said Tom Merry.

"Unless the garrison is in danger of defeat, we shouldn't be justified," said Talbot quietly.

"Well, don't say a New House man didn't offer!" warned Figgins. "What can you suggest instead, Merry?"

"Only a plan of defence," said the Shell captain. "But I think that ought to fill the bill. Look at the position. The Russians are armed—but so are we. If they open fire, which they won't, owing to the noise—"

"But if they do?" asked Blake.

"We can give as much as we receive!" responded Tom Merry grimly. "If our lives are in danger, we're perfectly justified in returning their fire."

"Agreed," said Blake. "But supposing they don't use firearms? Suppose they make a rush to clamber in at the windows? We can't open fire on them then."

"We held Ratty at bay in a barraging-out a few weeks back!" remarked Figgins.

"These chaps are a bit more dangerous than Monteith & Co.," said Tom Merry. "My suggestion is that we use our rifle-butts for hand-to-hand fighting. Any man who gets into the House will shove up his hands fast enough with a rifle jammed into his ribs!"

"Something in that," assented Blake.

"Then it's settled, what?" asked Figgins.

"Defence—until somebody raises the siege," agreed Tom Merry. "It's bound to happen sooner or later. The Russians must have captured several people by now who would have given the show away. The postman, for instance. Anybody who disappears will be searched for—and the Russians can't keep the whole population of the district under guard on the moor!"

"Ha, ha! No."

"It's a matter of hours," said Tom Merry. "We've got to be ready for a sudden rush, that's all. I think—"

What Tom Merry thought was interrupted.

The door of Study No. 10 opened at that moment, to admit the shock head of Wally D'Arcy, leader of the Third, and younger brother of Arthur Augustus.

There was no chorus of greeting for the lag. Four fingers pointed mutely but expressively at the corridor.

"Hallo, old beans! I just looked in to tell you—"

"Cut!" said Blake.

"Scat!" suggested Figgins.

"Flit!" remarked Tom Merry briefly.

"Polite and hospitable, aren't you?" grinned D'Arcy minor imperturbably. "As I was saying, I just looked in—"

"Well, just look out again, will you?" said Blake, nodding. "We're busy!"

"Discussing plans for war?"

"Go away!" roared Figgins. "If you stop there another couple of seconds, I'll come and hoof you out myself!"

"Oh, all right. Keep your wool on, you New House idiot! Only if you're discussing plans, you might decide what you're going to do with Grundy—"

"Why Grundy?" asked Tom Merry, in surprise.

"Because he's just coming to interview you!" grinned the lag. "Mind your eye!"

"Mind yours!" grunted Figgins, as the door closed on D'Arcy minor.

The Boys'
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"Cheeky idiot, Grundy! Wonder what bee he's got in his silly bonnet now?" asked Blake.

"Blow Grundy! We were discussing plans," reminded the captain of the Shell. "I was just going to say—"

Crash!

The door of Study No. 10 fairly flew open under that terrific kick.

Four pairs of gleaming eyes were turned to greet George Alfred Grundy as he appeared in the doorway.

Grundy met them all unflinchingly. He did not lack nerve. Behind him was a crowd of the Shell and Fourth, with a good sprinkling of the fags. Whatever he had come for, he had brought a good audience with him. Immediately behind their leader stood Wilkins and Gunn. Rakovsky was with them, looking a little annoyed.

Grundy surveyed the council with a cool gaze.

"Well?"

Four voices asked the question in unison.

Grundy folded his arms before speaking.

"I've come!" he remarked portentously.

"Try going, for a change!" suggested Blake.

"I've come to take you fellows down a peg or two!" thundered Grundy. "You appear to regard yourselves as the council of defence—what?"

"We had an idea we were something like it," assented Tom Merry.

"Like your cheek!" commented Grundy. "Just like your rotten nerve, in fact! What about Rakovsky? Hasn't he got a say in the matter?"

"Well, they're his Bolsheviks," admitted Blake. "But you see—"

"I don't see!" roared Grundy. "Or, rather, I do! I see that you intend to collar the reins again—as you always do! And I can jolly well tell you that we're not standing it! The prince has appointed me commander-in-chief of the forces for his defence—"

Rakovsky gave a jump.

His expression showed plainly that this was news to him.

"Oh, you ass, Grundy!"

"Ass yourself!" snapped Grundy coolly. "If Rakovsky hasn't exactly appointed me, we've been discussing it, and I've brought him round to my way of thinking. Haven't I, Rakovsky?"

"You have been talking a lot—but the matter is in the hands of Merry, and the rest, is it not?"

"No, it jolly well isn't!" hooted Grundy vehemently.

"Don't you have a say in your own affairs, you fathead? Oh, leave it to me! You're helpless!"

"I am quite willing to leave the arrangements to Merry," said Rakovsky quietly. "It is better that I should not be present to take part in the discussion—it is hard for me to allow you to run risks in my defence. If you respect my wishes, you will let Merry and the rest decide."

"There you are, Grundy!" chortled Wilkins.

"Now you know, old chap!" murmured Gunn.

"Squashed!" grinned Blake.

For a moment the wind seemed to have been taken out of Grundy's sails. But only for a moment. He had noticed that Rakovsky had appeared reluctant to accompany him to Study No. 10. But Grundy was used to fellows who did not know what was good for them.

He gave Rakovsky a pitying glance.

"I'm sorry for you, old man!" he remarked frankly. "Not knowing any better than to leave your fate in the hands of a set of blockheads like these chaps! It's jolly lucky you've got me to stand by you at a time of crisis—a fellow with vision! Just chuck worrying and, leave me to deal with them—"

"Come off, old man!" whispered Wilkins earnestly.

"You're dead in this act, you know!"

Grundy glared.

"I don't want any interference from silly asses like you, George Wilkins!" he remarked calmly. "This isn't a time to play the fool—every man of us is in danger. Keep your oar out, for goodness' sake! I've got enough to do, dealing with these chaps. Now, Merry!"

"I'm still here!" said the captain of the Shell, his eyes gleaming a little. "I haven't flown through the window!"

"I don't know what you've decided to do," went on Grundy coolly. "Probably you intend to stop in here meekly and hope for the best, what?"

"It's the only course," said Talbot quietly.

"Just as I thought!" ejaculated Grundy triumphantly. "That's all a weak-kneed leader like Merry can think of! Don't think I dislike you personally, Merry—"

"Oh! You don't?" gasped the Shell captain in great relief.

"You can't help being an ass," remarked Grundy tolerantly. "Geniuses are born, not made. But I've got a better plan. The Russians are thinking out their next move now—"

"I wish they had Grundy to lead them!" murmured Blake.

"We'll take them by surprise!" announced Grundy excitedly. "Rush out of gates—pounce on them like tigers—and—there you are!"

"Oh! And—and there you are!" gasped Tom Merry.

"We should be!" agreed Blake.

"In the soup!" added Figgins.

"That's the scheme!" said Grundy enthusiastically. "It couldn't go wrong—while you fellows covered them, I could go through them and bag all their weapons. Then we could march 'em all off to the Wayland police station. Easy as falling off a form!"

"Has it occurred to you that we're only a hundred strong, including the fags, Grundy?" inquired Tom Merry calmly.

"There are nearly a hundred of the Russians all told."

"Rot! It's pluck and dash that you want, Merry! Be a man, you know!"

"Oh! So you think we ought to be up and at the enemy—dash in and wipe up the floor with him?" ejaculated Blake, making a sign to his comrades.

"Exactly, old fellow!"

"You think we ought to make up our minds, and then put our beef into it?"

"Certainly! Haven't I been saying so?"

"I've made up my mind," remarked Blake. "What about you, Merry?"

"The same," agreed the captain of the Shell. "All together—and put your beef into it, as Grundy says!"

The council rose from the table, and made an instantaneous move towards Grundy. In a twinkling the great George Alfred was jerked off his feet and lifted on high.

"Here, I say! Wharrer doing? You fatheads, lemme down! Yaroogh!"

The council let him down—suddenly! And after that, they walked out of the study, using Grundy as a doormat in the process.

Grundy sat up, gasping. His counsels had been rejected—with scorn and contumely! For the second time that morning he had been bumped over. At that moment George Alfred Grundy was almost in sympathy with the Russians!

CHAPTER 4.

The Night Attack!

"YOU fellows feel up to it?"

"Of course, ass!"

"Please yourselves, you know. Kerr and Wynn will go up with me if you like!"

"Bow-wow!"

It was evening; greatly to the surprise of the St. Jim's garrison, the Russians had not made their appearance again that day. A continual watch had been kept, but not a sign or a shadow of the enemy had been seen.

Perhaps the Russians were debating the best means of overcoming the armed garrison without bloodshed; a very serious consideration to them, since they could not know that the juniors did not intend to fire first.

The leader, Paul Varakoff, had a broken wrist to remember them by; and it was probable that his followers were not so keen on advancing as they had been at first.

But, unless the project was to be abandoned, they had to attack; and that they would desist after coming so far was highly unlikely.

The attack had to come; sooner or later, the St. Jim's juniors would be called upon to defend themselves in real earnest.

But the day had passed without incident, and now the stars were shining and the wind moaning. Tom Merry remembered how the enemy had advanced under cover of the dawn, and he could not help reflecting that the danger of attack increased with nightfall.

It was time now for the Terrible Three to repair to the clock tower and resume their vigil—hence Figgins' cheery offer to take over the task.

"I don't envy you fellows!" remarked Blake frankly.

"It must be freezing up there!"

"Oh, no! We open all the windows because it's so close!" said Lowther crushingly.

"Better leave it to the New House men, Merry!" said Figgins persuasively. "What if you went to sleep?"

Tom Merry began to glare.

"Do you think we go to sleep on duty?" he ejaculated. "I jolly well know you chaps would, if we trusted you with the job—"

"You cheeky ass!"

"You silly owl!"

"Look here, Merry—"

"Look here, Figgins."

"Why not show some sense and let me go?" inquired Grundy sulkily. Grundy still nursed the recollection of his bumping.

"Oh, come on if we're going!" grunted Manners. "You can't trust the watch to a New House bounder, Tom. Get a move on!"

"All right!"

"I'll keep one eye open!" remarked Figgins, grinning. "Just in case, you know."

"Rely on us!" said Lowther. "And don't worry your baby head about it! Good-night, everybody!"

"Pleasant dreams!" chuckled Blake.

To the rest of the garrison there appeared to lurk some hidden humour in the idea of the Terrible Three sleeping, rolled in blankets, at the top of the clock tower. At least, the humour was hidden so far as Tom Merry & Co. were concerned.

Kangaroo stood by to close the window after them, the Cornstalk taking first watch in the School House. One by one, the three Shell fellows dropped into the quad, and headed for the tower.

They reached it, and ascended the spiral staircase in single file. They had decided to sweep the little attic out before they slept in it again, but until now that resolution had slipped their memories!

"Ow! What asses we were!" mumbled Manners dismally. "We could have given this place a jolly good spring clean during the daytime!"

"No use crying over spilt milk!" remarked Tom Merry cheerily. "Make the best of it, you know. Dash it all, this is nothing to actual warfare—mud and trenches and goodness knows what else besides! Keep a stiff upper lip, Manners, old chap!"

"I'm stiff all over!" grunted Manners. "And I shall be stiffer after another night in this place. Br-r-r-r!"

Lowther opened the little door leading on to the stone balcony, and a chill blast swept through the attic.

"Frost!" said Lowther.

"Shut the door, you idiot!" roared Manners. "Don't we jolly well know it's freezing, you frabjous owl?"

"Don't get excited, my infant!" chided Lowther, shutting the door, however. "You're not the only chap who's shivering!"

"Toss a coin for first watch—two hours!" said Tom Merry. "Here goes. Call, somebody!"

The juniors called, and Manners lost.

"Hard luck, old man!" grinned Lowther. "I'll lend you my overcoat as well as your own, if you like."

"Fathead!"

Tom Merry and Lowther curled themselves up on the floor as best they could, and Manners, enveloped to the ears in a thick ulster, with a tin hat on his head and a rifle slung over his shoulders, opened the door and began his spell of duty on the balcony.

It was bitterly cold, exposed to the wind, but it had to be gone through. At any moment, when the garrison was least prepared, the enemy might come creeping nigh, and the result might depend on the defenders being warned in sufficient time.

With a blue nose, Manners paced his restricted domain, his eyes sweeping the expanse of countryside which lay beneath.

He could see any movement plainly for a mile or more, and it was impossible for a hundred men to approach the school without being spotted while yet distant.

The moon rose, shedding a bright radiance over the fields and woods. Manners' turn was done at last, and he slipped gratefully into the comparative warmth of the attic. Tom Merry went on duty, and Manners slumbered.

The night wore on, and there was no alarm. Manners did a second spell of duty, relieving Lowther, but he saw nothing.

The early hours dwindled, and it was Lowther's turn again just before the dawn.

"Keep your eyes peeled this time, Monty!" murmured Tom Merry, as he was relieved. "Remember they came about this time yesterday!"

The humorist of the Shell nodded grimly.

There was half an hour yet before sunrise; and in that half-hour the danger that had been anticipated might lurk.

It was with his nerves a-stretch that Lowther paced the balcony round in the dark hour before the dawn.

Throughout the night there had been clear moonlight; but now a dark cloud obscured the face of the moon, and the countryside was shrouded in gloom. Strain his eyes as he would, Lowther was unable to catch more than faint outlines beneath him.

The clouds were gathering now; the moon was obliterated. In that Stygian darkness, a thousand Russians might have approached St. Jim's without the guards being a whit the wiser.

The minutes crept by, and still the moon struggled in vain to shine through the clouds. A faint light penetrated at last, and Lowther peered downwards. A gleam from the

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dark cloud played for a moment on the lane, far below, and the Shell fellow gave a start.

In that moment he had seen—or imagined—a movement. He stared again, but there was nothing.

But the moon broke through slowly now, and there was more light. With a sudden, sharp ejaculation, Lowther knew that he had not been mistaken—that figures were creeping around the school.

He spun round and dived headlong into the little attic.

"Tom! Manners! They're here!"

Tom Merry and Manners rolled out of their blankets, and staggered to their feet, wide awake on the instant.

"The Russians? How far away?" rapped the junior captain.

"Right at the gates!" said Lowther tensely. "I couldn't see a thing at first. Then, when the moon shone again, the rotters were just coming up the lane!"

"Oh, my hat! What rotten luck!" gasped Manners.

"Quick! Warn Blake and Figgins!" snapped Tom Merry coolly. "Manners and I will follow in a tick! Cut!"

Lowther wasted no time in words. He clattered down the narrow stairs at a reckless rate, sprinting across the quad at his very best speed.

He made a dive for the window at which the guard was posted, and was helped in head-first.

"What's up? Are they coming?" gasped Clifton Dane, yanking the Shell fellow to his feet.

"In the lane! They'll be here in a brace of shakes!" gasped Lowther dizzily.

"Ware boarders, you fellows! Wake up! Wake up, you slackers!"

"The enemy!" roared Clifton Dane, using his hands for a megaphone.

"Who—what—the Russians?"

"At the gates! Stand by to fight for your lives!" shouted Lowther grimly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh crikey! I shall be killed!" wailed Trimble, displaying his usual heroism. "Help! I shall be shot!"

"Good thing, too!" roared Grundy, leaping for a rifle.

"If the Russians miss you, I'll do it for them, by Jove!"

"Ow-wow-wow! Help!" bellowed Trimble.

"Rally!" roared Grundy, brandishing his rifle above his head. "Stick to me, and I'll lead you to victory! My hat! There they are!"

There was a rush after Grundy to the windows.

He was right; the enemy, with revolvers in their hands, were dropping over the school wall one after another. Already a score had gathered in the quad.

"Steady! Where's Tom Merry?" shouted Figgins coolly. "He hasn't come in yet!"

"Man the windows—but don't fire till they do!" rapped Blake.

Some of the fellows moved to obey, but a shout from Grundy drew their attention again.

"Look! There's only a score of them at the most! We can smash 'em! Who's game to follow my lead? Let's mop up the quad with the rotters! Up, St. Jim's!"

"By Jove! Let's!"

"Grundy's right!"

"At 'em!"

"Better than staying in here! Go it!"

"Down with the Bolsheviks!" boomed Grundy at the top of his voice. "Follow me! Death or glory, boys!"

"My hat! Into 'em!"

"Smash 'em! Lead on, Grundy!"

There was no mistaking the enthusiasm which Grundy's stirring call produced. The enemy were within the gates—they were threatening the St. Jim's juniors in their own school!

For the moment, even Blake and Figgins, in command, were carried away. Caution was forgotten as the Russians advanced towards the School House.

Grundy made a leap for the big door and dragged it open. The barricade was tumbled down to allow the juniors to pass. With a wild shout, the garrison dashed forth to meet the Russians.

"Up! Up, Saints!" roared Grundy.

"St. Jim's for ever!"

Like a flood tide, the juniors swept across the quad; and the next moment, a desperate battle was in progress.

The Russians did not fire; they relied on superior strength and numbers, now that the garrison had come out into the open. But in the juniors of St. Jim's they found they had no light handful.

Grundy's fighting blood was up, and he was swinging the butt of his rifle with deadly effect. Man after man went reeling down as Grundy smote; and his comrades backed him up gallantly.

