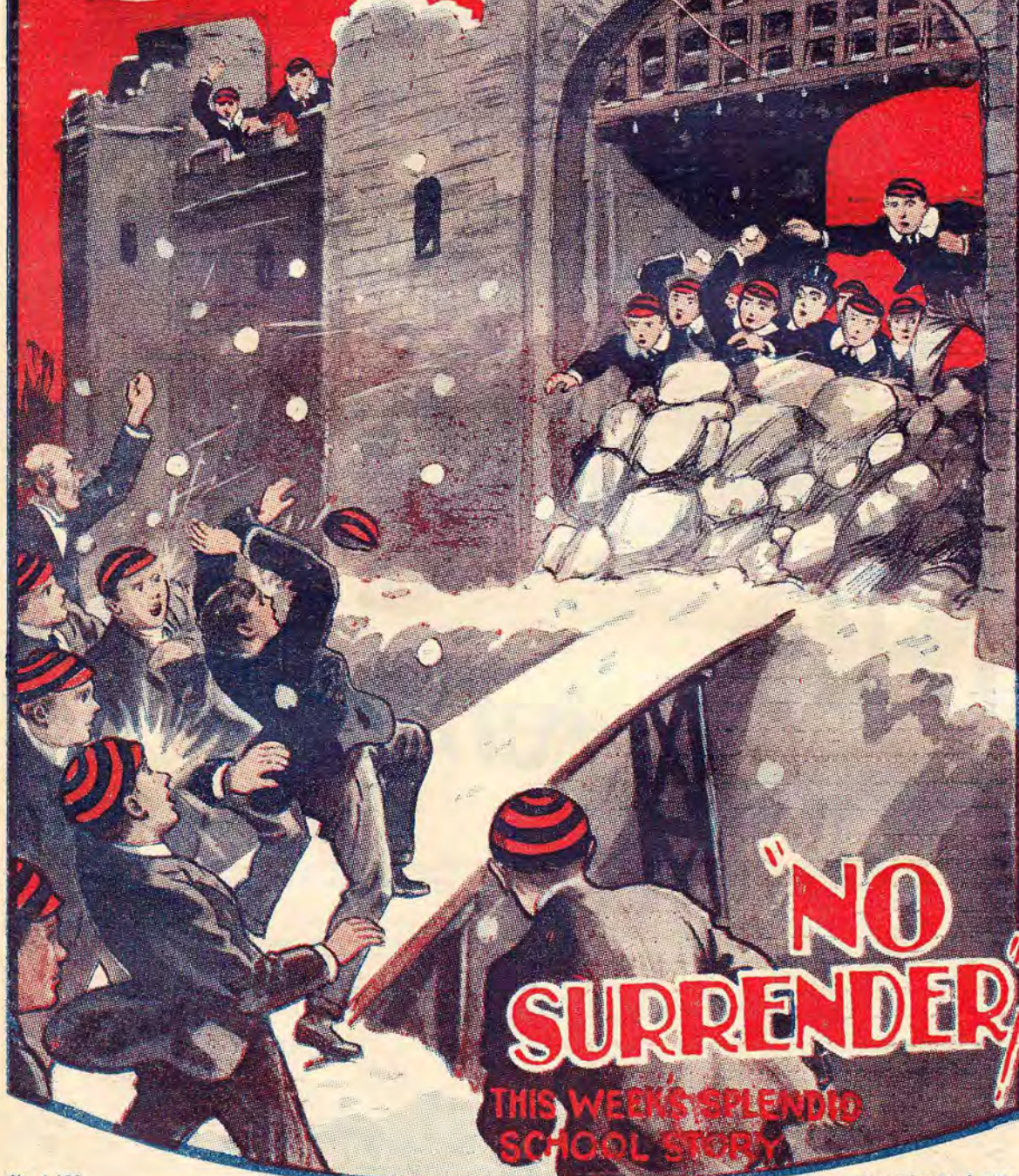


A SCHOOL IN REVOLT! AMAZING SCENES AT ST. JIM'S! SEE INSIDE.

THE GEM 2d



"NO SURRENDER"

THIS WEEK'S SPLENDID SCHOOL STORY

No. 1,136.
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November 23rd, 1929.
EVERY WEDNESDAY.

An exciting incident from this week's sensational school yarn.

THE GREATEST BARRING-OUT STORY EVER WRITTEN--



NO Surrender!

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD

Captain Gilbert Ratcliff little dreams, when he tries to "tame" the Fourth with his brutal tyranny, what a hornet's-nest he is rousing. He soon learns; but by then it is too late to prevent the barring-out that becomes one of the most amazing in the history of St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 1. Rebellion!

"WE'RE all agreed upon that, then?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

There was a roar of voices in the Fourth Form-room at St. Jim's.

It was close on time for afternoon classes, but the juniors were not in their places yet.

They were grouped round Jack Blake, and they were wildly excited.

"We'll give the fellow a chance," went on Jack Blake grimly. "Poor old Lathom's gone. We know he handed in his resignation, but we're pretty certain he had no choice about it—he was sacked. And this rotter, Captain Ratcliff, has got his job."

"The rotter worked it!" yelled Herries. "He and his blessed uncle from the New House worked it between

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them somehow. Captain Ratty was on his beam ends; he wanted a job. So—"

"It looks jolly suspiciously like it now, anyway!" snapped Blake. "It was through Captain Ratty and his uncle that Lathom got ticked off by the Head yesterday and the day before. For him to get the job the same day Lathom leaves—"

"It looks jolly well like it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Anyway, he's our Form master now," resumed Blake. "We know what a brute he is. He thrashed and kicked Trimble like a hooligan. And Trimble's got the marks on his hands yet where the rotter caned him this morning, before he'd even taken us over. And we know how he handled Tom Merry at the castle on Wayland Heath."

"He kicked old Towser!" gasped Herries. "That shows what—"

"The man's a rank outsider and a hooligan," said Blake.

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—STARRING TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

"A fellow who lies and uses the language he does isn't fit to be master of the Fourth, or any other Form."

"No fear!"

"We want Lathom back!" roared Figgins.

"And we'd jolly soon kick up a shindy until we get him back if we only knew for certain he was sacked!" exclaimed Blake, his eyes gleaming. "Still, we'll give this chap a chance this afternoon. If he treats us decently in the Form-room, well and good. But if we can't have Lathom back, then we're jolly well not going to have a tyrant and a hooligan for a Form master!"

"Bravo, Blake!"

"That's the programme, then," said Blake. "The captain says he's going to tame us; we'll see about that. Let him try his games, and—well, you know just what to do. We'll pitch him out neck and—"

"Bai Jove, we must be careful how we handle him, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "Wemembah, he was wounded in the War. He's a cwipple."

"He is at St. Jim's," said Digby significantly. "But if you fellows had seen him running when we snowballed him on the heath—"

"He's a rotten spoofer, if you ask me!" snorted Herries. "I don't believe he's lame at all. I believe it's spoo to get the sympathy of the Head."

"Well, there may be something in that," said Blake grimly. "At all events there's a limit, and if this man wants our respect and obedience—"

He broke off as a step sounded out in the passage—a halting step. The juniors became silent as the door opened and a man limped in.

It was Captain Ratcliff, and his thin lips twisted into an unpleasant smile as he noted the juniors standing together.

"Take your places, please," he said.

The juniors took their places with a shuffling of feet, though with far less noise than they usually made. They were determined not to give their new master any cause for complaint—to give him every chance.

But Captain Ratcliff was not satisfied.

"Every boy in the room will take fifty lines for making an unnecessary noise while taking his place," he said smoothly. "If the same thing occurs to-morrow I shall double the punishment."

"Phew!"

"Well off the mark in the first half-minute," murmured Cardew.

Captain Ratcliff whirled round. He pointed to Cardew.

"I should like the Form to know that my ears are exceptionally good!" he rasped. "What did you say, boy?"

"I said you'd got off the mark well, or words to that effect," said Cardew coolly.

Cardew had already seen that trouble was bound to come, and he thought it might as well come soon as late.

"I am glad you have seen that," smiled the captain. "To impress it on your youthful mind, my friend, you will write the sentence out five hundred times. 'I have begun as I mean to go on.'"

The new master's steely eyes roved over the Form.

"Blake—I think your name is Blake?"

"Yes, sir."

"At noon I ordered you to report to me for a caning the moment afternoon classes commenced."

"Yes, sir," said Blake quietly. "It is scarcely time for lessons yet, though. You ordered us to take our seats, and I was going to—"

"Stand out before the Form. You—the boy next to Blake—stand up!"



Blake left his place, and Arthur Augustus stood up as the master pointed to him.

"What is your name?"

"D'Arcy, sir."

"Very well, D'Arcy. In future you will attend classes properly dressed. I detest fancy waistcoats, and such idiotic foppery," snapped Captain Ratcliff. "You will dress like the other boys. What is that absurd thing stuck in your eye?"

"My eyeglass, sir!" gasped Gussy.

"Throw it out of the window, and do not bring such an idiotic thing into the Form-room again."

"Bai Jove!"

The noble eyes of Arthur Augustus gleamed. He knew perfectly well—as well as Blake, Digby, and Herries knew—that Captain Ratcliff was merely seeking an excuse to vent his spite upon any member of Blake & Co. It was they, together with the Terrible Three, who had handled, and afterwards snowballed the captain before they even knew who he was.

Gussy's jaw set.

"I wewet that I cannot do that, sir," he said calmly.

"Neither the Head, Mr. Wailton, nor Mr. Lathom have ever objected to my monocle. I will wemove it if you ordah me to, but I wefuse to throw it out of the window."

"Bravo, Gussy!"

There was a murmur.

Captain Ratcliff smiled—but only with his lips. Then he stepped forward, jerked the eyeglass away, breaking the cord, and throwing the monocle on the floor, he ground it to splinters and powder with his heel.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You—you wottah!"

"What!"

"You had no wight whatevah— Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gave a startled gasp as the captain's hand closed on his collar. Then he was wrenched right out of his seat, and whirled out to the front of the Form. With surprising strength and brutal callousness the new master sent him crashing into Blake.

Both sprawled on the floor, Arthur Augustus breathless, hurt, and half-choked by that savage grip.

Captain Ratcliff turned to the Form, his steely eyes glinting.

"I have begun as I mean to go on!" he snapped. "Mr. Lathom's slack and easy-going methods are not mine. I shall tame you very quickly, my friends."

The eyes of the Fourth were fixed on Blake, who was just scrambling to his feet. But Blake did not give the signal they expected; he meant to give the new master a little more rope yet!

Cardew, however, felt he had had enough.

He rose to his feet, a mocking smile on his handsome features.

"Excuse me, sir!" he said meekly.

"Well?"

"Our late Form master always encouraged us to ask questions, sir!" said Cardew, in his lazy drawl. "If I may ask one now, sir—"

"What is it?"

There was a dangerous light in Captain Ratcliff's eye, but Cardew was as cool as ever.

"May I ask if you're here as our Form master, or as a fashion expert?" inquired Cardew.

"Wha-what?"

"And if you object to my waistcoat!" said Cardew, opening his jacket wide, and looking up innocently. "It's a fancy one, but not quite so noisy as Gussy's!"

There was a dead silence. It was broken by a sound like a pistol-shot.

Smack!

Cardew went backwards over the form, and fell with a crash between the desks.

The new master had reached him in one tigerish leap—and it was noted that Captain Ratcliff showed no signs whatever of a limp then. In moments of excitement the War hero appeared to forget that he was lame. He had leaped at Cardew, and sent that youth spinning with a terrific box on the ear.

There was an instant's silence, and then a yell.

"Shame!"

"You howling brute!"

"What about it, Blake?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Silence!" shouted Captain Ratcliff furiously. "You—you—"

He rushed to his desk—again showing no hint of a limp—snatched up his cane and darted back towards Cardew. But he did not reach the slacker of the Fourth.

"Go for him!" yelled Blake. "Down with the rotter!"

A foot shot out from an end desk—it was Lumley-Lumley's—and Captain Ratcliff went over it.

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Crash!

He scrambled up again, the cane in his hand, his eyes glittering with fury.

"You little fiends!" he panted. "I—I'll tame you!"

Slash!

The cane hissed through the air, and cut deep into Lumley-Lumley's shoulder.

That did it!

"Down with him!" yelled Blake. "Up, the Fourth!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Die Cast!

THERE was a roar of voices from all round the room. Cardew was on his feet now, his face white with passion. The dandy of the Fourth had been impertinent; but he had known that nothing could prevent trouble, and he had shown up the new master of the Fourth for the brute he was.

Every fellow was out of his seat and rushing to the scene. Even funks like Trimble and Mellish joined in, though they took care to keep on the fringe of the crowd.

The new master gritted his teeth as the wildly excited juniors swarmed round him.

"Get back! Yoop—you little hounds! I'll thrash the life out of you! Blake—"

"Down him!" yelled Blake. "Pitch the rotter out!"

"Give him some of his own cane!"

"Down him—he isn't lame at all!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a brief, whirling struggle for possession of the cane.

"Got it!" gasped Blake, tearing it free at last, and breaking it into pieces. "Now, you brute, you're going out! We've had enough of you!"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Gussy. "Back up, deah—Yoooop!"

A savage blow sent Arthur Augustus spinning away to crash heavily to the floor. The enraged master was using his fists in earnest now, with at least a dozen juniors clinging desperately to him.

He landed out right and left, sending junior after junior spinning and crashing. He broke free at length, and jumped out from between the desks, his face like a fiend's.

But the Fourth were on him in a flash again, swarming round him like terriers round a bull. Blake had said that he was to be pitched out, and they meant to do it—somehow.

"Go it—back up, the Fourth!"

"Down with the tyrant!" roared Herries.

The whirling struggle shifted towards the window, slowly but surely. Numbers were telling. After that first desperate struggle, the captain, strong as he was, enraged as he was, stood little chance. Fellows lurched away from the fight, crimson streaming from cut lips and damaged noses, or hugging damaged eyes, but others flung themselves on the struggling, cursing Form master at once.

They got the new master to the window at last, and someone flung up one of the sashes.

"Over he goes—into the snow with him!"

"On the ball!"

Amid a roar of voices Captain Ratcliff, still struggling savagely and desperately, was hoisted on to the sill. In the general din nobody heard a rustle, nobody glimpsed the awe-inspiring figure of the Head in the doorway.

"Boys! G-good heavens!"

"The Head!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

The juniors heard the Head's voice then.

"Boys! What—what— How dare you?" thundered Dr. Holmes. "What are you doing? Good heavens!"

"We're chucking a howling brute out of St. Jim's!" gasped Blake, turning his head. "Sorry, sir—nearly finished. Over he goes!"

"Hurrah!"

Captain Ratcliff went over—his head vanished, then his shoulders, and finally he disappeared altogether, shouting furiously. He plunged head-first into the snow beneath the window.

"Hurrah!"

"Silence! G-good heavens! Blake—boys— Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"No—only of Captain Ratcliff, sir!" said Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In their wild excited state the juniors were heedless even of the Head's presence. But as he came into the room the uproar died down. Somewhat frightened, many of the more timid ones looked at Jack Blake. Rebelling against a tyrannical Form master was one thing, but before the awe-inspiring figure of the Head—

"Blake!" gasped Dr. Holmes at last, his brow thunderous.



"Over he goes—into the snow with him!" Amid a roar of voices, Captain Ratcliff, struggling savagely, was hoisted on to the window-sill. In the general din nobody heard a rustle in the doorway or glimpsed the awe-inspiring figure of the Head. "Q-good heavens! Boys!" "The Head!" "Oh, bai Jove!" (See Chapter 2.)

"What does this amazing—this outrageous scene mean, may I ask?"

"It means just this, sir!" said Blake, trying to steady his voice. "We mean no disrespect to you, sir, but we're not having Captain Ratcliff for our Form master!"

"No fear!"

"We want Lathom back!" shouted Herries recklessly. "He ought never to have gone. It's that brute Ratcliff's doings—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Upon my soul!" articulated the Head. "This—this is beyond all bearing! You—you dare—"

"We're sorry to have to act like this, sir," said Blake quietly, "but Captain Ratcliff is not fit for the post of a master at St. Jim's—"

"What—what—"

"He's a tyrant and a rotter, sir!" snapped Blake, eyeing the Head fearlessly. "We are agreed that we won't have him as our Form master, Dr. Holmes!"

"You—you are all agreed that—that—" gasped the astounded Head.

"We want Lathom back, sir!"

"No Ratty for us! He's a rank outsider, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Upon my soul!"

The Head's face was black with rage, but his voice was steady when he spoke.

"I am astounded—shocked and disgusted beyond measure!" he said. "Captain Ratcliff is a man of high scholastic attainments. He has been wounded in the service of his country, and is entitled to honour and respect. I am ashamed that you, boys of this school, should so far forget yourselves—"

"He's not lame at all, sir—he's shamming!" yelled Herries.

"Hear, hear!"

"Nonsense! How dare you, Herries!" thundered the Head. "But enough of this! Boys, take your seats this instant. Every boy in the room will be caned severely, and Blake, as your misguided leader, will be flogged!"

"We'll obey that, sir, and we'll take our punishments,"

said Blake, "on your assurance that Captain Ratcliff ceases to be our Form master!"

"What—what— Good heavens! Do you mean to defy me, Blake?"

"Yes, sir—if you refuse to get rid of Captain Ratcliff!"

"This—this is too much!" gasped the Head, trembling with anger. "Blake, you are expelled from this school—"

"If Blake goes we all go!" said Cardew coolly.

"Bravo!"

The Head turned to Kildare and the crowd in the doorway. Kildare was looking dumbfounded, though many of the crowd behind were grinning.

"Kildare—Darrell—North!" he snapped. "You will take Blake, D'Arcy, and Cardew, who appear to be the ring-leaders in this monstrous affair, to my study at once. They shall leave St. Jim's this day!"

"Very good, sir!"

The three Sixth-Formers advanced into the room. Obviously Dr. Holmes felt certain that with the ring-leaders apprehended the mutinous conduct of the Form would cease at once. But the Head did not know the Fourth.

"Come along, Blake!" snapped Kildare.

He grabbed at Blake's collar. The leader of the Fourth gave a yell. He saw that argument with the Head just then was useless; the die was cast, and they had to go the whole hog to get what they wanted.

"Back up! Back up the Fourth! Down with all tyrants!"

"What—ho! Go it! Chuck them out after Ratty!"

There was a roar of voices. The Head stood thunder-struck as the whole Form made a wild rush at the three prefects, yelling at the top of their voices.

"Good heavens! Boys—stop! How dare you! Blake—"

"Out with 'em, chaps!" yelled Blake. "Through the window!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Kildare. "You young—Yarrooop!"

Kildare went down with a swarm of juniors on top

of him. He started to struggle then, in fury and desperation. But it was in vain. Even Kildare was helpless against a dozen or more determined, reckless juniors. He was rushed to the window and hoisted, a bundle of whirling arms and legs, on the sill.

"Over with him!"

"You young fiends——"

Swoooooh!

Kildare went over and dived head-first into the snow outside.

Scarcely an instant later Darrell followed him, and then North went through the window with a rush and a wild howl.

Blake slammed the window down again, and faced the astounded Dr. Holmes coolly.

"You see we mean what we say, sir!" he said. "We're sorry, sir——"

"You—you unruly, rebellious young rascals!"

The Head started towards the leader of the Fourth, his brow was thunderous. Obviously he intended to apprehend Blake himself. But he never got the chance. Blake gave a yell.

"After me, you fellows—you know what to do! This way!"

"Hurrah!"

Blake started the rush for the door. The Head jumped back in alarm—he imagined the juniors were rushing at him. He scarcely realised what happened next.

The juniors surged round him and he was hustled and hustled aside by the excited crowd until he found himself against the wall, dazed and bewildered.

