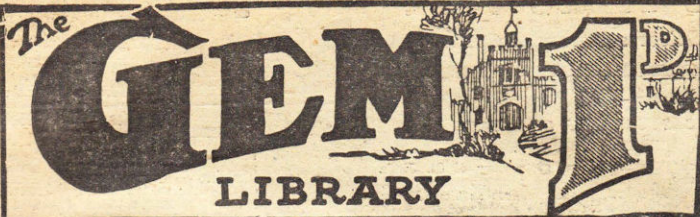


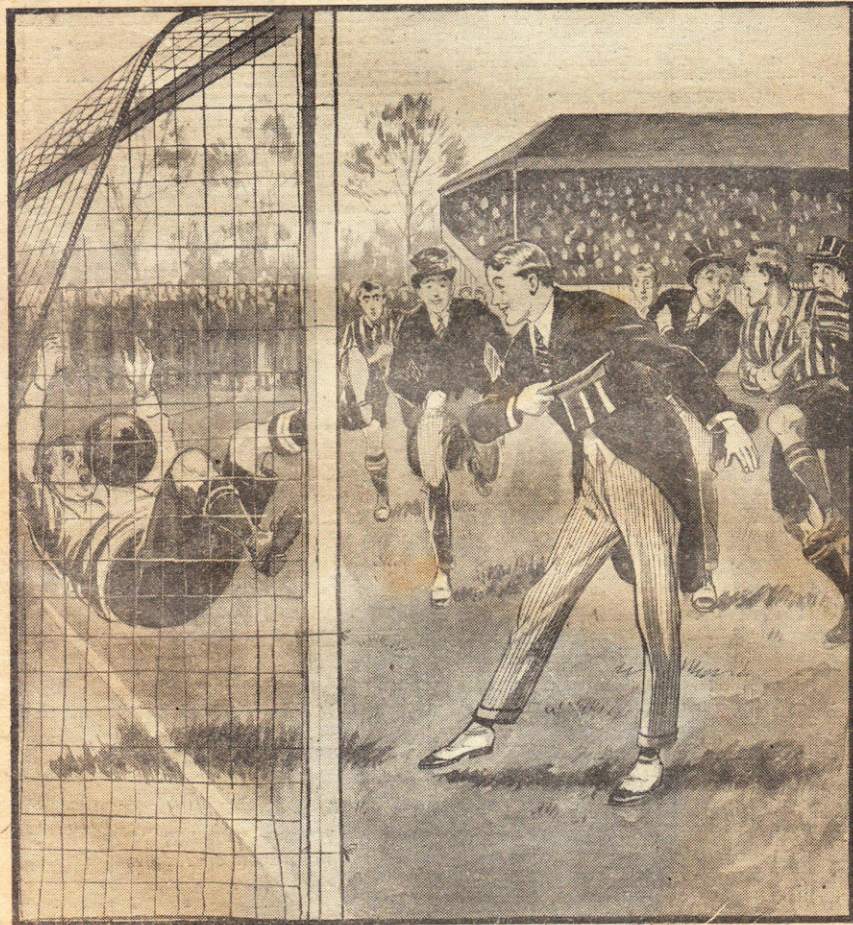
TOM MERRY'S WAR FUND!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's.

Complete
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for ALL
and
Every
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GEM.



No. 354
Vol. 9.



THE WAR FUND FOOTBALL MATCH!

There was a howl of laughter as Kildare, gracefully removing his silk hat, headed the ball into the net, and replaced his topper after a polite bow to the goalkeeper. "Goal! Ha, ha ha!" (An amusing incident in the grand complete tale of St. Jim's contained in this issue.)

THIS WEEK'S CHAT.
The Editor's Personal Column.

For Next Wednesday—

"CAPTURED BY CIPHER!"

By **Martia Clifford.**

Next Wednesday's splendid, complete story of St. Jim's goes to prove that Talbot's troubles are by no means over. The handsome Shell fellow, popular almost as Tom Merry himself, is perpetually haunted by the shadow of the past, and a confederate of his "cracksmen" days solicits his aid by means of a cipher, chalked upon the door of the School House. Levison, who has shown a strange devotion for Talbot since the latter got him out of a scrape, comes to the rescue; but his motives are misunderstood, and he is sent to Coventry. However, the unknown desperado, through Levison's instrumentality, is eventually

"CAPTURED BY CIPHER"

and the end of the Fourth comes very much into the limelight.

OUR GRAND ARMY SERIAL.

I have much pleasure in announcing that a stirring serial story of Army life, entitled:

"OFFICER AND TROOPER!"

and written by Beverley Kent, commences in next Wednesday's issue of the "Gem Library." Do not fail to order your copy well in advance.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"A Faithful Girl Reader."—Many thanks for your postcard. Levison was expelled from Greyfriars before he came to St. Jim's. Your suggestion may be acted upon later. Best wishes.

H. Todd.—The Christian names of Wynn, Levison, Mellish, and Skimpole are David, Ernest, Percy, and Herbert respectively.

HOW TO SPEND CHRISTMAS.

The great festival of Christmas is swiftly approaching, and it is now only a matter of a few weeks ere we shall be celebrating the time-honoured event. Amateur artists are spending all their leisure time painting cards and letters; other Gemites are industrious with coloured papers, paste, and scissors. But there are some persons—happily very much in the minority—who are sitting in gloomy silence, intending to forgo their Christmas fun and frolic on account of the war. They maintain that there should be no Yuletide revels in 1914; that tidings of good cheer should give way to sadness and solemnity. We all know this type of individual. If he were allowed to have his own way, I am afraid it would be a very dark day indeed for Britain. The same person who advocates a cheerless Christmas is also fond of circulating silly rumours about our brave soldiers and sailors. He will tell you that a German invasion is imminent; he will hardly be able to hide the pleasure he feels in retaining some terrible rumour of sunken fleets "the Government was keeping back from the public." Implicit belief in German power, and distrust of Britain's might, is what you may expect from him. Such a person is anything but a patriot.

Of course, Christmas will not be the same this year. How can it be, when some of us have brothers and bosom chums serving at the front? But I feel sure these would be the last to begrudge those at home their usual enjoyment.

For my part, I shall spare no effort in providing my loyal readers with a feast of good Christmas fare in the "Gem Library." Mr. Martin Clifford is engaged upon a really ripping Tom Merry yarn, which for good, hearty humour will challenge anything this brilliant author has yet produced.

I urge all my chums to prepare for Christmastide as usual, in spite of war troubles. By this I do not for one moment mean that they should have a heartless disregard for the great struggle which is being waged on the Continent. But it behoves us to be of good cheer in stormy as well as calm times; and when the Christmas of 1915 comes round may the flag of our splendid old island be flying as proudly as ever! This wish, I feel sure, is one which will be echoed by Gemites the wide world over.

THE EDITOR.

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By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



Kiddie and his followers came out into the field with perfectly serious faces, excepting Mulvaney major, who was grinning. The senior eleven had turned up—but not in the garb of footballers! Every member of the team wore a tail-coat, white gloves, spats, and a silk-hat! They looked as if they were dressed for church parade rather than for a match on the football field. (See Chapter 13.)

CHAPTER 1. A Good Beginning.

"**Y**AAS, wathah!" D'Arcy of the Fourth made that remark suddenly. He had been sitting silent in Study No. 6 for some time, while Blake and Herrie and Digby were talking football.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was generally ready to lay down the law upon that subject, had said nothing. It was Jack Blake who was laying down the law. Herrie and Digby were busy with a new packet of toffee, and they were giving Blake his head, so to speak.

Blake had just remarked that what he couldn't tell Study No. 6 about the off-side rule wasn't worth listening to. Then it was that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy chimed in unexpectedly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake looked at D'Arcy in surprise. He had not expected

the swell of the School House to back him up in this whole-hearted manner.

"Good for you, Cussy!" he said approvingly. "You're learning something about footer at last! You agree with me—"

"Eh?"

"You agree with me that Figgins was off-side when—"

"Weally, Blake, I was not thinkin' about footah at all," said D'Arcy, turning his celebrated monocle reprovingly on his study-mate. "I was thinkin' about somethin' fah more important."

"Then, what did you say 'Yes, rather!' for, aas?" demanded Blake warmly.

"I did not heah what you were sayin', deah boy. I was thinkin' of a splendid idea that has flashed into my bwin."

"Oh, rats!" said Blake crossly. "Now, about Figgins. I tell you he was standin'—"

"Nevah mind Figgins now, Blake—"

Next Wednesday:

"CAPTURED BY CIPHER!" AND "OFFICER AND TROOPER!"

(No. 354. (Now Series), Vol. 9.)

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"Dry up!" roared Blake. "I tell you Figgins was standin'—"

"I am surprised at you, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "I wegard it as simply wotten to be talkin' footh at a time like this!"

"A time like this?" said Blake, with a stare. "What's wrong in talking footer at tea-time?"

"I was not alludin' to tea-time. I mean a time like this, when war is wagin', and the woff of cannon is heard from one end of Euwope to the othah."

"Ain't we to talk about footer any more till the Germans are licked, fathead?" demanded Blake. "Why, it may take months and months and months!"