Tom Merry, with Manners at his heels, came dashing down from the clock tower, rifles in their hands, as they spotted the affray in the quad. For a moment the Shell

captain had a desperate notion of calling his men off; but he realised with a sinking of heart that it was too late.

"Oh, the idiot! The ass! He's done it now!"

"Looks like it!" said Manners grimly.

"Merry! Call them off—there's just a chance!" gasped Blake, reeling out of the conflict with a fast closing eye. "That fool Grundy was responsible—the fellows went mad—I couldn't hold them! We shall be beaten to the wide!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed with hope.

There was a chance—thin, but worth trying.

He held his hands to his mouth.

"St. Jim's! Back to the House! It's the only chance! Fight them off on the steps!"

For a moment the juniors wavered. But the junior captain's voice warned them that the battle was going against them, and they obeyed to a man. Even Grundy.

In the fierce struggle, two juniors were fighting gallantly in the van, standing their ground in spite of the onslaught. With a sudden rush, the garrison drove the Russians back and made a final stand round Grundy and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Now or never, chaps!" panted Tom Merry dizzily.

"Stick it out!" roared Grundy. "We've got 'em licked, by Jove!"

"Wally wound me, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "St. Jim's for ever!" shouted Monty Lowther gamely.

There was an exclamation from Varakoff, as his men were driven back under that determined rush. The Russian leader, with a wounded wrist, was following a certain illustrious example by leading his men from behind. He gave a shout, as, for a moment, the Russians wavered.

"Tcherkov! Corsov! Are you beaten?"

CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE!

GATED!

I'M really quite a jovial bard,
And not much good at hating;
Yet I could punch the bounder
hard

Who first invented gating!
This form of torture, to my mind,
Is absolutely Hunnish;
I wish the powers that be would find
Some milder way to punish!

For one long week (it seems an age)
I'm doomed to dull detention;
Here at St. Jim's I sit and rage
And wince when others mention
The jolly Wayland picture-show,
And other bright attractions,
Which I, for penance, must forgo:
Thanks to old Ratty's actions!

Tom Merry, Gussy, Blake and Glyn
Have gone to see the panto;
And here am I, still wiring in
At Horace (sixteenth Canto).
The joys of seeing "Mother Goose"
Are not for me to sample;
If for one night they'd let me loose,
I'm sure I'd find it ample!

Cardew and Clive, agog with glee,
Go toddling to the pictures;
For School House chaps escape, you
see,

The tyrant Ratcliff's strictures,
And Kangaroo and Clifton Dane,
Each mounted on his "jigger,"
Go pedalling down the winding lane
With energy and vigour!

I dare not follow them, alack!
For Taggles, trusty menial,
Would jolly quickly bring me back,
In manner far from genial.
It would be madness, you'll agree,
To try and quit the premises;
For it would mean the birch for me—
The stern reward of Nemesis!

And so, through weary hours of time,
With Horace in attendance,
I sit and expiate my crime,
And pine for independence.
It really makes a luckless bard
Feel not the least elated;
It seems to me that "six months"
hard
Is joy to being gated!



with a gash in his forehead, saw the wisdom of the order now.

With the Russians pressing hard, the St. Jim's garrison fought their way backwards up the School House steps.

CHAPTER 5.

The Fall of the Garrison!

"RALLY!"

"Back up, St. Jim's!"

"Keep 'em out!" boomed Grundy.

The battle on the steps was desperate.

It was fortunate for the garrison that the Russians did not attempt to use their revolvers. Even as it was, the casualties were severe.

The juniors wielded their rifle-butts with deadly effect, as more than one member of the enemy, dazed or stunned, could testify. But the weight of numbers told heavily, and slowly the garrison was forced up the steps.

Tom Merry's nose was streaming crimson; Blake was blinking painfully out of a half-closed eye. Kangaroo had a cut lip, and the rest of the defenders were all more or less marked.

"Licked to the wide!" roared Grundy triumphantly. "Follow me! One rush, and we'll put 'em to flight!"

"Into the House—while we've got the chance!" rapped Tom Merry grimly.

"Wats! We've got the wottahs gwoggay!" shouted D'Arcy, his aristocratic face spattered with blood, and his monocle steaming in the wind.

"Up and at 'em!" roared Grundy ferociously.

Tom Merry bit his lip as the Russians dashed to the fray again. For the second time his orders had been disobeyed. He could foresee the end of the resistance plainly enough.

The juniors were too excited to heed him; their blood was up, and with Grundy and D'Arcy at their head, they joined combat again.

"Fight for your lives!" snapped the Shell captain coolly. "It's our last chance!"

Even as he spoke there was a yell from Grundy.

"Take that, you rotter—and that! Up, you fellows—Oh—Yerrugh!"

"Wally, deah men—wally! Wooooop! Ow-wow-wow!"

With Varakoff's scowling face to egg them on, the Russians swept through the ranks of the defenders, skittling them down like ninepins as they advanced.

Grundy's rifle was twisted out of his grasp, and a blow from the butt sent him, stunned, to the ground.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, leaping to his rescue, met a ready fist and rolled among a forest of legs, his jaw feeling as if it had been driven up through his scalp.

Tom Merry, with Blake and Figgins, dashed gallantly into the breach, but they were knocked spinning back into the arms of their comrades.

"Look out! They're through!" roared Figgins.

He was too late. The garrison was wavering now, and in another minute the Russians had broken clean through the ranks. Surrounded, the juniors had no chance. For a few moments Tom Merry and a staunch few maintained the offensive, but they were overwhelmed. A revolver thrust under the Shell captain's chin by the man Tcherkov was the signal for the finish.

"Oh! Oh dear! We're done!" gasped Lowther.

"Beaten to a frazzle!" moaned Figgins dismally.

"Chuck it!" breathed Tom Merry coolly. "All right—you can put your revolver away!"

Paul Varakoff, wearing his arm in a sling, strode up the steps and gave the captain of the Shell a grim glance.

"You are the leader here?"

"Yes."

"Your defiance is at an end now. I can have you shot where you stand!"

"There is a law in England. You are not in Russia, you scoundrel!"

Varakoff laughed. If his plans went well, he did not expect to be in England many hours longer.

"You may threaten me as you choose. That does not alter the fact that I hold your life in my hand now. Do you not fear?"

"You would not dare to risk taking a life—I know that. You are not out of England yet!"

Varakoff hit his lip. The junior was right—the chance of capture grew hourly. The thought brought back to the Russian the need for swift action.

"I have no time to argue. You surrender?"

Tom Merry nodded briefly. There was no choice.

"Excellent! And now—where is the prince? His Highness the Prince of Igor?"

The garrison remained grimly silent as Rakovsky, his handsome face marked by the conflict, walked calmly forward.

The glance he gave Varakoff was cold and aloof; even in the power of his enemies, the prince was still the prince.

The Russian bared his teeth in a mocking smile, and bowed slightly.

"I regret that I have been instructed to take your Highness into custody!"

"By the Government?"

"Yes. You have evaded us for a long time, but we have found you at last. You will accompany us back to Russia—where a reckoning awaits you!"

Rakovsky's eyes flashed, but he did not speak.

"I take it your Highness will not compel us to use force? If you will give your parole that you will not attempt to escape, I need not bind you. Otherwise—"

"I will give nothing!" said Rakovsky coolly.

Varakoff shrugged his shoulders.

"You will be secured, then. But there is another matter—the treasure of your illustrious family. Where is it?"

"The treasure of the Rakovskys belongs to me!" responded the prince. "I would rather that it were never discovered than that it should aid thieves in their work!"

Varakoff flushed, and an ugly look appeared on his heavy features.

"We demand it! Your Highness is not in a position to refuse!"

"I do refuse. Why should you think that I know its hiding-place?"

"You brought it with you when you came to this school," said Varakoff calmly. "It was partly in order to secure your own person, and partly for the sake of the treasure, that I was deputed to embark on this adventure. It is useless to deny that the treasure is here—at this school. It must be—you could not have concealed it elsewhere. Come—speak out!"

Rakovsky set his lips obstinately.

"Good man!" ejaculated Figgins involuntarily.

"Let the rotters search for themselves!" grunted Blake.

There was a murmur of sympathy from the juniors.

Varakoff opened his mouth, but paused. He had forgotten that the garrison might renew hostilities at any moment. He issued a sharp command.

The man Tcherkov took Tom Merry by the shoulder, and motioned to the rest.

"This way! The first boy who offers resistance will regret it! That is a warning!"

"Dash it all! We can't knuckle under like a lot of

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giddy sheep!" muttered Lowther, as he followed his skipper into the quad.

"Must!" said Blake grimly. "What can we do against them?"

"If that howling cad starts bullying Rakovsky, I shall jolly well dot him one—I know that!" murmured Figgins.

"Keep your temper, Figgy, old man!" said Kerr. "We may see a chance—at present submission is the only thing!"

"Line up!" rapped Tcherkov.

Under his direction the garrison was lined up in the quad, some distance from the House.

"Perhaps it would be better to keep them here a little while," said Varakoff thoughtfully. "They can help transport some of the treasure to the aeroplane—eh, Tcherkov? Keep your eyes on them, Corsov, while we search. At the slightest movement, do not hesitate to shoot!"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "Don't move, for goodness' sake, Figgy!"

Figgins grunted.

Varakoff, with a smile on his face, motioned to Tcherkov to bring forward Rakovsky.

"Now to business! I am here after the treasure, your Highness. You will do well to reveal the place of concealment without delay."

"Suppose it is not here at all?" asked the prince calmly.

"What?"

"You are confident that I have concealed it here. Why should you believe this? It is only guesswork!"

Varakoff stared grimly at the prince for some moments. Rakovsky's face revealed nothing—excepting, perhaps, veiled amusement. A merciless light appeared in the Russian's eye.

"So. You refuse to tell me?"

"Nothing can make me reveal the secret!"

"We will see. I promise you lenient treatment if you speak out at once."

"Your word would weigh nothing with those who employ you. You know that as well as I!" smiled Rakovsky.

Varakoff breathed hard.

"Very well. You choose defiance. Tcherkov!"

"I am here!"

"His Highness refuses to speak. Can I trust you to persuade him to a more reasonable view?"

The man Tcherkov smiled.

He drew a knife from his belt and strode towards the prince.

The St. Jim's juniors drew in their breath.

"My hat! We can't—" began Lowther.

"Wathah not! I—"

"A rush at the last minute!" whispered Tom Merry tensely. "Anything would be better than—than—" he broke off.

Tcherkov towered over the schoolboy prince, the long, curved knife in his hand.

"Touch me, and your life will be forfeit when I return to my kingdom!" said Rakovsky quietly.

"When!" sneered Varakoff. "Do not heed his talk, Tcherkov!"

The knife flashed in the early morning sun, and Rakovsky was seized in a grip of iron. The keen blade was stayed only when its point was pricking the throat of the prince.

Rakovsky paled, but remained silent.

"Time for us to move!" breathed Tom Merry. "Get ready!"

"What now, your Highness?" snarled Varakoff, his eyes gleaming.

"My answer is the same!" said Rakovsky, through clenched teeth.

"Think! At a word from me, your life is the penalty for this foolhardiness! I am not to be bandied with!"

"Strike—if you have nerve enough!" retorted the prince coolly.

Tcherkov remained like a statue, his knife still held at the boy prince's throat.

Tom Merry opened his mouth to give the word for a rush, but Varakoff raised his hand.

"I admire your bravery, your Highness!" he said evenly.

"I admit that I am not prepared to dispense with you—yet. Without your valuable aid, I cannot lay my hands on the treasure. You may remove the knife, Tcherkov!"

The Russian released Rakovsky, who swayed a little. Talbot supported him, and his breathing became regular again.

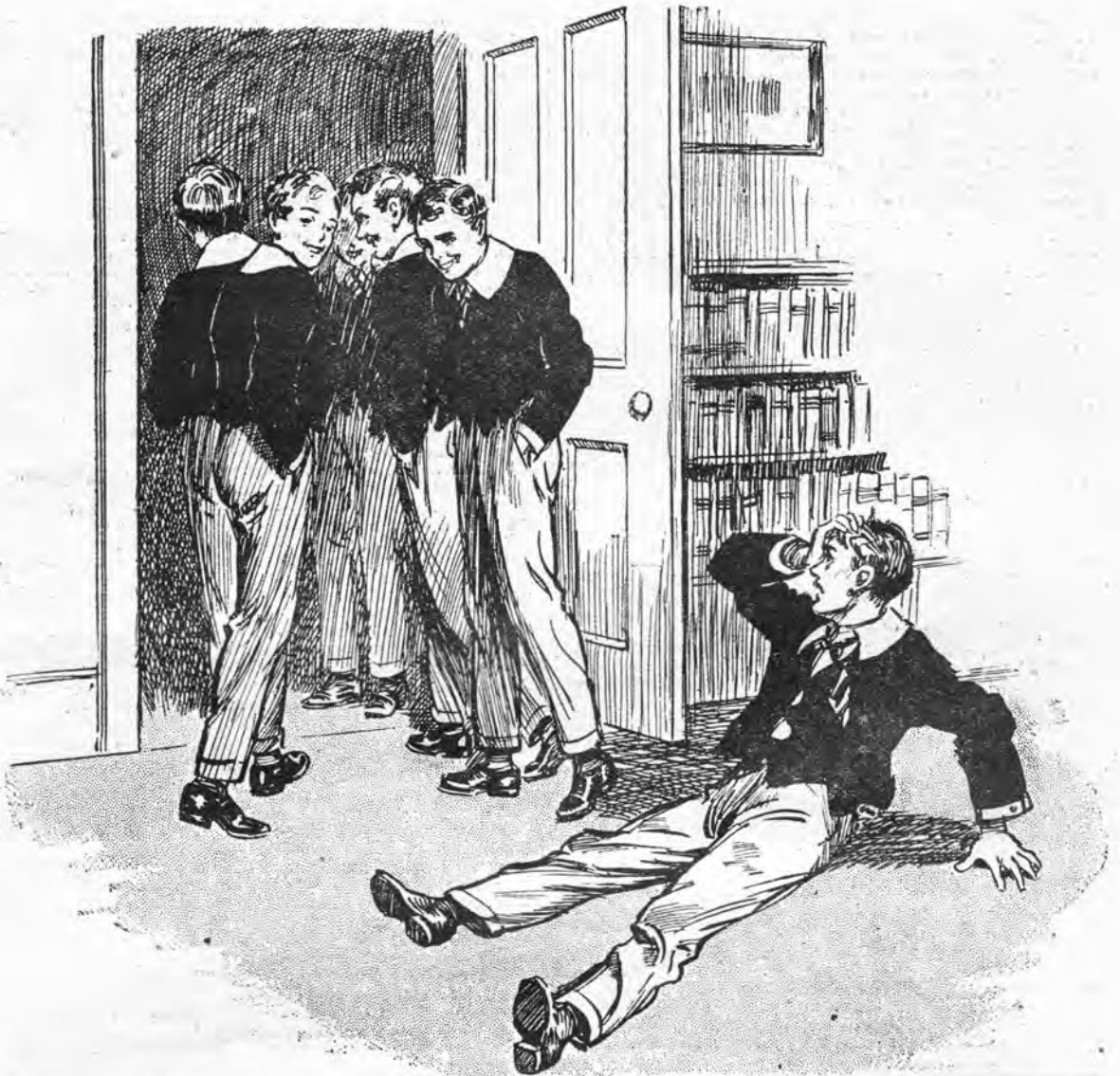
His eyes glittered at Varakoff.

"Well?"

"You wonder what my next move will be?" asked Varakoff calmly. "You shall see. Bring that boy forward. He is the leader."

Two of the Russians made a movement towards the captain of the Shell.

In another moment there would probably have been a



In a twinkling the great George Alfred Grundy was jerked off his feet and lifted on high. "Here, I say! Wharrer you doing?" he raved. "You fatheads, lemme down!" The council let him down—suddenly! And after that they walked out of the study, using Grundy as a door-mat in the process. "Grooooh!" Grundy sat up, gasping. (See Chapter 3.)

sudden rush from the St. Jim's juniors. But there was an interruption.

Both juniors and Russians spun round as a sound came from the School House—an echoing sound that startled and surprised them.

Slam!

It was the closing of the School House door.

CHAPTER 6.

Grundy Does It!

"YOW! Yow-wow-wow!"

Grundy of the Shell sat up feebly.

Stars and comets seemed to whirl vividly before his eyes. He had a dim recollection of having been hit. Grundy was just coming out of it.

His hand, feeling tenderly in his hair, had discovered a huge bump. Hence Grundy's sudden exclamation.

"Ow! Oh dear! What—what— The fellows have gone!"

As Grundy's vision cleared, he glanced round the Hall in considerable surprise. He remembered now—the fight on the School House steps—and the blow which had sent him into oblivion.

What he could not understand was how he came to be lying in the Hall, propped against a wall, when he had fallen on the steps. He did not know that Wilkins and

Gunn had dragged their gallant leader out of the press; still more he did not know that in the confusion he had been entirely overlooked. That solution was not likely to occur to Grundy.

But the fellows were gone—that fact was indisputable.

And Grundy's face took on a serious expression as he realised it.