Through the doorway rushed the crowd, yelling wildly. Blake in the lead. In the doorway Mr. Railton had suddenly appeared, but the rush sent him staggering back against the passage wall.

"Good heavens! What—what—boys!" he shouted.

"Stop—how dare——"

"Rats!"

"Upon my soul!"

Mr. Railton found himself alone—the rush had gone on.

"Up to the dormitory!" yelled Blake. "Quick! Before the Sixth get a chance at us!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hurrah!"

Mr. Winton looked out of the Shell Form-room, his face amazed. He jumped back again—just in time—as the mob rushed past. Mr. Horace Ratcliff came hurrying out of the Fifth Form-room. He put up his hand commandingly.

"Stop!"

"Rats! Over with him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The excited juniors were not likely to stop for the hated Mr. Horace Ratcliff. They swept over him like a tidal wave, and left him stranded, dusty, dishevelled, and dumbfounded. Ahead showed a crowd of startled Sixth-Formers just emerging from their Form-room.

"Stop!" shouted Monteith. "You young fools, what's this— Oh, gad!"

Bump!

Monteith went sprawling under the rush, as did the other members of the Sixth in the passage. The rebels cheerfully trod over them, and rushed on, yelling defiance.

Up the stairs they thudded, and a minute later they were safe in the Fourth dormitory, with the door locked. The rebellion had begun—they had burned their boats! The Head himself, the masters and prefects had been defied, and there was nothing else for it now but to fight it out to the bitter end!

CHAPTER 3.

New Recruits!

JACK BLAKE turned the key in the lock and shoved the key in his pocket. His face was flushed, and his eyes gleamed.

"Now, you fellows, there's no time to be lost!" he shouted. "Every moment is precious! Barricade the door—that's the first thing!"

"On the ball!"

A busy few minutes followed—at any moment the seniors might come rushing upstairs to the attack, and Blake did not intend to be caught napping. There was an anxious look on Blake's face now. He had not intended to go to such extremes so soon—he had intended to plan things out well first—to make full preparations for a barring-out if one became necessary.

But it had become necessary sooner than he had anticipated. The Head's attempt to arrest the ringleaders had forced him to act swiftly, without making any preparations.

There was no store of food—nothing for offence or defence, either. None the less, though anxious enough, Blake did

not despair, and he had no intention of climbing down now he had started.

He could see that Levison and several of the more thoughtful juniors were also anxious.

"Get busy, and keep your pecker up!" he shouted, as cheerfully as he could. "We're safe enough in here for a bit, and we'll jolly soon get out when we want to! And remember that the Shell fellows have promised to back us up!"

"Hurrah!"

Evidently the rank and file were anything but down-hearted, and Blake grinned as they got to work in real earnest. Washstands and beds were piled against the door, and they were still working feverishly when a firm knock sounded.

"Railton, I bet!" said Levison. "And there's a crowd with him obviously!"

It was Mr. Railton.

"Blake, if you are in there——" he called sternly.

"We're in here, sir!" answered Blake cheerfully.

"I order you to unlock this door at once, boy!"

"Can't be did, sir!"

"Wha-at!"

"Has the Head decided to sack that brute Ratty yet, sir?"

"How dare you, Blake! No, he has not, and he has no intention of obeying the demands of a pack of unruly boys!" came Mr. Railton's angry voice. "I order you——"

"Then there's nothing doing, sir! It's no surrender until Captain Ratcliff's sacked!"

"You will be brought out and expelled, Blake!"

"Get on with it, and don't gas!" bawled Herries. "We're waiting for the fun to start!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crash, crash, crash!

There was a hammering at the door—a chisel and a hammer were at work on the door. Evidently they were "getting on with it"! The woodwork round the lock splintered, and the juniors could hear old Taggles grunting as he worked away.

"Go it!" said Blake encouragingly. "There's a stack of furniture to get through when you've smashed the lock! And the first man through gets a jug of water over him and a cricket stump on his napper!"

"My heye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently Taggles, at all events, did not like the prospect.

Crash, crash!

Crack!

The lock gave way, and there was a thunderous hammering and charging at the door. Evidently Kildare and his fellow-prefects were trying to force an entrance now. The furniture moved a little as the door bulged inwards, and a washstand fell over with a crash.

"It's going, sir!" came Kildare's triumphant voice.

"Now, you men, another good—— Yoooooop!"

Unwisely Kildare had shoved a hand round the edge of the door. He withdrew it with a fiendish howl as Blake rapped it with his cricket stump.

"Wish we had a few more stumps!" said Blake regretfully. "Still, they'll be lucky—or unlucky—if they get through that lot!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The door bulged inwards again, but the washstand had been jammed up against the rest of the barricade, and the Fourth-Formers swarmed over it, putting all their weight and strength to the task of keeping it against the door.

Yet the seniors were straining every nerve, and were reckless now of damage to the door. It began to bulge again—alarmingly. The barricade groaned and shifted; a chair crashed down.

Blake's face grew anxious again. He need not have worried, however.

There came sudden noise outside—the sound of racing feet.

It was followed by a startled yell from Kildare, an exclamation from Mr. Railton, and then an uproar of yelling and the sounds of fierce strife.

"What the thump——"

"On the ball!" came a familiar, welcome voice. "Up Shell and at 'em! Justice and fair play for ever!"

"Hurrah!"

Outside in the corridor the uproar was tremendous now—scuffling, tramping, and the sound of blows and yells. Above it all could be heard Mr. Railton's voice calling and shouting helplessly.

"Bai Jove, what——"

"It's those Shellfish, of course!" roared Blake, in wild delight. "It's Tom Merry and his lot to the giddy rescue! Hurrah! Open that dashed door!"

"What-ho!"

The barricade was pulled away with desperate haste, and

the door dragged open. There was no rush of seniors—those startled individuals were otherwise engaged. The passage outside the dormitory was swarming with juniors—the hapless seniors could scarcely be seen in the melee.

"Go it!" roared Blake, nearly wild with delight. "Good old Tom Merry! On the ball!"

But no help was necessary—the Shell fellows were there to the last man. Against such a crowd the dozen or so seniors were helpless. They were rushed and bundled, fighting hard, to the top of the stairs, and rolled down them one by one amid a scene of indescribable uproar and confusion.

Mr. Railton elected to go without a struggle, greatly to the relief of the majority of the rebels. The last thing Tom Merry & Co. wanted was the necessity of handling their popular Housemaster. Ephraim Taggles had vanished at the first onslaught of the Shell fellows.

"Hurrah!"

"This way, Tom Mewwy!"

"Hold on! Get all our blankets and things first!" yelled Tom Merry. "Some of you guard the stairs!"

"Yes, rather!"

While a crowd guarded the head of the stairs the rest of the Shell rushed to obey Tom Merry's order. From the

Shell dormitory blankets and sheets were fetched, as well as everything else Tom felt might be wanted.

It was soon done, and then the Shell fellows swarmed into the Fourth dormitory, and swiftly the barricade was piled up again and everything made secure.

"Good man! Oh, good man!" shouted Blake, thumping Tom Merry excitedly on the back. "It's thundering decent of you fellows to back us up like this, Tom Merry!"

"We stand together in cases like this!" snapped Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. "We know what that brute Captain Ratcliff is! We might have had him ourselves, and we know you fellows would have backed us up fast enough!"

"You're with us to the bitter end, then?" asked Levison eagerly.

"To the last ditch!" said Tom.

"Yes, rather!"

It was a roar of excited Shell voices, and Blake flushed with pleasure. He had doubted a little at the thought of the Fourth against the school. But with the Shell solidly behind them—

"It's a barring-out, then, in real earnest!" said Blake.

(Continued on next page.)



"Generous Dick," who has offered 11d. to start a pension fund for the Oracle, is advised by our hardy perennial to found a home for stray tortoises instead.

Q. What is the Thuparama Dagoba?

A. This, Ernest, of Toppenham, is the oldest Buddhist shrine of Ceylon, having been erected by King Devanampiya Tissa about 247 B.C. It is composed of solid brickwork, and buried in the centre, probably in a golden casket, is a very sacred relic—the right collar-bone of the Lord Buddha, brought from North India by



A very old and sacred Buddhist shrine.

early missionaries of the faith. This dagoba stands upon a high platform of brickwork and is surrounded by tall, slender pillars, originally numbering 176. It was restored and much altered in 1842.

Q. How far would a toy balloon travel before coming down?

A. Naturally this would depend on various circumstances, such as the strength of the wind, quality of the balloon, and so on, as you should be able to see yourself, "Regular Subscriber." Not long ago a toy balloon was released in Suffolk and found in Sweden, no less than 700 miles distant. There may have been other more remarkable cases, but I have no record of them. By the way, the office-boy wishes to point out that the acid

tablet you enclosed for him in your letter was a bit frayed at the edges!

Q. Where is there a school on wheels?

A. In New Ontario, Canada. The idea was tried as an experiment and railway cars were provided free by the Canadian Pacific and Canadian Northern Railways. The novel school on wheels has a staff of teachers and can reach the children of outlying settlements.

Q. Do they have telephones aboard ocean liners?

A. Not half, Charlie P.! Some of the big liners have as many as a thousand phones and their own exchanges. So glad to hear that your young brother who swallowed your Meccano bolts has coughed up!

Q. Who wrote "The Answer"?

A. Never heard of it, "Old Chum." But I think it must have been A. Lemon. By the way, have you read "Ever Been Stung?" by Amos Quito?

Q. What career shall he take up?

A. The other day I had a most pathetic letter from a fond parent of a GEM reader. This gentleman, who signs himself "Harassed Dad," says that his offspring is for ever telling stories, lies, fibs, tarradiddles, terminological inexactitudes, or barefaced whoppers. According to Dad, it seems to be his only real accomplishment, and he wants to know what career such a boy could possibly take up with any chance of success. Well, "Harassed Dad," what about his aiming at some sort of political job or getting him apprenticed to a firm of motor-car salesmen?

Q. Why does a horse sleep standing?

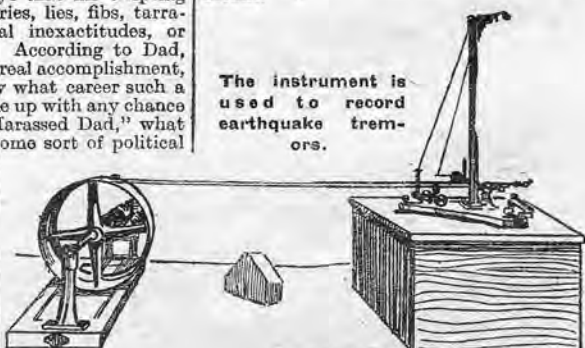
A. This question, bunged in by a Chichester chum, was obviously one for

the office-boy, who says he knows a bagful about natural history and more about horses even than the sub-editor. For once, however, he was at a loss and could only suggest that certain horses have an uncanny knack of knowing when he or the sub-editor draws one in a sweep! Then the mere thought of its passing the winning post first makes it dizzy. This explanation being unsatisfactory I sought out in turn several other more prominent horse lovers, including Lord Lonsdale, Steve Donoghue and Wee Georgie Wood. From their remarkable compendium of knowledge I gathered that a horse sleeps standing up because it is too tired as a rule to lie down. Since then I have read the real scientific explanation in the recent *Bumper Number* of the "Vet's Weekly." It seems that we human beings sleep lying down because unconsciousness in us causes a loss of muscular energy in the legs on which we balance ourselves when awake. A horse, however, has four legs—so the "Vet's Weekly" affirms—and therefore it can confidently have forty winks standing upright because its weight is evenly distributed at four corners, so to speak. Despite this, some horses, like ourselves, prefer to lie down to sleep—a remarkable instance being the one that the office-boy assured me yesterday would win the two-thirty in a canter.

Q. What is a seismograph used for?

A. This is a question from a student of geology. A seismograph is a highly-sensitive instrument, placed in observatories all over the world, by means of which earthquake tremors of even very slight character are recorded. The study of the propagation of these tremors through the earth has yielded information about the physical state of the interior of the globe that was unobtainable by direct means.

The instrument is used to record earthquake tremors.



"We'll go the whole hog! But we'll agree to have you Shell fellows on one condition, Tom Merry."

"What's that?" asked the captain of the Shell, staring.

"You've got to lead us, Tom Merry!" said Blake grimly.

"Hear, hear!"

Every fellow in the room was agreed on that. Tom was a born leader, and with him to lead, the rebels felt certain of victory.

"I'd like to lead, of course," said Blake, flushing; "but I know you're the better man, Tommy. I'm willing to take the brunt of the trouble, of course, if it does end in disaster!"

Tom's face flushed with pleasure.

"Then I'll agree to that," he said, laughing. "But it isn't going to end in disaster—it's going to end in victory. No single man is going to bear the brunt, anyway. We're standing in together, and it's going to be death or victory! When I heard the row in your Form-room I realised that it could only come to this. And I've already got a plan."

"Oh, good!"

"You're forgetting one thing, though," said Fatty Wynn, his fat face showing great anxiety.

"What's that, Fatty?"

"Grub!" said Fatty. "What about grub? It's nearly tea-time now!"

"Yes; what about grub?" snorted Trimble. "I'm hungry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter," said Tom Merry soberly. "We can miss tea easily enough, most of us, but we've got to have grub and water. The dormitory's all right for the time being, but we can't hold out here for ever."

"I've realised that," said Blake, nodding a trifle glumly. "I intended to wait until night, and then form a foraging party for grub and things. The prefects are not likely to stay up all night for us."

"They're bound to keep a guard on the dorm, though," said Tom coolly. "And even if we did manage to get grub in, they'd do us sooner or later. There's a water tap here, but they could easily cut the water and lights off. This isn't the place for a successful barring-out, Blake."

"Then where—"

"I've thought of the gymnasium—every place at St. Jim's," said Tom Merry grimly. "But the same thing applies. They can easily cut off our supplies of water and food. We've got to get out of St. Jim's altogether to find a suitable stronghold."

"But I don't see—"

"What about the boathouse?" said Grundy.

"Or Pepper's barn?" suggested Figgins.

"Not big enough," said Tom. "And won't do for various other reasons. I've got an idea, though, and I think it will appeal to you fellows."

"What is it?"

"What about the old castle on Wayland Heath?" said Tom. "It's only a mile from St. Jim's, and we could hold it against the Fifth and Sixth easily, I fancy. Plenty of ammunition—snowballs. If the snow fails us we've got turfs galore, and plenty of water."

"Pshaw!"

"There's plenty of wood for fires there, too," said Tom. "Enough to keep us going for days. And there are two or three rooms we can soon make fit to live in. We'll take all the blankets and sheets and things we can collar, and anything else we may want for comfort."

"That's all very well," said Fatty Wynn, shaking his head. "It's a ripping idea. But what about the grub?"

"I've thought of that little point, too," laughed Tom. "To-night we're going to raid the kitchens and larders to begin with. And when that runs short we'll get more from the village."

"Hold on!" said Talbot quietly. "They're bound to find out where we are, and they'll besiege us, Tom. We may not be able to get out for grub."

"Oh, yes, we will!" smiled Tom. "I know a way of getting out without anyone seeing us leave the castle."

"An aeroplane?" suggested Gore sarcastically.

"No; the underground tunnel between the old monk's cell in Rylcombe Wood and the castle vaults," smiled Tom.

"I don't suppose many of you fellows have even heard of it. But Cardew and Levison and a few more fellows have been in it. Cardew once rescued Cousin Ethel and some of our fellows who'd got lost in the tunnel. It's pretty certain nobody else at St. Jim's knows of it—not even the Head."

"My hat! Ripping!"

"I'd forgotten about that," said Blake, his eyes gleaming. "My hat, we'll be able to get in and out of the garrison as often as we like."

"That was my idea in choosing the castle," said Tom. "Not only that, it can be easily defended—especially now

there's plenty of snow. And there's a spring of pure water in the castle courtyard, and the river's only a few yards from the walls on one side. Well, what about it? Is it to be the castle?"

"Yes, rather!"

Every hand went up at once. The idea of defending a castle—even an old ruined castle—appealed to the juniors as romantic and enticing.

"Just the thing!" grinned Grundy. "That's it—the castle. And if snow won't stop 'em, we'll drop boulders down on their nappers from the battlements like the defenders of old."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There aren't any giddy battlements left," laughed Tom. "Still, the walls are still standing, more or less, and—Hullo! Shush!"

There was a sound on the stairs, and then footsteps on the landing. Then came a firm knock on the door.

"Merry!"

It was the Head's deep voice, and it had a tremble of anger in it.

"Yes, sir!" called Tom cheerily.

"Am I to understand that you, and your misguided fellow-juniors of the Shell, have joined those rebellious boys?" demanded the Head.

"Yes, sir. We're out for our rights, sir—the right of juniors to have a man in charge of them, and not a hooligan. We've no wish to be disrespectful to you, Dr. Holmes, but we're backing up the Fourth against tyranny and injustice."

There was a silence. Then the Head spoke again.

"You are aware that this will mean expulsion for you, as one of the ring-leaders, Merry?"

"I fancy the fellows with me will see that that doesn't happen, sir. In any case, we're going on with it, unless Captain Ratcliff leaves."

"Captain Ratcliff remains as the master of the Fourth," returned the Head, in accents that shook with wrath. "I am not likely to be intimidated by unruly Lower School boys."

"Then the barring-out goes on, sir," declared Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Very well. We shall see if you still remain defiant when you have been without food for a few hours!" snapped Dr. Holmes.

There sounded whispering outside the door, and then the juniors heard footsteps retreating and descending the stairs.

"Good!" smiled Tom Merry. "Just what we wanted, chaps! The giddy enemy mean to starve us out, if they can. It will give us plenty of time in which to discuss our plans, chaps. Some of you had better take turns at guarding the windows and the door, and the rest can take a nap on the beds, if they wish. There won't be much sleep for anyone to-night."

"But what about tea?" snorted Trimble.

"If you want tea, Trimble, we'll let you out, and you can get it in Hall on your lonesome with the beaks and seniors, old chap. Just say the word."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Trimble did not say the word. He preferred to remain with the rebels, tea-less and hungry, rather than venture out and face the terrific wrath of the Head and the enemy in general.

CHAPTER 4.

An Army on the Move!

"ALL ready?"

"Ay, ay; ready, skipper!" chuckled Lowther.

"Then you know the programme," said Tom Merry, looking round on a sea of excited, youthful faces. "It'll be risky until we get clear of the school; and we've a lot to do before then. We've heard no sounds outside. But that doesn't say nobody's keeping guard outside the dorm. I expect we'll find Kildare waiting, and a crowd of seniors. They're not likely to give us the chance to get out for grub."

"Rather not."

"If they are there," said Tom grimly, "we'll rush them and trust to luck. After all, we should be a match for the Fifth and Sixth. Here goes, then! Quietly, and no more noise than can be helped."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry and his fellow rebels had spoken in little more than whispers. They knew there was every chance of a watch being kept outside, and that a shout would soon rouse the House.

Still Tom did not fear the result of an encounter. The New House members of the Fifth and Sixth would be over in their own House, and the juniors were now in overwhelming numbers.

Much better, however, if they could do their work without molestation.

As softly as possible they began to remove the barricade

from the door. The hour was late—eleven-thirty had just boomed out from the school clock-tower. The November night was cold, but all the juniors were warmly wrapped up and ready for anything. Most of them carried blankets, sheets, and extra clothes; the rest remained free to load themselves with food and anything else they could lay hands on that might be useful.

Tom Merry had made his plans well, but Grundy upset them a little just then. Eager to lend a hand with the barricade, he dropped a chair with a crash.

Instantly they heard a muttered exclamation, followed by a scurry of feet on the passage outside. Obviously a watch was being kept.



"You young fools!" hissed Captain Ratcliff, his face black with rage. "These ruins are said to be haunted! At night—Ow!" A snowball cut him short abruptly. "Let him have it!" yelled Tom Merry. Whiz, whiz, whiz! That first snowball was followed by many more and scarcely one of them missed its mark. (See Chapter 5.)