"At a time like this," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "It is no time to talk footh. Our great bizney ought to be to buck up and help."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Blake. "Well, if you want to volunteer for the front, Gussy, I won't stop you, for one. It would give us a much-needed rest in the study, anyway."

"I should volunteer like anythin' if I were old enough," said Arthur Augustus. "As it is, I considah it wathah a mistake of the Wah Office to ovahlook us. But as we cannot go to the front, Blake, it is our duty as patwiotic Bwitons to help at home."

Blake stared at his noble chum. Herries and Digby left off eating toffee in their surprise. What Arthur Augustus was driving at was beyond their powers of guessing, but it was evident that some new idea was working in that mighty brain.

"I've been thinkin' it out," Arthur Augustus condescended to explain. "It is simply wotten that we can't do anythin', when so many brave fellows at the front are sheddin' their blood like watah, you know. Weadin' the wah reports, and shouting away, and singin' 'Wule, Bwitannia!' is weally not enough. We must do somethin', and I have thought out what we can do."

"Oh, good!" said Blake resignedly. "Go ahead! What are we to do? Apply to the War Office to send the St. Jim's Boy Scouts to the firing-line?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Or shall we go into training as nurses?"

"You uttah ass!"

"Well, I ought to know, you know," said Blake cheerfully. "The fact is, Gussy, you are talking out of the back of your neck, as usual. We'd all be glad to do anything we could, only there's nothing to be done. So don't waste any more breath. Now, as I was saying about that goal of Figgins—"

"Pway wing off, Blake, and listen to my ideah. It is weally nobby. I have thought of a scheme to enable evvery chap at St. Jim's to help."

Blake yawned portentously.

"How long will it take you to explain, Gussy?"

"Only a few minutes, deah boy."

"Would you mind going out into the passage to do it?" Blake further inquired. "Then you could take as long as you liked without botherin' anybody."

"If you wufuse to be sewious, Blake, on a sewious subject—"

"I'm quite serious," assured Blake. "Never been more serious in my life. Or you could go and tell Tom Merry. He might be glad to hear it—perhaps!"

"This study is goin' to have the honah and glowy of instartin' the weehee," said Arthur Augustus firmly, "and I insist upon explainin' it. Now, as it is impos for fellows of our age to wush into the wagin' battle as we should like to do, the next best thing is to help look aftah the wrelations of the chaps who are doin' the fightin'. That is a thing that everybody can help in. And that's where we come in."

Blake rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"How do we come in?" he inquired.

"They're waisin' funds all ovah the country to help the wounded and the wrelations of the bwave boys at the front. Evvery chap who has anythin' ought to give somethin'. But that isn't all. It isn't only a question of sendin' what you can spare. Lots of people do that—I twust evverybody does it; but it's up to St. Jim's to go one betterah."

"How?" roared Blake.

"By sendin' what we can't spare," said Arthur Augustus.

"Eh?"

"I mean, by bein' self-denyin', and goin' without things, and sendin' all we can waise to the funds."

"Oh!" said Blake.

"Weflect!" said Arthur Augustus enthusiastically. "You were goin' to buy a new foothah jersey—"

"I am going to, you mean," said Blake warmly.

"You were going to, deah boy. Well, instead of buyin' a new jersey, you keep the old one for the west of the foothah season—"

"Do I?" said Blake.

"The Gem Library.—No. 354.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, Every Monday.

"Yaas, wathah! And you send the pwice of the new one into the fund."

"Oh!"

"I suppose you would wathah a soldier at the front had a new blanket than have a new foothah jersey yourself, Blake?" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Of course I would! But—"

"There is no 'but,' about it, deah boy. This study is goin' to start it, and the whole School House will take it up, and then the New House will have to follow suit to save its face. And if the movement spreads, considah what a splendid thing it will be—no end of money waised for the funds, and so on."

"By Jove!" said Blake.

"Well, my hat!" said Herries. "Blessed if I ever expected to hear Gussy talk such sense! Gussy is right for once!"

"That's wathah a wude way of puttin' it, Hewwies. However, I will pass ovah that. I twust you fellows are goin' to buck me up. You can begin, Hewwies, by sellin' your bulldog."

"What!"

"I dare say Towshah would fetch a few shillin's."

Herries looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as if he would eat him. Herries would as soon have parted with his right hand as with Towshah.

"You-you, fathead!" said Herries, in measured tones.

"A few shillings! Why, Towser is worth pounds and pounds!"

"All the more reason why you should sell him, deah boy. As a mattah of fact, it would be wathah a welief if he went. He has no wespact whatever for a fellow's twousahs."

"Ass! Duffer! Chump!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"It's a good idea," said Digby, with a nod. "Never mind Towser; but a self-denyin' ordinance—that's a jolly good idea."

"Yaas, wathah! You can always wely on a fellow of tact and judgment to suggest the wight thing at the wight time," said Arthur Augustus confidently. "I knew you fellows would buck me up. We'll begin at once. No swacifice is too great to make for our twoops. I twust you agree to that. Besides the self-denal, there are othah things—such as waisin' money by sellin' things we don't want, and especially by sellin' things we do want. Then we might get up an enter-tainment and charge for admission, you know; or an extwah wippin' foothah match with gate-money for the occasion. I am prepared to take the lead in evverythin' and see it through."

"Go hon!" murmured Blake.

"I mean it, deah boy. Now, to begin with, how much were you goin' to give for your new jersey, Blake?"

"Seven-and-six," said Blake uncesily.

"Very well."

Arthur Augustus rose and went to the study cupboard. The three Fourth-Formers watched him in surprise. The swell of the Fourth lifted an empty biscuit-tin from the cupboard and stood it on the table, and removed the lid.

"What on earth's that for?" demanded Herries.

"That's for the subscriptions, deah boy. We require a vewy large wacceptance, you know, because we are goin' to waise lots of money."

Blake & Co. grinned. If Arthur Augustus succeeded in raising a large biscuit-tin full of money, certainly it would be a valuable aid to any fund.

"It's weady, Blake."

"Eh?"

"Heah you are!"

"But what—"

"Seven-and-six, please!" said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"Ahem! You see—"

"Seven-and-six, please!"

"You see, I really want that new jersey. Under the circumstances—"

"If this study doesn't set the example, Blake, it cannot expect the example to be followed by the othahs. Seven-and-six, please!"

Blake, with a wry face, fumbled in his pockets, and produced a half-crown, a two-shilling piece, and three shillings. Clink, clink, clink, clink, clink! One coin after another dropped into the biscuit-tin with a hollow sound. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy smiled a smile of satisfaction.

"Nothin' like havin' a good beginnin'," he remarked.

"Now, Hewwies, I've heard you speakin' of gettin' a new collah for Towshah—"

"And I'm jolly well going to!" said Herries.

"Wats! Show it in!"

"I'm up to you, Herries!" grinned Blake. "If I can go without my new jersey, Towser can go without his blessed collar!"

Herries seemed on the point of an explosion. But he con-

tained himself, and dropped a two-shilling-piece into the tin. Clink!

"Now, Dig, old man—"

"I—I wasn't going to buy anything new!" said Dig, hurriedly.

"Wats! You were goin' to stand tea in the studay!"

"Well, we must have tea, mustn't we?"

"Not at a time like this. We can have tea in hall. Lots of the soldiers don't get any tea when they're fightin' the beastly Germans. Hand it out!"

"Ahem! I—"

"Shell out, dear boy!"

Digby made a grimace, and clinked two shillings and a sixpence into the biscuit-tin.

"Good!" said Arthur Augustus. "That's a wippin' beginnin'. Now I'll take the tin along to Tom Mewwy's studay!"

"Hold on!" said Blake, with deadly politeness. "There's something you've forgotten, Gussy."

"Wats that, dear boy?"

"You had a fiver from your pater this morning."

"Yaas. That's for my new clobber."

"You don't want any new clobber at a time like this," said Blake, with a grin. "Hand it out!"

"What!"

"Hand it out!" roared Herries and Digby.

Arthur Augustus looked dismayed.

"You—you see, dear boys, I'm just goin' to see my tailah. Weally—"

"Blow your tailor! Hand it out!"

"A chap can't go about in wags, you know," said Arthur Augustus feebly. "I weally must have a new waistcoat, at least."

"Hand it out!"

"Well, pewpaws, if I weserve enough for a new tie, and

a—

"Reserve nothing!" yelled Blake.

"This isn't a time for new ties. Hand out the fiver!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Shell out!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face was a study for some moments. Then slowly he extracted a five-pound note from a little Russia-leather purse, and dropped it into a biscuit-tin.

Blake and Herries and Digby grinned joyously.

"Quite a good beginning!" said Blake.

"Quite!" grinned Digby.

"Oh, rather!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus smiled a rather sickly smile. It certainly was a good beginning, better than he had anticipated, in fact.

"Now we'll take the 'tin' along to Tom Merry's studay," said Blake, with a chuckle. "After Gussy's noble example, they can't decline to shell out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of Study No. 6 lost no time, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy accompanying his comrades, with an extremely thoughtful expression upon his face.

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry Goes One Better.

TOM MERRY and Manners and Lowther were in their study. They were having tea, and their talk ran on the subject of footer. The great winter game was in full swing at St. Jim's, and as Tom Merry was captain of the junior eleven, it was naturally much in his thoughts. The Terrible Three of the Shell were discussing the latest match with the Grammar School, in which Talbot, the scholarship junior, had distinguished himself highly by kicking the winning goal.