If the fight had resulted in a victory for St. Jim's, he would not have been left where he was—forgotten. There could only be one explanation. The garrison had suffered defeat.

Grundy's mind cleared, and he staggered to his feet.

"My hat! The silly asses must have let themselves get licked! I wonder where they've gone to?"

For some moments Grundy was glad enough to lean against the wall and think. He was a hefty fellow, but that terrific bump wanted a little getting over. There was a gash in his forehead, too, and he had to bind that up with a handkerchief.

But his strength returned slowly, and with it his determination. Grundy took a glance up and down the Hall. It was quite deserted. A voice from the quad made him start, for it was not the voice of a St. Jim's tellow.

"Gee-whiz! I must jolly well look into this!"

With great caution Grundy approached a window. He peered keenly into the quad, taking care not to be seen himself. He beheld the garrison, drawn up in line, with the Russians mounting guard over them.

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"Phew! All the lot of the idiots—prisoners! My only hat! As soon as ever I take my eyes off them—"

Grundy left the sentence unfinished.

He did not feel that it was his own recklessness which had led Tom Merry & Co. into danger. Far from it. In Grundy's opinion, determined backing would have gained a glorious victory; but it was only natural, after he had fallen, that the rest should go to pieces.

"Weak-kneed dummies! Nice pickle they've landed themselves in now, by Jove! But—but they'll get the Rakovsky treasure if something isn't done quickly! Great Scott!"

Spurred by the remarkable circumstances, Grundy's intellect worked swiftly. He realised that, in whoever the fault was to be found, Rakovsky had fallen into the hands of ruthless enemies—that the resistance of the St. Jim's juniors had failed.

The Bolsheviks wanted the treasure, which Rakovsky had told the garrison was hidden in the chapel vaults. And Grundy remembered with a start that the crown jewels and regalia of Igor were at present in Study No. 2, in the Shell passage.

And Grundy knew well enough that once the treasure was safely in the Russians' hands, the life of the prince would not weigh heavily on their consciences. He had himself hinted as much. And there he was—a prisoner of Varakoff and his men—and Grundy, alone of all the defenders, still in possession of the fort!

"By Jove, you rotters! I'll show you something yet!"

With really remarkable coolness Grundy ran his eye over the ranks of the captives. Varakoff was speaking, and guards surrounded them. Grundy gave a gasp of relief as he assured himself that there had been no serious casualties.

Then he slipped away from the window.

"Where's my giddy rifle? The bounders have pinched it. I expect!"

A glance round the Hall was sufficient to convince the Shell fellow that there were no firearms left behind. But it was immaterial; there was a rifle in his study, where he had been cleaning it.

Keeping out of sight of the windows, Grundy mounted the staircase and headed for the Shell corridor. He threw open the door of Study No. 3 and stared round the study. It presented a perfectly normal appearance, but there was no rifle in view.

Grundy emitted a snort of wrath.

"That idiot Wilkins or else that fool Gunn! One of the prize dolts must have shifted it! Oh, the asses!"

There was no sense in mourning over the absence of the rifle; possibly there was one in one of the other studies. At any rate, it was worth trying. Grundy made for the door.

At the same moment there sounded a faint footstep in the passage. With his hand on the door-knob Grundy paused. The footstep sounded again, faint, but unmistakable. Somebody was creeping with great stealth along the Shell corridor!

At that moment Grundy would have given a considerable amount of his worldly goods for the loan of a gun. But there was no gun to be had, thanks to either Wilkins or Gunn. Grundy set his teeth and took up the poker.

With one swift crack he might hope to disable the enemy; but if there were more than one, which was probable, he would stand a poor chance.

The creeping footsteps ceased just outside the study. There was dead silence. Whoever it was, was waiting for Grundy to come out.

Grundy breathed hard. There was nothing to be gained by postponing the issue. He gripped the study poker, and threw open the door.

A figure leaped in at the doorway, and there was a crash as two pokers collided in mid-air. Two pokers spun out of their owners' hands and crashed on the floor, and two exclamations burst forth simultaneously.

"Skimmy!"

"Grundy!"

"Skimpole, you blithering idiot, what on earth do you think you're up to?"

"My dear Grundy, I took you for a Russian, and—and it was my intention to slay you!"

"You—slay me! That's good!" chuckled Grundy. "Well, you are a silly fathead! I suppose you were reading up Professor Balmcrumpet when the scrap was on—what?"

"I certainly was studying Professor Dropowski on the Bolshevik problem when—"

"Shut up, and come on!" commanded Grundy brusquely.

"Do you know that the fellows have fallen into the hands of the Russians? We're the only fellows left in the House! It's up to us to hold the fort, and I'm looking for a rifle now! Follow me, and don't jaw, old chap!"

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Quickly and methodically Grundy made a round of the Shell studies, but in every case he drew a blank.

"Dear me! We shall be unarmed—" began Skimpole.

"Try the Fourth!" snapped Grundy, leading the way.

Grundy's round of the Fourth Form studies proved more productive. A rifle was discovered in Study No. 6, and Grundy hastened to find one for Skimpole. There was a wild yell as he threw open the door of Study No. 2.

"Yah! Yarooogh! I won't be killed, then! Don't you dare touch me, you beasts! Wow-wow-wow! Wooooooop!"

"What—what is it?" stammered Skimpole.

"Trimble!" snapped Grundy, diving under the table.

If Baggy Trimble had been half slain and left to die, he could hardly have made more noise than he was doing. It was extremely fortunate that his study was not situated near enough for the Russians to hear.

Grundy, without speaking, fastened a finger and thumb on the fat junior's ear and jerked him to his feet.

"Pray be careful, my dear Grundy, or you will injure Trimble's auricular appendage!" ejaculated Skimpole.

"Wooooop! Chuck it! Oh, it's you, Grundy! Wow-wow! I thought it was those rotten Russians, you know! Not—not that I'm afraid of them, of course!"

"Of course not!" agreed Grundy, with heavy sarcasm. "That's why you got out of sight under the table—what? Just because you were thirsting for gore—eh?"

"You—you see—Are they gone, you rotter?"

"Pull yourself together!" snapped Grundy. "Tom Merry & Co. have been taken prisoners! We're left on our lonesome in here! There's a chance of saving Rakovsky's crown jewels if we act quickly! Show what you're made of, Trimble! Be a man!"

"B-b-but we shall all be killed!" wailed Trimble dismally. "I—I don't want to be killed! Oh dear! Why doesn't somebody do something—the Head or somebody?"

"The Head is a prisoner, too, on Wayland Heath!" hooted Grundy, losing patience. "Look here, you fat funk, keep a stiff upper-lip! This isn't a time for squealing! Remember, every time you howl, I give you my boot! That's a promise!"

"Oh dear! Beast!"

"My dear Grundy—"

"This way!" rapped Grundy.

He knew that there was nobody else left in the School House. With the aid of his two henchmen—if either of them was capable of giving aid, which was doubtful—he intended to hold the fort against all comers.

Rakovsky might have fallen into the Russians' hands, but his crown jewels and regalia still reposed safely in his study. Grundy was their guardian, and he did not intend to betray his trust.

From the Hall the Russians in the quad could be seen, and Trimble gave a fresh wail at the sight of them.

"Oh, my hat! There's hundreds—thousands of 'em! It's all up, Grundy, you idiot! Yah! Wooooop!"

True to his promise, Grundy swung his hefty boot, and Trimble rolled on the floor, yelling.

Skimpole, at the window, gave an exclamation.

"Grundy, they are slaying Rakovsky! Shall we dash out and attempt a rescue, my dear Grundy?"

The Shell fellow leaped to Skimpole's side, and stared at the scene which was presented in the quad. In front of the ranks of juniors, Tcherkov could be seen, with Rakovsky in his grasp.

The long knife was flashing, and Varakoff's hand went up.

The prince was released, gasping, and the man Tcherkov moved at a command towards Tom Merry.

"What—what! They will take Tom Merry!" whispered Skimpole, his nerves all a-titter. "We must—we must do something!"

Varakoff was talking now, and his expression was not pleasant.

Grundy did not need telling that something peculiarly unpleasant was in store for the captain of the Shell unless some decisive action could be taken first.

With a thrill of pride, Grundy realised that it was for him to provide the diversion—that he could be instrumental in saving the junior from his fate.

Trimble was mumbling and grumbling, beside himself with fright.

Skimpole could only stare and gasp.

With complete coolness Grundy left the window and strode to the big door of the School House.

So keen had the Russians been on capturing Rakovsky that they had omitted to place a guard in the House, presuming, if they gave the matter a thought at all, that all the garrison had surrendered.

Grundy appeared for a moment in the doorway unnoticed, then he swung the door to.

The big door closed with an echoing crash; in another moment Grundy had dropped the bars in place, rendering it firm against almost any assault.

The attention of the Russians had been gained, but there was not a moment to be wasted.

Grundy's keen, eager face brought a faint glow of enthusiasm into even Trimble's and Skimpole's looks as he turned from the door.

Grundy's next words electrified them.

"Quick! Barriade the lower floor. Forms, beds, furniture—anything! Keep them out!"

CHAPTER 7.

No Surrender!

BAGGY TRIMBLE blinked.

Herbert Skimpole opened his eyes a little wider.

Neither Trimble nor Skimpole was very swift of understanding.

But Grundy was fairly leaping with excitement.

"Quick! Oh, you asses! Get a move on!"

"But—" began Skimpole.

"But—" ejaculated Trimble.

"Quick!" bellowed Grundy.

He wasted no more time in words.

A grasp of iron fell upon Skimpole's collar, and Grundy's other fist took a firm grip on Trimble's hair. Grundy started for the Shell Form-room with a rush. Unless his companions wanted to leave their collar and hair behind respectively, they had to go, too. The three juniors dashed at full-speed into the Form-room.

"Yow-wow! Ow! Leggo!" howled Trimble, wriggling free at last. "You've pulled nearly all my hair out by the roots, you cad! Wow!"

"My dear Grundy—" commenced Skimpole.

"Now then!" snapped Grundy, breathing hard. "Just realise the position! Here we are, in full possession of the School House, with the door shut and barred! The Russians can only get in through the windows. We've got to barricade them at once! Anything will do, so long as it's big and solid! Get it into your fat heads that if we fail we shall probably get short shrift from the enemy! You both saw what they were going to do to Merry!"

"Oh, crumbs!" stuttered Trimble.

"If you've got any backbone at all, you'll chuck howling and act!" snapped Grundy. "Hark! They're shouting already! Help me with this form, one of you!"

For a fraction of a second Trimble and Skimpole allowed Grundy's words to sink in, and then they moved with a celerity which they had not shown ever since their arrival at St. Jim's.

Grundy had raised one end of the heavy form, Trimble and Skimpole took the other, and swung it towards the window.

"They'll smash the glass and try to clamber through!" remarked Grundy, with deadly coolness. "We've got to bung this in their way, and fill up the whole of the ground floor if we can! Then we can retreat to the first floor, where they can't get at us. My hat! They've started already!"

Tinkle, tinkle!

Crash!

"Oh! Oh, dear!" gasped Trimble, breaking out in a perspiration.

"Pray remain calm, my dear Trimble!" murmured Skimpole, with considerable calmness. "We shall gain nothing by panic!"

"Run!" snapped Grundy. "It's our only chance. Once they get in it will be all up!"

The three juniors broke into a trot, bearing the big form as best they could. They dashed headlong into the Hall, just in-time to see a leg thrown over the sill of a broken window, and the face of a Russian appear after it.

Grundy did not hesitate.

In another moment the man would have dropped inside, but that moment was not allowed to elapse.

"Full speed! Aim for his waistcoat!" rapped Grundy.

The juniors had been trotting; now they spurted recklessly. The heavy form gained momentum, and would have thrown them off their balance, but Grundy steered it straight for the window, and drove at it with all his strength as the Russian came clambering in.

There was a terrific bump and a fiendish yell. The Russian flew back through the window-frame as if he had been shot out of a catapult.

"Yah! How do you like that, you rotter!" roared Grundy.

"He must have felt that jolt!" gasped Trimble, looking almost cheerful. He and Skimpole jumped for the window.

But Grundy was there first, and he had snatched up the rifle which he had secured in Blake's study. At the sight of the Russian rolling helplessly in the quad, Grundy burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! He's winded! Look!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Trimble, emboldened by that sudden dispatch of the enemy.

"Corsov! You are hurt?"

The man, Tcherkov, with a crowd of Russians at his back, had left the St. Jim's garrison at the slamming of the School House door. That unexpected event had quite taken the attention of the Russians from the captain of the Shell. The Russians had not seen what befell the man Corsov. They had only observed his sudden exit, and certainly, from his groans, he might have been seriously injured.

But he was only "winded." He rolled over again, and sat up, gulping in breath.

"Yah! Come on—all of you!" roared Grundy. "I'm ready—waiting, in fact!" He glanced round at his henchmen. "Trimble! Skimmy!"

"Wha-a-a-at next?" asked Trimble, rather doubtfully.

"Obey orders! I'll keep these bounders at bay!" said Grundy tersely. "Get hold of all the forms and desks you can lay your hands on—furniture, anything big! Bring it along here, and barricade the ground floor. Once that's done we're safe! Don't stand there staring! Act! Quick!"

"I—I—" stuttered Trimble.

"Reflect, Trimble!" said Skimpole earnestly. "Our lives are in danger! They depend on our efforts!"

"Remember your fat skin will pay forfeit if you don't get a move on!" snapped Grundy. "Go on! Before I jolly well kick you!"

"Ow! Right-ho! Forms, desks, and things! Come on, Skimmy!"

Trimble was the fattest and funkiest fellow in the lower school—that was freely acknowledged. But even Trimble had a grain of determination somewhere in his fat carcass, and the dire danger of the present moment awakened it.

Trimble and Skimpole dashed for the Form-room again, to drag out the forms and desks and pile them in the corridor. Rarely, if ever, had either junior showed such surprising energy.

Grundy, quite cool and collected, remained at the broken window, watching Tcherkov and his men.

Corsov had been raised to his feet now, and was recovering. But he did not exhibit any keen desire to lead a fresh assault, being unaware that there was no battering-ram to deal with now.

The eyes of the Russian leaders glittered at the junior framed in the window. Grundy gave them a cheery nod.

There was a chuckle from several of the St. Jim's garrison, and it was followed by a cheer. Varakoff rapped a command, but he was disregarded. The juniors were watching Grundy's defence with great interest.

"Good old Grundy!"

"Keep the flag flying, old man!"

"Hurrah!"

For one fellow, backed only by two fellows of Trimble's and Skimpole's calibre, to hold the School House in the face of a hundred Russians was ridiculous. But Grundy, with his usual confidence, was attempting it. And so far he had undoubtedly succeeded.

But the Russians were not long in taking measures. The man Tcherkov rapped a command, and a body of the enemy advanced with a rush towards Grundy.

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's all up!"

"We're not jolly well standing here while they hurt him!" ejaculated Wilkins fiercely.

"Rather not, by Jove!" said Gunn loyally.

Crack!

Grundy had disappeared from the window.

But he had not retreated. As the Russians came close, a rifle barrel was levelled over the sill, and Grundy's head appeared for a moment.

A sudden shout of pain from the man Tcherkov indicated that Grundy's shot had not gone astray. The Russians faltered. Tcherkov, his face white with agony, was gripping his arm, from which the blood was flowing.

"Fire!" shouted Varakoff, dashing across furiously. "Shoot the young dog! It is the only way!"

A dozen hands flashed to a dozen holsters, and revolvers twinkled in their owners' grasps. But Grundy's rifle was pointed again, and it spat fire. It was war—war to the death—and Grundy, the duffer of the school, was cool and calm in the emergency. He did not shoot to kill, but he had no compunction in "winging" the enemy.

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

Grundy bobbed below the sill like a flash, escaping the return fire.

But the Russians, massed together, were an easy mark, and each of the Shell fellow's four bullets had found a billet.

The men beat an instinctive retreat from the vicinity of the window. Varakoff's face was convulsed with fury, but

he did not venture close himself. His arm, in its sling, was sufficient reminder of what to expect.

But he snapped orders angrily.

"Go on! You fools! Are you afraid? You may kill him—attack, men! What?"

"He is not firing to kill!" said Tcherkov sullenly. "But if we press again, he may. Is there no other way, Varakoff?"

"And you call yourselves soldiers!" ejaculated Paul Varakoff disdainfully.

"Our instructions were to avoid bloodshed!" said Tcherkov grimly. "We do not want a rope round our necks, in the event of failure. And the men value their lives, if you do not, Paul Varakoff!"

The Russian leader's gaze rested venomously on the empty window which Grundy was guarding. The Shell fellow was wisely keeping out of sight, but he could read the thoughts of the enemy.

Trimble and Skimpole, avoiding the windows as much as possible, were stacking furniture of all kinds in the corridor and in the Hall, working with a will that astonished even themselves.

The sound of firing urged them on to tremendous efforts, and the barricading of the ground floor proceeded apace.

"Put your beef into it, you chaps!" whispered Grundy, with one eye on the quad. "I'm holding 'em off! That man Tcherkov will have to nurse his fin for a few weeks, I'll bet! They've got the wind up, too! Varakoff wants them to attack again, but I think they've had enough."

"Yarooop!" roared Trimble, as a form dropped on his toe. "Oh, you clumsy ass! You blithering fathead, Skimmy!"