"You—you fathead, Grundy!" breathed Tom in sulphurous accents. "Now we've no chance of taking them by surprise! We ought to have thought—"

"That's the worst of you old fogies—you never think of anything!" chuckled a soft voice.

The crowd of juniors jumped, almost startled out of their wits. For the voice had come from above their heads.

Looking upwards, they understood and gasped. In the ceiling was a trapdoor; there was a similar one in the ceiling of all the dormitories. Framed in the opening was the cheeky, impudent face of Wally D'Arcy of the Third. Behind him showed several other youthful, grinning faces of fags.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Blake. "What the thump—"

"Just like you silly asses to get taken by surprise like this!" said Wally warmly. "I suppose you never thought of this trapdoor? You can bet your boots the beaks would have remembered it sooner or later, and then you'd have been raided and nabbed nicely."

"Well, that's so!" grinned Tom Merry faintly. "But what are you kids doing up there? You're all dressed! Does this mean—"

"Don't gas—get away from underneath!" snorted Wally. "We're coming down! Can't you see we're joining you, fathead? Whew! You fellows going out, after all?"

"We're taking up our quarters elsewhere," said Tom softly. "If you're coming, drop down quickly; there's a guard outside, and we've got to rush it—"

"Look here!" said Wally, with withering scorn. "I think

you'd better let me skipper this show, Tom Merry. You want a man with brains! What about you coming this way; I've got a giddy rope here? You can climb up, and do the vanishing trick by the back staircase and the giddy back door!"

"Phew!" breathed Tom. "Good for you, kid! The very wheeze! That staircase leads down to the kitchens, and—"

"And we'll leave the giddy guard on guard!" chuckled Cardew. "I'd like to see their faces when—"

"Never mind gassing!" snapped Tom Merry. "That rope, Wally—quick!"

"What-ho!" said Wally.

A rope came dropping down—the other end fastened securely to one of the beams in the attics above. First the blankets and sheets were hauled up, and then each of the Fourth and Shell swarmed up it and gained the attic. They worked quietly, and no sound of alarm came from the passage.

"Safe enough now!" grinned Blake. "Jove! You kids

think of everything, and no mistake. I see you've got your sheets and blankets—"

"We've got lots of things!" said Wally airily. "Trust me to think of things. You fatheads will be thankful you've got me to advise you before you've finished! Shove that trap back into place and let's get going!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You cheeky young—"

"You ring off, Gus! What's the programme, Tom Merry? I was going to advise you merchants to raid the New House, pitch everybody out neck and crop, and hold the giddy barring-out there!"

"I thought of that, Wally," chuckled Tom. "But it would take some defending, and the enemy might cut the giddy water off; and for other reasons, too, I dropped the idea. I've got a better one! We're bound now for Wayland Castle, kids!"

Wally whistled, and then a gleeful expression came over his face as Tom outlined his plan of action. One and all, the excited fags voted it tophole. Their eyes danced at the prospect.

Chuckling explosively as they thought of the prefects keeping watch and ward outside the deserted dormitory, the juniors swarmed in the big attic and on to the landing outside.

Tom Merry came last and secured the trapdoor. Then the word was passed on to go ahead. In twos, with their outdoor boots slung over their shoulders, and carrying their

various burdens, the rebels stole quietly and in regular order down the stairs.

The kitchen regions were soon reached, and the light was switched on, and the raiders got busy in earnest. Bread and meat, tinned stuffs, tins of biscuits, and all sorts of food were commandeered by the rebels, in addition to stocks of crockery, candles, matches, and oil and two oil-stoves. Several of the fags had been dispatched to the cycle-shed to get lamps also; Tom Merry seemed to forget nothing that might be of use in a siege.

Herries and D'Arcy minor rushed off to get their pets—Towser and Pongo.

Tom was satisfied at last. Loaded up with all kinds of supplies, the juniors trooped out into the snowy quad and joined the rest waiting there.

The snow was thick on the ground, and overhead the stars glimmered in the clear night sky. The trees, leafless but heavy with snow, loomed up gaunt and shadowy as the procession approached the school wall. Silent and still, St. Jim's lay under the stars, its inmates little dreaming of the exodus that had just taken place.

It was no easy matter to reach the lane, and many were the falls from the wall, burdened as the rebels were. But the snow saved them from bruises, and at last the word was passed to march.

"This snow will give us away, though!" exclaimed Blake suddenly. "They'll easily trail us to the castle in the morning. Have you thought of that, Tom?"

"Yes; it can't be helped, though!" said Tom grimly. "In any case, it really doesn't matter; they're bound to find out where we are sooner or later. And I'd rather it were sooner—so long as they give us time to get ready for them! We'll go down Abbey Lane; the snow's trodden down there, and they'll never pick up our tracks. Then we'll start across the heath from there. It'll take them some time to realise where we have gone, then, and to pick up the trail!"

"Good wheeze!" Almost in silence, save for the crunching of feet on the hard snow, the rebels tramped on until Tom Merry gave the word, and they dived through a gap in the hedge in single file, crossed a couple of meadows, and gained the silent heath. Herries and Wally were carrying their pets now.

Here the snow was deeper, and the going was difficult and tiring. But the spirit of the rebels was high, and they trudged on cheerfully, Tom Merry and Blake leading the way at a speed easy for the fags.

"There's the castle!"

"Oh, good!" Ahead loomed the grotesque shape of Wayland Castle, dim and ghostly in the mist which hung low over the heath. Desolate and forbidding it looked indeed, and more than one of the juniors shivered. Somewhere amid the shadowy ruins an owl hooted.

"Oh dear!" gasped Trimble; he was shaking. "Only an owl!" laughed Tom Merry. "We'll jolly soon waken the place up a bit, never fear!"

"They say the giddy castle's haunted!" grinned Lowther. "And remember it's close on Christmas!"

"Dry up, Monty!" snapped Tom Merry. "Don't be an idiot!"

He realised that it would be difficult to keep up the courage of his men if such an idea as that of ghosts once gripped them.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! In olden days the drawbridge across the moat of the castle must have echoed often enough to the tramp of marching men. Now the drawbridge was gone, and its substitute, a wooden footbridge, was echoing to the tramp of marching schoolboys—youthful rebels. The juniors could not help feeling strange and just a bit nervy as they entered the ruins—past midnight as it was.

"Well, here we are!" called Tom Merry cheerfully, standing aside to watch his men file through the shattered gateway. "Get a move on! We've got to make all ship-shape before morning; and we've got to be up early, too, to prepare for an attack! Fires first and lights, and then some grub—supper!"

"Hurrah!" It was a rather subdued cheer. But soon lights were blazing in the ancient ruins—electric lamps, acetylene and oil bicycle-lamps, and lots of candles. The juniors had brought dry sticks, and soon fires were burning in the few remaining chambers of the ruined castle.

The castle was built in the form of a square, with a massive round tower at each corner. Only the four lower rooms of each tower were still intact, with ceilings over them. The upper rooms, the only others remaining, were open to the sky, with very little left of their ancient walls. Stone stairs led upwards to these from the lower chambers—broken and dangerous.

The juniors worked hard; blankets were stuffed into gaping holes and hung over the doorless entrances to keep

out draughts. The stone floors were swept clean, and blankets laid down for beds. In the great wide fireplaces damp wood was stacked to dry by the roaring fires. In the rooms themselves plenty of wood, most of it dry, was ready for present use.

Lamps and candles glowed everywhere, and the leaping flames from the fires danced and flickered on the age-old stone walls. The juniors were amazed at the cosiness of the rooms when all was done at last and they sat down to a supper of bread-and-butter, cheese, and tinned meat, with steaming coffee to drink.

"So far so good!" said Tom Merry, with satisfaction, looking round him at the cheery, excited faces in the fire-light. "It's not so bad, eh?"

"Wathah not, bai Jove!"

"Ripping!"

"Well, we've done enough for to-night," went on Tom. "We'll get busy with the fortifications as soon as it's light to-morrow morning—or this morning, rather!" he added, with a chuckle. "We shall want snowballs by the hundred, and turfs, too."

"What about sentries, Tom?" asked Blake. "Are they wanted?"

"I scarcely think so to-night. Still, you never know. I'll stay up for one; I'm not a bit tired!"

"And I will!" said Grundy and Figgins together.

"Half a dozen will be enough, and we can be relieved at daylight," said Tom. "Figgins, Grundy, Kerr, Lowther, Gussy, and myself will be enough. Agreed?"

The juniors named agreed willingly, and when supper was over and the crockery cleared away, the rest of the juniors turned in, leaving Tom Merry and his fellow sentries to keep watch and ward, ready if an alarm, a very unlikely event, should come.

But none came; nothing save the eerie cries of owls and other night-birds disturbed the grim stillness of the ruined castle—now the stronghold of the St. Jim's rebels!

CHAPTER 5.

A Visitor!

"MORE snow!" Tom Merry spoke with satisfaction.

It was nearly ten o'clock in the morning, and Tom had just turned out of his blankets. At daylight the sentries had wakened six other fellows and turned in their places. Now Tom was up and doing again, having had as much sleep as he wanted.

He had left Blake in charge, and as he came out into the open air of the courtyard Tom grinned in satisfaction at the busy scene there. Some of the fellows were gathering more wood, and a glance through the wide gateway of the castle showed him fellows dragging in loads of snow-covered bracken and timber.

"Good!" said Tom, nodding to Blake, who was busy, with scores of other fellows, making snowballs and piling them in heaps. "We can't have too much wood, and we can't have too many giddy snowballs. I see it's been snowing again!"

"Started soon after I got up," said Blake. "All the better—it'll have covered our footprints by this. But I don't think it will be much. Tommy—getting thinner now, in fact!"

"Don't forget we'll want heaps of snowballs up on the walls!" warned Tom. "You fellows had breakfast?"

"Long ago. Fatty's getting yours now, I think. Hallo, there he is!"

"Breakfast!" bawled Fatty Wynn from the doorway of his cookhouse. "Here you are, Tom Merry!"

"Right-ho!"

Tom joined those who had not had breakfast yet; and he was ready for it. He felt better after a meal of bacon and eggs and marmalade. Afterwards he made a round of the garrison, making suggestions here and there. Some parts of the walls of the castle were shattered, leaving deep gaps that had to be barricaded with boulders. But great masses of masonry and stones lay about everywhere, and there was no lack of suitable material for the barricades.

The juniors worked hard. As the snow would have obliterated their footprints, speed was not so necessary now. None the less, they enjoyed the work, and it kept them occupied and warm.

Tom Merry finished his round and joined Blake again.

"All serene?" asked Blake, grinning.

"Right as rain!" said Tom. "All the chaps in now?"

"Yes. We've got enough wood to keep us going for weeks," said Blake. "Better get these boulders into position now, what?"

"Yes, rather! Mustn't be caught napping. What about the giddy bridge, Blake? Think we can shift it?"

"We've tried it," grunted Blake. "They aren't planks,

(Continued on page 12.)

Mr. Parker, our special representative of football, pops into Villa Park, Birmingham, and interviews the Aston giants. Gee, they're fine fellows, these chaps who chase the leathern sphere in the colours of claret and blue, as "Nossey" explains below.



Mr. Parker POPS IN

TO SEE
ASTON VILLA!

I AM really sorry to have to say this, but it is a fact; there are some people who go to Villa Park at times whom I don't like a bit; they have such a strange sense of humour. I went to Villa Park last season when the claret-and-blues were playing the Arsenal in a Cup-tie.

Just before the match there had been a considerable amount of snow, but by employing nearly all the people in Birmingham as "shifters" the officials of the club had managed to get the snow moved off the playing pitch. It was piled up along the touch-lines. There was a terrific crowd that day, and some of the people who went to watch the game actually sat on the snow. I wish they had sat on it a bit longer, because then there would have been less snow about at the finish of the match.

Of course, I wasn't one of the folk who sat on the snow; my inclinations are towards a cushion which is a bit warmer and less susceptible to heat. I had a seat in the stand, and after the match, as the crush was so serious, I decided that I would do a bit of writing while still in my seat. Well, those good folk of Birmingham whom I don't like suddenly decided that I shouldn't do any writing; that I ought to know that they had spent most of the game sitting on the snow.

Human Telegraph Poles!

AND in case I didn't know what snow was like, they just picked it up—every bit of it—and threw it in my direction in the form of nice round balls, all tightly packed. What a life I had for a few minutes!—because, believe me, those fellows who had seen the match through were pretty good "shooters." So I decided there and then that never again would I visit the ground when there was any snow about, and that is a vow I intend to keep. The supporters of Aston Villa have watched their favourites shooting so straight for goal for so long that they are pretty good when taking pot-shots themselves.

On a recent occasion, however, I slipped in when there were no spectators about, but I couldn't dodge inconvenience even then. Before I had been on the ground, talking to the lads, for more than half an hour I had the stiffest stiff neck you can possibly imagine. That stiff neck was caused through talking to the lamp-posts which stalk about the ground during practice. On second thoughts I don't like the word lamp-posts; it doesn't convey the idea properly. So let us change it to telegraph-poles. That is how the Villa team of these days is made up—of telegraph-poles almost entirely.

Big 'Uns Are Best!

LOOK at those three half-backs standing there in the centre of the field—Jimmy Gibson, Joe Tate, and Arthur Talbot; each one over six feet in height—a nightmare to opposing forward lines, and a short cut to a stiff neck for anybody who spends a few minutes talking to them.

I don't give it as a fact, but I was told in most serious tones by the trainer, Harry Cooch, that they have recently made structural alterations to various doors at Villa Park—had them made higher so that these lengthy lads could walk through without having to bend their backs or without running the risk of knocking their heads off.

Mind you, these three half-backs of the Villa are not the only telegraph-poles scattered here and there about the premises. Goalkeeper Ben Olney can



Snowballs fell thick upon the devoted head of "Nossey"!

touch the cross-bar without standing on his tiptoes, and Tom Waring, one of those many centre-forwards turned out by Tranmere Rovers, is another over the six-foot line.

So you will imagine that the present motto of the Villa seems to be "good big 'uns are better than good little 'uns."

FORTUNATELY these lengthy lads have just recently ceased to wear their hair in a mop to add inches to their appearance. They all turn up ever so spruce; all neat and trimmed. There is a reason for this which I discovered quite by accident. I went up to Billy Walker—you know, the fellow who skips the Villa—and the first thing he said to me was: "You don't seem to have had a very close shave this morning."

I thought I should have to include Billy among the Villa people I don't like, and in a very sarcastic tone—my best Oxford manner, you know—I replied: "There is one thing which can be said about you Villa chaps. You are never personal."

Then Billy smiled as he can smile, and he explained. "You see, Mr. Parker, it's like this. I have just opened a hair-dresser's shop in the town and I thought I could do a nice bit of business when you came along."

SO now you are fully acquainted with the reason for the laugh which goes round the Villa dressing-room when somebody brings in a newspaper on a Monday morning in which it is suggested that the Villa only won their match on the Saturday by a hair-breadth. Or in other words, that they had a close shave.

Of course, the Villa have every right to look neat and properly turned out, because

they have to live up to the name of their right back, Smart—who is that and a bit more. Perhaps you wouldn't believe it, but Smart is actually the fastest runner on the staff, prepared at this moment to challenge anybody and everybody to a sprint the length of the field. The only man who is prepared to take up the challenge is Dicky York, who plays outside-right. Dicky should certainly be a bit of a goer—and he is—because he spent some time in the flying corps during that scrap with Germany a few years back.

And, by the way, if you want to go and live in the Birmingham district—or rather if you have to do so at any time—York is fully prepared to build you a house. That is his trade. He sets things up during the week and knocks things down at the week-end—opposing full-backs or goalkeepers for preference.

At this stage in my nosing business Arthur Dorrell and Ben Olney came up to say good-bye. They told me they were off on a fishing expedition, at which quiet little sport they are inseparable. The tales they tell the other lads about the fish they would have caught if the line hadn't broken!

A Happy Band of Brothers!

SOME new chums have arrived at Villa Park in recent times, but they are very much a happy family. Jimmy Gibson is never tired of saying how he was welcomed when he first came from the land of cakes to put on the claret-and-blue jersey. And George Brown, not long ago of Huddersfield Town, is just as much at home as if he had been born on the ground and lived there all his life.

Some people thought that the Villa had made a mistake when they bought Brown, but that opinion is rapidly changing. He is now fitting into the centre-forward position well, and it is said that the Villa got him because they had never forgotten how on one occasion he scored three goals against them in one game.

So altogether it's a very happy band of brothers trainer Cooch has under his charge. And the club lacks nothing in the way of up-to-date appliances for keeping the players fit. Harry used to keep goal for the Villa, but he had to give it up when, at practice one day, somebody sent in such a hard shot that Harry's index finger of his left hand was broken, and he had to have it off.

Harry wanted to take me along to see the secretary, who is of the big family of Smith, but my neck was so stiff by that time that I couldn't talk to another who was somewhere among the stars. And as I passed out I left this as a parting shot: "I'll bring a step-ladder next time I come!"

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"No Surrender!"

(Continued from page 10.)

they're thumping big balks of timber; and it would take an army of navvies to shift 'em. They're jammed deep into the earth at both sides of the moat, and would want digging out to begin with!"

"Never mind! They'll be lucky to get across!" grinned Tom. "And then they've got the barricade to get over!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "It will be wathah fun guardin' this bawwicade, you know! It is the weal dangah-spot, deah boys! The moat is half full of drifted snow, and they'll have to wade through that before attemptin' to climb the walls all round!"

"I wish it was water, though!" said Tom Merry, with a grim chuckle. "Hallo! That Lowther yelling?"

It was. Lowther was one of the sentries on the highest point of the castle—at the top of the one great tower that remained intact. He was shouting now.

"Someone coming! Where's Tom Merry?"

"Here we are!"

Followed by Blake and Figgins, Tom rushed up the steps of the tower, heedless of the danger of a fall. On the floor above, covered now with snow, Lowther and Herries were standing on a sort of platform formed by the flagged landing on the top of the broken stairway, which still remained against the bare, broken wall that was eight feet or more high at that point.

Lowther turned as they ran up.

"Someone coming, Tommy—a man, I think! He's making for the castle, too! Wait until we come down; it isn't safe for more than two up here!"

Lowther and Herries climbed cautiously down the dangerous steps that still clung precariously to the wall. Tom Merry and Blake took their places on the top of the wall and glanced over the wide, snow-covered heath.

Sure enough a man was approaching the ruined castle, and from the direction of St. Jim's—the roofs and towers of which were visible in the misty distance.

"Railton, I bet!" breathed Tom Merry. "No, by jingo! It looks like that rotter Captain Ratcliff!"

"What? But—"

"I'm jolly sure it is!" snapped Tom, his eyes fixed intently on the approaching figure. "But he isn't limping—he's left his dashed limp at home!"

"Herries said all along the sweep wasn't lame!" said Blake. "Let's get down!"

They went down and joined the workers by the great archway in which the machinery of the drawbridge had once been. The juniors there were hard at work piling up boulders and great stones across the opening. There was a buzz as Tom and Blake broke the news.

"That rotter!" gasped Grundy. "Oh, good! You chaps leave him to me! I'll show him what's what!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll hear what he's got to say first," said Tom. "I'm blessed if I can understand this! Why has he come alone? And, in any case, how has he found out so soon where we are?"

It was rather puzzling, certainly. But as the distant figure grew nearer the puzzle was solved.

"Can't you see, dear men?" drawled Cardew. "He doesn't know we're here!"

"What?"

"He'd be limping if he did!" chuckled Cardew. "Keep out of sight and see what his little game is, I say!"

"Phew!"

The juniors got out of sight at a word from Tom Merry. Tom was watching the oncoming figure keenly now. It was Captain Ratcliff without a doubt, and he was walking quickly through the snow, making a bee-line for the castle. His walk showed no signs whatever of a limp.