Tom Merry's team was in wonderfully good form lately, and they had won some great victories. Like Alexander of old, they sighed for fresh worlds to conquer. With that idea in their minds they had sent a challenge to the Fifth Form, nothing doubting their ability to play and beat a senior eleven. The Fifth Form had not, however, taken the trouble to reply to their challenge, Lefevre, the captain of the Fifth, having contented himself with snorting when he received it.

"Cheeky rotters, I call 'em!" Tom Merry remarked. "I believe we could beat the Fifth; we'd give 'em a good tussle anyway!"

"Or the Sixth!" said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"I jolly well wish we could get the chance of playing the First Eleven," he said. "I hinted it to Kildare one day."

"And what did he say?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, he said, 'Rats!' " confessed Tom Merry. "All the same, we could give them a jolly good game. And we're in topping good form now—Hallo, what do you Fourth Form kids want!"

Clink, clink, clink!

Blake was carrying the biscuit-tin. The chums of Study No. 6 marched in, Blake leading. Blake set the tin on the table.

"I say, that's jolly good of you!" said Lowther. "For us, I suppose? What kind of biscuits?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"That's the strong-box," explained Blake. "We're out for funds. We've thought of a new and jolly ripping idea!"

"Weally, Blake, I thought of it!"

"Gussy made the first suggestion," admitted Blake generously. "Now we've taken it up, to knock it into shape and make a success of it."

"But Jove!"

"It's a self-denial dodge, you know, to raise money for the patriotic funds," explained Blake. "Every chap puts in what he can afford, and especially what he can't afford. This is only the beginning. Shell out!"

"But, I say—"

"No need to say anything!" said Blake briskly. "I suppose you don't want to roll in luxury and riotous living while other fellows are fighting your battles, do you?"

"Nunno! But—"

"Then shell out! No need to count your money—we want all you've got!"

"My hat!"

"Gussy has generously contributed a whole fiver, as an example to the others," said Blake, with a chuckle. "But we're all in it. Shell out!"

"Yes, wathah! Shell out, dear boys!"

The Terrible Three exchanged glances. Funds were not high in Tom Merry's study just then. Money was "tight."

"Gentlemen," said Arthur Augustus impressively. "I trust it is not necessary for me to make a long speech to show you—"

"I trust not!" said Monty Lowther hurriedly. "Anything but that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I must point out to you that every chap is called upon to self-deniy himself at a time like this. This is no time for half measures. St. Jim's is goin' to set an example to the whole country, I trust. This is self-deniy week!"

"Oh!"

"Money or article of value—all's gwist that comes to the mill," said Arthur Augustus. "As patriotic Britons, I call upon you to shell out!"

"Gussy," said Monty Lowther affectionately, "nobody could resist you. The way you put it would bring tears to the eyes of a stone image or a Prussian junker, or anything of that kind." "I'm going to contribute every farthing I've got about me!"

"That's wight, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus approvingly. "I trust your example will be followed."

"I trust so," said Lowther. "Every blessed farthing I've got—I can't say more than that, can I?"

"Certainly not, Lowthah." "I regard it as noble and generous of you. I trust the othahs will take example by you. Heah's the box."

Monty Lowther fumbled in his pockets, one after another. Erom one pocket at last he produced a small coin. It was a farthing. With a smile of conscious merit he dropped it into the biscuit-tin.

"There you are!" he said.

"You—you uttah ass, Lowthah! What do you mean by contributin' a farthing to my war fund?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "I regard this as a wotten joke, Lowthah. You said you would contribute every farthing you'd got—"

"Well, that's all the farthings I've got," explained Lowther.

"You—you uttah ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, dear boys. At a time like this, when the roar of woad and waging battle is heard in the land, it is no time for wotten jokes. Shell out!"

"It's up to you!" grinned Blake. "Take it smiling!"

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The Terrible Three realised that it was up to them. And with a good grace they went through their pockets, and raised by united efforts the sum of one-and-sixpence, which was forthwith added to the collection in the biscuit-tin.

"All you've got!" asked Blake.

"All!"

"Well, you can't give more than that, but remember the biscuit-tin the next time you get remittances," said Blake warmly. "I'm jolly well going to see that I'm not the only giddy self-denier in this school. Ta-ta! We'll try Reilly next, you chaps!"

And the collectors marched out of the study with the clinking biscuit-tin. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther looked at one another.

"Cheek!" growled Lowther.

"Well, it's a jolly good idea!"

"That's what I mean, fathead! Cheek of those Fourth-Form kids to think of such a wheeze, and leave us out! Where are your brains, Tommy? That blessed kids' study will be getting all the kudos. We ought to have thought of this."

"So we ought!" agreed Tom Merry, wrinkling his brows in thought. "But—we didn't. But we can do our little bit. If we can think of a scheme for raising more money than they can get with their blessed self-denial—"

"How?" said Manners.

"That wants thinking out."

Tom Merry thought it out. He thought it out so earnestly that he let his tea get cold, and Manners and Lowther finished the eggs and the toast without his noticing that the table was being cleared. Suddenly the captain of the Shell uttered an exclamation.

"My hat, I've got it!"

"Oh, good! What is it?"

"A footer match—"

"What!"

"Gate-money—"

"Well, of all the rotten wheezes!" said Monty Lowther, in disgust. "Who'd pay to see us play footer, I'd like to know? More likely they'd want to be paid."

"Well, not us, perhaps," agreed Tom. "We're a jolly good team, but I admit that people wouldn't pay to see a junior team play on its own. But if we can get a topping team to play us, that would make all the difference!"

"Thinking of challenging Tottenham Hotspur or Aston Villa?" asked Lowther sarcastically.

"No; what about St. Jim's First?"

"The First! They won't play us!"

"Won't they? Look here, we could borrow the Ramblers' ground at Rycombe," said Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming with excitement as he thought out his idea. "It's an enclosure, you know, though people don't usually pay to go in. But they have had matches with gate-money. We'll ask them for the ground one afternoon when they're not playing, and advertise the match in the local papers—see? St. Jim's First is jolly well known as a first-class team, and lots of people would pay to see them play. Lots of people would pay to come in, just for the sake of the fund; we advertise all gate-money given to the St. Jim's War Fund. We couldn't get a crowd on our own, but the First Eleven would bring the crowd—plenty of 'em."

"But they won't play us!" howled Lowther.

"But we'll make 'em!"

"How?"

"By appealing to their patriotism!" said Tom Merry triumphantly. "Kildare thinks it's beneath the dignity of the First Eleven to play a team of fags—that's what they call us, the cheeky bouncers! But for the sake of the War Fund they can put their pride in their pockets. We'll shame 'em into it."

"My hat!" Lowther grinned. "It would be a lark!"

Tom Merry jumped up.

"Come on!"

"Where?"

"To see Kildare!"

"He'll kick us out!" said Manners.

"Let him. All for the sake of the cause. Come on, I tell you! Why, we might raise twenty quid for the fund, and give Study No. 6 the kybosh!"

And Tom Merry led the way, and Manners and Lowther followed their leader, though with very considerable misgivings in their minds.

CHAPTER 3. Misunderstood.

KILDARE of the Sixth rapped out "Come in!" as a knock came at his door. Kildare was at tea, with Darrell and Langton of his Form. The three great men of the Sixth glanced at the Shell fellows as they came in. Tom Merry advanced into the study boldly—Manners and Lowther took up a strategic position near the door. They wanted to be near the passage in case of trouble.

"Hallo!" said Kildare good humouredly. "What do you kids want? If you've come here to fag, you're just in time. You can put some coal on the fire, Merry!"

"Ahen! We didn't come to fag—"

"Never mind; you can do it all the same," said the captain of St. Jim's cheerily.

Tom Merry mended the fire.

"Now, Kildare, if you've got a few minutes to spare—"

"Sorry; I haven't!"

"It's rather an important matter," explained Tom. "I suppose you chaps are patriotic, ain't you?"

The three Sixth-Formers looked surprised.

"I hope so," assented Kildare. "What on earth are you driving at?"

"We've got an idea," explained Tom Merry. "You're not playing a footer match next Saturday—the First Eleven—"

"No. What the dickens—"

"We want you to play us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It isn't a laughing matter," said Tom Merry indignantly.

"Excuse me, I thought it was!" said Kildare.

"Look here—"

"We're much obliged for the honour you want to do us," said Kildare. "But we decline. I know it seems rather ungrateful of us, but we do decline. We do really. Shut the door after you, will you?"

"I haven't finished yet—"

"Your mistake; you have," said Kildare. "Get out!"

"You see, there are some very special circumstances in the case. We're going to have the Ramblers' ground in Rycombe; it's an enclosure, you know—"

"There's the door."

"We shall advertise the match—"

"My hat! Will you get out?"

"And charge gate-money—"

"Clear!" roared Kildare.

"And the gate-money will go— Oh—oh! I say, hands off! I tell you— Yarrooh!"

Tom Merry flew through the study doorway. The captain of St. Jim's had lost patience. Manners and Lowther hopped into the passage, and picked up their gasping chum. Tom Merry panted for breath.