"We are making considerable progress, Grundy!" beamed Skimpole, breathing hard. "A few minutes further—"

A roar burst from the quad. It was a rousing cheer from the garrison to Grundy. And it signalled that the attack was at an end.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Cheers for Grundy!"

"Well played, Gwunday!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Silence!" rapped Varakoff, his face set savagely.

There was silence—more or less—among the prisoners. They were still in the enemy's power, and Varakoff was able to wreak his anger on them if he wished. But there was open exultation on Grundy's face.

"Licked!" he ejaculated, with great satisfaction. "Licked to the wide, and I did it! Buck up with that barricade, you fellows, before they pluck up their courage again!"

"Lend a hand, you rotter!" gasped Trimble, crimson with unaccustomed exertion.

"What are they doing to Merry and the rest, Grundy?" asked Skimpole anxiously.

"Nothing at present!" responded Grundy coolly. "I'm only waiting for them to start any hanky panky; I've got a bullet ready for Varakoff's other arm!"

"Oh!"

Herbert Skimpole hardly knew what to make of George Alfred Grundy in this bloodthirsty mood. Grundy had always delighted in a scrap; in an affair of this kind, however desperate, he was in his element.

But the barricade demanded Skimpole's complete attention. It was nearly finished now, the whole of the ground floor accessible from the quad being blockaded with a pile of forms and heavy articles of furniture.

The Form-rooms were empty; the masters' studies had been ransacked; and the senior studies had been raided for tables and chairs. It was fortunately not necessary to call upon the junior studies.

"Ready!" panted Trimble. "Come on down from there, Grundy; we're shoving this form in the way!"

Grundy did not move.

What was happening in the quad demanded all his attention.

He snatched up his rifle.

CHAPTER 8.

Cardew's Message.

"**H**OW much longer here, Ralph?"

"Goodness knows!"

The three chums of Study No. 9 were silent again.

They had talked and talked; but talking did not improve their plight. It seemed days since they had fallen into the hands of the Russians on Wayland Moor, and been thrown into the saloon of the giant aeroplane in which the Bolsheviks had come to England.

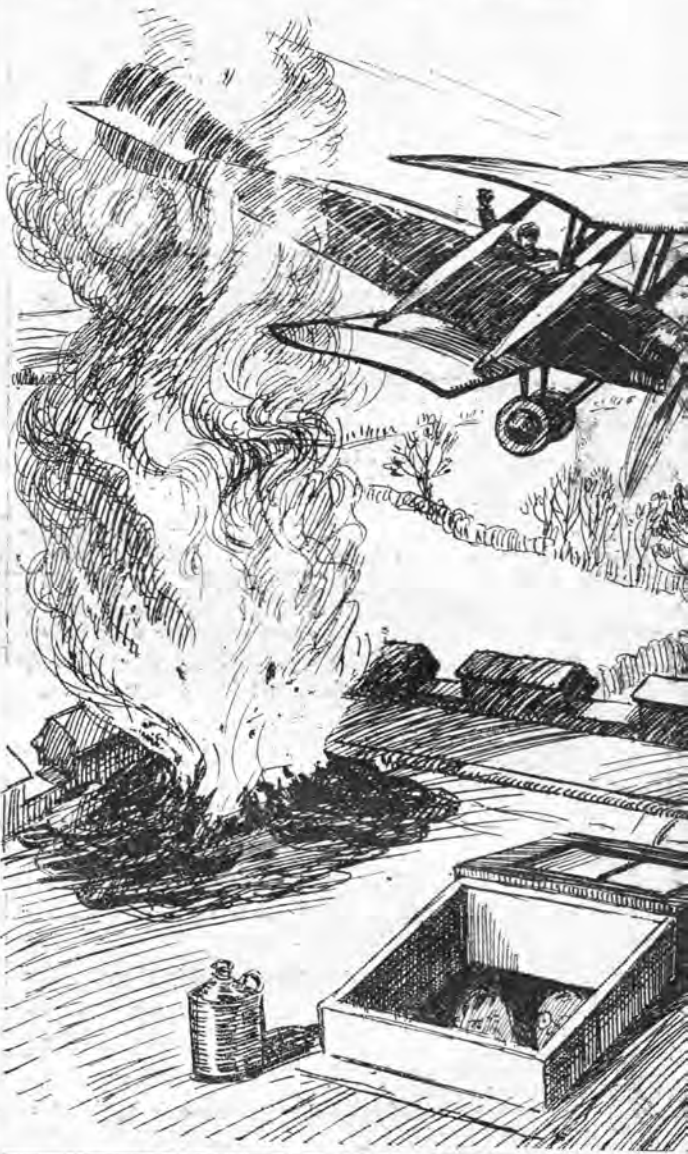
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The first hours of imprisonment had been a period of astonishment, mingled with the hope of rescue. Since then, they had learned the reason for the daring expedition.

Cardew, with cool cunning, had engineered the escape of the prince, Michael Rakovsky, who had been with them. Rakovsky had probably warned the juniors of St. Jim's of the impending danger; but the fact that there had been no release for the prisoners could only point to one thing.

Tom Merry & Co. were holding their own; the Russians would have left as soon as their mission was accomplished. But St. Jim's was evidently in a state of siege, and no message could be got to the police to summon aid.

By the number of prisoners now encamped, either in the long saloon, or in tents erected for them in the gully where



The plane came skimming along only a few feet above the roofs with within shouting distance of Grundy as the machine passed overhead an arm was waved encouragingly. "Rescue!" bawled Grundy at the

the aeroplane was concealed, the chums knew that only Tom Merry and his men stood between the Russians and success.

The masters, together with all the Sixth and Fifth, were in the hands of the Russians. Piggott of the Third, and the chauffeur of Cardew's hired car were among them; as also were several men who had accidentally stumbled on the state of affairs now appertaining. Anybody who discovered that St. Jim's was isolated was brought to the gully and left under guard.

It was a pass which could not continue for more than a very few days, at the outside. There would soon be an organised search-party from Wayland; but the Russians

relied on gaining their ends and taking to the air again in time. The unexpected resistance at St. Jim's was involving them in considerable additional risk.

Time and time again during the three days of his imprisonment Cardew had turned over in his mind schemes to get into communication with the outside world, but in vain.

The Russians had "tapped" the telephone lines between Wayland and the school; every call from the market town was dealt with so as to disarm suspicion.

Cardew's eyes played on the telephone a great deal. It was so near, and yet beyond his grasp. The hands of the captives were tied before them, and there was a guard constantly in the saloon. The man was in his chair now, and there was no chance of tricking him, as Cardew had



h the engine shut off. It was a daring glide, but it brought the pilot ad. At the same moment a figure appeared in the pilot's seat, and he too of his voice. "We're besieged! Rescue!" (See Chapter 10.)

tricked the guard, and allowed Rakovsky to escape. Any move of Cardew's was watched keenly.

"Wouldn't I like to know how they're getting on up at the school?" murmured Levison. "They can't have given in, or the man Varakoff would be back again. This is the second attack, too!"

"Tom Merry is sticking it out!" said Clive. "There must come an end some time!"

"If only a fellow could let somebody know!" mused Cardew. "Easiest thing in the world for the police to swoop down on this gully an' capture the guards. Then, when Varakoff an' his merry men came home, they'd find a pleasant little surprise waitin' for them!"

"They guard the phone night and day!" remarked Levison. "They know what we're thinking of, naturally."

"It's the giddy limit, really!" quipped Cardew, grinning slightly. "There's the jolly ol' Head, campin' on the moor in a tent—"

"He's feeling it, I should imagine," said Clive. "He's not exactly in his first youth, you know."

"Can't even hand out a few floggin's!" grinned Cardew. "An' there's Railton an' Ratty, an' all the rest—all with tempers absolutely white hot, I'm thinkin'—"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"An' Kildare an' Monteith, an' a host of giddy pajandums of the Sixth and Fifth—"

"Well, it won't hurt the Sixth!" grinned Levison. "We always do get too much cheek from the Sixth. But it's like the Bolsheviks' nerve, all the same!"

"An' a mischievous lot of miscellaneous characters from Rylcombe, an' so on!" remarked Cardew. "All wonderin' what on earth it's all about. Finally, our illustrious selves are detained here under the eagle eye of the guard—the dear men regardin' us in the light of dangerous birds, I suppose. Do I look a dangerous bird, Clive?"

"You look bored stiff!" said Clive frankly.

"Well, I am! Oh, gad! There's a regular commotion outside. What's on?"

For a moment the eyes of the captives gleamed with new hope; but it was not a rescue. A messenger had arrived, from St. Jim's, and the few guards who had been left in charge of the camp were clustering round the man to hear the news.

"Gad! If only our man would go outside!" breathed Cardew.

The dandy's eyes were fixed on the guard, lounging in his chair and apparently indifferent to what was occurring outside.

"Dash it all, he's asleep!" murmured Levison. "Can't we wake him somehow?"

"Wake him without showin' that we wanted him to wake!" breathed Cardew coolly. "All together—cough!"

Cardew led off, and in chorus the three juniors coughed. Their coughing would not have sounded realistic had the guard been awake; but it served well enough to bring him out of the doze into which he had fallen.

He sat up suddenly, rubbing his eyes; and Cardew finished with a subdued cough that sounded perfectly natural.

The discussion outside the saloon had become quite heated; evidently the news that the messenger brought had proved exciting. The voices came clearly to the ears of the man at the table.

As the chums of Study No. 9 watched, he stiffened and rose to his feet. Whatever the messenger was saying, it was enough to arouse the guard's deepest interest.

"My hat! He's goin'!" breathed Cardew.

The dandy of the Fourth hardly dared to breathe while the Russian hastened to the door and disappeared, having completely forgotten his prisoners in his excitement.

Outside, in the gully, the guards were plainly visible, discussing the news with plentiful gesticulation. Fortunately, the table on which the telephone stood was in a corner, and out of sight of the windows of the saloon.

As he approached the table there was considerable risk of Cardew being observed; but that could not be helped. There was not a moment to be lost if a phone message was to be sent before the guard returned. And a message successfully dispatched meant freedom.

"Quick!" murmured Clive. "He's just joined the group! All their attention is on the man who came with the news, whatever it is!"

"Do you know which line to connect so as to get Wayland?" asked Levison anxiously.

There was no reply from Cardew.

The dandy of the Fourth rolled off his chair to the floor, and, with his hands bound, he crawled towards the table. Unless the guards had seen him roll off the chair, there was no risk of discovery now. Arrived at the table, Cardew hauled himself up and slid into the chair recently occupied by the Russian.

He glanced at the wires connected with the phone rather dubiously. The man in charge, naturally, knew which to connect, and how the wire was connected at present. Cardew did not.

He eyed the wires with deeper and deeper misgivings.

There was only one course. He must ring up as the connection stood, and trust to getting what he wanted.

"Chance it!" whispered Clive. "You can't do anything else, old man."

Cardew nodded.

He stretched out his hand to ring, but stopped.

B-z-z-z-z-z-z!

The bell was ringing; it was a call from somewhere. Unless the Russians had entered St. Jim's, it must be from Wayland.

"By gad!"

Cardew's eyes lit up with sudden hope.

Bz-z-z-z! Bz-z-z-z-z!

Cardew, with one eye on the saloon door, lifted the receiver.

At any moment the guard might hear the bell and return. If he found the junior in his present position, the consequences might be serious. But Cardew was cool as ice as he put the receiver to his ear.

As soon as he answered, he was put through; and he listened intently as a voice came over the wires.

"Is that St. Jim's? Gordon Gay speaking, from Rylcombe Grammar School."

"Wha-a-at?"

Cardew almost dropped the receiver at the sound of that well-known voice.

"If you are a master, would you mind asking Tom Merry to come to the phone a minute, sir? It's about the football!"

"Well, my hat! What rippin'—absolutely rippin' luck!" breathed Cardew.

"Who is it?" ejaculated Levison, his eyes gleaming. "Tell us, you ass!"

"Gay!" grinned Cardew. "Gay of the Grammar School! Just a sec!"

"Hallo, hallo! Are you still there? Yes, it's Gay speaking!"

"Cardew at this end!" rapped the dandy of the Fourth. "Cardew of St. Jim's—"

"Oh, good! Perhaps you'll take a message for Tom Merry, Cardew, or ask him to come to the phone?"

"Listen, Gay. You won't believe what I'm goin' to say, but it's true. We're prisoners—Clive, Levison, an' myself—"

"Prisoners? Where?"

"The masters an' the seniors are here—on Wayland Moor—with us," said Cardew calmly. "We've been captured by the Russians—"

"The—the what? Is this a jape, you idiot?"

"I'm dead serious, Gay. There's an aeroplane here, an' we are held by a gang of Russians who came over in it last Wednesday, in the fog—"

"My only summer bonnet!"

"The main body of the blighters have gone on to St. Jim's to get Rakovsky, a new fellow. He's a giddy Russian prince, an' these Bolshies are after his family treasure. It's no end of a yarn, I know. But I'm not raggin'—honour bright!"

"Oh, you're not?"

"For goodness' sake don't think it's a joke, Gay! I'm as serious as a judge, I tell you! Get the police an' rescue us as soon as you can!"

"Oh, my hat! But—but—"

"Can I rely on you, Gay?"

"I—I say, it's a bit steep, you know. And I know you're a frightful leg-puller, Cardew. Exactly what's the object of spinning this yarn?"

"It isn't a yarn!" snapped Cardew. "I—"

"Cave!" whispered Levison tensely.

The guard had left the group outside the saloon, and was mounting the steps into the machine.

Cardew lingered for a moment over the phone, but was back in his place again when the saloon door opened.

The guard went to his seat without a glance in Cardew's direction.

The news he had received appeared to have given him plenty of food for thought.

"That was a narrow shave!" breathed Levison, turning to Cardew. "You—you got through?"

"Gay of the Grammar School answered," said Cardew coolly. "But I don't know if he swallowed the yarn or not; it does sound jolly steep, you know. He thought it was a jape at first—"

"What rotten luck!" ejaculated Clive.

"I did my best to convince him," said Cardew grimly. "We shall know in a minute or two; it depends on how he took my suddenly ringin' off!"

"What do you mean, ass?"

"If he thinks it was all part of the joke, he'll ring up again; he wanted to speak to Merry over the footer," said Cardew coolly. "If not—"

"There's hope!" whispered Levison.

The succeeding seconds were like hours to the waiting juniors.

But the phone did not ring again. The guard sank into a doze, and the minutes crept on. Cardew drew a deep breath at last.

He turned an elated face to his chums.

"He's swallowed it, old beans. There's hope now, what?" Clive and Levison nodded agreement.

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CHAPTER 9.

Unearthing the Treasure!

"YOU are ready, Leonev?"

"Yes."

"Very good."

Paul Varakoff turned a mocking glance at Michael Rakovsky, standing cool and defiant in the ranks of the garrison.

The Russian knew that he could not force the knowledge he desired from the lips of the schoolboy prince; Rakovsky would rather have died than betray his secret. But there were other ways; and Varakoff did not doubt his ability to bring Rakovsky to reason by cunning.

"Your Highness refuses to reveal the hiding-place of the Rakovsky treasure? Reflect before you answer!"

The prince set his lips grimly.

"You know my answer!" he flashed.

Varakoff drew his knife, and Rakovsky's face paled. It was not for himself that he feared; he divined the Russian's intention well enough.

The knife-blade glinted evilly in the early sunlight.

With a cruel smile playing about his mouth, Varakoff took a step towards Tom Merry.

Several of the St. Jim's juniors made a movement; they were not likely to leave the Shell captain to his fate.

"You will shoot down the first boy to move, Leonev!"

"Yes."

"We'll risk it," murmured Lowther coolly.

"We're not leaving Tom to that ruffian's tender mercies!" agreed Manners.

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

Varakoff's eyes were fixed upon Rakovsky.

With a sinking of heart, the schoolboy prince realised that Tom Merry's life hung on his hands; that unless he submitted to the demands of the Russians, the gleaming knife would not be withheld. The secret was being forced from his lips.

"Well? You do not see fit to change the decision, your Highness?"

The long knife flashed; it stopped, pricking the skin of Tom Merry's throat.

There was a moment's silence.

Crack!

Juniors and Russians spun round, their eyes on the School House. Grundy had appeared in the window for a second, but he had gone again. Leonev's revolver was smoking.

"You got him?"

Varakoff's face was triumphant.

"No. He moved just too quickly. If he shows himself again—"

"Fool! It was a simple shot. Fool, that you are, Leonev!"

The Russian was silent.

"My hat!" breathed Lowther. "It was a ruse to make Grundy show himself. And—and that boulder Leonev was waiting to pot him the moment his napper bobbed up. What luck for Grundy!"

"Let's hope he's got enough gumption to keep out of sight for a bit, anyhow," murmured Blake. "They won't miss the second time!"

"Bai Jove! Gwunday might have been killed, you know!"

"Thank goodness he wasn't," remarked Digby. "Though we shall be lucky if we all get out of this alive, I'm thinking."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You cheerful idiot!"

The discussion was ended by a command from Varakoff.

"Bring them under the trees. The boy cannot see us there. You will remain, Leonev. If you fail again—"

"I shall not fail!"