Quite suddenly Tom remembered how he and his chums had surprised the captain in the vaults of the castle, and how furious he had been at their appearance. They had wondered then what he was doing there. And Figgins had said that he often went for walks across the heath, and came back dusty and dirty.

And here he was again! What was the mystery?

"Here he comes!"

Through crannies and holes in the barricade the juniors watched the captain as he tramped up to the bridge that spanned the moat. Suddenly he halted, an expression of surprise on his dark, hard features.

"He's spotted the barricade!" murmured Lowther.

That much was obvious. The captain's brow darkened, and he looked puzzled and uneasy. The juniors made no sound. They knew their visitor must have seen the smoke

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from the fires, and he was puzzled still more by the barricade. Possibly he imagined that gipsies or roving vagabonds had taken up their quarters in the castle.

But as he stared at the pile of boulders he seemed to make up his mind suddenly, and he came over the bridge, and started to clamber over the barricade.

"Show up!" grinned Tom.

The next moment Captain Ratcliff's head appeared over the boulders. His face was a picture as the swarm of grinning juniors appeared, and he almost fell backwards, so great was the shock.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Tom cheerfully.

"Have you breakfasted yet?" asked Lowther. "We can offer you snowball-pie, or turf-pudding!"

"Compliments of the season!" was Figg's greeting.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" gasped Captain Ratcliff. "You—you are here, then? You—you rebellious young hounds!"

"He's left his limp at home, but he's not forgotten to bring his temper!" said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"None of your rotting, Lowther!" snorted Grundy. "Just let the brute come over! I'm itching to get my right under his bony chin!"

"Let's hear him first!" grinned Tom. "Now, Captain Ratcliff, we're no end glad to see you and all that. But what are you after here?"

Captain Ratcliff breathed hard. His eyes glittered as he glared at the grinning faces below him. Bitterly had he regretted his harsh treatment of his Form. Not from any motive of remorse, however—far from it. He realised that if the juniors won, all his scheming to get Lathom's job had come to naught, through his own actions, his ungovernable temper.

It was too late for regrets now, however.

"You—you young fiends!" he choked. "I command you—I order you to return to school at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Derisive laughter greeted that. The captain's sallow face went black with rage.

"You young fools!" he hissed. "Do you imagine for one moment that you can hold out here? You may have food, but it will not last for ever. And against seniors and other attackers you cannot possibly retain possession of this—this place! Stop this foolery and return to school!"

"Rats, old bean!"

"I—I will overlook your insults and treatment of myself," snarled the captain. "I will do my utmost to persuade the headmaster to pardon you. Leave this castle; it is dangerous to remain here. The place is in ruins; the cold—"

"Cheese it!" jeered Grundy. "You can't frighten us, you rotter!"

"The ruins are said to be haunted!" went on the captain almost feverishly. "At night you will wish—Ow!"

A snowball stopped his eloquent flow of words. Wally D'Arcy was impatient of discourses at any time.

The captain vanished, falling backwards from his precarious position on the barricade. There was a bump, an angry yell, and then a howl of laughter from the juniors.

"Let him have it!" yelled Tom Merry.

The juniors swarmed up the barricade. Captain Ratcliff was on his feet now, and as he saw them swarming over, he turned and ran for it, snowballs bursting all over him.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

A perfect fusillade of snowballs followed the captain, scarcely one of them missing him at such close quarters. Before he had gone a dozen yards he resembled a snowman at the back. The juniors rushed after him, snowballing as fast as they could knead and throw them. Captain Ratcliff put on speed and fairly flew. Obviously he had left his limp at home!

Any doubts the juniors might have held as to his lameness flew as they saw him covering the snowy heath. The bully and tyrant was showing his yellow streak now. He vanished into the misty distance, and the triumphant, laughing juniors returned to the garrison.

"Well we never expected to see that merchant!" panted Tom Merry, as he clambered over the high barricade.

"What on earth can the man be after here?"

"Perhaps one of those merchants who take an interest in ruins and things!" grinned Lowther.

"Rummy, anyway!" grunted Tom. "If he's interested in ruins, why doesn't he explore those at St. Jim's? They're as interesting as the castle here, anyway. Nobody's seen him exploring them, I bet!"

"Wathah not! It is wathoh queeah, dear boys!" said Arthur Augustus.

And all the juniors agreed with him there.

But the coming of the hated Captain Ratcliff had brought them to the crisis now. The captain would return with his report that the rebels were at the castle, which meant that very soon the enemy would be coming to the attack. And under Tom Merry's crisp orders the defenders set to work with renewed energy to prepare for the expected attack.

CHAPTER 6.
No Surrender!

"HERE they come!" It was a yell from the look-out—the sentry at the observation-post at the top of the tower. It brought a swarm of fellows rushing to their various posts round the castle walls. The greater number were grouped behind the barricade, ready with huge piles of snowballs to hand with which to sweep the footbridge across the moat. At other gaps—weak spots in the castle walls—other groups were gathered, all eager and ready for the coming fight.

Tom Merry had divided his forces with great care and skill. The fags, eager for the fray, were mixed judiciously with the older juniors and scattered round the walls. Picked fellows—Figgins, Blake, D'Arcy, Grundy, Talbot, Levison, and other leading lights of the Lower School—were in charge of the various companies. Behind the main barricade, where the biggest rush was expected, Tom had gathered together what he called his "shock troops."

They would undoubtedly stand the brunt of the fighting, which probably explained the rush of recruits to join the shock-troops!

By this time the juniors had quite settled down to their new life, and were enjoying it immensely. When the morning's work was done they had livened things up in various ways—with snowfights, slides in the snowy courtyard, and other diversions.

The rebellion was going great guns, the unanimous opinion being that it was "tons better" than lessons in a stuffy Form-room.

Now, however, the enemy were in sight, and the stern work was at hand.

Those on the walls could see the enemy advancing now!

"Railton, Captain Ratcliff, old Ratty, and a crowd of Sixth Form chaps!" yelled Bernard Glyn, from the observation post.

"Hurrah!"

It was a wild cheer. Snowballs were picked up in readiness.

"When I give the word!" yelled Tom Merry. "And remember—no surrender! I fancy we'll soon beat off that little lot!"

"What-ho!"

"I'd keep that lot off myself!" said Grundy scornfully.

The enemy were near now—even those behind the barricade could recognise them all. From Mr. Railton downwards they looked grim and determined.

"Stop!"

Tom Merry's voice rang out clearly on the crisp, wintry air.

Mr. Railton halted at the far end of the footbridge. At this the moat narrowed down, and was only a few yards across. The crowd of seniors and masters waited.

"Merry!"

"Yes, sir!" called Tom cheerily.

"The headmaster has sent me to make a final appeal to your decency and good sense!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "Return at once! Stop this lawless nonsense, and only the ringleaders will be punished! If you obey without further delay there will be no expulsions!"

"Bai Jove! The Head's climbin' down already!" murmured Gussy.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Is that all, sir? Did the Head say anything about our terms?" he called calmly.

"Your terms!" stuttered the Housemaster. "How dare you, Merry? The Head is not likely to make any terms with rebels other than he has made."

"He refuses to sack Captain Ratcliff?" insisted Tom.

"Most certainly!" was the grim, angry answer.

"Then buzz off back again!" yelled Grundy.

"You've had your walk for nothing, sir!" said Tom Merry coolly. "You know our terms, sir! Lathom has gone. We all believe he's been forced to go, and we believe that rotter behind you—Captain Ratcliff—helped by his uncle, is responsible!"

"Perfectly monstrous!" hooted Mr. Ratcliff, while Captain Ratcliff gritted his teeth. "Mr. Railton, you heard—"

"I heard!" said Mr. Railton coldly. "Boys, you are talking utter nonsense—wicked nonsense! Mr. Lathom chose to spurn an offer of friendship made by Dr. Holmes, his old friend. He resigned entirely on his own responsibility."

"Well, perhaps we're wrong there, sir," said Tom Merry quietly. "But that makes no difference to our terms regarding Captain Ratcliff. The Fourth—"

"You are not a member of the Fourth, Merry! Why are you—"

"We're standing together in this—shoulder to shoulder!" said Tom clearly. "We all know what an utter hooligan Captain Ratcliff is. The Fourth refuse to have him as their Form master, and we in the Shell and Third are backing them up to the bitter end!"

"Very well!" snapped Mr. Railton. "Kildare, you will force an entry into the castle and capture the ringleaders of this rebellion! If they resist, so much the worse for them! I warn them—Yoooooop!"

Once again Wally D'Arcy had been impatient. A snowball, flung with unerring aim, burst full on Mr. Railton's august chin, and he staggered back.

There was no need for Tom Merry to give the order to fire—Wally's snowball was the signal, and it was followed by a score. A second struck Mr. Ratcliff, sending his hat spinning away; a third burst full in Kildare's face; a fourth burst on Captain Ratcliff's left ear, though he was standing just behind Mr. Railton.

Then the air became full of flying snowballs from behind the barricade and from the top of the towers and walls.

"Good gad!" gasped Kildare, ducking and dodging frantically. "The—little fiends—Groooogh!"

Kildare's mouth stopped another one.

"Kildare, Darrell, North, Monteith!" spluttered Mr. Railton. "Go on—charge that barricade! Bless my soul! I never expected—I did not dream of this!"

"We'll jolly soon have them out of that!" choked Kildare furiously. "Come on, you men!"

"I can see us doing it!" growled Darrell.

But he and the rest followed Kildare as the captain of St. Jim's led the attack with a rush. They might just as well have charged a brick wall.

"Let 'em have it!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Give 'em socks, boys!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwwah!"

Whiz, whiz, whiz, whiz!

The air was thick with whizzing snowballs. Kildare staggered and fell, dazed, half-blinded by that terrific bombardment before he even set foot on the balks of timber that formed the bridge. The seniors reeled, and broke up, winded and staggered. Nothing could withstand that irresistible fire.

"Keep it up!" yelled Tom Merry, wildly excited.
(Continued on next page.)



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"Bravo!"

"Go it!"

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Darrell had set foot on the bridge; he lurched forward desperately, staggering under the hurricane of snowballs. But suddenly an extra-special one sent by Fatty Wynn caught him neatly between the eyes, and then—
Flop!

Darrell reeled and fell over the bridge, diving headfirst into the heaped-up snow in the moat below. Only his wildly-kicking legs were visible.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rebels could scarcely throw for laughing now. Somehow the hapless Darrell managed to work his way upright again, and he floundered to safety, covered in snow as in a shroud.

"Let him get clear!" laughed Tom Merry. "They're drawing off! Hurrah!"

There was a roar of cheering as Kildare and his men retreated in confusion, gasping and panting, and smothered from head to foot in snow. They reeled and staggered back to where the dumbfounded masters were waiting, followed by a fusillade of whizzing snowballs.

"First round to us!" bawled Grundy. "Go home, you silly asses!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway take your snowmen home, Mr. Wailton!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Railton, retreating hurriedly still farther out of range. "I—I had no idea—I did not dream they would go to such lengths, or that their defence would be so ably organised, Kildare!"

"They're hot stuff, sir!" choked Kildare, spluttering and coughing. "Oh, my hat! It's no good, sir! They're well prepared, and we'll never do it on our own! If we had all the Sixth here and the Fifth as well—"

"I do not think the Head will consent to the Fifth coming, Kildare!" said Mr. Railton, quite flustered and dismayed.

"Scandalous!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "I cannot understand why Kildare and the rest of the Sixth did not continue the attack. A few snowballs—poooh!"

"Perhaps you'd like to lead us!" said Kildare, just as snappily. "We'll follow if you will, sir!"

But Mr. Horace Ratcliff did not care to avail himself of the opportunity. He snorted, and then, realising that further attack without help was hopeless, the weary party from St. Jim's, aching, snorting, gasping, and covered from head to foot in clinging, drenching snow, trudged dismally back to St. Jim's to report the overwhelming victory of the rebels.

The attack had been beaten off, and at the old castle the besieged garrison cheered until they were hoarse.

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry's Brain-wave!

"**S**PADES!" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. The invading "army" had vanished across the heath. Though he had little fear of another attack that day, Tom Merry was taking no chances. At once he set his men to work strengthening the defences and replenishing the supplies of snowballs.

The early winter dusk was already settling over the desolate heath, and Tom felt pretty certain that the Head would never allow an attack in the dusk or darkness when a fall from a wall might mean serious injury.

None the less, being Scouts, the motto of the defenders was "Be prepared!"

For another hour they worked hard, and then gathered round the fires for tea—and they were ready for it.

After a jolly meal Tom Merry, Blake, and Figgins made the round of the garrison.

As a matter of fact, Tom and his lieutenants were not a little worried and anxious. They had beaten off the first attack with ease, but on the morrow they knew another attack would come. The Head was certain to move heaven and earth to crush the rebellion before break-up day.

And this time besiegers would come in force, Tom knew. The whole of the Fifth and Sixth would be enlisted, besides the male members of the domestic staff, the gardeners, the groundsman, and the school boatman, and all masters that were likely to be of use.

And the castle was rather extensive for even a numerous garrison like the Shell, Fourth, and Third of St. Jim's to defend. The moat, partly filled with snow, was a great obstacle to an attack, certainly. But Tom did not want to rely upon the snow—which might be gone before another morning dawned, though it was not likely.

So Tom and his leaders had been gravely discussing the position as they walked the grounds of the beleaguered castle.

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It was as they looked down from the east tower overlooking the river that the brain-wave struck Tom Merry, and he ejaculated: "Spades!"

"Spades!" exclaimed Blake, staring. "What—"

"The very wheeze!" said Tom, with a chuckle. "The Head isn't the man to be beaten without a hard fight, we know. He'll enlist men from the village before he'll give way, very likely. He'll bring along every single senior and man he can get hold of—to crush us into submission as soon as possible."

"We know that," said Figgins. "We'll beat them off, Tommy, if the snow holds out."

"That's the trouble," said Tom. "Supposing the snow doesn't hold out? In that case, to be quite frank, chaps, I'm thinking we'll have our hands full when the Fifth and Sixth join forces. They'll attack from a score of points, perhaps, and once they break through—"

"Well, what have spades to do with it, Tommy?" asked Blake curiously.

Tom pointed down to the river, gleaming below. At that



Tom Merry was about to leap at the hooded, shadowy figure, when two burning eyes blazed into his own, and two

spot the River Rhyl curved in towards the castle with scarcely thirty yards of ground between it and the moat. Black and sluggish it looked, with broken ice floating downstream between the snowy-white banks.

"In the old days they kept a watch on the river from this tower," said Tom. "We may get an attack from the river, too. But I'm not thinking of that now. If you notice you'll see a deep ditch running from the bank of the river to the moat—in fact, it seems to be a continuation of the moat on a narrower scale. But it's banked up by the river!"

"Phew! You mean—"

"That hollow from the moat to the river bank isn't just natural," said Tom, his eyes gleaming. "It was dug ages ago as a channel to fill the moat from the river when the moat itself went dry. All that was needed to be done was to break down that short stretch of bank between the channel and the river. Well, what's to stop us doing the same? With a few spades—"

"My hat, what a wheeze!"

"Kildare and his crowd didn't enjoy struggling through waist-high snow under our fire," said Tom. "They'll enjoy

struggling or swimming through icy-cold water less, I fancy! In fact, they'll never tackle it. Railton wouldn't allow them to try."

"You mean to break down that bank with spades and let the water flood the moat?" gasped Figgins gleefully.

"Just that," smiled Tom. "It's been flooded that way before, no doubt of that."

"Ripping!" said Blake. "But we've no spades."

"We've got to get them," said Tom briskly—"and quickly! Somebody's got to go for them through the secret tunnel! Cardew knows it well, and so do you, Blake. I suggest that Cardew, Blake, Gussy, and Lowther go—four



turned suddenly. The junior heard a muttered, startled exclamation—cold and strong as steel, gripped his throat! (See Chapter 8.)

should be enough. My place is here, in case an attack does come at dusk."

"Get spades from the village?" asked Blake.

"Yes—though hold on! The school's nearer to the monk's cell. What about sneaking in by the playing-fields? They keep a supply of spades and things in the shed behind the pavilion. It'll be risky, but not so risky as going to the village."

"Phew! Good idea! I'm on, for one!" said Blake.

"Then get your men together and make a start—sharp!" snapped Tom. "The sooner the moat's flooded the better! I'll get a crowd to be clearing away the snow from the bank and making a start with any tools we can get."

"Right—ho!"

The matter was not discussed further—no time was to be lost. Leaving Tom to direct a gang to make a start on the river bank, Blake, Cardew, Lowther, and Arthur Augustus got Glyn's big electric lamp and torches, and muffled themselves up in greatcoats and scarves. Then they descended the steps down into the castle vaults.

It was damp and chilly below ground; Cardew grimaced at the smell and mildewy grime. Glyn's lamp was a

powerful one, and the light flickered and danced on dripping stone walls and in black patches, showing where passages branched off.

Cardew led the way, and he did not hesitate.

"A dashed labyrinth—what?" grinned Cardew. "A chap could easily lose himself here and go wandering on until he dropped from exhaustion, and—"

"Cheese it!" snapped Blake, with a shudder. "I—I'm not sure of the way, Cardew. I've been once, but—"

"I'm sure!" said Cardew grimly. "I was lost here once, remember—I've reason to be sure. I left marks, an' I also shoved stones across the passages that branch off into the quarry workings. Those are the danger spots."

"Go ahead!"

In silence they went ahead, Cardew's eyes scanning floors and walls. Once or twice he hesitated, but, sure enough, there were marks on the walls and stones across the tunnels that branched off. The deathly silence, the earthy smell, the flickering light casting grotesque shadows on the walls was getting on their nerves. Even Cardew was silent.

He spoke at last.

"Was it worth it?" he said, with a faint grin. "Fancy goin' through this for a few spades, you men!"

"Not for a few spades," said Blake. "For the barring-out and our giddy rights, Cardew! Are we far from the exit now, do you think?"

"I hope not!" drawled Cardew. "A mile of this is no joke! I fancy the air seems to be getting fresher, though."

It was, and very soon, to their intense relief, the light shone ahead on slimy, stone steps.

"Here we are!" murmured Cardew. "Don't forget to tip the merry old guide, gentlemen! By the way, the monk's cell is supposed to be haunted by the ghost of a giddy murdered monk, y'know!"

"Oh, dry up, you ass!" snorted Lowther.

Cardew chuckled softly, and the next moment they reached the steps. Above their heads showed a square of grimy, moss-covered flagstone. Cardew stood back, and gave Blake and Lowther the honour of heaving it up. It went back with a dull thud, and all four explorers were thankful to emerge into the open air.

"Now for the pavilion!" said Blake, his spirits rising instantly. "We'll leave the lid off until we come back. Nobody comes here."

"Right—ho!"

Leaving the flagstone on its edge, the juniors crept out of the ruined monk's cell, its shattered walls ghostly in their coverings of snow.

Then they set out at a brisk trot for St. Jim's.

"Look out! Down!"

Jack Blake hissed the warning, and ducked on the instant.

The expedition had been successful—so far. The daring juniors had gained the playing-fields, and by keeping close to the hedge, had reached the pavilion in safety. The toolshed window was unfastened, fortunately, though it would not have taken Blake & Co. long to open it. Now, carrying all the digging implements they had found in the shed, four spades and two garden forks, they were hurriedly retracing their steps.

It was just as they reached the stile leading on to Rylcombe wood that Blake gave the warning hiss.

Coming along Rylcombe Lane was a man—a tall man, and he limped as he walked over the trampled snow of the lane.

"That worm!" breathed Blake, as they crouched low in the hedge. "Good job he didn't spot us! Phew! A narrow escape!"