"Look here, Kildare—"

Slam!

"N.G.," said Monty Lowther, with a grin. "Chuck it, Tommy!"

Tom Merry shook his head. When he had made up his mind, Tom Merry could be very firm.

"I'm jolly well not going to chuck it. It's their duty to play us, for the sake of the fund. I haven't explained to Kildare yet. When I explain, he will see it in the proper light. I'm going to try anyway."

"Better come away—"

"Oh, rats!"

Tom Merry opened the study door again. Kildare and Darrell and Langton simply glared at him. The dignity of the great men of the Sixth was damaged by the bare suggestion of playing a fag team on the footer-field.

Kildare jumped up.

"Will you clear off?" he roared.

"I want to explain—you see, we want you to play the junior team, because—"

"Because you're a set of silly young asses!" growled Kildare. "Any other captain would lick you for your cheek. And I will, too, by Jove, if you don't clear off this minute. Blessed if I ever heard of such cheek!"

"Get out, for goodness' sake, Merry!" said Darrell, laughing. "We're not looking for the honour and glory of playing fags—we're not really!"

"Let me explain—"

"Travel!"

"We're going to charge gate-money for seeing the match, and all the cash raised will go to the— Here, chuck it!"

Kildare chuckled it—"it" being Tom Merry. The captain of the Shell alighted in the passage again, with a bump and a yell. Kildare slammed the door angrily, and Tom Merry was picked up by his sympathetic chums.

"Seems a bit difficult to explain to Kildare, doesn't it?" grinned Lowther. "I rather think I should chuck it!"

ANSWERS

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FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE

is the principal character in one of "CHUCKLES," ½d. the complete stories contained in

"Ow!" groaned Tom Merry.

"Hurt?" asked Manners sympathetically.

"Yow! Do you think I'm doing this for fun, you ass? Ow, ow!"

Tom Merry limped away down the passage, Manners and Lowther following him, grinning. They were sympathetic, but they grinned. Evidently it was not possible fully to explain to Kildare the object of the proposed match, though if it had been explained at full length, Lowther and Manners doubted whether it would make much difference to Kildare. The dignity of the Sixth-Form was at stake, and the First Eleven was not likely to play a fag team under any circumstances whatever.

Kildare and Darrel and Langton settled down to tea again, the captain of St. Jim's looking a little ruffled. Kildare was a very good-tempered fellow; but there were limits. And in his opinion Tom Merry had passed the limit that time.

Knock!

Kildare turned an exasperated look towards the door. It opened, and Jack Blake of the Fourth came cheerfully in, with Herries and Digby behind him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy brought up the rear with a biscuit-tin under his arm.

"Hope we're not disturbing you, Kildare," said Blake, somewhat surprised by the glare the captain of St. Jim's gave him. "We've called in to—"

"Buzz off!" growled Kildare.

Jack Blake being a prominent member of the junior eleven, Kildare's natural assumption was that he had come to repeat Tom Merry's challenge to the First Eleven.

"Ahem! We've got a new scheme!"

"Yaas, wathah, a wippin' scheme!"

"I've heard all about it," roared Kildare, "and I don't want to hear any more! Travel out of my study—sharp!"

"You've heard about it?" exclaimed Blake, in surprise. "Well, I suppose it's getting about already. It's a tremendous idea, isn't it?"

"Tremendous check, if that's what you mean," said Darrel.

"Check!" said Blake. "I don't see where the check comes in. I should think that you fellows would back us up in it. Kildare especially, as captain of the school."

"I regard it as Kildare's duty."

"In fact, we look to Kildare to help us out in this," said Digby.

"I'll help you out fast enough," said Kildare, striding towards the astonished Fourth-Formers. "Now, out you go! Outside!"

"Here, I say, what the dickens— My hat! Yaroooh!"

"Hold on! Chuck it. My word!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Kildare— Gweat Scott!"

Kildare was using his boot vigorously. He might have been kicking for goal by the vigour he put into it. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy tumbled over one another into the passage. The famous biscuit-tin went to the ground with a crash. Then the study door slammed.

The chums of Study No. 6 sat up, dusty and breathless, and stared at one another in amazement and rage.

"Well, my hat!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Bai Jove! I wergad that—ow!—as wotten. Yow!"

"Ow! I'm hurt! Oh, Jerusalem!"

And the much misunderstood collectors for the War Fund limped away down the passage, without any contributions from Kildare's study.

CHAPTER 4.

Rivals in the Field.

"S OLD again!" growled Figgins of the Fourth.

Kerr and Wynn looked at their chum inquiringly. Figgins had just come into the common-room in the New House, and he was looking "wrathy."

"What's the trouble?" asked Kerr.

"Sold again! Those School House Bounders have done us!" snapped Figgins.

Fatty Wynn looked alarmed.

"Figg! You don't mean to say that they've got at the pie in the study—"

"Blow the pie!" said Figgins. "I'm not talking about pies."

Fatty Wynn looked relieved. If the School House juniors had raided the Co.'s Study, and appropriated the pie that was waiting there for supper, Fatty Wynn would have looked glummer than Figgins. But as that greatest of all possible catastrophes had not happened, Fatty felt that he could bear anything else with equanimity.

"Blessed if I know why we didn't think of it!" said Figgins, scratching his head reflectively. "We've got more brains than those School House bounders any day!"

"What-ho!"

"And we've cock-house at St. Jim's, ain't we?"

"We are!" said Kerr. "We is!"

"And it's up to us to think of things like this. But we've let those School House bounders take the wind out of our sails," growled Figgins. "It's sickening. Of course, we could have managed the thing better, if we'd thought of it."

"But what is it?" asked Kerr, in astonishment. "What are they up to?"

"And it's a good idea; a jolly good idea!" said Figgins morosely. "It's a School House wheeze, but we've got to admit that it's a good idea; the right thing at the right time, blow 'em!"

"But what—"

"How they came to think of it is a mystery. Bessed-if I can make it out! Seems to have been Gussy's idea to begin with. That ass!" said Figgins, in utter disgust. "The New House is nowhere—simply nowhere. This is where we sing small and hide our diminished heads."

"But you haven't told us—"

"It's a War Fund, you ass!"

"A War Fund!" said Kerr.

"Yes; a War Fund! No good denying that it's a jolly good idea. We never thought of it. Can't make out that we did. Of course, we've all sent subscriptions out of our pocket-money to the war funds, I know that. But we never thought of starting a War Fund here; the School House have thought of that," said Figgins despairingly. "You know, it's a simply topping idea. They've got a self-denial dodge. Fellow go without things, and put money in a box. When they've saved up enough, they hand it over to a big fund for the soldiers. And we hadn't the sense to think of it."

"Go without things!" said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully.

"That's it! Frinstance, you go without your supper, or jam for tea, or pies and cakes, any old thing, and put the money in the box. Isn't it a ripping idea?"

"Oh!" said Fatty Wynn. The expression on Wynn's plump face seemed to imply that he thought there were limits to the rippingness of that idea.

Figgins looked very gloomy. It was the wheeze of the season, as he called it, and it had emanated from the School House. The rival House was nowhere this time. And Figgins, as chief of the New House juniors, was very jealous of the honour of his House.

"And the worst of it is, they're coming over here with their blessed collecting-box," he grunted. "Coming here!"

"Well, we can show in some tin," said Fatty Wynn.

"Yes, and help make a success of their wheeze," said Figgins.

"And, of course, we can't refuse, because that would be mean. They've got us! Actually got us! We've got to back up their scheme; a rotten School House scheme! And we call ourselves the cock-house of St. Jim's! Br-r-r-r!"

It was a distressing situation. As patriotic Britons, of course, Figgins & Co. could not decline to back up the War Fund. That was impossible. They were bound to help it on by every means in their power. And they would be exerting themselves to back up a scheme of the rival House. And the New House would be nowhere.

Kerr wrinkled his brows in thought.

"We won't contribute," he suggested.

Figgins snorted.

"Of course we'll contribute," he said. "Nice it would look for us if we were left out! I should think even Fatty would go without a feed, for the sake of helping Tommy Atkins in the field."

"Ye-es!" murmured Fatty Wynn. He sighed, but he meant it.

"You don't catch on," said Kerr. "We won't contribute to the School House fund, I mean. We'll start a rival fund. And if we raise more money than they do, we'll beat them at their own game. See?"

"But we can't! There's only half as many fellows in our House as there are in the School House; and we can self-denly ourselves till we're black in the face, and we sha'n't raise more than half as much as they do."

Kerr nodded.

"I know. But we'll leave them their self-denial. We'll try something else; we must think of a wheeze. There are lots of ways of raising money. All we've got to do is to think of a dodge— Hallo! Here they come!"

Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy walked into the common-room, with the biscuit-tin under D'Arcy's arm. It clinked as he walked. Already the number of coins in it was mounting up.

"Pax!" said Blake, holding up his hand, as the New House juniors gathered round the four. "Pax, my infants! We've come over for your spare cash. Roll up and contribute to the War Fund!"

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"Yaas, wathah, deah boys! Small contwibutions thankfully weecived; largah ones in pwoportion," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway make a start, Figgins."

"Rats!" said Figgins.