"You had better not. Bring them this way, Tcherkov!"

The Russians commenced to shepherd the juniors under the old elms, where they would be out of sight from Grundy's window. The man Leonev, obviously, was to remain on guard, waiting for a chance to "pot" Grundy, as Monty Lowther expressed it.

"Bai Jove! They will catch the poor chap nappin', you know!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm goin' to wisk a shout, Blake. Gwunday! Keep your nappah down!"

"Silence!"

D'Arcy did not heed Tcherkov's command.

An answering hail had come across the quad. And Grundy, having learnt caution, was keeping out of sight.

"They're waitin' to pot you, deah boy! Keep cleah of the window!"

"Good man! Thanks, Gussy!"

"Take that!" snarled Tcherkov.

"That" was a cuff which sent the swell of St. Jim's spinning. D'Arcy rose to his feet with his face set grimly. But he was glad that he had managed to warn Grundy of his danger. Leonev would not take him unawares now.



Grundy made a leap for the big door and dragged it open. The barricade was tumbled down to allow the juniors to pass. With a wild shout, the garrison dashed forth to meet the Russians. "Up! Up, Saints!" "St. Jim's for ever!" Like a flood tide, the juniors swept across the quad; and next moment a desperate battle was in progress. (See Chapter 4.)

The juniors were halted under the elms, and Varakoff beckoned Rakovsky and Tom Merry from their ranks. He motioned grimly to the Shell captain with his knife.

"Your Highness knows my intention," he said smoothly. "If you persist in your refusal, I shall have no alternative but to take this boy's life. I have no wish to take such a drastic measure, if you will be reasonable. Is it not unusual for a Rakovsky to take shelter behind the back of a friend?"

The prince's face crimsoned and his hand clenched. "That taunt is untrue, and you know it. That I, a Rakovsky of Igor, should be forced to treat with a dog of a revolutionary is an indignity, but I have no choice. I will reveal the secret on your promise to spare the persons of these boys from all violence whatsoever. With myself you may do as you choose. I am in your hands."

"Your Highness has had your day," said Varakoff, smiling. "Now it is mine. I give you my word—these boys shall not be harmed. Now, where is the treasure?"

"In the chapel vaults,"

"Where is that?"

"I will show you the way," said Rakovsky coolly.

"Very well. You boys will follow. You will be useful to help move the treasure."

"The hounds!" growled Kangaroo. "They know Rakovsky can't do anything but knuckle under. Oh, if only that idiot Grundy hadn't led the fellows out of the House!"

"And yet Grundy's the man who's holding the giddy fort," remarked Blake, with a wry grin.

"There's no help for it. We've got to obey orders," said Tom Merry quietly. "Perhaps something will crop up. You never know, you know."

The party had reached the school chapel now, and Rakovsky halted at the head of the stone steps leading down into the vaults.

"It is there, Varakoff!"

The Russian nodded, obviously elated at his success.

He did not anticipate much difficulty in getting the treasure to the aeroplane on Wayland Moor. Once there, it would be only a matter of an hour or so ere the giant machine rose into the sky with its double capture—the

Rakovsky fortune and the person of the prince himself.

The fate which was reserved for Rakovsky when he reached Moscow did not worry the Russians.

"Teherkov! Corsov! Tirensky! You will descend and bring up the treasure. You all have torches?"

"Yes."

"His Highness, doubtless, will lead the way?" inquired Varakoff, smiling again. He could well afford to smile now. But Rakovsky's face showed nothing of the anger and mortification which were within. He nodded coolly, and, taking a torch from one of the Russians, began to descend into the vaults.

"Work as quickly as you can!" warned Varakoff. "Time is of value. You will not all be needed; some must remain here with me to guard these boys."

Tom Merry & Co. watched with grim faces while Russian after Russian disappeared down the flight of steps. An ample guard remained to watch them, and there was nothing they could do to aid the schoolboy prince.

It was galling to watch, inactive, while the treasure was brought up under their eyes, but it had to be.

Down in the vaults the work of repacking the treasure into the big trunks in which it had come to St. Jim's did not take long.

In order to carry it to this place of concealment, Rakovsky had been obliged to split it up into small parcels; but two or three of the Russians could manage the big trunks between them.

With surprising speed the famous treasure of the Rakovskys was carried above ground. In the trunks lay an accumulation of gold and precious stones, with necklaces and heaps of jewellery. Varakoff jerked open the first of the trunks to be brought up, and he gave an exclamation as the contents threw back the rays of the morning sun in his face. It was a treasure well worthy of a royal family—the pride of generations of Rakovskys—and it was piled in disorder under the eyes of the Bolshevik emissary.

Other trunks followed the first, till at length the last had been dragged up, and all was ready for transport to the aeroplane.

Michael Rakovsky was the last to leave the vaults, and his expression was set and grim. This was the end—first his fortune, and then his life, in all probability, were to pay forfeit. It was a bitter blow to the prince's hopes, but his manner was cool and contained. His captors were not likely to find him complaining.

"Great Scott!!" breathed Tom Merry, as the Russians, breathing a little hard, opened the trunks and allowed their eyes to play on the contents.

"And these—these rotters are going to pinch all that!" ejaculated Figgins. "Rakovsky, old man—"

"It is worth the daring expedient which the Russians have adopted, is it not?" asked Rakovsky, smiling calmly.

"My hat, yes!" gasped Blake.

"We have wasted enough time, men," said Varakoff, closing one of the trunks. "The sooner we load this in the machine the sooner shall we be beyond reach of English law. Hasten!"

While the Russians raised the trunks, Varakoff turned to the juniors.

"You will accompany us to the aeroplane," he remarked coolly. "When we take off you will have your liberty. I warn you to be careful not to shout for help once we are out of the school grounds. We shall deal summarily with anybody whom we meet, and a sound from any of you will cost the offender his life. We do not intend to be balked on the very brink of success. Bear my warning in mind!"

"That does it!" remarked Manners. "I don't think any fellow is keen on stopping a bullet, what?"

"They've got us set!" said Tom Merry grimly. "We're helpless, or so it seems. But—surely we can think of something in the open lane!"

"Let's wisk a dash for freedom, deah boy!" suggested D'Arcy enthusiastically. "P'robably the wuffians would miss us in the hurwy and scuwwy."

"If a fellow lost his life, the escape of the rest wouldn't make up for it," said Tom Merry quietly. "We mustn't act like fools. But keep your eyes peeled."

"This way!" snapped Varakoff. "Hurry!"

The Russians had shouldered their burdens, and were already moving towards the gates. A detachment waited upon the juniors, and surrounded them, with revolvers in their hands.

"Remember my words!" said Varakoff grimly. "You will have only yourselves to blame if lives are forfeit."

In silence the juniors followed their captors across the quad.

They glanced instinctively towards the window at which Grundy had been seen last. But there was no sign of the Shell fellow now. The man Leonev was watching keenly, with his revolver in his hand; but Grundy did not show up.

Grundy could do nothing to help, and he was wisely not exposing himself to unnecessary risks.

The phalanx moved on, and the men bearing the treasure passed out of the gates and into the lane. Tom Merry & Co., in a gloomy group, followed.

The captain of the Shell glanced back as he passed through the gates.

A faint thrumming had caught his ears.

"My hat!"

He started as he glimpsed Grundy at the window, and Grundy was not looking after the garrison, as might have been expected.

He was staring intently up into the sky.

Tom Merry's eyes followed the direction of Grundy's, and he made out a speck in the blue. It was an aeroplane approaching St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 10. Grundy's Signal!

"THERE goes the treasure!" said Grundy grimly.

"My hat!" ejaculated Trimble. "There must be pounds and pounds—worth!"

"Several hundred thousands, at least, I imagine, my dear Trimble!" said Skimpole.

"Crumbs!"

"If only a fellow could fire!" muttered Grundy savagely. "Only—only—"

"You jolly well keep your head in!" roared Trimble anxiously. "We don't want them firing at us. Might hit anybody—me, for instance!"

"Ring off, you fat funk!" snapped Grundy. "I'm not showing myself; there's that rotter with a revolver waiting for a chance! Besides, I couldn't wing more than one or two before they got me. Poor old Rakovsky, he's looking pretty blue!"

"Although I feel deeply for Rakovsky, I really do not perceive how we can be of aid to him, Grundy," remarked

Skimpole mildly. "We have done our best; but the Russians appear to have gained the upper hand."

"Ass! As if I can't see that!" growled Grundy. "Hold your sheep's jaw, and give us a rest!"

"He, he, he! One for you, Skimmy!" chuckled Trimble.

"Breathe a word, Trimble, and I'll sling you out of this window!" ejaculated Grundy, quite out of patience. "Now, then, which is it to be? Sharp!"

"Nun—not a word, old fellow!" stuttered Trimble.

Grundy, breathing hard, returned to the window to observe the Russians and their prisoners as they left St. Jim's. Under the Shell fellow's very eyes the treasure was being removed, and he was powerless to raise a hand to stay the enemy.

It was no wonder that Grundy was a little short-tempered with his henchmen. Grundy found Wilkins and Gunn trying enough at ordinary times, but Trimble and Skimpole were infinitely worse.

D'Arcy's warning shout, at the expense of being cuffed on his aristocratic ear by the man Tcherkov, had undoubtedly saved Grundy from being hit—perhaps saved his life. Since then Grundy had exercised the greatest care in observing the enemy, and now he kept well back from the window, in deep shadow. Trimble and Skimpole were even farther back.

But the Russians appeared to have forgotten Grundy; and, as a matter of fact, they had. With the treasure in his hands, Varakoff had not given the Shell fellow another thought. He did not know that the regalia of Igor was not included in the trunks—that a rich prize still remained in Study No. 2, in the Shell passage.

It was just as well for Grundy and his henchmen that he did not.

Now the treasure was going, and the Russians with it.

In a very short time they would be beyond capture; and Grundy could see no course open to him. Hence the terrific frown which furrowed his brow.

"Hallo! What's that?" ejaculated Trimble.

"Eh? What's what?"

"That humming noise," said Trimble. "Listen! Can you hear it?"

"I can hear a thrumming sound, my dear Trimble," said Skimpole, after a pause.

"So can I. It's a plane!" said Grundy. "My only hat!" He stopped short. "A plane! An aeroplane! By Jove!"

"What the thump—" began Trimble. "He's gone mad, Skimmy!"

"My dear Grundy, pray calm yourself—"

"What thumping good luck!" gasped Grundy, his frown vanishing as if by magic.

"Mad as a hatter!" commented Trimble.

"You—you asses!" roared Grundy, finding his voice suddenly. "An aeroplane coming over St. Jim's! If we can attract attention—"

"Oh, my hat! I see!" ejaculated Trimble.

"Time you did!" said Grundy tartly. "We must make a signal—something to bring the pilot down. Why, we can have the police—the military, even—here in a brace of shakes! Out of the way, you footling idiots! Quick!"

"B-but what—" began Skimpole.

He gave an exclamation as Grundy, tremendously excited, shoved past him. Trimble, his eyes gleaming, had already seen what Grundy intended to do.

"Follow me, both of you!" rapped Grundy, without turning his head. "There isn't a second to waste. The plane is a mere speck at present, but it'll be here in a jiffy! Get a move on!"

"This way, Skimmy!" gasped Trimble, dragging the genius of the Shell after him.

Grundy was taking the dormitory stairs three at a time, and Trimble and Skimpole followed him up breathlessly. When they burst into the Shell dormitory Grundy was dragging a stepladder out of a cupboard, and setting it up in the middle of the dormitory.

Having set up his stepladder, he mounted swiftly to the top, and reached up to the ceiling of the dormitory. There was a skylight above his head, and he jerked at the fastening. It was obvious that it had not been opened for years, but a vigorous jerk from the Shell fellow shifted it at last. The skylight opened directly on to the leads.

"Buck up," snapped Grundy, turning a grim glance on both his henchmen, "and put a jerk into it! Gather all the rubbish you can—anything that'll burn—and a can or two of oil! Bring it here in two minutes' time—we haven't got much longer! Move, you lazy slackers!"

"All—right, Grundy!" gasped Trimble. "Yah! Keep off! I'm moving, ain't I?"

Trimble scuttled out of the dormitory as Grundy made a dash for him, but, as it happened, there were other and more important reasons for Grundy's exit from the dormitory. He headed at full speed for the kitchen, where there would most probably be oil available. The kitchen staff had gone with the Russians, along with Dame Taggles

and the gate-porter, but Grundy had no difficulty in finding what he wanted.

A couple of cans of oil were sufficient—and the Shell fellow dashed back to the dormitory laden with them.

Skimpole was just piling the bedclothes on the floor, ready to be handed up to Grundy on the roof. Skimpole had seen Grundy's idea now—to make a bonfire on the roof, in the hope that the aeroplane, in passing, would see it and take it for a signal of distress. Whether the pilot would spot the bonfire depended on its size, and Grundy intended to make it big enough.

Hence the big pile of bedclothes. Burning them was a reckless proceeding, but it was not a time for half measures. If action was to be taken, it had to be taken at once.

"Good man, Skimmy! Oh, my hat! What's that you've got, Trimble?"

Baggy Trimble, aroused for once to action, came staggering in at the door, laden to overflowing with garments—garments of all kinds and descriptions. Prominent among the huge armful which he bore was a hurried selection of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's most elegant "clobber." What Gussy would have said had he beheld such a state of affairs did not worry Grundy or Trimble; the aeroplane was throbbing closer every second now, and Skimpole called from the window that it was plainly visible—a small biplane.

"Heading this way?" asked Grundy coolly.

"Yes, my dear fellow. It will pass directly over the school if it maintains its present course."

"Oh, great!"

"Hand me up those clothes—bedclothes first!" rapped Grundy calmly. "Wait till I'm on the roof!"

Trimble stood ready with an armful of "fuel," while Grundy mounted to the top of the ladder and gripped the edges of the skylight. He gripped them firmly enough this time, and swung himself up. A quick scramble, and he was on the roof.

His face, red but elated, peered down at Trimble from above.

"The plane's coming up hand over fist!" he ejaculated. "Quick! Gimme the bedclothes, and then a can of oil! Quick, you dummy!"

Trimble moved with really creditable swiftness to obey Grundy's injunctions. With a huge bunch of sheets and blankets, and a can of oil in the other hand, he mounted the stepladder.

Grundy stretched his hand down for the sheets, and dragged them up. Then he took the oil, and scrambled to his feet.

"Good man! Get some more! Quick!"

"Right-ho!"

While Trimble grabbed up another armful of sheets Grundy took a swift glance at the oncoming aeroplane, humming and thrumming musically in the clear sky.

It was heading straight for St. Jim's, and in a few moments was certain to pass right over the school. Grundy had much to do in those few moments.

He tossed the bundle of clothing on the flat roof, and sluiced the oil over it with a lavish hand. Then he struck a match, threw it into the bundle, and jumped back.

There was a sudden roar, and a sheet of flame leaped up on the roof of the dormitory. Flame and smoke swept up to the sky as Grundy watched. The aeroplane thrummed nearer, and Grundy fixed his eyes on it intently.

"Here you are! Pile it on!"

It was Trimble, with a fresh supply of fuel. Grundy sprang to the skylight and hurled the additional fuel on to his bonfire. A spurt of oil from another can which Trimble handed up sent the flames leaping up again.

"My hat! He can't help seeing that!" muttered Grundy, as the flame and smoke sailed up—the latter in a high column, since there was hardly a breath of wind.

"How's it going, Grundy?" howled Trimble from below.

"Is he stopping?"

"Pray enlighten us, Grundy!" called Skimpole excitedly.

"He's circling!" yelled Grundy, leaping into the air with satisfaction.

For a moment he had been in doubt; the machine was flying low, but it had held to its course. Now it was circling, and planing lower—there could be no doubt. The pilot had seen the signal.

"Coming down?" yelled Trimble from below. "Is he? My hat, I can see him! See him, Skimmy?"

"Hi, hi! Ahoy!" roared Grundy, waving his arms and leaping up and down. "Ahoy, pilot!"

It was extremely unlikely that the pilot heard Grundy's shouts, in spite of the tremendous volume of his voice. But he evidently understood that something was wrong, for he was circling lower and lower.

He came skimming along only a few feet above the roofs now, with his engine shut off. It was a daring glide, but it brought the pilot within shouting distance of Grundy as the machine passed overhead.

Grundy drew his breath for an extra special yell as the plane swooped down. At the same moment a figure appeared in the pilot's seat, and an arm was waved encouragingly.

"Rescue!" bawled Grundy at the top of his voice. "We're besieged! Rescue!"

He ducked instinctively as the machine flashed over his head, but for a second he had glimpsed the pilot and recognised him. The man had shouted back, but Grundy lost his words in the rush of wind.

"Conway!"

"What?" asked Trimble excitedly.

"Lord Conway—Gussy's brother!" roared Grundy, in great glee. "He's spotted us! Look! There he goes!"

"We can't see, you ass!" howled Trimble.

"Over Rylcombe Lane!" shouted Grundy. "My hat! He'll spot the Bolsheviks, and then he'll bring up the police! Hurrah!"

"We shall be rescued, then!" ejaculated Trimble anxiously. "Oh, good! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

And as Skimpole joined in the cheering of the beleaguered garrison, Lord Conway's plane thrummed and roared away into the blue at full stretch. There was hope at last!