Captain Ratcliff—for it was he—strode past the hiding juniors. They waited until he had vanished round a bend in the lane, and they mounted the stile and continued on their way.

"I'd like to have stopped to give him a tap with this shovel!" grinned Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! The brute gave me a headache—"

"Let him rip!" snapped Blake. "We're lucky he didn't spot us—a scrap with him would have been no joke, I can tell you! Come on!"

The juniors went on, dismissing Captain Ratcliff from their minds. They reached the monk's cell, and, switching on the light again, descended the flight of stone stairs. The heavy flagstone was pulled into place, and then once again Cardew led the way into the gloomy labyrinth.

Silence reigned in the gloomy clearing as the flagstone thudded home.

But not for long! There came the soft crunch of cautious feet on the snow, and then, after a short wait, a man emerged into the clearing, and entered the ruined monk's cell, his eyes—hard and steely—fixed on the tracks in the snow left by the juniors.

It was Captain Ratcliff, but he was not limping now!

His eyes gleamed as he scanned the ground around the secret flagstone.

"The young fools!" he muttered, his thin lips curling in a sneer. "So they imagined I had not seen them! They also overlooked the fact that their tracks showed in the snow!"

He stooped, and began to work at the flagstone, listening intently as he did so. He got a grip on the edges at length, and very cautiously, with seemingly little effort, he raised the heavy flag.

His eyes glinted at sight of the steps leading down into the blackness.

"So my dear, respected relative was right the other day!" he murmured. "He told me there was a legend, at all events, that a secret tunnel existed between the castle and some ruin or other! This is it—those young fiends have found it! Dear uncle little dreamed why I was interested in such things! Well, there are other ways of getting rid of those infernal brats than by force of arms! If only I had a lamp now—"

He stood motionless, his brow lined. Then a cruel grin hovered round his tight-lipped mouth, and he gently replaced the stone and moved out of the clearing. Apparently Captain Ratcliff had thought of a plan of action—and apparently it was one that appealed to his sense of humour!

CHAPTER 8.

The Night Alarm!

"ALL well?"

Tom Merry smiled as he joined Kerr and Manners, who were pacing up and down behind the barricade in the great archway of the ruined castle.

It was close on midnight! The night was fairly light—stars twinkled overhead, and a dim moon shone on the ruins, sending grotesque and eerie shadows across the big courtyard. All was still and silent, save for a faint moan of wind round the ancient walls. In the castle, grouped in their blankets snugly round the big fires, the St. Jim's garrison of rebels slumbered peacefully. Only the sentries were awake—some at their positions on the walls, others at the gateway and other danger spots.

Tom Merry was making his rounds, giving each sentry a word of cheer.

And they needed it. It was bitterly cold, muffled up as they were. Moreover, it was no pleasant task, pacing those age-old ruins, with their eerie relics of the past. It was a task to tax the stoutest nerves.

Tom knew it, and he made a point of making the rounds as frequently as possible. Two sentries guarded the gateway on to the dark, deserted heath. Kerr and Manners were there now, doing their three hours' duty.

From various look-out slits and windows overlooking the courtyard faint ruddy glows from the fires gleamed—a cheering sight to the sentries. But for them the latter would have found the task unbearable.

"All serene!" replied Kerr, with a grim chuckle. "But it's cold—"

"Jolly cold!" said Manners, with a grunt. "A cup of steaming coffee would go down well now, Tommy!"

"Yes, rather!" said Kerr.

"I've thought of that!" grinned Tom. "Cheer up! Fatty Wynn's awake, and I've just told him to make enough to go round the sentries. I'll bring it round—Good heavens, what's that?"

The juniors started violently, their hearts thumping madly against their ribs! For without warning there came from somewhere in the gloomy castle a scream—a shrill, nerve-shattering scream of terror!

"That was—Fatty Wynn!" breathed Kerr, going white to the lips. "Something's happened! This way!"

"Hold on—you chaps stick to your posts!" snapped Tom.

He rushed to the nearest doorway, dragged aside the blanket, and rushed inside. All the fellows were awake, just jumping up from their blankets, their faces startled in the firelight.

"What's the matter?"

"Somebody screamed!" stammered Arthur Augustus, his face white. "It woke me up—"

"This way!"

From the large, inner room voices were calling excitedly. As he rushed inside, hurling the blanket that covered the doorway to one side, Tom found a scene of confusion within.

The fire had burned low, the glowing embers casting flickering shadows about the room. Every fellow was out of his blankets, blinking about him dazedly.

"What's happened?" cried Tom Merry. "Somebody screamed—Fatty Wynn, I think! Where—Good heavens!"

Tom's eyes had fallen on a still form just outside the

radius of the glowing fire. Close by was a saucepan, its contents scattered over the floor.

"Fatty!" gasped Tom Merry. "A light—quick!"

A lamp flashed on, and candles were hurriedly lighted with shaking hands.

On the stone floor lay Fatty Wynn, flat on his back, with his white face turned upwards. His eyes were closed, his face ghastly. Even as he stooped over him, Tom could not help noting the curious, livid red marks on the junior's podgy neck.

"Fatty!" breathed Tom, horrified.

He raised the unconscious figure, and Cardew brought forward the electric lamp. As the bright light flashed on his face, Fatty Wynn opened his eyes.

He shuddered violently.

"You're all right now, Fatty!" said Tom quietly. "What's the matter? You've had a fright—a bad fright, old man!"

"The—the ghost!" panted Fatty Wynn faintly, and he looked about him with something like terror.

"You've had a fright!" repeated Tom. "You must have dropped asleep again and dreamed—had a nightmare, old chap! There's no ghost here—look around you!"

Fatty Wynn sat up, shaking in every limb, and his hands went to his neck.

"I—I saw it—I felt it!" panted Fatty Wynn frantically. "It was a ghost—the ghost of a monk! He had a cowl over his head, but I saw the eyes—burning eyes! Then—Heavens! It was awful!"

"Those marks on his neck—look!" panted Lumley-Lumley in sudden alarm.

Fatty took his hands away and showed his neck. There was a deep, horrified murmur.

"I—I can't understand it!" muttered Tom Merry. "You—you didn't do it yourself—"

"I rather fancy he couldn't, from the look of those marks!" said Cardew, his face unusually puzzled and serious. "This is dashed queer, you men!"

"I—I don't understand it!" said Tom thickly. "A ghost—"

He halted abruptly.

A faint, almost imperceptible rustle had sounded from the shadows near the door. All heard it and glanced that way almost tremblingly. Then the colour ebbed from their faces, and they stood like frozen statues, mouths open, tongues and lips suddenly parched dry with horror.

The ghost stood there—a dim, shapeless figure. The juniors glimpsed a tall, dim form—two burning eyes seemed to glow at them!

Then the form moved out from the shadows, slowly, noiselessly. The petrified watchers saw a tall form in a flowing robe and cowl—a hooded monk!

Under the hood showed piercing, glinting eyes and a chalk-like face!

Not a sound escaped the terrified juniors—they stood frozen with horror. They could not move—they scarcely breathed in that terrible moment.

The hooded monk turned soundlessly and vanished through the doorway from which the juniors had already torn the blanket.

Silence! Tom Merry gave a choking gasp. Not a fellow had been left in the outer apartment—all had rushed in after Tom.

"Come on!" he panted, overcoming his fright with a mighty effort. "It's no ghost—it's somebody playing ghost! After me!"

He hurried into the outer room, hardly knowing what to expect there. The room was empty and still, only the firelight dancing and flickering on bare walls and tumbled blankets.

He had given one glance round when from somewhere out in the open sounded another scream—a prolonged scream of horror that ended in a choking gurgle.

"Kerr!" panted Blake. "Good heavens!"

Tom set his teeth and rushed out. Many of the bolder spirits—Blake, Figgins, Cardew, Levison—rushed after him. They found a terrified, shaking Manners stooping over a still form on the ground—Kerr!

"It—it's gone!" faltered Manners shakily. "I—I didn't see it until I heard Kerr scream! I was just pacing outside in the courtyard. It—it passed me, almost touched me! I was petrified—could do nothing! I rushed in when it had gone—"

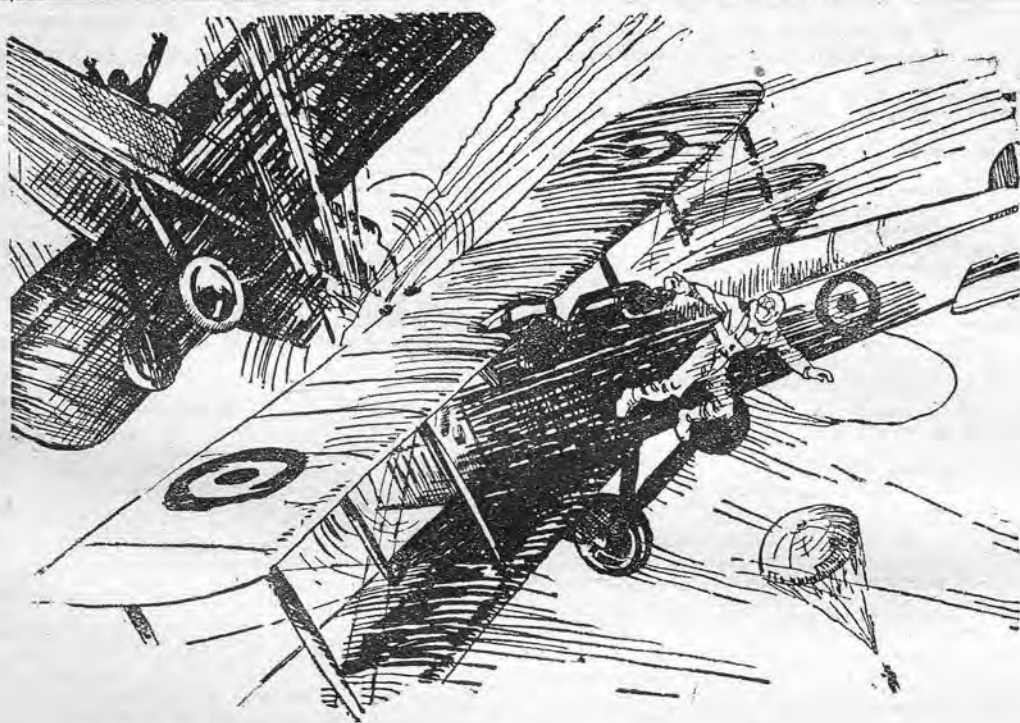
Kerr sat up, and Tom Merry drew a deep breath of relief.

"Look to him, some of you!" he snapped. "Cardew and the rest spread out and search the courtyard! Somebody's playing ghost! We're going to nab him!"

The juniors obeyed—Tom's quiet confidence gave them courage, and they started the search. The juniors had scarcely broken into twos to begin when a shout sounded behind Tom—from the archway they had just left.

(Continued on page 18.)

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"No Surrender!"

(Continued from page 16.)

The captain of the Shell turned swiftly—just in time to see a vague, hooded form glide swiftly under the archway and vanish.

"This way!" yelled Tom. "He's gone in again—this way!"

Tom rushed under the archway where Kerr, Manners, and a terrified crowd were crouched against the far wall by the barricade. Without hesitation he rushed into the apartment off the archway.

He saw it at once—the hooded figure! In the outer chamber Trimble was shrieking, his back against the wall. The hooded form passed him and vanished silently into the empty inner chamber beyond.

Tom, reckless now, dashed after it.

He caught the hooded figure up just inside the big, shadowy chamber, and he was about to leap at it when the monk turned suddenly.

Tom heard a muttered, startled exclamation and then two burning eyes blazed into his own, and two hands, icy-cold and strong as steel, gripped his throat.

He kicked and struggled convulsively. There was a shout from outside—Blake's voice. Another muttered exclamation, and then the grip loosened, and Tom was flung with vicious force across the flagged floor.

When Blake rushed in with a little crowd at his heels, scarcely two seconds later, Tom was alone in the room. He lay there half-stunned, swaying dazedly, half-sick with the horror of those awful moments.

"Gone!" panted Blake, casting the light of his torch into the shadows. "Tom—"

Tom Merry staggered to his feet, his hands to his throat. He was shaking in every limb, but his white face was grim now.

"It was no ghost!" he said huskily. "It was a man—a brute as strong as a horse! I—I didn't see him go! If he passed you—"

"He didn't!" said Blake, and he glanced about him nervously, the torch in his hand shaking.

"The vaults, of course!" snapped Tom, pulling himself together. "He must have escaped by the vaults! Here, lend me that lamp of yours, Glyn! I'm not done yet!"

"Bai Jove! You—you're goin' down into the vaults!"

"Yes!" snapped Tom, his eyes glinting. "I'll go alone if nobody else—"

"I'm coming!" said Blake at once, while Figgins and half a dozen fellows nodded.

"I fancy we shan't catch the merchant, though!" said Cardew.

But he went with them. The entrance to the vaults was at the far end of the apartment where the stores were being kept, and Tom led the way down the worn steps.

A moment later the search had begun—lights flashed in the vaults, on stone walls, and flagged floors, pillars and arches. But realisation of the hopelessness of such a search in that vast labyrinth came to Tom at last, and he recalled the searchers.

"If he did come down here he's gone long ago!" he grunted. It can't be a ghost, anyway! Rot! It's some merchant out to frighten us away from here for some reason or other—but a dangerous brute, whoever he is! Let's get back!"

The juniors climbed the stone stairs back into the ruins. To make sure, another search above ground was made; with no result. And, at last, after the sentries had been doubled the garrison settled down in their blankets again, though not to sleep. Ghost or no ghost, the eerie apparition had affected the nerves of everyone, and small wonder that when daylight came at last it brought with it a general feeling of relief.

CHAPTER 9.

What a Surprise!

THE next morning the St. Jim's garrison was early astir, despite the happenings of the night.

That day, the rebels knew, was going to be a critical one. Dr. Holmes and the school authorities would strain every nerve to subdue them. There would be another attack, this time on a large scale.

The garrison were anxious—but they were also grimly determined not to give way; it was to be "No Surrender!" If all went well with Tom Merry's new scheme, however, all agreed that the danger would be slight.

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Immediately breakfast was over Tom chose his men, and, armed with the spades Cardew, Blake, Gussy, and Lowther had brought the night before, they marched out of their stronghold and set to work on the bank that divided the river from the narrow channel leading to the moat—now merely a dry hollow.

On the previous evening, while Blake & Co. had been away on their errand, a group of juniors armed with lengths of wood and of iron, picked up in and around the castle, had cleared away the snow and bracken that had half filled the channel. They had also done quite a lot of digging. So the fellows with the spades only had to carry on with the good work.

They worked hard and untiringly, relieving each other in shifts, and very soon the doubting juniors saw that the scheme was more than possible. As yet it was safe and easy enough, but Tom Merry's face became more and more anxious as the channel was brought nearer and nearer to the river.

If Tom's calculations proved incorrect and the river burst through before the digging party were ready, a drenching in icy-cold water was the least danger to be faced.

He called a halt at last, when little more than a thickness of a foot kept the water from bursting through.

"The water won't burst through that!" panted Herries, glad of a rest, however. "Just another six inches—"

"Not an inch!" said Tom grimly. "I'm taking no risks! Out you come, chaps! If it came through now you'd get washed away! Blake, take some men and fetch that balk of timber just inside the courtyard. We'll soon have this down now!"

"Phew! I see the idea!" said Blake, his brow clearing. "You're going to ram a hole through with that—"

"That's just it!" said Tom, nodding. "Much better to break it down with that than with spades! It'll give us a chance to get clear in case it comes through with a rush—as I expect it will. Buzz off!"

Half a dozen juniors rushed off. They had scarcely done so when Percy Mellish came rushing up to the workers, his face ablaze with excitement.

"Quick!" he panted. "They're coming!"

"What!"

"Bai Jove!"

"The enemy!" yelled Tom.

"Yes!" almost shrieked Mellish. "Figgy sent me to fetch you in—there's a big crowd coming across the heath from St. Jim's!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry had never for one moment expected an attack so early. It was only too clear that the Head was not going to remain idle—he was not losing any time.

"How far are they?" demanded Tom, regaining his coolness at once.

"Some way off yet—Wildrake gave the alarm from the tower!"

Just then Dick Julian came running up.

"Better get in!" he said excitedly. "Wildrake says they'll be here in five minutes at most."

"We'll be along presently!" said Tom crisply. "Glyn, d'you think a few good pushes with that beam would do it?"

"I think so—yes! But it'll mean dropping the beam and running for it afterwards!" grinned Glyn.

"We shall have to do that in any case!" said Tom. "Hallo, here's Blake!"

Six juniors were coming up at the double with the heavy beam of timber. Blake had carried out orders, despite the sudden alarm.

"Good man!" said Tom. "Now, my lads! This side, all of you, or you'll be cut off and have to run round. All hands to the pump!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Almost every fellow there was covered in snow and mud; heated faces were streaked and grimy. Arthur Augustus looked a most fearful sight, with mud and snow over his clothes and a besplashed monocle still jammed in his eye.

They all lent a hand, standing on the one bank, and gripping the great long beam where they could. At a word from Tom the end was pushed against the bank of soil, and then they began to push and ram in steady, even swings.

"Go it!" panted Tom. "Go it, and get ready to jump away—never mind what happens to the beam!"

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

With heavy, sullen blows the ram was battered against the thin wall of soil, low down in the channel they had dug.

It did not take long. Stones and big rocks had been used at some recent date to buttress the river bank, but they soon began to give way under that regular pounding.

There was a sudden yell from Tom Merry.

"It's going! Get ready!"

It was going. A great mass of stone went outwards, and then, amid a shower of soil and stones, water began to rush through, gurgling and spurting.

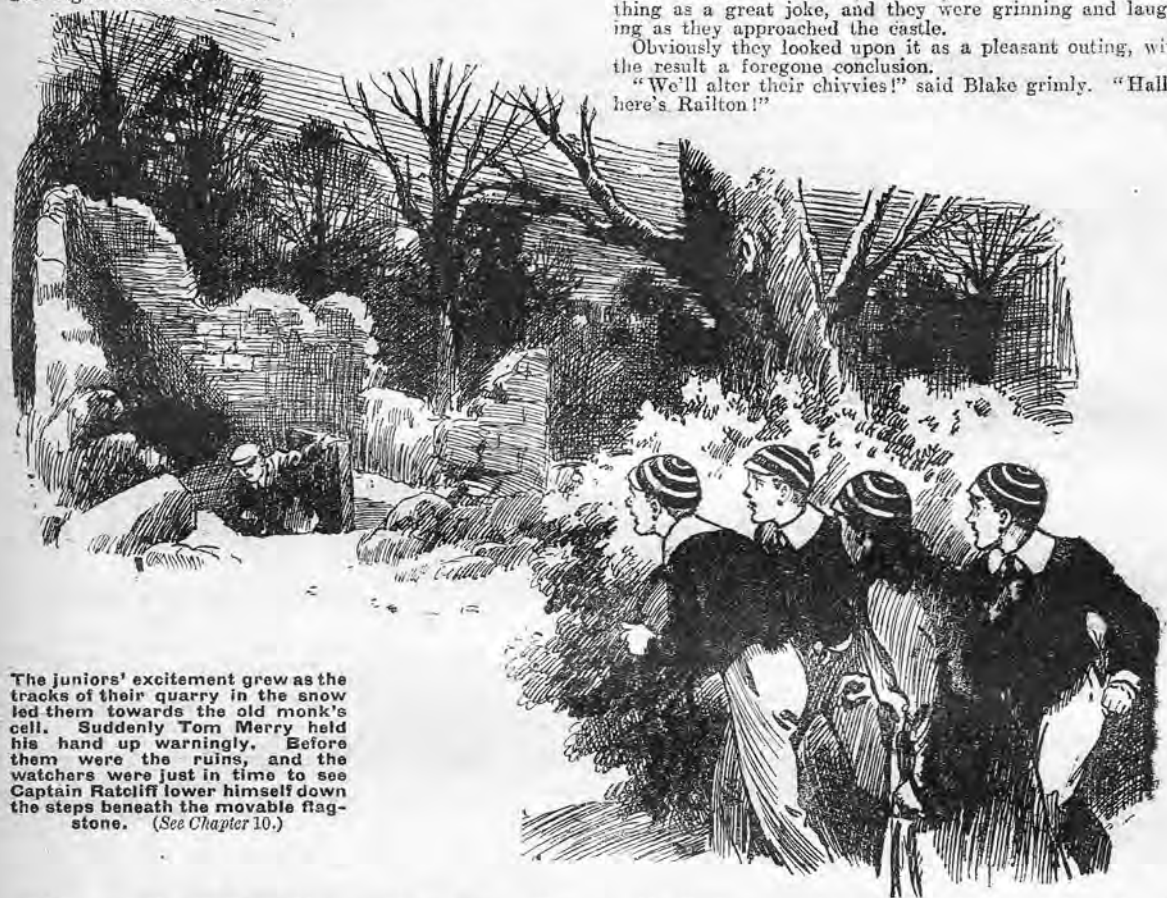
"Another few rams!" suggested Levison.