"Rot!" said Redfern.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Weally, deah boys, I twest you are not goin' to leave the War Fund in the lurch," said Arthur Augustus severely. "This is no time for House vows. This is a time for backin' up, shouldah to shouldah."

"Quite so," said Kerr. "Hold on a minute!"

Kerr rushed out to the common-room, and the collectors waited in some surprise for his return. Kerr was back in a minute, but he did not bring a contribution. He brought an empty jam-jar. He held it out to the School House quartette.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the jam-jar in surprise.

"That is no use, Kerr! We are not collectin' wags and bones and bottles and jabs."

"That's our collectin'-box," explained Kerr.

"What!"

"That's the collectin'-box for the New House War Fund," said Kerr. "I request you to shove something into it."

"Hear, hear!" chorused the New House juniors. "Shell out!"

"Bai Jove! But we are collectin' for the fund—"

"I can collect, you can contribute," said Figgins, with a chuckle. "Pay up to the New House War Fund."

"Pay up!"

"Weally, you wotahs—"

"Look here!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully. "This is our idea. It's our War Fund. We're collectin'."

"So are we!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Blake. "Come on, you chaps. If these bounders won't contribute, we'll try further on."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah—"

"Bait!" said Figgins; and a party of New House juniors lined up between the collectors and the doorway. "You don't go out till you've paid up."

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm shocked at you," said Kerr severely. "At a time like this, I must say I'm shocked at you! Shell out!"

"But we've paid up in our own biscuit-tin!" roared Blake.

"Then you can pay up again in our jam-jar."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wufuse to do anything of the sort!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I uttaly wufuse to have my nobbly ideah bowwowed in this way. There is only one War Fund at St. Jim's, and we're collectin' for it."

"Pay up!"

"I'm waitin' with this jam-jar," said Kerr patiently.

"You silly ass—"

"Gentlemen," said Figgins, "at a time like this, I suggest that every fellow who refuses to contribute to the War Fund shall be bumped."

"Hear, hear!"

"Collar the bounders!"

"Look here—" roared Herries. "Hand's off! It's pax." "Tain't pax till you've contributed to the War Fund," said Figgins. "Self-denial is self-denial, you can't have any half-measures. Pay up—all you've got."

"Gweat Scott! I wufuse—"

"Then you'll be bumped."

"Collar the bounders!"

The crowd of New House fellows closed in on the unfortunate four. Blake & Co. looked at one another helplessly. They had come for wool, and they would be shorn. But there was no help for it.

"Bai Jove! I weward this as uttaly wotten," said Arthur Augustus. "I have only about five shillings left—"

"Five bob's better than nothing."

"Shillin's—"

"Bobs."

"Shillin's—"

"Shillings or bobs, shove them into the jam-jar," said Kerr.

"Pay up!"

"Or you'll be bumped until your House won't know you again," grinned Redfern. "We mean business with our War Fund, I can tell you."

Blake & Co. went through their pockets with sickly expressions. Figgins & Co. kindly helped them. Every coin the unfortunate four had about them was promptly transferred to the jam-jar.

"I'll put the names and the amounts on our list," said Kerr cheerfully. "You will have the honour of heading the New House list. Now kick 'em out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," 1D

Every Monday.

Every Friday.

Every Saturday. 2

"Look here, you rotters—"

"Kick 'em out!"

Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy made a somewhat hurried departure from the New House. They left Figgins & Co. roaring with laughter. The rival fund had been started, and the School House juniors had started it. Blake & Co. returned to the School House with the biscuit-tin, containing the same amount as when they crossed the quadrangle with it, and with empty pockets. Study No. 6 had made a handsome collection in their own House, so far, and the biscuit-tin was clinking with coin. But Study No. 6 themselves were "stone-broke," and likely to remain in this unhappy condition for a considerable time to come.

"Aftah all, it's all wight," said Arthur Augustus, with a feeble attempt at consolation. "It is our self-denial week, you know."

But his chums did not look as if they enjoyed it.

CHAPTER 5. Going Strong.

THE War Fund in the School House had started well. The next day all the school was talking of it. The biscuit-tin in Study No. 6 received many contributions. Blake had fastened the lid on securely, and jabb'd a hole through the top, so that contributions could be dropped in. A list was made out of the contributors, and posted up in the common-room, with the name and the amount of donor and donation.

There were few fellows who did not hand out something, and the list was soon a long one, and a fresh sheet of impot paper had to be added to it. Blake also took the precaution of numbering the donations. Thus, when Darrel of the Sixth handed out a half-crown, Blake marked it on the list thus:

"Darrel. First donation. Two-and-six."

Which was a strong hint that second donations, and third, were requested, and, indeed, expected.

Some of the fellows considered it a better idea to keep their money in their own pockets—such as Levison and Mellish of the Fourth, and Crooke of the Shell. Crooke was the son of a millionaire, and had plenty of money, but he did not seem disposed to part with any of it, however worthy the object.

Levison and Mellish were not over-blessed with cash, and they explained that what they had they wanted. That explanation was not good enough. Arthur Augustus pointed out to them eloquently that the more they wanted the money themselves the more credit there was in handing it out to the War Fund. To which Levison replied "Rats!" and Mellish "Rot!" Self-denial did not seem to appeal to them somehow.

But they were not to escape easily. After morning lessons, Arthur Augustus tackled them in the Form-room passage, in the presence of all the Fourth. Levison and Mellish spotted him with the biscuit-tin, and would have hurried off, but the swell of St. Jim's planted himself in their way.

"Contributions, please!"

"Oh, clear off!" said Levison irritably.

"Go and eat coke!" growled Mellish.

"Weally, deah boys, I am shocked at you! I appeal to all the fellows whethah it is not up to the boundahs to contwibute."

"Shell out!" chorused the Fourth-Former.

"Pay up, you worms!"

"Don't be Shylocks!"

"Considah the example of the othah chaps who are wathah hard up," urged Arthur Augustus. "There is Bwooke, who is only a day-boy, and has to work—you know, he has put in five shillin's. Then there is Tabbot—you well he's a schoolshipp chap, and hasn't very much cash, but he has handed out ten shillin's—ten whole bobs. You have more money than old Tabbot."

"Look here—"

"You had a remittance this morning, Levison," howled Reilly. "Shell out!"

Levison looked exasperated.

It was true that he had had a remittance, but he had intended to expend it for the benefit of Ernest Levison of the Fourth. Part of it was to go in "smokes," that being one of the indulgences of the black sheep of the Fourth. And he was extremely disinclined to see it disappear into the capacious biscuit-tin.

"Shell out!" chorused the juniors, gathering round Levison in a grinning crowd. To most of them it was a first-class "lark" to see Levison compelled to part with some money. It gave Levison a pain to have to give anything away.

"I am surprised at you, Levison," said D'Arcy severely.



"I wufuse to allow this to pwoceed," shrieked D'Arcy. "That is my bat! You must have taken it from my studdy, Levison!" "Yes, that's Gussy's bat right enough," said Blake emphatically. "What's your little game, Levison?" (See Chapter 8.)

"You have been wathah impwovin' lately; I had begun to weward you as weally almost a decent chap. I twust you are not goin' to wuin my good opinion of you."

"Blow your good opinion," growled Levison. "Oh, let the mean boast alone!" growled Blake. "If he wants to keep his dirty postal order, let him keep it." "Yaas, and the despicion—I mean, the contempt—of all the House with it," said Arthur Augustus crushingly.

Levison flushed uncomfortably. He did not like to hear it put like that. He fumbled in his pocket.

"That's wight, deah boy," said D'Arcy encouragingly. "You'll be glad aftahwards that you haven't acted like a wofah. At a time like this, a fellow is called upon to sacrifice anythin' he has. Wich and poor alike—they all ought to hand out. Any fellow who hasn't any money can sell somethin' to waise tin. So long as our gallant twoops are in need of anythin', nobody has a wight to weward his property as his own."

"You mean that?" asked Levison.

"Certainly."

"All serene," said Levison, with a peculiar gleam in his eyes. "I'll remind you of that. Here's my postal order."

A postal order for five shillings was squeezed into the tin.

"Bravo!"

"Good for you, Levison."

"Your turn, Mellish! Pay up!"

"I'm stony," said Mellish savagely.

"Vewy well, if you're stony, sell somethin'," said Arthur Augustus. "One of the chaps will buy your pocket-knife."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want my pocket-knife!" roared Mellish.

"Not so much as you want to contribute to the fund, deah boy. Any fellow who does not hand out for the fund will be werged as a German."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yah! Deutschlander!" hooted Kerruish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure, pay up and look pleasant intirely!" urged Reilly. "You don't want to be the only mean skunk in the House!"

Mellish made a wry face, but public opinion was too strong for him. He unwillingly took out his pocket-knife.

"What offers?" said Blake, with a chuckle.

"Bai Jove, I'd make an offah myself, only all my tin is in the biscuit-tin and the jam-jar ovah the way," said Arthur Augustus. "What offahs, deah boys, for Mellish's pocket-knife? Pway make a good offah, for the good of the cause."

Jameson of the Third offered threepence. Wally D'Arcy, the younger brother of the great Arthur Augustus, raised it to a tanner. A shilling was offered by Gore of the Shell, and the pocket-knife was knocked down to Gore. Mellish, looking almost green, saw his pocket-knife disappear into Gore's pocket and the shilling into the biscuit-tin.