CHAPTER 11.

The Grammarians to the Rescue!

"CARDEW! Cardew, you ass! Are you still there?"

There was no answering voice.

"Well, my hat!"

Gordon Gay put down the receiver. The expression on his face was peculiar.

Morning lessons were not long over at the Grammar School, and Gay had rung up St. Jim's from the prefects' room to speak to Tom Merry about the football. The Grammarians were due to play a match at St. Jim's that afternoon, but that remarkable conversation with Cardew had driven all thoughts of football out of Gordon Gay's mind.

He knew that Cardew was a noted leg-puller; and, on the face of it, he appeared to be engaged in a bigger and more fantastic jape than usual.

But there had been something in the voice of the dandy that had rung true. Yet how could his statements be true?

(Continued on next page.)

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THE SIEGE OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from previous page.)

Prisoners on the moor—Russians! It was too much to swallow. Yet Cardew had given his word that he was speaking the truth—and, in spite of his faults, Gay knew Cardew to be a man of his word.

It was remarkable—inexplicable!

For a few moments Gordon Gay paused, phone in hand, undecided whether to ring up again or not. But he hesitated. If—though the possibility was remote—Cardew's information was to be relied upon, a further call would warn the Russians. Cardew's hasty ringing off was sufficient indication that he had been interrupted at the instrument.

"My sainted hat! If it should be really true—"

Gordon Gay broke off.

Cardew had given his word; there must be some foundation for his appeal for help. Whether the state of affairs which Cardew had outlined appertained or not, the dandy was obviously in need of aid—and Gordon Gay was not the fellow to ignore such an appeal.

He turned from the telephone with his resolve taken.

Mont Blanc was waiting in the passage as the Grammarian leader emerged from the prefects' room.

"All serene, old top?"

"No," said Gordon Gay coolly.

"Don't say it's postponed!" ejaculated Mont Blanc. "We're in great form just now."

"I didn't speak to Merry," explained Gay calmly. "The call was taken by that chap Cardew. You remember him—"

"Cynical sort of card," agreed Mont Blanc. "What did he have to say?"

"I can't make head nor tail of it," admitted the Grammarian leader frankly. "But he gave me his word that he wasn't rotting. Listen to this!"

Mont Blanc lent his ears with deep interest while Gordon Gay repeated all he could recollect of his conversation on the phone with Cardew.

At the end of the recital the French junior's expression was as peculiar as Gay's.

"But—but it's impossible!" he ejaculated.

"It's the thousandth chance," agreed Gay. "But we've got Cardew's word for it that there's something afoot. I think we ought to investigate. There's a crowd of fellows coming over to St. Jim's with us to see the match. They can come to Wayland Moor instead!"

Mont Blanc nodded.

"It's up to us," he assented. "If they really want a rescue—"

"They've come to the right shop!" grinned Gordon Gay. "There's Wootton and Monk! This way, you fellows! There's news!"

"Match off?" asked Frank Monk, looking disappointed.

"I'm afraid so," responded Gay. "Lend your ears while I pour out a giddy tale. And then let me know what you think of it."

The Grammarians lent their ears, and Gordon Gay recounted his story afresh. There was surprise and astonishment among the juniors, but their opinion was unanimous.

"Investigate!" said Wootton at once.

"Can't ignore the message," agreed Frank Monk.

"If it's a jape, after all, we'll skin Cardew!" remarked Mont Blanc. "But I don't think it is, for one."

"Right! Call the fellows, then," said Gordon Gay coolly. "We'll start at once."

It was not a difficult matter to enlist the services of a number of fellows in the search. The startling story spread quickly, and found belief on some sides, doubt on others.

But all agreed that it should be looked into, and when Gordon Gay led his men out of the gates, there were quite thirty, all eager to solve the mystery of Cardew's telephone-call.

Delamere, the captain of the Sixth, called to them as they left.

"Hallo! What new game are you young imps up to now?"

"No game at all," answered Gordon Gay, grinning. "Ask no questions, and you'll be told no fairy-stories!"

"If it's a rag with the St. Jim's kids—"

"It isn't, old bean. Don't worry!" remarked Gay, waving his hand in farewell.

The Grammarians passed out of gates before Delamere could make up his mind to inquire further.

"Which part of the moor did Cardew mention?" asked Carboy. "It's pretty extensive, you know."

"The aeroplane is concealed in a gully," said Gay. "As it's a big plane, I imagine it's a rather deep gully. There's only two or three deep enough for the purpose, as far as I know."

"Try the Punchbowl first, then," suggested Wootton minor. "It's the nearest."

Gordon Gay nodded, and the Grammarians set out at a swinging pace for the moor.

It was a clear, sunlit afternoon, and the juniors could see a good distance ahead, but there was no sign of an aeroplane as they approached the Punchbowl.

"This is where we draw a blank," observed Carboy.

"Looks like it," agreed Wootton major.

Gordon Gay held up a warning hand.

"Go steadily!" he whispered. "If this is the place, of course there'd be nothing on view till we reach the brink. Keep mum, everybody!"

Gay advanced a few more yards, and then dropped on his hands and knees. The rest followed suit. Possibly there was nothing whatever concealed in the Punchbowl, and, if so, their caution went for nothing. But if there was, too much caution could not be used.

Gordon Gay was a yard or two ahead of his followers, and as he approached the brink of the gully he waved them back.

At this point the ground, after rising a little, fell away in a steep slope to the bottom of the gully. The edge was overgrown with ferns and grasses, and the Grammarian made good use of these as cover.

He reached the brink, and peered over.

Then he drew in his breath.

At one glance his doubts were dissolved.

Here was the aeroplane—a huge machine, capable of lifting many thousands of pounds' weight without effort. There were six engines and three tiers of wings. The big saloon was capable of accommodating well over a hundred passengers.

Near the plane were erected several tents for the benefit of the numerous prisoners the Russians were holding.

Cardew's account was true—every word of it. Gordon Gay thought rapidly.

"Can you see anything, Gay?"

The Grammarian leader slid back down the slope as that whisper came from behind. In a tense undertone he explained what lay beyond the brink of the rise.

"It's time to act while we've got the chance!" he whispered keenly. "There are only a few guards—half a dozen at the most. We can rush them in a few seconds. Only—"

"Lead on, then!" responded Wootton major coolly.

"Only they're armed!" said Gordon Gay quietly. "We shall have to risk getting hurt! Any fellow who doesn't feel like going on had better get out of range before we rush."

"Speak for yourself!" remarked Carboy. "I'm game!"

"Same here!"

"And here, Gay!"

"No funks present?" said Wootton major, grinning.

"Good! Waiting for you to give the word, old bean!"

Gordon Gay nodded quietly.

"Creep up behind me," he whispered coolly. "When I give the word, make a dash for it!"

There was a general assent among the Grammarians.

Exerting all their scoutcraft, they crept to the brink of the gully, taking all the cover that the grasses offered.

There were not more than half a dozen of the Russians left on guard, as Gay had said. And they were standing together in a group, apparently deep in discussion.

Now was the opportunity.

"Get ready!" whispered Gordon Gay. "Up!"

At that command, the Grammarians broke from the crest of the slope like a wave.

They were half-way down when the guards spun round, paralysed for a moment with amazement.

That moment's pause served Gordon Gay & Co. in good stead.

They covered the remaining distance at breakneck speed, and came up with the Russians just as they levelled their revolvers.

Crack, crack!

Two shots sped, but there was no time for more.

They were aimed almost point-blank at Gordon Gay. But the Australian junior ducked like lightning, and the bullets sailed harmlessly over his head. The next moment he tackled the Russian below the knees, the man went to the ground with a crash and a savage exclamation.

"Roll him over!" panted Gay.

The Russian was fighting furiously, and his clenched fist caught Gordon Gay's nose, whereat there was a spurt of crimson. But Wootton minor and Frank Monk and two or three other fellows piled energetically on the man, and, in spite of his ferocity, he was overwhelmed.

"Ow! Ah! By dose!" ejaculated Gordon Gay, dabbing at his injured organ. "Sit on him!"

"We are!" grinned Monk. "And the rest of the bounders are getting it in the neck, too! Good old Tadpole!"

The Tadpole, the freak of the Grammar School, was

fighting as fiercely as the rest, and he was in at the overthrow of the last of the guards.

The six men were spreadeagled on the ground, with the victors seated on top of them. By that gallant rush the camp of the Russians had been surprised! Gordon Gay's face, in spite of his streaming nasal organ, was jubilant.

"Our win!" he ejaculated grimly. "My hat! What's the commotion in the saloon?"

"Come on!" rapped Carboy.

Several of the Grammarians followed Gordon Gay and Carboy up the ladder that led to the saloon. Gay threw open the door, and stopped short.

But it was only for a second. A wild and whirling combat was in progress on the floor. Three juniors, with their hands bound, were struggling with a bearded Russian, who appeared to be choking.

"Pile in!" snapped Gay.

The fight terminated suddenly on the intervention of Gordon Gay and Carboy and several others. The Russian was dragged off the bound juniors, and Cardew, Clive, and Levison staggered, gasping, to their feet.

"By gad! You've come, then!" gasped Cardew. "Good men!"

"Just in time to save you from being massacred, too!" grinned Gay.

"This fellow was going to shoot from the window," explained Clive. "But Cardew jumped on him from behind."

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Gordon Gay. "Some of us would have been potted if you hadn't had the nerve to jump on the rotter, Cardew. I think we're quits, what?"

"Just as you like, old bean," assented Cardew. "I expect this state of affairs takes you somewhat by storm? We've been havin' high old jinks just lately!"

"Cut out the jaw, Cardew!" interrupted Levison brusquely. "If Gay and his men are willing, we'll make a dash for St. Jim's, and see how things are going with Tom Merry & Co. The Russians are besieging the school—"

"Great Scott!"

"Ernest is right!" remarked Cardew. "There's just a chance of us bein' able to relieve the garrison if we fly like the wind!"

"Coming in a second!" said Gordon Gay coolly. He turned to his followers.

"Tell the fellows, Carboy, and release the rest of the prisoners. Bind the guards, and leave 'em. We shall want every man at St. Jim's!"

"Right, O king!"

Carboy slipped out of the saloon, and Gay and the chums of Study No. 9 followed.

There was no lack of enthusiasm among the Grammarians when the Sixth and Fifth, together with the masters, were released.

"When you're ready, Kildare!"

"Lead on, Macduff!"

Kildare, with the seniors, in the van, moved off. The juniors of both schools followed. And after them, looking shaken by their experience, but otherwise none the worse, came the masters, including the august Head.

CHAPTER 12.

Turning the Tables!

"HOW about sendin' a scout ahead, Gay?"

It was Cardew's suggestion, as the juniors marched out of the gully. Gordon Gay nodded at once.

"Good wheeze! We will. Might walk straight into the blighter's arms, otherwise. There's no need to mention it to Kildare. Franky—"

"I'm your man!" answered Frank Monk immediately.

"I was thinkin' of myself!" said Cardew urbanely.

"Well, both of you go," said Gordon Gay. "That solves it!"

"Good enough," agreed Monk. "Come on, Cardew!"

"An' if we spot anythin' goin' on, we'll slip back an' give you warnin'," remarked Cardew. "Go carefully till you hear from us how the land lies."

"Rely on us," said Gordon Gay.

"Off we go, then!" said Cardew. "May as well trot, what?"

Frank Monk assented, and the two juniors set off at a brisk pace for St. Jim's. The footpath across the moor brought them into Rylcombe Lane after some minutes, and from that point it was necessary to exercise extreme caution.

The Russians were known to be besieging St. Jim's; at any moment they might be met with, and the relief force was relying on the scouts to bring them information.

"Get behind the hedge," suggested Cardew. "We can see into the lane without bein' seen then."

"I suppose the giddy Russians will be crowding round the gates?" asked Frank Monk.

"Unless they've captured the citadel!" answered Cardew coolly. "In that case, we're up against a pretty tough proposition!"

"Go easy. I thought I heard voices!" warned Monk.

Cardew listened keenly.

The Grammarian had not been mistaken.

And there were a good many voices—conversing in a tongue which Cardew had learned during the past few days to recognise. The Russians—or a detachment of them, at least—were approaching in the lane. Cardew chuckled softly.

"Crouch down!" he whispered. "They won't spot us here. They're either retirin' with losses, or takin' prisoners back to their base. We shall know in a minute, an' we can buzz back an' report to Gay."

"Quiet! Here they come!" murmured Monk.

As the scouts crouched in dead silence behind the thick hedge, there was a tramping in the lane, and the head of a long phalanx came into view.

A faint exclamation left Cardew's lips as his eyes fell upon the man Varakoff in the van—and Cardew's eyes gleamed as he noted that the Russian leader wore his right arm in a sling.

"By gad! There's another wounded—and another! There's been some pretty desperate scraffin' at the school!"

The tones were faint, but they reached Frank Monk's ears.

He nodded grimly, his eyes fixed on the Russians.

The van was past now, and Cardew gave a gasp as he spotted the prisoners—disarmed and surrounded by guards. Cardew's surmise was right—there had been desperate fighting, and the garrison had fallen. And now Tom Merry & Co. were marching in the midst of the enemy—their resistance at an end.

Cardew's teeth came together with a click as his gaze lighted on Rakovsky, under a special guard. The prince's features were quiet and composed, but the dandy of the Fourth did not need telling the bitter disappointment and chagrin which they masked.

"What—what are they carrying?" breathed Monk.

"By gad! The treasure!" ejaculated Cardew. "The hounds are clearin' right out—in an hour or two they mean to be quit of England for good! And Rakovsky was to go with them—poor kid! Thank heaven we've spotted them in time! This way, Monk! An' put your best foot foremost!"

"Rather!"

The juniors had seen enough; St. Jim's had been carried, and the Russians were making away with their spoil. It was probable that they would mete out short shrift to anybody whom they chanced to encounter in the lane.

Gordon Gay and his men and the St. Jim's seniors were some distance behind, and by cutting across a field, Cardew and Monk saved a long twist in the lane. They were ahead of the Russians now—and a few minutes would bring them to the main force.

The two juniors' legs flew over the ground, and a little farther along they broke into the lane again. A sudden turn brought them in sight of their comrades.

"Hallo! Here they come!"

"Full pelt, too! What's happened?"

"The enemy are on the war-path, my infants!" grinned Gordon Gay.

Cardew and Monk came up with a rush, and were obliged to pause to regain their breath.

"They're comin'!" gasped Cardew, gulping hard. "An' they've got Tom Merry & Co.—prisoners, every man jack of 'em!"

"What?" ejaculated Kildare.

"My only sainted aunt!" gasped Gay. "Then they've captured this Russian johnny—Rakovsky, isn't it?"

"An' they've got the giddy treasure, too!" snapped Cardew, his composure returning fast. "This is the last chance of stoppin' them—if they beat us, they'll get away in their plane before we can put the police or the military on their track!"

"Then they won't beat us!" said Gordon Gay, his jaw setting grimly.

"Not if we know it!" agreed Jack Wootton.

"Not while we've got a leg left to stand on!" added Carboy.

"Hear, hear!"

"Shut up a minute, an' give a fellow his head!" suggested Cardew. Amid the general excitement, Ralph Reckness Cardew was as cool as an iceberg. "Listen! Our best plan would be to line the hedges at a convenient point, an' as they pass, wade in for all we're worth. Every man fight his hardest, an' Tom Merry an' his men will join in. At close quarters the Russians won't be able to use their guns—an' we shall outnumber them easily. It's the only chance. What do you say, Gay?"

"Cardew's hit the nail on the head," admitted Kildare

"Come on—there's a narrow spot barely fifty yards from here. Time's limited!"

"Good man!" said Cardew. "Come on, Clivey—this is where we turn the tables, Ernest, old bean!"

"I hope so," agreed Levison coolly.

"Don't be a dismal jimmy, old chap. Fight an' win—that's the caper!"

"We've got a chance," said Levison calmly. "There will be a good many hard knocks taken, but we may win through. As it's for Rakovsky's sake, we've got to!"

"That's the spirit!" grinned Clive.

"Line up here!" rapped Kildare. "Half of you this side—you'll lead the other side, Darrell. Buck up!"

The chums of Study No. 9, followed by the Grammarians, plunged through the hedge on one side of the lane. Kildare and the rest lined the other side.

At this point, the lane was not more than a few yards wide, and any force caught between two fires, as the Russians were destined to be, was at a severe disadvantage. And the juniors would need all the advantage they could gain over their adversaries.

"Only a few secs to wait!" breathed Cardew. "I believe I can hear their fairy footsteps now."

"So can I," said Levison quietly. "We're all ready, I think."

A hand waved over the hedge showed that Kildare and his men were prepared, and in dead silence the two parties awaited the Russians.

The sound of their approach was plain, and the van swung round the turn in the lane.

Cardew held his breath.

On the success of the next move depended the fate of Michael Rakovsky. If the attack failed, he was doomed. But his friends were grimly determined at the moment of action.

Varakoff, his eyes searching the road ahead of him, came nearer and nearer. The enemy had no inkling that they were walking into a trap. They strode between the ambushes, and a shout from Kildare was the signal for action.

"Up, men!"

"Smash 'em!"