"No—jump away now!" said Tom, his face clearing. "It'll come with a rush soon enough! Let go!"

The juniors dropped the huge beam of timber with a heavy thud on the bank. Water was pouring through fast now, and even as the juniors dropped the beam and sprang back, a big mass of rocks and soil fell inwards with a rumbling crash.

"Look out!" yelled Tom.

The next moment the water came through with a swirling rush, and went tearing in a foaming torrent along the narrow channel. It reached the moat, and surged to left and right like a tidal wave.



The juniors' excitement grew as the tracks of their quarry in the snow led them towards the old monk's cell. Suddenly Tom Merry held his hand up warningly. Before them were the ruins, and the watchers were just in time to see Captain Ratcliff lower himself down the steps beneath the movable flagstone. (See Chapter 10.)

"All serene!" yelled Tom Merry, with a cheer. "Now, back to the castle, quick! I can spot the crowd from here!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wun, deah boys—wun like anythin'!"

Grabbing their spades and tools, the tired workers ran for it. In the distance they could see the enemy advancing. They heard a faint yell, and a host of them started to run, as if hoping to cut off Tom and his chums.

"What a hope!" laughed Tom Merry, as they rushed up to the footbridge. "Look at the giddy torrent! If they get across that they'll be lucky!"

"Hurrah!"

A wild roar of cheering came from the towers and walls as the garrison saw and heard the rushing waters. Tom knew the water would soon find its level, and he hoped that level would be pretty high up the banks of the moat!

With a rush they tore across the footbridge and swarmed over the barricade, helped by willing hands. All the garrison was prepared for the attack, standing by their piles of well-kneaded snowballs.

The water was nearly up to the footbridge, the snow swelling the stream as it melted. On the surface floated pieces of ice from the river. But the flood was abating now as the water found its level.

Tom Merry had a good look at it. The water had ceased to rise when within a foot of the bridge, but the whole of the castle was surrounded now with swirling, foamy water, black and forbidding. He ran back and joined the gleeful garrison.

"Just a few men on the walls and the other towers!" he ordered. "We shall probably want as many men here as we can get! Unless they fetch some giddy boats over the heath—and they'll find that a job—the day is ours!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove, I should not like to ewoss that watah myself, deah boys! It looks feahfully cold, and awfully wet!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes!"

"Here they come!"

Grinning faces looked out over the barricade. Tom Merry and Blake made their way to the roof and gazed down at the approaching host. They recognised Mr. Railton, Captain Ratcliff, a couple of gardeners, a couple of groundsmen, and Bill Adams, the school boatman. Behind showed practically every member of the Sixth and Fifth Forms. The latter, at least, looked upon the whole thing as a great joke, and they were grinning and laughing as they approached the castle.

Obviously they looked upon it as a pleasant outing, with the result a foregone conclusion.

"We'll alter their chivvies!" said Blake grimly. "Hallo, here's Railton!"

Mr. Railton came forward, with Kildare at his side. He stopped at a distance from the bridge.

"Merry!"

"Adsum, sir!"

"Merry, the Head has sent me again!"

"Very good of him, sir!" said Tom. "Has he reconsidered our terms? If not—"

"He orders you to return to school at once!" thundered the Housemaster. "This folly—this outrageous conduct—must cease! It is impossible for you boys to hold out against law and authority any longer!"

"Don't gas so much—get on with it!" bawled Grundy.

"Want to keep us out in the cold all day?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grundy, you—you—Yooooop!"

Not for the first time during the past two days Mr. Victor Railton stopped a snowball with his chin.

Hastily, and in a towering rage, he drew out of range. He and Kildare rejoined the army, and then Mr. Railton began giving orders. Swiftly, and as if they were being drilled in the school quadrangle, the Sixth and Fifth were divided into four companies, with the men at the head of them. Mr. Railton was in charge of the main company which was to attack the barricade across the main gateway.

He gave the signal at last—a sharp blast on a whistle. It was greeted by a roar of laughter from the rebels, and then they were busy—at least, those in front were busy. But they were not busy for long.

At the head of his gallant men Mr. Railton rushed up to the bridge, the Sixth and Fifth gathering up snow as they ran and kneading ammunition swiftly. They came within range, and the air became thick with snowballs.

Sheltered as they were behind barricades and walls, the defenders merely laughed. But the attackers did not laugh—scarcely a snowball missed its mark.

But they kept on, heedless of the terrific bombardment they had to face.

"Don't waver!" shouted Mr. Railton, ducking and dodging frantically. "One determined rush—"

But it was Mr. Railton himself, at the head of his men, who wavered. He broke off suddenly and stopped dead, heedless of the whizzing snowballs.

He had sighted the swirling water of the moat.

"G-good heavens!" he gasped. "What—what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What price the moat?" howled Herries. "Let 'em have it!"

From the attackers on other sides of the castle came yells of astonishment and disappointment as they, too, glimpsed the swirling waters.

Not one of them dreamed for one moment of diving into that icy-cold flood, whether it was deep or not!

They rushed back and round to the front again to report the great surprise to Mr. Railton—who already knew well enough about it. His face was dark with wrath and bitter disappointment, though not more so than the hard face of Captain Ratcliff.

"They're licked!" roared Grundy suddenly.

The first rush had failed—failed dismally. That halt on Mr. Railton's part had thrown the attack into confusion, and fellows like Knox of the Sixth, and St. Leger and Gilmore of the Fifth, were only too glad of an excuse to hang back.

For several whirling minutes they stuck it half-heartedly, and then they broke and retreated, dazed and half-blinded, Mr. Railton being the last to go.

"Hurrah!"

"First blood to little us!"

"Yaas, watah! How do you like the watah, Mr. Railton?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rebels yelled.

Mr. Railton joined Captain Ratcliff and Kildare, his face showing his disappointment and anger.

"The—the young villains!" he gasped. "There—there seems no end to their ingenuity. They have dug a channel from the river and flooded the moat, of course."

Captain Ratcliff said nothing—he could hardly trust himself to speak. He understood now why Blake and the juniors had carried spades the night before. For some moments the leaders stood talking together, and then they formed their forces again—this time in one solid company—the men first, the Sixth next, and the Fifth at the rear.

"They're having another go!" yelled Grundy.

"Oh, good!"

"Hurrah!"

The rebels were delighted—they had not had half enough fun yet. They had little fear of being overcome now. Yet Tom Merry was a trifle anxious. If that mass of determined seniors rushed them—

"No surrender, chaps!" he warned. "Remember, not a man must get across that bridge! Look out—here they come!"

Mr. Railton led the way with a determined rush. He had thrown all dignity aside. The Head had been sarcastic—he had told him he expected him to bring the rebels home this time, and Mr. Railton was determined to do it if it were humanly possible.

Unfortunately for him, it wasn't—at least, he and his men found it impossible.

Long before the attackers reached the bridge they were broken up, disorganised and scattered. But they reformed again, desperately, rallied by the yells of Mr. Railton and Kildare.

"Look out! Here they come again!"

Whizz, whizz, whizz!

Again the air was thick with whizzing spheres. Again howls and gasps and grunts sounded on all sides as hard snowballs burst in faces and brought the attackers up short, gasping and half-blinded. But the van were on the bridge now and had got a footing.

"Go it!" roared Tom Merry.

"Hurrah!"

The rebels were working like maniacs, their arms were whirling like tireless clockwork. The bridge was a mass of snow-smothered figures, and the uproar was terrific. A great mass of snow swooped downwards from the shattered wall above the gateway, where rebels were working like trojans. It fell, almost flattening three of the attackers. Over them stumbled more attackers, and a scene of wild confusion followed.

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And still that merciless fusillade whizzed and hissed and burst.

It was the beginning of the end for the attackers.

Unable to regain their feet, pressed on from behind, the van was trampled on amid a scene of indescribable confusion. Mr. Railton was down, with bemused Sixth and Fifth-Formers trampling over him. Not an inch farther could they gain, yet those behind were still pressing on, making confusion ten times worse.

Those ahead fought desperately to retreat; those behind did their best to attack, shielded as they were from most of the hurricane.

Splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

One of the attackers was in—he lurched over the edge of the footbridge into the water of the moat. He was not the only one; another and another went in, squeezed out like pips from an orange on both sides of the bridge.

It was hopeless—Mr. Railton had already seen that. He gasped and shouted frantically, and at last made his voice heard.

Never was an order to retreat more gladly obeyed; indeed, but for those pressing behind, the retreat would have begun long ago.

In a scrambling, struggling mass, the Fifth and Sixth on the bridge staggered up and reeled off the bridge, snowballs bursting all over them still.

"Huwah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, stopping and waving his eyeglass frantically. "They're goin', deah boys! They're licked, bai Jove!"

"Hurrah!"

Followed by pelting missiles, the last of the beaten attackers scrambled blindly off the bridge and took to their heels. A terrific cheer followed them from the defenders—victorious once again!

Out from the moat scrambled the last of the luckless ones—Gerald Knox of the Sixth. Water streamed from him as he tottered away dismally, and the laughing rebels allowed him to get clear. He was the last to go—every attacker was out of range now, and the rebels, aching and breathless, but deliriously happy, were able to take a rest.

"That finishes them, I fancy!" grinned Tom Merry, wiping perspiration from his youthful brow. "But, by jingo, the water saved us, chaps! I believe they'd have done it if the moat hadn't been impassable!"

"Yaas, watah!"

The rebels agreed with their leader there. Tom Merry's brain-wave had saved the situation, and they had little fear of another attack—not of that nature! Mr. Railton and his army had had the time of their lives, and it was extremely unlikely they would risk a repetition. And as Tom Merry stood on the walls and watched the beaten army trailing dismally back to St. Jim's he felt he had something to congratulate himself about!

CHAPTER 10.

Starling!

"SOMEONE'S got to go out again this evening," said Tom Merry. "The bread's run out, and we can't live on tinned stuff and luxuries for long. We want bread, potatoes, and butter. We want some stuff to make a nice Christmas pudding, too!" he added with a chuckle.

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the stuff to give the troops!"

"Yaas, watah!"

"My idea is to get hold of young Grimes, the grocer's boy—he'll help us like a shot," said Tom. "We could get him to cart some stuff to the monk's cell, and we'd fetch it along the underground passage."

"Good wheeze, Tommy!"

"Well, sooner we get off the better," said Tom, rising from his seat on a blanket. "I think I'll come along this time. We've nothing to fear from an attack at dusk, I fancy."

"Ha, ha! Rather not!"

"They've had enough to be going on with," smiled Tom. "Cardew, I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to come, old top. Figgins, what about you?"

"I'm on," nodded Figgy.

"I'll come again, too, if you like," said Blake.

"You remain in charge, old bean," grinned Tom. "Cardew, Figgy, Talbot, and myself can go this time. Get a move on! No time to be lost if we're to catch Grimay before he leaves off work."

"Right-ho! Think it too risky to cross the heath, Tom?" asked Talbot.

"Yes. For all we know there may be a cordon round the place," said Tom. "In any case, it'll be quicker by the passage. Buck up and get your coats!"

In a few moments the four were ready for the foraging expedition. Cardew grumbled and groaned; but it was not serious grumbling. Armed with a lamp the dandy of the Fourth led the way through the vaults and along the underground passage.

They did the distance in record time, and without adventure. Cardew never once hesitated. Leaving the monk's cell they crossed the dusky woods, and reached Rylcombe Lane.

"Watch your giddy steps now!" warned Tom Merry. "Keep close to the hedge, anyway. If you see anyone coming, dodge out of sight. One of us only had better enter the village."

"Right-ho!" They soon found that the warning was necessary—very necessary. Tom Merry gave a sudden, frantic hiss, and dragged Figgins back just in time.

Turning a bend in the lane they had almost blundered into two men who were talking in the roadway. Fortunately, the juniors were moving on the snow-covered grass on the roadside, and they had not been heard, or seen.

"Thank goodness!" breathed Tom Merry. "See who it is?"

"My only aunt!"

It was Mr. Horace Ratcliff and Captain Ratcliff. Apparently they had just met in the lane by accident.

"Oh, gad!" breathed Cardew, with a soft chuckle. "History repeating itself, dear men. We were nearly collared by Ratty junior last evenin'!"

Hardly daring to move, the juniors crouched in hiding.

The two masters were scarcely a dozen yards away, and the slightest sound must have attracted their attention. Mr. Ratcliff was speaking—coldly, in his rasping, unpleasant voice.

"Yes, I am very glad I have met you out of doors, Gilbert," he was saying acidly. "There are certain matters I wish to speak about that cannot be discussed safely at St. Jim's."

The listeners heard Captain Ratcliff catch his breath.

"Indeed," he said at last. "But—but I must not stand here, uncle. The night air—My old wound—"

"That is one of the matters I desire to ask you about," snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "I wish to know, Gilbert, why you have deceived myself and the whole school by posing as lame, when you are not lame?"

The juniors heard the hiss of indrawn breath.

"Uncle, what—what do you mean?"

"I mean this. From the first I have had my suspicions of you, Gilbert. Those young rascals claimed you were not lame. I myself have had better opportunities than anyone of seeing you in private. I have watched you, Gilbert. You are no more lame than I am. I demand to know, sir, for what reason you have adopted a limp?"

"I—I—I—" The captain, if captain he was, panted.

"There is another matter," went on Mr. Ratcliff, as if impatient to get all out. "Mr. Lathom's resignation was as great a surprise to me as to anyone else. I must confess that I was not displeased to hear of it—especially as it opened up a position for you, Gilbert. But I have just been speaking to Mr. Lathom."

Captain Ratcliff staggered.

"What? Mr. Lathom is here? I thought he had gone!" "He is in the village—staying in rooms," said Mr. Ratcliff coldly. "He informed me that he was requested to resign by the Head. He showed me a letter, purporting to come from Dr. Holmes. It was signed Holmes, but it did not come from the Head, Gilbert."

"Uncle, how— This is monstrous! If you are suggesting—"

"At the moment I am merely stating facts, sir!" rasped Mr. Ratcliff. "Mr. Lathom also denies utterly having had any intention of resigning. Dr. Holmes has told me what was in the letter he sent to Mr. Lathom. He is utterly

incapable of anything approaching an untruth. Mr. Lathom never received that letter. He received a forged request to send in his resignation."

"I—I fail to see how this concerns me," said Captain Ratcliff, with a harsh note in his voice. "Does—does the Head know of this—?"

"No. I am just returning from the village now. It was quite by accident that I met Lathom, and I was obliged to stop and speak. But I am strongly of the opinion that it does concern you," said Mr. Ratcliff bitterly. "This afternoon I received a letter from an old friend of mine at Windridge School, Gilbert."

Mr. Ratcliff's nephew staggered back again as if he had been struck.

"You—you have a friend at Windridge!" he panted hoarsely.

"Yes; a scholastic friend. You gained this appointment at St. Jim's partly by my influence, partly by means of references, one of which was signed by the headmaster of Windridge. That reference was forged, Gilbert."

"It—it is a lie—"

"Wait, sir. Hear me out!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff, his voice trembling with the indignation that consumed him.

"I mentioned you when writing the other day. I asked for particulars for certain reasons of my own. My friend answered delicately, but quite frankly. He states you had a post there before the War as a junior master, and that you were dismissed and narrowly escaped imprisonment for forging the Head's signature on a cheque. You fled the country."

There was a long silence. Captain Ratcliff was breathing hard. The juniors could see Mr. Ratcliff's face—harsh and bitter. They knew what a blow the news must have been to the haughty, overbearing Housemaster. The juniors did not dream of moving. They did not think of it, so startled and staggered were they.

"That is why I demand an answer from you in regard to the letter sent to Mr. Lathom, Gilbert. It did not come from the Head. Did you sign or write it, sir?"

Silence!

"You were at the end of your resources. You had to obtain an appointment, or live on me!" said Mr. Ratcliff harshly. "You were desperate. You affected a limp to enlist my sympathy, and the sympathies of the school. It is questionable whether you have ever been in the Army, from what I understand. You took advantage of the slight trouble between the headmaster and Mr. Lathom. You saw your opportunity. You intercepted the Head's letter to Lathom, and put a forged note in its place, asking Lathom to resign."

"Phew!" breathed Cardew. "What a lad!"

"Good heavens!" gasped Tom Merry.

That it was all true—that the baffled rascal could not deny it was clear. He spoke at last, and his voice was curiously humble and husky.

"You—you were right," he muttered at last. "I—I was desperate, uncle. For that false slip years ago I have suffered terribly. I have been unable to obtain another position. Can you wonder—can you blame me for snatching such an opportunity? You yourself were hinting that I could stay no longer. I wanted to stay."

"Good heavens! Then—then it is true! I had hoped that—"

"I do not deny it," said the captain hoarsely. "But it is done. Lathom is gone. You won't be fool enough to reopen the affair—"

"How dare you? I shall most certainly do so, sir!" said Mr. Ratcliff, trembling with indignation. "Lathom is no friend of mine, but I refuse utterly to stand by and allow such an injustice to go on. Mr. Lathom must be reinstated. You must return with me this very night, and

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the Head must be told. And you must shake the dust of St. Jim's from your feet for ever."

"Fancy dear old Ratty as the champion of right and justice!" murmured Cardew.

The juniors watched spellbound. Captain Ratcliff's face was working. They feared once that he would spring upon his uncle and fell him to the ground. But he controlled himself, and when he answered, his voice was once again humble and contrite.

"I—I ought not to have done it. But I was desperate," he repeated again. "Would you kick me out now—at Christmas time?"

"Did you think of Lathom, sir?"

"I—I— Look here, uncle. Listen to me! I will go when the school breaks up. The Head understands my position. He will pay me what is due to me for these few days—my salary. I swear I will write a confession then, explaining my conduct to the Head. I shall go then, and I will never worry you again. Only a few days more—"

He paused, his voice humble and pleading.

"If—if you assure me that you will confess, and that you will go without disgracing me further—" said Mr. Ratcliff bitterly.

"I swear, sir!"

"Very well, then. I will speak to you again in regard to the position!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff harshly. "You have deceived me—you have deceived the whole school! But—rather than public exposure—"

His voice trembled, and then, without another word, he turned abruptly on his heel and strode away towards St. Jim's.

Captain Ratcliff stared after him, his face showing savage hatred now. Gone was the humble air of pleading remorse.

"The rotten hypocrite!" breathed Figgins. "Jove! Jevver see such a handsome chivvy!"

"Shush!" breathed Tom.

The captain moved at last. He muttered an oath, and then he strode away towards the village.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry, after he had gone some distance. "Safe enough now. Well, what do you fellows think of that?"