"Bravo, Mellish!"

"Bai Jove, we're goin' strong!" said Arthur Augustus, as

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and Talbot. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"CAPTURED BY CIPHER!"

he marched off with his chums and the biscuit-tin. "This is going to be a great success. We've got to make Cwooke pay up somehow. Hallo! There's Cutts of the Fifth! Wun him down!"

And the collectors rushed after Cutts of the Fifth. He, however, was not contributing. He let out with his boot instead, and the biscuit-tin sailed through the air and landed several yards away with a crash and a terrific clinking. The wrathful collectors rushed after it, and Cutts walked away.

Levison and Mellish walked out of the House, Mellish looking sulky, and Levison grinning. An idea was working in Levison's active brain.

"Now I'm cleared out!" growled Mellish.

"Same here," said Levison. "Never mind, it's a good cause. And I've got an idea."

"Blow your ideas!" grunted Mellish.

"But it's a jolly good one," said Levison, with a chuckle, and he proceeded to explain to Mellish in subdued tones. And when he had finished Mellish was chuckling, too, and had quite forgotten the loss of his pocket-knife.

CHAPTER 6.

The Politic Letter-writers.

TOM MERRY was busy that day.

The Terrible Three felt that it was up to them.

Study No. 6 had started a self-denial dodge, which seemed to be panning out successfully. Figgins & Co. had started a New House collection, and were supposed to be planning some wheeze for raising unheard-of sums. The Terrible Three, who looked upon themselves justly as great leaders, were in danger of being put quite in the shade, which, of course, was not to be thought of. That consideration, added to the goodness of the cause, made them wire in with great energy. Tom Merry's scheme, if it was a success, would bring in funds, and would bring the Terrible Three to the front—their proper place, as Tom remarked.

The first steps were easy. The Rylcombe Ramblers, of whom Grimes was captain, willingly loaned their ground for Saturday afternoon. Grimes, the grocer's boy of Rylcombe, was ready to do anything to help. Besides lending the enclosure, he undertook to help to get a crowd to come in. As all Grimes's friends and acquaintances could not afford threepences and sixpences, it was agreed that the crowd should pay anything they liked at the gates, so long as they paid something.

Then Tom Merry visited the offices of the "Rylcombe Gazette," and arranged for large advertisements in the local paper. The adverts. were on tick, as money was short; but Tom Merry was well-known there, as the "Gazette" had the printing order for Tom Merry's "Weekly," so there was no difficulty about that.

Tom gave also an order for a number of posters in red and blue, to be posted up about Rylcombe and the neighbourhood, to advertise the match; and some were to be sent to him at St. Jim's, to be stuck up about the school.

The Terrible Three walked back to St. Jim's very well satisfied with what they had done so far.

"Only," said Lowther, "suppose the First won't play us?"

"They've got to!" said Tom decidedly.

"But suppose they won't?" said Manners dubiously. "We shall look a set of asses, with the match advertised, and all that. The crowd will come—lots of people are bound to come when they know that all the gate-money is for the War Fund—and there won't be any match for them if Kildare won't play it."

"They've got to, that's all!"

Tom Merry was quite decided about that. His belief was that when the patriotism of the First Eleven was appealed to they would play up like Britons. If they wouldn't, they would be forced to somehow, the how not yet being decided upon.

The St. Jim's First was famous in the vicinity, and their matches often attracted large crowds. There was no doubt that Kildare and his team would be a draw. They had to be got to play, that was all.

After all the arrangements were made, in this thorough-going manner, Tom Merry felt that they couldn't very well get out of it. He did not mean to let them get out of it. His next step was to explain to Kildare what had been done.

He found Kildare in the prefect's room. The captain of St. Jim's had in his hand when the Terrible Three came in.

"I've paid!" he exclaimed.

"Same here!" said Langton, laughing. "D'Arcy has been round with the biscuit-tin."

"So has Figgins with the jam-jar," said Darrel.

"So you can hook it?" said Rushden. "Nuff's as good as a feast."

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FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE, is the principal character in one of "CHUCKLES," 1/4

Tom Merry smiled.

"I haven't come for collections," he said. "That's all right. I've come about the match."

"The match!" said Kildare, frowning.

"Yes. I want to explain the object—"

"Cheese it!"

"All the gate-money will be devoted—"

"Clear off!" shouted Kildare.

He jumped up, and the Terrible Three executed a masterly retreat out of the prefects' room. In the passage Monty Lowther whistled softly.

"Looks like N. G.!" murmured Manners.

"Bosh!" said Tom Merry decisively. "If Kildare won't let us explain to him by word of mouth, we shall have to write to him: I'll write a note and get a fag to take it."

"Oh, good!" said Lowther admiringly.

A quarter of an hour later D'Arcy minor of the Third Form entered the prefects' room with a note in his hand and a grin on his face.

"For you, Kildare."

D'Arcy minor handed over the note to the captain of St. Jim's, and promptly retreated.

Kildare opened the letter. It ran:

"Dear Kildare,—I want to explain to you that the football match, First Eleven v. Junior Eleven, is to take place for the benefit of the War Fund.

All the gate-money—expected to be very considerable—will be handed over to the fund without deductions.

Therefore, it is up to the First Eleven, as patriotic Britons, to play in the match. The Ramblers' ground in Rylcombe has been secured. Advertisements of the match are already out.

Under these circumstances, I hope you will reply, fixing the match for Saturday afternoon. Kick-off any time you like.

R.S.V.P.

TOM MERRY."

Kildare read the note, and frowned. He handed it to Darrel, and it passed round among the lofty occupants of the prefects' room. There were a good many frowns, and some laughter.

"Cheeky beggars!" said Darrel. "Awful nerve!" said Rushden, laughing. "Of course, we can't play them! It would be too ridiculous!"

"Of course we can't!" growled Kildare. "The Sixth Form playing kids in the Shell and the Fourth! Of course we can't! It would be too absurd!"

"Only they don't see it," grinned Rushden. "They think they could play us, the silly young asses!"

"Before a big crowd, too! Catch us!"

"The young duffer thinks we shall have to give in to help his blessed fund!" said Kildare, knitting his brows. "Of course, we want to help the fund, or any fund for the same purpose. But we can't make the First Eleven look ridiculous. That's what the young duffers can't see."

"R.S.V.P.," smiled Darrel, glancing at Tom Merry's letter again. "Are you going to answer?"

"Yes," said Kildare grimly.

He took the letter and scrawled across it in pencil:

"Take fifty lines.—KILDARE."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare called in a fag and handed him the letter, with instructions to take it to Tom Merry. It was Frayne of the Third who bore the message. The Terrible Three were in their study, chatting with Talbot of the Shell while they waited for an answer. Frayne handed Tom Merry the note.

"Here's Kildare's answer," said Tom.

"I hope it's yes," said Talbot, with a smile.

Tom Merry looked puzzled as he unfolded the letter.

"It's my own letter back again. My hat!"

"What's the answer?" asked Manners.

"Look!"

Manners and Lowther and Talbot read out together.

"Take fifty lines.—KILDARE."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to chuckle at!" growled Tom Merry crossly. "Kildare hasn't answered me. Wait a minute, Frayne. Take this to Kildare."

Tom hastily scribbled on a fresh sheet of paper, Joe Frayne waiting, and grinning, for the note. Tom's second message was brief:

"Dear Kildare,—I don't quite understand your note. Will you kindly reply to my letter and tell me that we can depend on you for the match on Saturday afternoon?—TOM MERRY."

"Take this to Kildare, and wait for an answer, kid," said Tom, as he handed the note to the waiting page.

"Right-ho!" said Frayne.
The flag departed, and the Shell fellows waited rather anxiously for his return. In a few minutes Frayne came back into the study, with a note in his hand. Tom Merry spread it out on the table, and the Shell fellows read it:

"Take a hundred lines.

KILDARE."

The chums of the Shell looked at one another with rather sickly expressions. Kildare's reply was not exactly to the point, but its meaning could not be misunderstood. The First Eleven were not taking any.

"I call it cheek!" said Manners, after a long pause.
"Considering the object of the match," said Lowther, "I call it unpatriotic!"

"It's a disappointment, anyhow," remarked Talbot.

"But we're not finished yet," said Tom Merry. "There's something more going to be done."

"Lines!" suggested Lowther, with a feeble attempt at humor.

"Oh, blow the lines! They're going to play!"

Tom Merry spoke with great determination. The First Eleven were going to play in that match for the War Fund, somehow.

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther and Talbot. But they looked doubtful, all the same.

CHAPTER 7. Sale Announced.

"B A I Jove!"
"What a giddy surprise!"
"Levison, too!"

"Well, this takes the cake!"
There was amazement in the faces of all the juniors collected before the school notice-board in the School House.

They had reason to be amazed. On the board was pinned a new notice, in the handwriting of Levison of the Fourth. And it was simply astonishing. It ran, in large, displayed letters, to catch the eye:

"WAR FUND! WAR FUND! WAR FUND!"

"At 8 p.m. a Sale will take place in the junior common-room, in the School House.