"Butt them in their waistcoats!" urged Cardew coolly.

The surprise was sudden, although not complete.

For a few seconds the enemy faltered under that sudden attack, and much damage was done ere a terrific shout from Varakoff pulled them together.

"More of the young dogs! Do not deal gently with them!"

His injunction ended in a gasp, as Cardew, following his own advice, butted the Russian leader with all his force in the region of the waistcoat. Whether Varakoff wore a waistcoat was doubtful; but he doubled up all the same.

Several of the juniors were using the same tactics, and there were sundry gasps and grunts from the Russians as they collapsed.

"Bai Jove! It's Gordon Gay, deah boys! Good old Gay!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in terrific excitement.

"Oh, good man!" gasped Tom Merry, his face lighting up. "Pile in, you chaps! Let 'em have it!"

It was no occasion for talk. All the pent-up feelings of the St. Jim's garrison were giving vent during the next few seconds. As Cardew had foreseen, it was impossible to use firearms in a hand to hand encounter, and the Russians were forced to fight with their fists. They had a big advantage in weight and size, but the juniors were more numerous. Added to this, the great men of the Sixth and Fifth, with the younger masters, told heavily, and the Russians were forced slowly back.

"Up, St. Jim's! We're licking 'em!" panted Kildare, felling one of the enemy with a clean left between the eyes. "Go it, you juniors!"

The seniors were fighting grimly, and their presence lent the juniors courage. But it was in the hands of Tom Merry and Gordon Gay and their men that the issue lay.

They had numbers, as the Russians were speedily discovering. The enemy fought desperately now, and more than one junior staggered out of the fray to attend to an injury, one of the masters helping him.

At the Head's command, Rakovsky had kept out of the fight; but in the rush and scramble, that had proved impossible. He was engulfed in the struggle, and found himself hitting out with great zest and enjoyment. He smote fiercely at the dark face of Paul Varakoff, as for a moment it loomed over his own; the Russian took the blow without flinching.

The next moment Rakovsky was wrenched off his feet, and half dragged, half carried, out of the fray. Half a

dozen followers of the Russian leader held off the rushes of Rakovsky's comrades, two of them falling underfoot.

But, gasping and bleeding from two or three abrasions, Varakoff reached the shelter of his own force, and plunged to the rear. He slipped through them and broke for the school, dragging Rakovsky with him. The man Leonev accompanied him, with his hand on the schoolboy prince's other shoulder.

A moment later the whole Russian force broke and retreated precipitately.

"Hurrah! Licked 'em!"

"They're bunking! After 'em!"

"Forward, St. Jim's!"

"Up, the Grammar School!"

"They've got Rakovsky!" rapped Kildare. "Fight your hardest!"

With a whoop of excitement, the juniors plunged after the seniors in pursuit of the Russians.

The school gates were barely a quarter of a mile distant, but Varakoff and Leonev, with their prisoner, had already reached them.

The rest of the enemy turned at bay in the old gateway, and put up a fierce resistance. Kildare led a charge, but was repulsed—not without losses. But he rallied his men coolly, and there was a fresh rush.

"Down with the rotters!"

"St. Jim's! St. Jim's!"

The conflict raged fiercely in the ancient gateway; but only for a few moments. A rush of the juniors in support of Kildare and his men, finally turned the tables. The Russians, knocked right and left, were driven into the quad, and the gate was taken.

It now remained to recover Rakovsky.

"Where's Varakoff?"

"He's got Rakovsky! Where is he?"

"By the wall!" shouted Cardew. "Over by the House now!"

Varakoff's fleeing figure, and that of Leonev and that of Rakovsky, who was struggling desperately, was spotted, and there was a rush to head him off.

The Russian doubled and twisted, but in the quad he had no hope of out-manceuvring the St. Jim's juniors. He was headed off at last, and forced to retreat against the wall of the School House.

He leaned there, panting hard, his eyes glittering. His hand still grasped Rakovsky, and Leonev gripped the prince's other shoulder.

"Got him!"

"Now, you rascal!"

As the seniors rushed, Leonev started forward to ward them off, but he was swept aside. Kildare made a leap for Varakoff, but stopped in his stride.

The Russian was pinned against the wall; he had no chance of escape. But he had drawn his knife, and it was pointed at the throat of the junior in his grasp. At a stroke from Varakoff, Rakovsky's life would have been forfeit.

Kildare, his face set, halted.

The Head, who had just come in at the gates, threw up his hand.

Varakoff, drawing breath in great gulps, spoke.

"Let any of you come a step nearer and this boy dies!"

CHAPTER 13.

Honour for Grundy!

FOR a moment, there was complete silence.

Varakoff, his wounded arm hanging limply at his side, had pinned Rakovsky against the wall by the weight of his body. In his sound hand, the long knife quivered at the prince's throat.

Kildare's fists were clenched, but he dare not approach a step nearer. Varakoff was at the end of his tether; it was only too obvious that he would not hesitate to carry out his word.

"Stop!"

It was the Head's voice, trembling with anxiety. At any cost the boy prince's life must be saved.

Varakoff turned his blood-bespattered face towards Dr. Holmes. Throughout everything, Rakovsky, though pale, had remained coolly silent. Even the keen blade at his throat did not rob him of his high courage.

"Stop, I command you! What are your terms?"

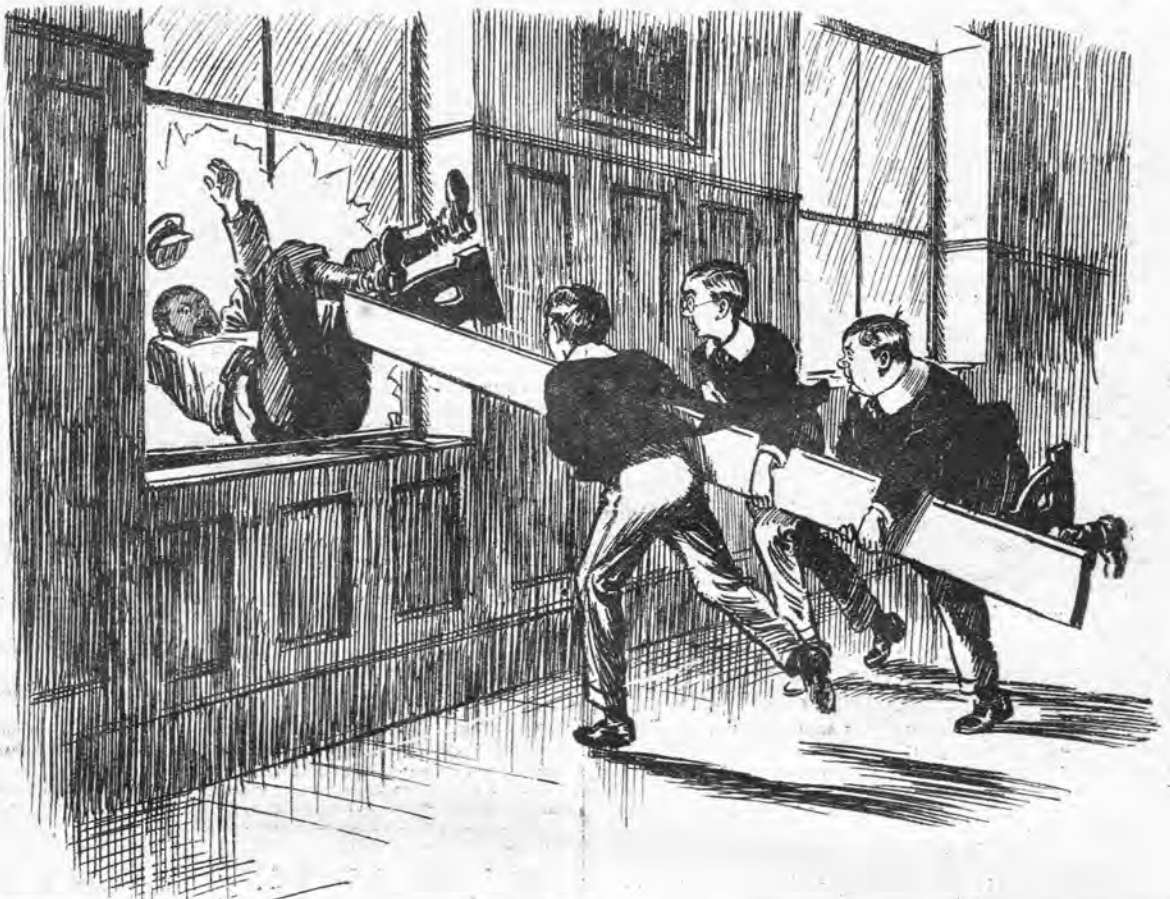
The answer came back quickly enough.

"My liberty, and twenty-four hours without pursuit!"

There was a murmur of disgust among the juniors. In his extremity, the Russian leader had no thought but for himself. His only desire now was to save his skin.

"Hang it all, why should the rotter escape?" breathed Blake. "Couldn't we—"

"Look! Behind Varakoff!"



"Full speed! Aim for his waistcoat!" rapped Grundy. The heavy form gained momentum, and Grundy steered it straight for the window, driving at it with all his strength as the Russian came clambering in. There was a terrific bump and a fiendish yell! The Russian flew back as if he had been shot out of a catapult! (See Chapter 7.)

"By gad! Grundy!"

Grundy it was!

Varakoff, panting against the School House wall, had eyes for nothing but the Head's face, regarding him grimly. He did not notice that he was standing directly beneath a window, and that the window was open.

Grundy had appeared in the space, and there was a cool grin on the Shell fellow's face. Something of the tenseness of the onlookers must have communicated itself to Varakoff, for he half-turned, releasing Rakovsky from his hold.

His hand flew up, but he was not quick enough.

A rifle-butt, with all the strength of Grundy's arms behind it, crashed on the Russian's head.

With a dull moan, Varakoff measured his length on the ground.

While the crowd of masters and fellows were still in the throes of amazement, Grundy gave a cool nod:

"I've settled him, I think. Cheerio, Rakovsky!"

The juniors found their voices at that. And they fairly let themselves go—seniors and masters joining in enthusiastically:

"Oh, good man, Grundy!"

"Well played, old man!"

"Old Grundy's done something worth while at last!" roared Monty Lowther. "Cheer him, ye cripples!"

"Hip, hip—"

"Hurrah!"

It was a really devastating roar.

But it did not disconcert Grundy. He took those plaudits with becoming dignity, and frowned a little as Trimble and Skimpole appeared behind him. There was a fresh roar at that.

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head, placing his pince-nez a little more firmly on his nose. "Grundy and his two comrades appear to have held the House against the Russians, Mr. Railton."

"A very commendable feat," agreed the Housemaster. "I am not surprised at the boys' enthusiasm."

"Nor I," said Dr. Holmes. "However, we must enter the House, Grundy!"

The uproar subsided as the Head spoke.

"Yes, sir?"

"Will you unbar the door and admit us, my boy?"

"Certainly, sir!"

The Head began to move towards the School House, but a yell of alarm brought him up sharply:

"Look out! On to them!"

"The Russians! They're bunking!"

"Scrag 'em!"

The quad had been peaceful a second previously; now it was the scene of a terrific combat once more.

The Russians, penned in the quadrangle, had taken advantage of the juniors' preoccupation to make a sudden dash for freedom, and the dash nearly succeeded.

But for Tom Merry's shout, it might have succeeded quite. But a line of seniors rushed to intercept the enemy, and held the tide gamely against odds.

"Pile in!" roared Blake fiercely. "We're not going to let them get away!"

"Not likely, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arey.

"By Jove, what is that?"

Whirr-rrrrr! Whirr-rrrrr!

"Hallo! Oh, good! Conway!" shouted Grundy, from the steps of the School House.

Attention was partly distracted from the Russians to the aeroplane which was circling over St. Jim's, and a shout from Gussy showed that he recognised his elder brother's machine.

"Huwah! Conway, deah boys! He's comin' down!"

"Never mind, Conway! The Russians are beating Kildare and his men!" shouted Tom Merry. "Come on!"

"I'm with you!" boomed Grundy, charging down the School House steps three at a time.

The Russians were certainly getting the better of the encounter, and at any moment it appeared as if the St. Jim's force must part and allow the enemy to burst through the gates.

"Back up!" panted Kildare, hitting out valiantly.

"Don't let 'em escape!"

The seniors, ably backed by a contingent of juniors under Tom Merry and Gordon Gay, made a firm stand in the

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gateway. The Russians found that they were hurling themselves in vain against that solid phalanx in their path, and they dropped back.

But it was not the end. Leoney drew his revolver, and levelled it. The rest followed suit. At close quarters they were unable to use firearms, but they could at least shoot a passage through the crowd at the gates.

Another moment, and there must inevitably have been some casualties among the St. Jim's force. But a sudden rush from the rear swept them aside, and a gasp of amazement went up as a score of figures in khaki closed in on the Russians, rifles in their hands.

The sudden rush had taken the enemy off their guard; their opportunity was lost for good now. More and more soldiers came pouring in at the gates, tumbling off their cycles, on which they had ridden post-haste from Wayland.

In a few seconds the Russians were prisoners, and the lieutenant in charge saluted the Head, smiling.

"We were informed by aeroplane of what was wrong, sir," he said. "I hope we've come in time."

"Only just, I think!" said a voice.

The Head and the lieutenant turned, to behold Lord Conway. His lordship was smiling.

"Bless my soul! Then we owe it to you that these men arrived before serious harm was done, Lord Conway? I cannot express my relief adequately yet. As you possibly know, I have been a prisoner in a tent on the moor for three days, and at my time of life it has been something of an ordeal. Will both you gentlemen step into my study?"

"Certainly, Dr. Holmes!"

"Good old Con!" shouted Gussy, from the quadrangle, as his lordship accompanied the Head and the lieutenant up the steps. The roar was taken up on all sides.

"Three cheers for Lord Conway!"

"Here, what about me?" boomed Grundy indignantly. "Didn't I put up the signal that Conway spotted? Didn't I hold the giddy fort after you fellows had let yourselves be captured? Didn't I—"

"I say, don't you fellows forget me!" interrupted Trimble. "I was there. If it hadn't been for me—"

"Shut up!" roared Grundy vehemently. "I think the least you chaps can do is to pass a vote of thanks to me for defending the old school from the perfidious invader!"

"What a mouthful!" grinned Lowther.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "Rakovsky wants to speak to him."

Michael Rakovsky, his pale face brighter than ever the juniors had seen it before, came forward quietly.

The man Varakoff was in the grasp of two sturdy Tommies now, and there was no more danger to be anticipated from that quarter. Rakovsky felt that it was time to express his thanks for the many services which the St. Jim's juniors—not forgetting the Grammarians—had rendered him. Grundy was with him there.

He smiled loftily as Rakovsky approached.

It was not Grundy's intention to appear lofty, or to "pile it on," but he could not help puffing out his chest a little.

Much as he merited distinction, it was rarely that Grundy received any, and he felt that he deserved his full share now.

Other fellows might have—indeed, they had—done things, but it was Grundy who had held the School House throughout the siege. That fact was beyond denial.

Rakovsky gave Grundy a slight bow as he approached—a mark of honour which the Shell fellow appreciated fully. Amid many chuckles he bowed back.

The Russian prince was, as usual, quite cool and calm. It took a great deal to disturb his equilibrium. He spoke, while the fellows listened, grinning.

"I wish to express at once my gratitude to all those of you who have so gallantly aided me," he said quietly. "There are too many to single out—though to Merry and Cardew I tender my most sincere thanks for their services!"

"Of course, I—" began Grundy casually.

"In your case, Grundy, I feel that some honour is only fitting," continued Rakovsky earnestly. "You are aware that the crown jewels and regalia of my throne are hidden in my study—"

"Safe as houses!" remarked Grundy reassuringly. "I was keeping an eye on Trimble, you know. The fat rotter wanted to get his fingers on 'em, but I persuaded him he'd better not—with a cricket-stump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You have acted as guardian of my most precious possessions, Grundy," said Rakovsky. "In the face of my enemies, you kept these from them! I wish to reward you."

"Oh, rot!" ejaculated Grundy. "I don't want anything, you ass! Chuck it!"

"Kneel!" commanded Rakovsky.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Kneel!" repeated the prince, smiling.

"What on earth do you want me to kneel for, you fathead?"

"Do as I command!" said Rakovsky. "You will see."

"Is it a joke?" asked Grundy suspiciously.

"I give you my word as a prince that I intend only to honour you for your services to the crown of Igor. Kneel!"

With deep mystification on his features, Grundy knelt in the quadrangle.

The onlookers drew a long breath. They wondered what was to happen next.

Rakovsky stepped forward, and touched Grundy lightly on the shoulder. He stepped back again, and motioned the Shell fellow to rise.

"I create you a member of the Imperial Order of the Knights of the Silver Star!" said the prince calmly.

Grundy leaped to his feet, his expression exhibiting a variety of emotions. The juniors hardly knew whether to cheer or to laugh. But Rakovsky was serious enough. Grundy had defended the crown—he was created a knight!

And on Grundy's face there appeared slowly an expression of complete satisfaction.

"I thank your Highness!" he said, with dignity.

"Mum-my only aunt!" breathed Lowther. "Is it true? Grundy—a knight!"