"Amazing!" said Figgins. "The fellow must be an out-and-out scoundrel! The giddy sorrow was all eyewash; but he was just itching to fling himself at his giddy uncle's neck, if you ask me! What shall we do about it?"

"It wants some thinking over!" muttered Tom Merry, still too startled to think clearly. "I—I almost feel like finding Lathom and telling him. But we don't know his address."

"Hallo! Here's our dear pal again, you fellows!" said Cardew, with a soft chuckle. "Into the jolly old hedge!"

Once again the adventurers sought shelter in the hedge. They squeezed through a gap, and hid behind the snow-covered hedge, crouching down low in the ditch. Luckily, the captain was too far away to have seen them, and passed without a glance in their direction.

"All serene!" grinned Figgy. "Unless he turns again, like Dick Whittington. I say, look! He's stopped again, by the thumping stile!"

Tom Merry stared. He followed Figgy's example, and peered out from the hedge. Sure enough, Captain Ratcliff had stopped at the stile they had crossed several minutes before.

As Tom looked, the man vanished over it, after a swift glance up and down the lane.

"Rummy!" breathed Tom Merry. "I—I say, let's look into this, you men! Only an idiot—or someone who had good reason—would go through the woods at this time in the evening, and with the woods in the state they are!"

"I'm with you, Thomas!" murmured Cardew, a peculiar gleam in his eyes. "Who knows? Our friend the merry old captain may be goin' to pay us a visit—going to call at the castle-by the back door—our own private exit and entrance. I think we'd better look into it!"

The startling thought had already occurred to Tom. Was it possible the captain knew of the secret passage? In any case, why that cautious look up and down before crossing the stile?

The next moment the juniors were hurrying towards the stile, moving swiftly and softly over the snow. There was no sign of their quarry about, but his tracks in the snow beyond the stile were easily picked up. Other tracks were there, but only the tracks of one man. They followed them excitedly, ever on the look-out for the quarry ahead.

The excitement grew as the tracks, surely enough, led them towards the monk's cell—they were mixed up, in fact, with their own earlier footprints. Suddenly Tom Merry held up his hand warningly.

Before them were the ruins in the centre of the quiet clearing. They had left the movable flagstone closed, but now it was open. And Tom drew in his breath sharply as he sighted Captain Ratcliff just lowering himself down the

steps. Next instant the flag was dragged down with an echoing thud.

Silence fell on the clearing and the ruins.

"Phew!" muttered Tom Merry. "He—he must have seen you chaps use it last night!"

"Not necessarily, dear man," said Cardew. "Still, it looks like it. I really think that, for the good of the garrison, we'd better follow. But be ready for the dust-up of your cheery lives if he spots us! It won't be a matter of a gating or a caning!"

Cardew spoke grimly, and the rest realised what he meant. But they did not hesitate. The flagstone was raised after a short time had elapsed, and, with the light carefully guarded now, they started along the secret passage. No light shone ahead, and they had covered nearly a mile before Cardew suddenly turned out the lamp.

The juniors stood silent, in deep blackness, their hearts thumping. Then they saw that Cardew had seen—a streak of light, apparently coming from one of the passages that branched off.

"Wait!" murmured Cardew.

They waited in a silence that was deathly. Then suddenly Tom caught his breath hard; he felt Figgins grip his arm convulsively.

The light ahead had moved; it flickered and danced on the walls. Then from the opening emerged a figure—a hooded form, ghostly, terrifying.

It did not come towards them, however. With the bright white light before it, the ghostly figure moved softly, soundlessly away from them along the secret passage that led to the castle vaults.

"The merry old ghost!" murmured Cardew, with what sounded suspiciously like a chuckle. "The jolly old hooded Monk! I thought as much when I spotted Ratty junior in the monk's cell."

"Oh!" panted Tom Merry, the truth dawning in upon him with a rush. "It's Captain Ratcliff playing ghost! It was that brute last night!"

"Exactly!" agreed Cardew blandly. "What a brain you have, Thomas! But we'd better trot after him, I think—in case he starts tickling any more throats!"

"Phew! Yes, rather!"

And cautiously, scarcely daring to breathe, the daring juniors followed the figure ahead—the ghostly monk, whom now they felt certain was none other than the hated Captain Ratcliff!

CHAPTER 11.

The Ghost Laid!

"NOW'S our giddy chance!"

Wally D'Aroy spoke in a cautious whisper.

The leader of the Third and his chums made a welcome discovery. The innermost part of the castle chambers, from which the flight of stone steps led down into the vaults, was empty.

That was how the four young rascals had been hoping to find it, for special reasons. Tom Merry had given strict instructions that no one was to enter the vaults without his permission. He realised the risk that anyone who did not know them would run of getting hopelessly lost in the winding passages and tunnels. But the chums of the Third were not overfond of obeying instructions at the best of times, and when Wally had suggested a rat-hunt in the vaults, to liven things up a bit, and "give old Pongo some exercise," the others had agreed at once.

"Tom Merry and those other chaps will be coming back that way soon," remarked Reggie Manners, as they crossed the room to the steps. "We may barge into them in the vaults."

"We'll chance that," said Wally. "Buck up! I've got a torch, and you've got yours, Curly?"

"What-ho!"

Grabbing up Pongo, who was whimpering with excitement now, they tumbled pell-mell down the steps, and Curly Gibson switched his light on.

Through the first vault Wally led the way—he knew there would not be much sport there. As they entered the second a sudden scurrying of feet was heard, and Pongo fairly wrenched himself out of Wally's arms and flew.

"Hurroo! There he goes!"

It was a huge rat—parts of the ruins, especially the vaults, were swarming with them, as a matter of fact.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wally. "After Pongo—quick!"

The sudden fear struck Wally that Pongo might get ahead and lose himself in the maze of passages off the vaults, and, with his chums at his heels, he went after his pet with a rush, his pocket torch sending a white beam of light dancing and leaping on walls, floor, and ceiling.

They came suddenly upon Pongo—he was leaping about madly in one of the vaults, barking frantically. As they rushed in he started to scratch round a jagged hole in the flagged floor.



In a flash Tom Merry and his chums flung themselves on the desperate Captain Ratoliff. "Hold him, chaps!" panted Tom Merry. Although the desperado fought with the strength of a madman, he had little chance against such overwhelming odds. (See chapter 11.)

"Right-ho, old boy!" grinned Wally, in great relief. "No good barking, fathead! The beggar's miles away by this time! You've lost him!"

"Went down that hole, I expect," said Curly Gibson. "I say, supposing there's a secret passage underneath this?"

"What rot! It's just a crack in the flag—the rats have a hole under it! We'll get it up if you like."

"We'll want a crowbar for that!" said Reggie Manners. "Don't be asses! What's the good—"

"I'm having a try, anyway!" said Wally stubbornly. "May be a giddy nest underneath. Hold on, Pongo, don't get excited! Hand over that cricket-stump, young Jameson!"

Two of the fags had armed themselves with cricket-stumps before coming on the expedition—stumps that had been brought from St. Jim's by the rebels. Wally inserted the point into the crack and heaved. He might as well have tried to raise the castle itself!

"No good!" grinned Reggie Manners. "You'd want a crowbar and someone heftier than you for that job, Wally! What's the use, anyway?"

"Rats!"

Wally went on with his task. The hole between the floor was merely a slit, of an inch width at most, where a piece of the flag had broken off. It was filled up with dirt, save for the hole where the rat had vanished. There was really no reason to suppose that the flag was a secret trapdoor, and Wally really did not expect to be.

Nor was it! Yet Wally's task was not in vain. Quite suddenly, as he levered, something moved upwards—something covered with dirt and rust.

It proved to be a small tobacco-tin that had been forced down between the two flags and in the crack.

Wally and his chums fairly blinked at it. How such a thing had got there was a mystery! And what did it hold?

The rust made it difficult to open, but Wally managed to wrench the rusty lid up at last.

"What the thump—"

Cotton-wool was disclosed, and in it were imbedded

several lumps of what looked like glass or stone—the fags could not decide which. They were dirty, yet as the gleam of the torch caught them they flashed and sparkled amazingly.

"Bits of blessed glass!" grunted Wally. "Well, this is a fair corker! I—I say, though. If they are only bits of glass why should they be hidden—"

He broke off.

Pongo suddenly whined, and then started barking frantically.

A sound behind Wally had made him break off. He wheeled, and then the hair began to creep on his head. He tried to scream, but his throat was suddenly dry and parched—he could not make a sound. Nor could his chums.

The blood rushed to their hearts, and they remained motionless—like frozen statues.

Just outside the radius of the torch was a tall, hooded figure—the ghostly monk!

It moved at last—towards them!

With a wild shriek, Reggie Manners turned and fled blindly, panic-stricken. The spell was broken, and after him went Jameson and Curly Gibson, yelling with fear. Wally would have gone, but he suddenly realised that Pongo was attacking the ghost, teeth bared, snarling viciously.

He halted, and as he did so the ghostly monk lashed out with one foot, and sent the plucky terrier spinning across the vault. The next instant Wally shrieked as an icy-cold hand clutched him. And then, though he was scarcely aware of it, a second hand groped for his pocket—the pocket where he had hurriedly shoved the tobacco-tin.

What happened after that the terrified fag scarcely knew. He realised that Pongo was back again, attacking the ghost—if ghost it was—ferociously. The fingers on his throat relaxed, and then—

There came a sudden shout—a blaze of light.

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"Hold on, Wally! We're here, kid!"

It was Tom Merry's voice—and never had a voice sounded so welcome to the hapless fag!

A rush of feet followed, and then the thud of a fist, and an oath.

"It's only that brute Ratcliff!" yelled Tom Merry. "Don't be afraid, Wally! Good dog Pongo— Good heavens!"

Tom staggered back as an arm shot out from the monk's robe—a weapon gleamed dully, and then came an explosion that sounded terrific in the gloomy, silent vaults. The sound of it went echoing and re-echoing through the dark chambers and galleries.

Tom felt the scorching flame of a bullet as it sang past his head, though he scarcely realised what it was at the moment.

"Stand back!"

It was a harsh, menacing voice—a voice they knew only too well.

The juniors staggered back—to defy that menacing, deadly weapon would be madness they knew. Captain Ratcliff—there was no doubting who he was—spoke again, this time to Wally D'Arcy.

"That tin you found—quick!" he rapped savagely. "You've saved me a long search, you little brat! Hand me that tin!"

He did not wait for Wally to obey. Footsteps were echoing in the outer vaults—voices were shouting. Every moment was precious to the villain.

With a leap he reached the fag, and again he felt for the pocket. Wally did not struggle—he knew the folly of struggling against such a ruthless scoundrel. It was all he could do to hold Pongo.

There was a muttered gasp of triumph—the hand came out from the pocket. But as it did so Pongo tore himself free and leaped at the man's throat.

"Pongo!" screamed Wally.

He knew the scoundrel would never hesitate to shoot the dog. But the man did not get the chance. Pongo had saved the situation. Taken off his guard by the snarling whirlwind that leaped for his throat, Captain Ratcliff staggered back, the hand holding the deadly weapon dropping as he did so.

Then Tom Merry leaped in. His foot shot up; there was a howl of pain from the villain, as the revolver was sent spinning from his numbed fingers. It dropped yards away into the gloom of the vaults.

In a flash Tom and his chums had flung themselves on the desperado. The next moment a swarm of excited, determined juniors came rushing into the vault—lights danced all round until the place was lit up from end to end.

"Leave him to me!" yelled Grundy. "Stand aside, Tom Merry—Figgy—Talbot—"

George Alfred rushed into the fray, fists whirling. He did as much damage to friend as to foe, perhaps, but he certainly got in a few hefty rights on the struggling, cursing villain.

It was soon over. Against such a mob Captain Ratcliff, though he fought with the strength of despair, and the fury of a madman, had little chance. He went crashing down at last, and cords, hurriedly fetched, were wound tightly round wrists and arms. Then he was forced up the stone steps of the vaults into the chamber above.

"The first giddy prisoner!" panted Tom Merry. "We'll see if he's got any more weapons on him, chaps. I rather fancy we were right when we claimed that Captain Ratcliff was not a fit and proper person to take the Fourth. And I fancy the Head will agree when he sees my scorched face and realises how it was done."

"Yaas, wathah!"

They all agreed with him there; and from the fury on the face of the prisoner, Captain Ratcliff also agreed with him. But before anything else was done Tom Merry took charge of the rusty tobacco-box. As he opened it, and the light fell on the stones within, Talbot's eyes gleamed.

"Diamonds!" he exclaimed, with a soft whistle. "So that is what this merchant was after, Tom! There's a good few thousand quid's worth there!"

"Diamonds!" yelled Wally D'Arcy. "Oh, blow! And I thought they might be fixed on Pongo's collar!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at!" snorted Wally. "After all, I found them, and they wouldn't have been found but for Pongo! Just you hand the rotten things over, young Merry!"

But "young Merry" did not obey—he placed the precious box of stones in his pocket carefully instead! Then, after searching the raging, cursing rascal, he began to make inquiries about supper.

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CHAPTER 12.

Two Visitors!

THE St. Jim's garrison had a slack time that night. Though the expedition had come back without having seen Grimes, or done what they had set out to do, Tom Merry and his chums were more than satisfied. That night the garrison could sleep peacefully without fear of ghosts, at all events. The ghost was laid; he was lying now, bound hand and foot, in the far chamber of the castle—a prisoner.

And they had solved the mystery—the mystery of what he was after at Wayland Castle. It was obviously also the sole reason why he had come to the district at all. But though Tom Merry and his chums attempted to get information regarding the amazing find of diamonds from him, he refused to satisfy their curiosity.

Moreover, they now knew the truth about little Mr. Latham.

He had not resigned at all—only under compulsion. And the rascality of Captain Ratcliff—if he was a captain, which they very much doubted now—was responsible.

Grundy and one or two more impatient fellows wanted to rush off to St. Jim's with the news at once. But Tom Merry would have none of it. In any case, it was dark now. Tom felt quite certain that Mr. Railton would be along again in the morning—possibly with another army, possibly with new schemes for the overcoming of the garrison.

And Tom was taking no chances. Now he knew the truth his terms were changed. Captain Ratcliff would go now—that was a foregone conclusion. What they had been fighting for had already been brought about. But now they had something else to fight for if necessary. Mr. Latham had been unjustly "sacked"—whether it was the Head's fault or not. And they did not intend to lower the flag of rebellion until they were assured officially that Mr. Latham was to return to St. Jim's.

That much Shell, Fourth, and Third were decided upon to a man!

The whole garrison was in cheery spirits that night. In the morning Tom intended to dispatch a foraging-party for the bread and other things required. But they could manage for the present.

After supper they had yarns and a sing-song; and then they turned in, tired out and looking forward with confidence to the morrow.

Tom Merry was on first guard that night; and daylight was streaming in upon him when he woke the next morning. He found Arthur Augustus standing over him.

"Anything the matter?" he demanded. "The prisoner all right?"

"Yaas, deah boy! But somebody is comin' ovah the heath. Hewwies thinks it is Wailton."

"Alone?"

"Yaas."

"Well, my hat!"

Tom was up and dressing in a flash, and he rushed out to the barricade. A group of juniors and fags were standing there staring out over the misty heath.

"It is Railton!" yelled Herries from the observation post.

"What the thump is he after?" snorted Grundy. "I say, shall I let him have a few good ones?"

"Don't be an ass!" said Tom Merry. "We'll soon know what he's after."

Mr. Railton came up towards the bridge across the moat. The water had subsided a foot or so during the night, but it was still deep, and would present a stiff obstacle to any attackers. He halted as Tom Merry called out to him.

"Good-morning, sir! Please don't come any further!"

"I wish to speak to you, Merry—and through you to the Shell, Third and Fourth!" called Mr. Railton. "I have a message from the Head!"

"If you will give your parole, sir, you can come inside! We also wish to speak to you!"

The Housemaster did not move.

"The headmaster wishes me to inform you that if you will return in an orderly manner to St. Jim's there will be no expulsions!" he said calmly.

"Another climb down, anyway!" grinned Blake.

"He has also instructed me to tell you that the reason for your rebellious conduct is now removed. Captain Ratcliff has disappeared—and, according to his uncle, he is not likely to return!" snapped Mr. Railton.

"That's all right, sir!" called Tom Merry cheerfully. "We've got him here!"

"What—what—"

"We've got Captain Ratcliff a prisoner here!" said Tom Merry in almost a casual way. "He tried to shoot me with a revolver last night; but we managed to put the kybosh on him, sir."

"G-good heavens! What are you saying, boy?"

"Come inside and see for yourself, sir!" said Tom. "Just give your parole—"

"Very well, Merry!" said the Housemaster, after a pause. He was obviously puzzled—which was very natural, in the circumstances. Some of the boulders at the barricade were removed, and the Housemaster climbed over and dropped down into the citadel. He glanced about him and smiled grimly.

"This way, sir!" said Tom respectfully.

He led the way through into the inner chamber. On the floor, on a couple of folded blankets, lay Captain Ratcliff, fury and despair still showing in his hard, steely eyes. He was bound hand and foot; the juniors dared not take any risks with a powerful ruffian they could not trust.

Mr. Railton nearly fell down as he sighted him.

"Good heavens! Merry, how dare you treat Captain Ratcliff in this scandalous manner! Upon my soul! I am amazed!"

The Housemaster paused, struck by the glare of bitter hatred in the face of the Fourth Form master.

"We fastened him up like that, sir," snapped Tom Merry, "because it is the only way to treat a wild beast! Three or four of us have the marks on our throats still where he handled us. And this," added Tom Merry, showing the faint scar on his face, "is where a bullet from his revolver scorched my cheek."

"Good—good heavens! Merry, what, in Heaven's name, do you mean, boy?"

Tom Merry drew the revolver from his pocket—unloaded now.

"This is the weapon he used upon us, sir," he said quietly. "The man is an out-and-out villain! He is a forger—and worse! His lameness is a trick—as Mr. Ratcliff will tell you! He came here with forged references. He was sacked from Windridge for forgery, I believe—forging a cheque! And this is why he is at St. Jim's!"

And Tom Merry took from his inner pocket the rusty tobacco-tin and showed the contents.

Mr. Railton gasped with amazement.

"Boy, those are diamonds!"

"I'm well aware of that, sir—just as Captain Ratcliff is! How he knew they were hidden here, goodness knows! D'Arcy minor found them hidden in the vaults. Captain Ratcliff has been searching for them. He wanted a job at St. Jim's solely in order to be at liberty to search for them. The reason he is dressed as he is—in a monk's robe and hood—is because he's been playing ghost to frighten us away from here!"

And Tom explained fully all that had happened, even divulging the secret of the underground passage. The only thing that he did not explain was the conversation he had overheard between Mr. Horace Ratcliff and his rascally nephew.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Railton, when he had finished. The Housemaster stared down at the bound man, and his face hardened. "Rascal—villain that you are!"

A stream of curses came from the baffled rascal. Blake hurriedly wrapped a length of scarf round the man's savage mouth and tied it.

"And that is not all, sir!" said Tom at length. "The Head did not believe us when we told him how this man had treated us! Neither he nor you, sir, believed us when we claimed that he had worked Mr. Lathom's resignation somehow!"

Mr. Railton started. Tom Merry drew from his pockets a pile of papers, among which was a cheque-book.

"Upon my soul!" gasped Mr. Railton, starting forward. "That cheque-book—"

"Belongs to the headmaster. It has his name on it. That rascal obviously intended to forge his signature on cheques when he had decided to clear. But that's not all. Look at these, sir!"

And Tom handed over several sheets of the school note-paper. On one sheet was the letter Dr. Holmes had written to Mr. Lathom—and which Mr. Lathom had never received—and the rest were specimens of the Head's signature and of the forged note to Mr. Lathom requesting him to resign.

Mr. Railton breathed hard as he examined them.