"Valuable articles of all kinds will be offered for sale. The whole proceeds of the Sale will be devoted to the St. Jim's War Fund!"

All St. Jim's fellows are urged to attend the Sale, and bring all their spare cash with them. No reserve! Every article knocked down to the highest bidder!

"Among the lots will be letter-cases, fountain-pens, silver pencil-cases, cornets, silk hats of the very best quality, a large assortment of fashionable neckties, splendid overcoats, footballs, football-boots, cricket-bats all ready for next season, etc., etc., etc.

"No Reserve!
"The highest bidder takes the cake!"
"This Grand Sale has been arranged by Ernest Levison, of the Fourth Form, who will act as auctioneer. Every article will be sold, regardless of value, to the highest bidder.

"Now is the time! Help your country, and secure good bargains! Lay in your new overcoat for the winter, and your new cricket-bat for the summer. Renew your football-boots at bargain prices. Sport a fashionable necktie, and feel that you are a patriot!"

"Signed, ERNEST LEVISON."

The juniors read that announcement with an astonishment which was not complimentary to Ernest Levison, but which was natural enough.

Levison was generally supposed to be an extremely selfish fellow, and very close with money. He was seldom or never known to give anything away. True, of late Tom Merry & Co. had observed a marked improvement in the character of the cad of the Fourth. Talbot had lent him a helping hand in a bad corner, and Levison had shown gratitude—a new thing for Levison. And the incident seemed to have influenced him for good in many ways. But that his reform would go to this extent was amazing. The idea of Levison selling off all his private property in a public auction for the good of the War Fund made the fellows gasp.

But there it was; written in Levison's hand, and signed with Levison's name. It certainly looked as if the black sheep had turned over an entirely new leaf, and was pre-

pared to stagger humanity by making greater personal sacrifices than any other contributor to the War Fund.

"I wogard this as wippin' of Levison," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy enthusiastically. "I must say, I am surprised. But it is wippin'. He is cawyiin' self-denial furthah than any of us."

"Must be a jape!" growled Herries. "Levison doesn't do that kind of thing. Self-denial ain't in his line."

"Can't be genuine," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "It must be a rony. He's trying to pull our leg. There'll be a crowd in the common-room at eight o'clock, but there won't be any auction. That must be his little game."

"We'll jolly well mob him if he makes asses of us Eke that!" growled Digby.

"It must be that!" said Kangaroo of the Shell. "Fancy Levison parting with all his props! Rats!"

"Besides, he hasn't such a blessed lot of props as that," remarked Clifton Dane. "He isn't rolling in money."

"May have been making a collection of things to sell," hazarded Talbot.

"I haven't heard of it, if he has."

"Same here! It's gammon!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.
"I hardly think that Levison would twy to gammon us on such a serious subject as the War Fund, dear boys," he remarked.

Figgins & Co. of the New House walked in. They were looking very surprised.

"Hallo! You've got it here, too," said Figgins, stopping to stare at the notice. "We've got one of these papers up in our House. Mellish came and stuck it there."

"My hat!"

"If it's genuine, we're coming over to the sale, of course," said Kerr. "We'll bring a crowd to make the bidding lively. But is it genuine?"

"Blessed if I know!" confessed Blake. "It's queer, I must say. Still, if Levison means business, we'll do him justice. Let's go and see him."

"Good egg!"

A crowd of astonished and curious juniors sought for Levison. He was found in his study in the Fourth Form passage. His study-mates were there—Mellish and Blenkinsop and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, Blenkinsop and Lumley-Lumley had seen the notice in the hall, and they were questioning Levison about it. Blenkinsop, who was a simple youth, was expressing his admiration for Levison's generosity. Lumley-Lumley, who wasn't at all simple, was expressing his opinion that it was spoof.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Now, Levison—

"What's the little game, Levison?"

"Whose leg are you pulling?"

"What do you mean by that giddy notice?"

Levison yawned.

"Can't you read?" he asked.

"We've read it," said Tom Merry. "But what does it mean? Is there really going to be a sale?"

"Yes."

"Honest Injun?" asked Figgins. "We don't want to march an army of New House chaps over here for nothing."

"Honest Injun!" said Levison. "You won't come for nothing. It will be a genuine sale. No reserve. All articles knocked down to the highest bidder. A jolly good chance to get good bargains, and to show your patriotism at the same time."

"Yes, rather!" said Mellish, with a grin. "We expect to raise a really handsome sum for the War Fund."

"Hallo! Is Mellish in it, too?" exclaimed Kerr.

"Certainly!" said Mellish.

"You're putting up things to sell—you?" ejaculated Blake.

"I'm putting up as much as Levison, anyway."

"Well, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! I wogard it as wathah wotten to hint a doubt of Levison's motives," said Arthur Augustus. "I wogard Levison as plays 'up splendidly!"

Levison gave him a curious look.

"You approve?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah; with all my heart, deah boy!"

"Good!"

"I'm only sorry that our study is out of funds, and won't be able to bid," said Arthur Augustus. "Othahwise, we would twy our vevy best to win the wices up."

"There'll be plenty of bidders, if the sales comes off," said Bernard Glyn. "I'm in funds, for one, and I'll lend cash to intending purchasers, if they want it."

"Hear, hear!"

"And Crooks too. We'll make him bid—"

"Oh, I'll bid if there's anything worth bidding for!" said Crooke, rattling his money in his trousers-pocket—a habit

he had. There was always a jingle of cash about Crooke of the Shell. "But I don't believe Levison has anything to sell that's worth buying."

"Wait and see!" said Levison sententiously.
"Where's the saleable property?" asked Reilly.
"The lots will be produced when the sale is ready to begin. They're not on view until then," said Levison. "I hope everybody will turn up. I give you my word, there will be a big sale at bargain prices."

"Oh, we'll come!"
"Yaas, watah!"
"You chaps can help," added Levison, to study No. 6. "If you can't bid, you can be there to help the auctioneer—handing out the things, and so on. It will be a pleasure to have your assistance on the occasion; a very great pleasure indeed."

Mellish burst into a chuckle.
"Certainly," said Blake, staring at Mellish. "Where does the cackle come in, Mellish?"

"Oh, don't mind him," said Levison hastily, with a glare at his chum. "I suppose I can depend on you four fellows before eight?"

"Yes; but—"
"Then you can help me get the saleable articles on the spot," said Levison. "They'll be packed in a big box. That's all."

"Can't we see any of the things now?" asked Fatty Wynn.
"Not on view."

"Blessed if I don't think it's a rag after all," said Figgins suspiciously.

"Wats!" said D'Arcy. "Levison is all wight, and he is actin' nobly. And I can call upon all the fellows of both Houses to wally wound at the sale."

"Hear, hear!"
And as there was no further information to be obtained from Levison or Mellish, the curious juniors retired from the study. They hardly knew what to think, but it was settled that everybody was to turn up at the sale, and if the sale didn't come off, everybody agreed with Blake that Levison should have the ragging of his life for pulling their leg.

And the fellows of both Houses looked forward with great keenness and curiosity to the hour of eight o'clock that evening, when Levison of the Fourth was to appear in the new and surprising role of an auctioneer.

CHAPTER 8. The Caution.

BEFORE eight had struck, the junior common-room in the School House was crowded, not to say crammed.

All sorts and conditions of fellows were there. Juniors of both Houses came in crowds—of the Shell, the Fourth, and the Third Forms. And as the fame of the sale had spread, there was a good sprinkling of seniors. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his keenness to help on the good work, had constituted himself into a regular advertiser for the auction, and had spread its fame far and wide, and so a good many seniors had promised to look in.

D'Arcy had succeeded in getting Kildare and Darrel to promise to come, and their example brought many others. Curtis & Co. of the Fifth looked in, not specially to back up a worthy object, but on the look out for bargains, and in a spirit of curiosity.

It was agreed on all hands that it was a noble object, and that therefore the dignity of the seniors would not be compromised by mixing with a junior crowd. So they came in good numbers.

The apartment was large, but the space was well-filled long before eight o'clock. As yet, the auctioneer and his assistant had not appeared. There were calls for Mellish and Levison on all sides. But so far they were not to be seen. Some doubting Thomases averred that they didn't intend to come at all, and that there wouldn't be a sale.

The table was dragged up to one end of the room, and a large hammer, borrowed from the tool-shed, lay upon it, all ready for the auctioneer. And a soap-box was there to form a rostrum for that functionary.

As eight o'clock drew nearer, impatience was shown on all sides. The chums of Study No. 6 were ready to help the auctioneer, but he had not come. They sat on the table in the meantime, waiting for him.

"There goes eight!" exclaimed Kangaroo, as the hour began to strike from the old tower.

"He ain't here!" growled Blake.

"Here he comes!"
Levison walked into the crowded room with Mellish at his heels. The doubting Thomases were silenced now. The auctioneer had come!

"Where's the goods?" demanded Gore of the Shell.

"The Gem Library—No. 354.

"Just coming," said Levison briskly. "We've been getting them ready, packing them into a box to bring here."

"We could have helped you do that," said Blake.
"Oh, that's all right; you can come and help us carry the box," said Levison. "We've borrowed D'Arcy's biggest trunk from the box-room."

"You are very welcome, dear boy."
"Thanks! Will you fellows come and lend a hand; it's rather heavy."