"Cheers for Sir George!" shouted Wilkins, nearly bursting with mirth. "Oh dear, he'll be the death of me yet! Hip, hip—"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Grundy!"

George Alfred Grundy—or, rather, Sir George, as he had suddenly become—nodded calmly, and linked his arm with Rakovsky's. Arm-in-arm they strolled across the quad, and disappeared into the School House.

They left the juniors of both schools gasping.

"Well, I never!" gurgled Frank Monk. "Did you ever see a bigger ass than that chap Grundy?"

"Never!" admitted Gordon Gay, with deep sincerity.

"Of all the blithering idiots!" howled Wilkins. "We shall have to call him Sir George in the study now! Oh dear! Why did that fathead Rakovsky want to play the goat like that for?"

"Of course, Grundy couldn't help it!" grinned Gunn. "Aren't you glad he didn't pick on you, Merry?"

"Oh, my hat, yes!"

"By gad! He might have knighted me!" ejaculated Cardew, in dismay at the thought. "What an escape—closer than Rakovsky's at that man Varakoff's hands!"

"Ha, ha! Nearly!"

"Let's go and see Sir George!" grinned Lowther. "This will be the joke of the term, my infants! Come on!"

And there was a rush of juniors to the School House to enjoy that new "handle" against Grundy. It was probable that "Sir George" would be glad to drop his title within a few days—but, meanwhile, it was much too good to miss!

The forecast of the juniors was right. In a few days—the danger from the Russians having been removed by the valiant efforts of the juniors and seniors of St. Jim's, backed up by their old rivals of the Grammar School—the prince left St. Jim's for London, where it was thought that he would be safer under his old tutor.

Rakovsky was sorry to leave St. Jim's, but he realised that it was in his own interests that he should go. And the whole school—including even Kildare and the mighty men of the Sixth, and the masters—saw him off in the Head's car at the gates. And, needless to say, the famed Rakovsky treasure went with him by special carriage.

The old school knew Michael Rakovsky no more, though the stirring events which marked his short stay were discussed for weeks afterwards. And fellows of Trimble's kidney, who had not shown up well when the shadow of real war loomed over St. Jim's, were careful to keep out of the public eye as much as possible.

But there was one fellow who was unable to escape attention—and for long after the Siege of St. Jim's, George Alfred Grundy was addressed about St. Jim's as Sir George!

THE END.

(In next week's souvenir number of the GEM, there will be another long complete yarn of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, with the fat and fatuous Baggy Trimble filling the principal role. Make a note of the title—"Trimble's Teamer!" and be prepared for a record laugh.)

ANSWERS

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THE WITCH'S PROPHECY! It doesn't comfort Adam and his party, besieged by a horde of warlike natives, to know that a witch has prophesied their salvation from the Skeleton men. Yet at the critical moment, when death stares them in the face, comes that salvation which she foretold!



ADAM.

HARRY.

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By **ARTHUR S. HARDY.**

A Timely Arrival!

THE Skeleton man stared, with jaw drooping, doubtless expecting to see the spear glance away as if from impenetrable metal. But the witch woman was but human, for the shining blade pierced deep, and she, uttering a low cry, spread her arms as she toppled backwards.

For one second the crouching warrior stared as if unable to believe his eyes, and then, with an exultant leap, he turned, and, throwing his hands up high, yelled a command to the warriors who were waiting below.

Doubtless he was telling them that he had slain the witch woman whom they feared, that the spell had been broken.

Then, with a savage cry, he leapt upwards and gained the level floor space which Adam and Harry and Muta had made their place of refuge.

As the witch woman tottered, and with a low sobbing moan collapsed, Adam caught her and lowered her gently to the ground, dropping his rifle and supporting her upon his upraised knee.

Muta, wailing like a stricken animal, wrung his hands, and seemed bereft of action.

But as the Skeleton giant, with a cry of triumph, set foot within their defence, Muta, in a frenzy, sprang at him, seized him in his powerful arms, and raising him above his head, as if he were lifting a child, flung the warrior outward.

Adam saw the throw. Harry gasped at the amazing strength of the strange being who had accomplished it.

The Skeleton warriors had rallied, were about to attack once more.

Their leader had killed the witch woman. They had nothing to fear now in desecrating the Temple of the Forest God. The witch who had cast a curse over the nation of the Hekebus threatening with instant death any who should raise a hand against her, was robbed of her power. These things Adam learnt afterwards.

And yet in the very moment of his triumph the giant leader of the Skeleton army met with the death he feared.

Muta had thrown him out far and wide beyond the narrow footway.

The body of the wretched man turning over in the air fell head foremost upon a great boulder half-way down the steep side of the Temple.

From thence it bounded and rolled over and over from stone to stone until it came to rest on the level of the ground below and lay still. Even as surely as he had slain the witch woman, the Hekebu had met his end.

The witch's curse still held!

Harry Franklin now ran to the far side of the ruins up the face of which this witch woman of Muta had come, though Harry had seen no pathway there. Her coming had seemed like a miracle as she ascended where there seemed to be no foothold, bathed in the glory of the morning sunshine.

As the warriors saw their leader hurtling through the air, thrown from the Temple by unseen and superhuman hands,

WHO'S WHO IN THIS STORY!

ADAM BYRNE, who is accompanied by his chum, **HARRY FRANKLIN**, and a band of trustworthy followers, sets out in search of Adam's father and sister, news having been received that the great white explorer, **GEORGE WILLIS BYRNE**, and his daughter, **ROSA**, who left England four years ago to explore the African jungle, are alive and well, but prisoners in the hands of a strange people at Barcoomba, which lies north of the Silver Glacier and beneath the Mountain of the Hidden Crest.

Well equipped with guns, stores, provisions, two aeroplanes, and wireless apparatus, the party leaves Baruda for their journey into the interior. Fate is against them, however, for the plane containing

Adam and Harry is wrecked in a terrific storm and the chums are left stranded. Shortly after this they are attacked by a crowd of hostile natives, who pursue them to the Temple of the Forest God. Aided by Muta, a negro who has suffered at the hands of the White Bone men, as the natives are called, on account of the peculiar way they paint their bodies, Adam and Harry are putting up a stout resistance when Muta's mother, O-Kama, the witch, whom the Hekebus have learned to fear, suddenly appears and steps between the warriors and their white victims.

Overcoming his superstitious fears, however, the giant leader of the Hekebus flings his spear at the witch.

(Now read on.)

they cried aloud in horror and stayed their attack once more.

Harry saw them forming a group round their dead chief. They seemed horror-stricken at the calamity. Shouting wildly and loudly to one another, they peered at the Hekebus who had been slain by the curse of the witch.

They drew away from him shudderingly, and it was long before any among them dared lift him and bear him away.

But at last they bore him among the forest trees, and thereupon the drum-beaters started upon a new and pulse-throbbing tom-tomming of great violence.

It was a sound which must have carried an enormous distance, and to the watchers in the ruins it was deafening.

So it seemed the morning passed.

Adam and Harry did all that could be done for the wounded mother of Muta. The strange-looking dwarf himself seemed inconsolable. Weeping and wringing his hands, he set up a never-ceasing wailing of lamentation.

As for the witch herself, she cast inquiring glances at the two white men, and then spoke to Muta, who replied.

The vitality of the emaciated creature was amazing. That spear wound would have killed stronger women than she outright. But she lingered on, keeping her senses amazingly.

In between his bouts of wailing Muta spoke.

"My mother, O-Kama, the exile, has asked me how I came to find my white masters," he interpreted. "And I have told her. She is glad because she says now I will be safe. She is dying. She asks can she be of any help towards you, oh, my masters, before the shadows claim her?" And his tears ran fast.

"Tell her," answered Adam, "that we would find the Mountain of the Hidden Crest, which lies north of the Silver Glacier. Maybe she has heard of such a place."

Muta spoke. The woman, listening and answering with effort, spoke intelligently.

"O-Kama says," choked Muta, "that we will find the secret of the mountain in the cave of refuge, where she begs that her bones may be laid to rest until she is claimed by the people to whom she belongs."

Harry and Adam exchanged glances of surprise. Here was their first definite clue to the whereabouts of the strange mountain whose summit was veiled, if the message the professor had caused to be broadcast home were right.

"Is there such a cave, Muta?" asked Adam eagerly.

"Yes, yes. The cave where I believed my mother would go to hide after they burnt down her home," Muta replied excitedly. "I know the place. We go there if we escape the Skeleton men."

He bent over O-Kama, speaking excitedly. The woman replied. Muta turned, a grin driving the expression of grief from his rugged features for a space.

"O-Kama, my mother," he stated, "says that we shall be delivered from the Skeleton men. Always the words she speaks are true."

Adam looked down at the woman. Her eyes were closed now. Her head, propped upon Adam's coat, which he had taken off and folded to make a pillow, was like that of a mummy. Adam would have believed her dead but that he saw her chest heaving rapidly and violently.

Now he looked down the narrow footpath, and with a start saw that once again the Hekebus were preparing for attack.

"Stand by, Harry!" he cried, leaping to his rifle and raising it.

The drum-beaters now changed their beat of lamentation into a warlike drumming. The Skeleton men, cheering, shouting wildly, and brandishing their weapons, had gained new courage. They swarmed up the narrow pathway once more at such a pace that Harry knew all would be over in a few minutes. Either they would repel their assailants for good and all, or go down under their spear-thrusts. This was the climax.

Muta's behaviour now was odd in the extreme. His panic had gone. Rising, he folded his arms and grinned down at the advancing horde.

"Pick up that spear, you chump, and prepare to defend yourself!" ordered Harry angrily.

But Muta only grinned.

"There is no danger. The Hekebus will be routed. O-Kama, my mother, the witch, has said it."

"Never mind. Use the spear, Muta!" ordered Harry.

"We need deeds now, not witches' words."

But Muta, stubborn as any mule, shook his head.

"The witch, O-Kama, knows," he answered.

"Shoot, Adam!" cried Harry, for the nearest of the Hekebus was upon them.

Still Adam hesitated. He could not kill. In order to try

and frighten the Hekebus he fired his rifle in the air. At sound of the report the line of Skeleton men halted.

And then, as if in echo, came a deafening bang just within the forest.

The noise was frightening. Adam and Harry had heard a similar noise before—at home when maroons had been used for signalling. But to Muta, who had never heard such a sound, it was as if some demon had come to wage war. With a howl, he dropped upon his knees, burying his face in his hands and swaying from side to side.

Adam, startled, saw O-Kama's eyes open. He fancied her withered lips curved a smile. The whole line of attacking Hekebus had halted now. The horde of painted warriors upon the ground below faced round in the direction from which the report had come.

Bang—boom! Bang—boom! Bang—boom! Bang—boom!

Four times more the deafening reports rang out, followed by rolling echoes which rumbled away into the heart of the forest.

Adam smiled as he saw the line of armed warriors on the footway turn and tumble pell-mell down to the ground.

The startled drum-beaters had leapt to their feet, had slung their drums, and were facing round to flee. Everyone seemed to be crying out at once. Never had Adam heard such a hullabaloo.

"What is it?" asked Harry.

"Maroons. It's Sandy McTavish and Jimmy Brown!" yelled Adam. "Must be! And look! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Out of the forest burst two white men, followed by two rather scared-looking natives with packs slung upon their backs. Each white man had a canvas bag slung from his shoulders. The frightened Hekebus, at sight of them, rallied for one brief moment; then, with scared cries, ran. Muta, who had risen again, stared after them.

"They say it is O-Kama, the witch, who has laid her curse upon them," he explained. "They run—"

Run they did, pell-mell in frantic panic, and as they ran Sandy McTavish, a bearded Scotsman, swung his right arm as if throwing a cricket-ball, and sent a dark object whizzing into the air, which, bursting with a loud report, sent a smoke-cloud floating upwards, whilst the blinding flash of the explosion hurled shrapnel after the fleeing Skeleton men.

Jimmy Brown, following suit, did likewise. The two whites followed the fleeing Skeleton army at the run, hurling bomb after bomb in their wake.

Then the forest swallowed the last of the Hekebus, and Sandy and Jimmy came back, to be hailed from the Temple of the Forest God by their two lost comrades:

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Up climbed Sandy. At his heels came Jimmy Brown.

"Strict a light!" boomed Sandy as they met. "But it's guid tae see you, Mr. Byrne, and Mr. Franklin, in! We heard they rifle-shots last night, and we marched through the forest guided by the beating o' they drums. Yon black trash of oors seemed tae be able tae find the trail even when we couldna see an inch before us. But for the love of MacGregor, what hae we here?"

His eyes bulged as he looked at Muta.

"Oh, something we found in the forest after the storm drove our aeroplane down, Sandy," smiled Adam, as he pumped the other's hand. "His name is Muta, but we call him Mutt."

"And he looks it!" growled the Cockney engineer, Jimmy Brown.

"And what's yon?" asked Sandy McTavish, indicating the dying O-Kama.

"A woman—Muta's mother. One of those Skeleton fellows speared her. She's dying, I'm afraid, Sandy."

Sandy McTavish, pulling the cork helmet he wore from his head, mopped his brow, for the heat was sweltering.

"I'm glad I didna meet yon fellows before we skeered them wi' the maroons," he stated. "For they'd hae put the fear o' death intae me. I hae seen naething like it outside an anatomical museum." Then he walked to where O-Kama lay. "Let me see if I can du naething tae help the puir body," he said, as he knelt down in the dust.

Very gently, for he had kindly hands, Sandy McTavish pulled back the clothing which covered the woman's body, and as he did so Adam uttered a cry of amazement, for he saw then that the skin of the woman was not at all darkish brown. Quite a large section of it was of a pinkish-white in hue, meaning that the woman was a skewbald, even as Beavan, the settler at Baruda, had stated the messenger from the unknown land of Hokahulas had been!

"Harry!" gasped Adam, in amaze. "Look! Look!"

(There will be another thrilling instalment of this powerful serial in next week's GEM. Don't miss it, chums.)

ANOTHER RECORD FOR THE GEM!

GET ready to cheer, chums, for next Wednesday we celebrate our thousandth issue of the good old GEM. What do you think of that? Isn't it a remarkable achievement? Doesn't it go to prove my oft-repeated words that the GEM is indeed a world-wide attraction? What-ho! Now you fellows will have something to talk about when you meet a non-reader. One thousand weeks old—and still going strong, with dear old Gussy and Tom Merry and his cheery chums bigger favourites with the reading public than ever. I doubt whether there's a person living in Britain and her English-speaking colonies who hasn't heard of Tom Merry & Co. and their famous school St. Jim's. Every day sees new chums flocking to the standard of the GEM; every day sees an increased mail from delighted new readers, who openly confess their amazement at having missed such a scrumptious paper for so long. Yet once we "bag" a new chum he stays with us for keeps. He's not happy without the sparkling company of Tom Merry & Co., and thus it goes on, with the GEM putting on weight, so to speak, at a very gratifying rate.

MARTIN CLIFFORD SAYS A FEW WORDS!

In next week's souvenir number your favourite author contributes—in addition to the long story of St. Jim's, of course—a special chat which will interest you vastly. Like

myself, Mr. Clifford regards Gemites as his friends, and although he may never see his vast army of admirers, that bond of friendship will linger for all time. In next week's number, too, will be reproduced in miniature the GEM Library Cover No. 1 (New Series) which appeared on the bookstalls Thursday, February 13th, 1903. That's over nineteen years ago! Just think of it!

TRIMBLE'S TRICKS!

Baggy Trimble has not been with the GEM so long as Tom Merry & Co., but he made a hit at his first appearance. And Baggy, the one and only, is the central figure in next Wednesday's delightful yarn of St. Jim's. The title—"Trimble's Tenner!"—should intrigue you, for the fat and fatuous Fourth-Former, as we well know, is usually broke to the wide. Now, what's this about a tenner—Methinks it were better left for Mr. Clifford to explain next week. But don't miss this treat, whatever you do.

THE EASTER VACATION!

That's the subject of the next jolly little poem from the St. Jim's Rhymester. You'll like it no end, take it from me. And keep your peepers open for the next thrilling instalment of

"BEYOND THE SILVER GLACIER!"

for it shows Mr. Arthur S. Hardy at the top of his form. Don't forget to order your GEM in good time—it would be a rare pity to miss such an important, record-breaking number. Chin, chin, chums!

Your Editor.

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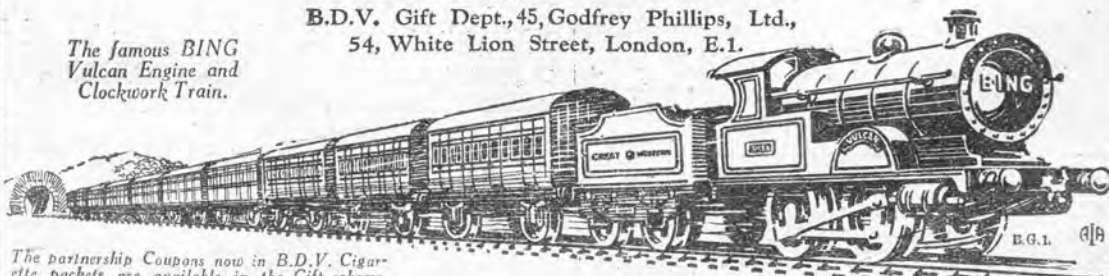
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