"You—you have done well, boys!" he said at length. "You have unmasked a heartless scoundrel, and prevented an act of injustice. Poor Mr. Lathom, he must have suffered intensely! But he will be reinstated now, of course. And you—"

"The rebellion collapses!" said Tom grimly. "If this man goes and Mr. Lathom returns to St. Jim's there's nothing left for us to fight for. We shall have to take our chance—"

"You must return at once to school and your duties, my boys!" said the Housemaster. "I have already assured you that no expulsions will take place. And—and I think I can promise you that Dr. Holmes will be lenient when he learns the facts—when he knows that you had every reason to act as you did—lawless and rebellious as your conduct has been since. Have I your promise to return to school this morning, quietly, in an orderly manner?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"Very well, boys. You will not regret your decision."

The Housemaster took charge of the revolver and the precious diamonds, and telling the juniors to leave the bound ruffian for the police to fetch, he left the inner chamber and strode towards the barricade. A short little gentleman was just being helped over by the juniors there. It was Mr. Lathom, and he looked breathless and warm.

"Mr. Lathom!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"I—I was told of the rebellion by Mr. Ratcliff last evening, sir," faltered the little gentleman, blushing as the juniors raised a cheer for him. "I—I came here, Mr. Railton, solely in order to do my utmost to persuade the juniors to return to school."

"Of that I am quite sure, Mr. Lathom!" said the Housemaster, taking his subordinate's hand frankly. "But the rebellion is over, and all cause for it is now removed. If you will accompany me back to St. Jim's I will explain the facts—facts that will amaze you, sir. The note you received asking you to resign was forged—the work of a rascal!"

And he briefly explained the facts to the astounded master. Mr. Lathom's eyes blinked rapidly as he noted the faces of the juniors crowding round.

"Most certainly I shall return, Mr. Railton!" he gasped. "I—I shall only be too glad to be back with my boys again—boys whose respect and regard I am proud to have earned!"

"Bai Jove! Then eweythin' in the garden looks like bein' lovely, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I think I told you fellows that it would all come out wight in the end. Thwee cheeahs for the webbellion, you fellows!"

"What-ho! Hip, hip, hip—"

"Hurrah!"

"And three cheers for Mr. Railton!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Hip, hip, hip—"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"And now for Mr. Lathom!" yelled Blake. "The man who backed his Form up against rotten tyrants! Now, let it rip!"

And they did let it rip—with a will! The cheers could have been heard at St. Jim's.

The next moment numerous lusty voices were roaring out:

"For he's a jolly good fell-ow!"

"For he's a jolly good fell-ow!"

"For he's a jolly good fell-ow!"

Which no one can deny!"

Mr. Railton and Mr. Lathom smiled, and with the strains of the old song ringing in their ears, started back for St. Jim's, knowing the great rebellion was over, and that all was well!

An hour later the castle stronghold of the late rebels had been evacuated, and with blankets, cooking utensils, food and other materials on their shoulders and backs, the garrison trailed back through the snow to St. Jim's. There was no crowd to greet them—the Fifth and Sixth were at lessons—fortunately, perhaps! Nor did Dr. Holmes greet them, either, with a smile or a frown. That afternoon, they took their places in the Shell, Fourth, and Third Form-rooms as usual, Mr. Lathom receiving an ovation from the Fourth.

The rest of that day the late rebels waited, somewhat anxiously, for the punishment they were sure would come. But it did not come. The Head went about as usual, though he looked somewhat grim. Tom Merry was not even sent for, and before long it dawned upon the Lower School that Dr. Holmes had pardoned them.

When the police went for "Captain" Ratcliff—a title he had never earned or was entitled to—he had vanished. Only the monk's robes and hood told them where he had lain, a prisoner. And Mr. Ratcliff, in addition to the school authorities, breathed deeply in relief when he heard the news. The police soon discovered the owners of the diamonds which had been hidden so craftily in the vaults by the thieves when the police were hard on their trail. The thieves were never caught, however, and why the diamonds had never been recovered by them was never known. "Captain" Ratcliff could have told, though it was supposed by the police that he had learned the secret in prison from a "lifer" who knew that he himself could never hope to recover the booty.

THE END.

(Next week's GEM will contain another grand long story of Tom Merry & Co., entitled: "THE JESTER OF ST. JIM'S!" As this is undoubtedly one of the finest yarns Martin Clifford has written, I should advise all "Gemites" to order their copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)

DAVID GOODWIN'S GREAT MASTERPIECE:

THE WORST FORM AT CODRINGTON!

(Introduction on next page.)

Jellicoe, the mild and simple-minded member of the Worst Form at Codrington, gives the Head and Taffy Wynne & Co. the surprise of their lives in this rollicking instalment of our popular school serial!



A Surprise for the Party!

"I FEAR they will be angry," Jellicoe gasped under his breath; "but I will risk it. What a splendid thing it would be if I could convince Sir Harry. A shock might bring it home to him. I am sure he is a man of brains and could be brought to see the error of his ways!"

In came two men-servants, bearing a large dish, on which was a splendid steaming turbot, quite fifteen pounds in weight, with slices of lemon all round it. The dish was placed on the warm metal shelf, one of the covers put over it, and the men hurried down again to the kitchen.

Jellicoe watched anxiously. Soon the second dinner bell rang, and at once the men reappeared and bore the turbot away to the dining-hall. Five minutes later one of them returned, and with the help of a comrade brought in a much larger dish, on which was a towering, hissing baron of beef.

"What a disgusting sight!" murmured Jellicoe.

The enormous metal cover was placed over this, although it was much too big even for the great joint on the dish. Then the man hurried away again, and Jellicoe, screwing up his courage, came out. His face was pale, but set and firm, and his eyes glistened like some fanatic dervish's.

"Now to strike a blow for the right!" he hissed. "Come what may! Ha, ha!"

He hoisted up one end of the great cover and exposed the steaming beef. What was to be done with it? Jellicoe's eyes lit on a pair of folding doors of a cupboard at the back of the shelf. In a twinkling he jumped up and opened them.

Heaving the covers back, he grasped the baron of beef. It took all his strength to lift, and it burnt his hands pretty sharply, but with an effort he managed to hoist the big joint inside and shut the cupboard doors.

Footsteps were heard approaching—the men were coming back. There was no time to run to the recess. Jellicoe's heart came into his mouth. What was he to do?

"Where the deuce is that youngster?" said Sir Harry, as they entered the dining-room.

"Mr. Jellicoe? He was with us a minute ago!" said Dorothy, looking round.

Taffy and his companions felt rather uneasy at the strange disappearance, and the Head was looking annoyed. There was no saying what the simple-minded Jellicoe might take into his cranium, as the chums knew.

"It's very unconvincing of the boy; I should not have thought of him," said Canon Wyndham. "Let me—"

"Oh, never mind! The young rascal will soon smell his way here," said the genial baronet. "We needn't wait for him. Jenkyns, go and see if you can find that young gentleman, and let dinner be served."

In came the great turbot, and it was placed before Sir Harry.

"I suppose you youngsters have good appetites?" said the host. "All boys worth their salt have."

"I'll answer for these," said the Head.

The turbot was capital, and the boys did their share, but nobody seemed very cheerful as yet. The Head was evidently angry, and it was certainly bad manners of Jellicoe to be late. Jenkyns, the footman, reported that nobody could find him, and little was said during the course.

"Extraordinary thing where the boy's got to," said Sir Harry. "What's his name—Jam-jar? Never can remember names. He must make up for lost time when he does come. I've got a surprise for you here, canon."

"What's that?"

"Old English baron of beef, served whole. None of your mere sirloins. The bigger the joint the better the meat. I let the whole household sup off it afterwards. You've never seen my big Queen Anne dish-cover before, have you?"

The two footmen came in, fairly staggering under the weight of the great dish.

"Heavy, isn't it, Jenkyns?" said the baronet.

"Never knowned one so 'eavy, Sir Harry," gasped Jenkyns.

The dish was placed on the table, which seemed to creak under it. Everybody looked at it expectantly. The host rose, and, taking his long carving-knife, gave it a whet or two with the steel, and prepared for business.

"Off with the cover, Jenkyns."

The footman lifted the great metal lid. The next moment the whole dinner-party was struck dumb with amazement. Mr. Lambe, for the first time in history, nearly dropped his eyeglass from its place. Instead of a baron of

beef Jellicoe himself was revealed, sitting cross-legged on the dish. He looked very pale, rather scared, and was perspiring freely. But he stuck there, like a Burmese idol.

Sir Harry staggered back a pace, gripping the carvers convulsively, and stared with eyes that started out of his head.

"Eh, what? What the deuce! It's Jam-pot! Where—who—"

Everybody looked petrified—even Taffy could not find his voice. The Head dropped his spectacles into his glass of champagne.

"I—I beg your pardon," said Jellicoe, in a faint voice, "but you will not regret the loss of the beef, will you? I am here instead. I only wanted to point out how wrong it is to eat meat!"

"What!" gasped Sir Harry.

"Think," said Jellicoe, in a hollow voice, "how happy the cow was, browsing on the buttercups and frisking among the little lambs, before it was called upon to furnish us with baron of beef! Here," he continued, holding out a silver paper-covered roll with a hand that shook somewhat, "is something which is a—perfect substitute. Try it, and you will see we need not eat meat at all. It is Nailer's Nutritious Nut-food."

The rest of the company had to pinch themselves to make sure that they were awake. The Head first found his voice.

"Jellicoe!" he cried, in terrible tones. "What do you mean by it, Jellicoe? How dare you!"

Sir Harry suddenly fell back into his chair, his features relaxing, and roared with laughter. He laughed till the room shook, and the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Wretched boy!" cried the Head, his wrath rising to a fearful pitch as he left his chair and strode towards the vegetarian. "You dare to insult a gentleman in this atrocious manner at his own table! You shall be flogged within—"

"No, no," said Sir Harry, wiping his eyes and starting up between them. "Not a bit of it, canon. It's all right. Here, come out of it, youngster!" He reached out, and, lifting Jellicoe bodily off the dish, set him on his legs upon the floor. "So you're a vegetarian, are you? Gad, you're starting early! Want me to eat nuts instead of beef, hey?"

"A disgraceful, ill-mannered affront!" exclaimed the Head.

"I'm sorry you don't like my fare," said the baronet, chuckling. "But, no matter, you shall eat nut-meal, or chicken-meal, or catsmeat, or anything you like. I always like my guests to please themselves. Cheer up, my boy!"

Jellicoe seemed on the point of bursting into tears.

"I—I'm afraid I've been very rude," he moaned. "Yes, I see it all now. I was very rude. But I never meant to be. I thought it was such a good opportunity to—to—I wish I hadn't done it now. I'm very sorry."

"Tut, tut! Let him alone, canon. He didn't mean any harm."

"I really sometimes think the boy is— You know, not quite sound in his head," said Canon Wyndham, in a low voice to Sir Harry. "But—"

"Oh, he's all right! Buck up, Jelly-jar! Jellicoe! I wish I could remember your name!" said Sir Harry heartily. "I'm afraid I'm too old to start vegetarianising, but you may if you like."

"You must apologise most humbly for the insult you have offered to Sir Harry, as he is good enough to forgive you," said the Head.

"I do," exclaimed Jellicoe. "I apologise, sir. I'm awfully sorry. I—I wish I wasn't a vegetarian. I'm—I'm sick of it."

"That's all right," said Sir Harry. "But look here, where's the beef?"

"In the cupboard over the iron shelf," said Jellicoe, fairly bursting into tears.

"Great glory!" muttered Taffy. "It really ain't safe to bring the kid out."

Sir Harry made a sign to the footmen, and sure enough, they found the baron of beef, brought it in, and put it on the dish. It was still hot. Then Sir Harry had another fit of laughter that turned him purple in the face.

"Tell us how you did it, Jellicoe," he said, "and we'll forgive you."

"I—I hid the beef in the cupboard," blubbered the vegetarian, "and then I heard somebody coming, so I got on the dish and pulled the cover over me. I thought it would be so effective if I were served at the table, and could offer you the nut-food. It all came to me in a moment."

"I should think so," grinned Dereker.

"But now I see how silly I was," continued Jellicoe plaintively. "It was also very warm under the cover, and I perspired a great deal. The dish was unpleasantly hot to sit on, and I fear the gravy has spoilt my trousers."

"I should say your trousers have spoilt the gravy," murmured Taffy, who was weak with laughing.

"And—and I am very sorry altogether," concluded Jellicoe.

Sir Harry picked up the carvers.

"Look here, my boy," he said cheerily, "I'm more than four times as old as you are, so it's not likely, is it, that you can tell me what's good for me?"

"No, sir," said Jellicoe humbly.

"Now this vegetarianism of yours is all very well for faddists and so forth, but no healthy boy has any business with it. You hear me? Fancy a schoolboy as named to eat roast beef! Why, the British Empire was built up by roast beef. To denounce it, sir, is high treason, or little better."

"Yes, sir," said Jellicoe warmly. "I never thought of that."

"High treason," said Sir Harry, flourishing his carving knife, "is punishable by the axe and the block. But you are pardoned, my lad, only on condition you sit down in that chair and eat a bigger plateful of it than anybody else at the table. If you don't, I'm hanged if I won't send you home! Will you?"

"Yes, sir," said Jellicoe eagerly. "I shall be very glad to."

"Jenkyns, bring a waterproof for him to sit on, because he's been well basted with gravy. And bring another dish. That's right. Now to business."

Sir Harry, carving like a Trojan, soon helped all the company to beef. It was splendid beef, and, thanks to the size of the joint, it was still piping-hot. For Jellicoe he gave a thumping portion, and there is no denying that the vegetarian looked at it hungrily as it was being brought to him.

"Now, Jellicoe," said Sir Harry, "what do you say to throwing that patent rubbish of yours into the fire?"

"Yes, sir," said Jellicoe thankfully.

And, turning round, he dropped the Nailer's Nutritious Nut-food among the hot coals.

"Glad to get rid of it, Jellicoe, aren't you?" said the Woolly Lambe placidly, putting up his eyeglass.

"Yes, sir. I always hated the nasty stuff, really," said Jellicoe.

"Isn't the beef good?" said Sir Harry.

"Grand, sir!" said the ex-vegetarian, with his mouth full.

"Then there's a choice piece of nonsense knocked on the head," said Sir Harry. "Hallo! Ring at the bell! That's the evening post."

The meal went merrily, and everybody was in the highest spirits, when the footman came in with a missive on a tray.

"All right, Jenkyns! I don't want any letters now," said Sir Harry impatiently.

"Beg pardon, Sir Harry. It's an express letter marked 'Urgent,' so I thought I'd better bring it."

Dereker, with a serious face, nudged Taffy, and the two exchanged a meaning glance. The former had not forgotten what he saw at the Post Office.

Sir Harry took up the letter. "Don't know the handwriting," he said half aloud. "Will you excuse me, gentlemen? I'd better open it, as it's marked 'Urgent.'"

He tore the envelope open and perused the letter inside. For a few seconds he read, and sat as if thunderstruck. His face became very pale, and his features hardened and grew grim. He looked up from the letter and fixed his gaze

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Convinced that Mr. Wollaston Lambe, their new Form master, is an escaped convict, Taffy Wynne & Co. and Ferguson & Co., rival factions in the Remove, the most unruly Form at Codrington, determine to bring pressure to bear to rid the school of the new master's presence. Their efforts prove of little avail, however, for the Woolly Lambe not only shows that he is capable of taking care of himself and his Form, but proves a hero and sportsman by catching a cracksmen in the act of looting the school's strong-room. Although Wynne & Co. are now ready to back up the Woolly Lambe, Ferguson and his cronies are still determined to expose the new Form master. Later, Taffy Wynne is instrumental in saving the life of Dorothy Beckford, the pretty daughter of one of the governors of the school. As a recognition of his bravery he is invited, together with his chums and a new boy named Jellicoe, to dine at Sir Harry Beckford's house that same night. Canon Wyndham, the headmaster of Codrington, and Mr. Wollaston Lambe are also invited. In company with Dorothy, the chums are making a tour of the house when Jellicoe, who is a staunch vegetarian, sees an enormous dish cover as used in olden times to cover a whole roast sheep. At a favourable moment he slips through the curtains, of the portiere and secrets himself in a dark recess at the end of the room.

(Now Read On.)

fiercely on Mr. Lambe. That gentleman was not looking. His eyes were wandering sleepily round the room, taking in its rich appointments and the massive plate that shone on the sideboard.

The baronet, still staring at the Remove master, crushed the letter in his left hand and rose to his feet.

"No bad news, Sir Harry, I hope?" asked the Head anxiously.

The dead silence that fell made everybody feel very uncomfortable, and all wondered what was going to happen next. There seemed to be thunder in the air. Sir Harry's jolly face now looked terribly stern and threatening.

Mr. Lambe turned his head and met Sir Harry's gaze with the greatest unconcern. He was the only unembarrassed person there. He put up his eyeglass and smiled at the baronet, with perfect frankness, as if unaware that anything was wrong.

Sir Harry turned abruptly to the Head. "You ask me if I've bad news?" he said in a grating voice. "Yes, infernally bad! I have received a letter from a cad, and I don't know who he is—a cad without a name!"

He crushed the missive up in his hand and breathed hard. Nobody felt able to say anything. Sir Harry paused a moment, and then, flinging the note into the fireplace, he filled his glass to the brim with champagne and held it high.

"I pledge you, Mr. Lambe!" he cried heartily. "A glass of wine with you! I'm charmed to see you at my table!"

The Woolly Lambe rose at once and drank to his host, saying cheerily:

"To you, sir!"

As he did so the strain passed off, and everybody sighed with relief. They felt they had escaped a very awkward affair, though they hardly knew what.

"There's something precious wrong somewhere," whispered Derek to Birne. "I can guess who sent that note."

It was surprising how quickly the clouds turned to sunshine. Sir Harry became as merry as a cricket again, and soon had the company talking and laughing freely. In a few minutes the incident was forgotten altogether.

The baronet showed himself a charming host, and the boys were surprised to find what good company their head-

master could be. But the Woolly Lambe was the brightest of the three, and kept the table alive with his wit. He was really very funny when he chose, and as the dinner progressed the talk about Codrington became uncommonly light and free, considering the four boys were there, rather to the Head's dismay once or twice.

"You are the sort of chief who is needed there," said Sir Harry to Mr. Lambe. "Only a gentleman and a sportsman could handle the Remove. Boys know when they have one to deal with. Here's success to you and the Remove, Mr. Ram!"

"Mr. Lambe, not Ram," put in the Head, mildly.

"I beg your pardon—Mr. Lambe, of course!" said Sir Harry, whom the champagne was making rather jolly. "Capital name, too. What do they call you in the Form, sir? Not the sheep—eh?"

"No; the Woolly Lambe," replied the Remove master, laughing.

The Head smiled discreetly. The boys looked surprised, for in their simplicity they had not supposed the Form master knew what they called him.

"Woolly Lambe—eh? Capital!" chuckled Sir Harry. "Of course, it would be! Your first name's Wollaston—eh? Egad, I'll wager they don't find you a lamb in class! That eyeglass of yours is a big help. Terrifies 'em, you know, when you look at them through it. What?"

"I don't know about that," said Mr. Lambe, laughing. "I should say not. The whole class wore them one morning—out of compliment to me, perhaps—an eyeglass apiece. Derek led the attack. Wonderful eye for a glass, he has!"

The chums looked rather embarrassed. They did not see the fun, and thought it was not fair of Mr. Lambe to bring all this up against them in public. Jellieco especially looked grave as a judge trying a murder case, and regarded the Head with a disapproving stare.

(There's no mistaking the fact that the Woolly Lambe and Taffy Wynne & Co. are the staunchest of chums noir, is there, chums? And, what's more, you can bet your boots that there's a warm time in store for the rascally Ferguson & Co. Don't be let down over next week's instalment through failing to order your copy in time!)



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