"Yaas, watah!"

The four chums departed with Levison and Mellish, and the crowd waited eagerly. It looked like real business at last!

In a few minutes the six came back, carrying among them a trunk of extremely large dimensions, the lid of which was closed.

It seemed to weigh a good deal, by the evident exertions of the six juniors in carrying it. But the trunk when empty was no light weight.

"Here's the goods!—Hurrah!"

The trunk was rushed in, and planted down with a bump behind the table, within easy reach of the auctioneer's stand. Mellish took up his position in front of it, ready to hand up the goods to the salesman. Blake & Co. lined up on the other side of the table, between the auctioneer and the audience.

"Gentlemen—" began Levison.

"Hear, hear!"

Levison gave a flourish with the hammer.

"Gentlemen, the sale is about to begin. You are already acquainted with the nature of this sale. There is no reserve. Every article here is a good one, and will go cheap—to the highest bidder, anyway. Every article has been willingly and cheerfully contributed by its owner to be sold to swell the fund."

"Bravo!"
"I need not dwell on the worthy and deserving nature of the fund," went on Levison, waxing eloquent. "You have heard of it from Master D'Arcy, hero present, who has described it much better than I can—"

"No—no—"
"Oh, weally, Levison!" murmured Arthur Augustus, almost overcome by that flattering allusion to himself.

"I mean it," said Levison. "In case any of you should have dissented, I will repeat D'Arcy's noble and thrilling expressions—"

"Oh, weally, dear boy—"

"D'Arcy says—and we all endorse it—at a time like this every fellow who is worth his salt is for the country. Every fellow ought to be prepared to make any kind of sacrifice. Self-denial is the order of the day! A fellow ought to be willing to give the shirt off his back, or the boots off his feet. In England to-day, as in Rome of old, as Lord Macaulay puts it:

"Then none were for a party,
Then all were for the State;
Then the rich man helped the poor,
And the poor man loved the great!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted the juniors. They had never expected Levison of the Fourth to come out like this. Still, after his idea of selling off his property to help the fund, really nothing could surprise them.

To quote our respected friend D'Arcy again, a fellow who hesitates to make any sacrifice for his country is a wank wotah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen, I need say no more. The sale will now begin. Four of you"—Levison indicated the chums of Study No. 6—"being in the state usually known as stony, are unable to bid, and have promised to help me in my work. I appeal to them to see that order is kept, and to keep down all disturbance. I ask them to give me their word that there shall be no interruption of the sale."

Blake & Co. stared at Levison.

"What the dickens—"

"Of course there won't be any interruption," said Blake.

"What are you driving at?"

"You promise to keep order, and see that the sale is not interrupted?"

"Certainly. It isn't necessary, but we do."

"Yaas, watah!"

"Well! Now to business! Hand up the first article, Mellish!"

Mellish grinned and opened the trunk, and handed up the first article, a very handsome cricket-bat, which had evidently not cost less than a guinea. Levison held it up for general inspection.

"Lot No. 1, a handsome cricket bat. What offers?"

Arthur Augustus jumped, and turned his eye-glass scrutinizingly upon the bat.

"Hold on a minute, Levison! That looks like my bat."
 "The handsome cricket-bat," went on Levison, unheeding.
 "cost a guinea! I am aware that we are now in the football season, but the cricket season will come round again in due course, and then bats will be to the fore again. This very handsome cricket bat—"

"Weally, Levison—"
 "Two bob!" called out Gore.
 "But that is my bat!" shouted Arthur Augustus excitedly.
 "You are makin' a mistake, Levison! You have got the wrong bat! That is mine."

"Two bob I am offered," said Levison, apparently deaf to the excited voice of the swell of St. Jim's. "Two bob for this very handsome bat—"

"Three bob!"
 "I refuse to allow this to proceed," shrieked D'Arcy.
 "That is my bat! You must have taken that bat from my study, Levison."

"Yes; that's Gussy's bat right enough," said Blake.
 "What's your little game, Levison? You can't sell D'Arcy's bat."

"Can't I?" said Levison, with a stare. "Why not?"
 "Why not!" stuttered Arthur Augustus. "Why, because it's mine, you wottah."

"That makes no difference," said Levison coolly.
 "No—no difference?"

"Certainly not. This is a time to sacrifice everything for the War Fund. I appeal to all the fellows if you didn't say so, to the extent of giving up everything—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Quite right!"
 "Well caught!"

"Goal!" chuckled Blake. "He's got you, Gussy! You can't go back on your own word! It's up to you!"

"B-b-but I want my bat!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the whole crowd, delighted at the turn things were taking. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face alone, as Lowther remarked, was worth a guinea a box.

"Play up, Gussy!"
 "Play the game!"
 "Levison, you wottah, hand me that bat, or I'll give you a thick eh!"

"Do you mean that you are going to interrupt the sale?" demanded Levison.

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "And what about your promise?"
 "My—my promise?"

"Certainly. You four chaps have given your word that the sale shall not be interrupted."

"Oh cwumbs!"
 The crammed room rang with laughter. The fellows understood now why the auctioneer had extracted that promise from the chums of Study No. 6. They had promised that the sale should not be interrupted. After that they could hardly proceed to interrupt it themselves. Arthur Augustus's face was a study. And the fellows who considered that the swell of St. Jim's had been a little too pressing with the biscuit-tin enjoyed his discomfiture to the full.

"Three shillings I am offered for this excellent cricket-bat, once the property of D'Arcy of the Fourth, and gingerly devoted to the War Fund."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Take it smiling, Gussy!" grinned Blake. "You're fairly caught! Just practise what you preach, you know. And it's all for the good of the cause, anyway."

"Vewy well. I agree, Levison."
 "Bravo, D'Arcy! Four bob!" called out Glyn.
 "Five bob!"
 "Six!"

"This handsome bat, going for six bob!" said the auctioneer. "Going—going—gone! This handsome bat goes to Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth for six bob. My assistant will take the money. Thank you!"

Lumley-Lumley paid over the six shillings, and put the bat under his arm. Mellich chuckled and clicked the six shillings into a coffee-pot placed on the table for the purpose. And amid general hilarity, the auctioneer's assistant proceeded to hand up Lot No. 2 to the enterprising auctioneer.

CHAPTER 9. Put to the Test.

"LOT No. 2!" announced the auctioneer. "A very handsome violin, with case and bow complete. Initials 'J. B.' on the case, but can be painted over by new owner. What offers for this very handsome violin?"

Jack Blake stood like a statue for a moment, dumb with wrath, as he recognised his violin in the hands of the auctioneer. Then he gave a roar.

"Levison, you rotter! Gimme my violin!"
 "This violin has seen service, but is still in very good condition," said the auctioneer calmly. "Some of you have heard it played in Study No. 6."

"Ha, ha, ha! We have!"
 "That's my violin!" roared Blake. "You're not going to sell my violin, you—your burglar! I'll wallop you if you don't hand it over! Sharp, now!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's turn to chuckle.
 "That's all right, Blake, dear boy. Take it smiling. You must practise what you preach, you know. It's all for the good of the cause, anyway. Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of merriment from the crowd. The sale was exceeding all their expectations. Levison's cool nerve in thus taking the promoters of the self-denying scheme at their word and collaring their property to sell at auction for the War Fund seemed to everybody there the richest joke of the term—to everybody, that is, but the owners of the property. They were by no means prepared to see their principles carried out to this extent. And Blake liked his violin. It was an old friend.

"Gentlemen, what offers for this violin? Those of you who have heard it played in Study No. 6 may think it is a rotten violin—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "But that's quite a mistake. With a different player it will go rippingly. A lot depends on the player. What offers?"

"Ninence!" shrieked Jameson of the Third.
 "One-and-six!" shouted curly Gibson.
 "You're not selling my violin!" bellowed Blake. "If you don't hand it over I'll come over the table to you."

"Order!" shouted the juniors. "Don't interrupt the sale!"

"Remember your promise, Blake, dear boy."
 "Go ahead, auctioneer!"

"One-and-six I am offered for this ripping violin," said Levison coolly. "I put it to you, gentlemen, this violin is worth more than one-and-six. I appeal specially to members of the Fourth Form. It is worth something to get it out of the Fourth Form passage."

"Hear, hear!"
 "My hat! I—I—I—I—I slaughter him!" gasped Blake. D'Arcy and Herries and Digby were holding him back from scrambling across the big table at the auctioneer. "Leggo, you fatheads! Leggo, I tell you!"

"Weally, Blake—"
 "Play the game!" said Herries. "You can't go back on your own word! We're in for it now, and we can't eat our words in public, Blake. Think of the prestige of the study."

"Two bob!" called out Kerruish.
 "Two bob I am offered—"

Kildare of the Sixth pushed his way through the laughing juniors. Room was made at once for the captain of St. Jim's.

"Hold on!" said Kildare. "Don't carry a joke too far, Levison. You can't sell Blake's property without Blake's permission."

"Blake has already given permission," said Levison.
 "I haven't!" roared Blake.

"I say you have! You endorsed D'Arcy's remarks on the subject. Nobody has a right to hold back anything at a time like this. You were fast enough to collar my postal order—all I had. I put it to the fellows: I gave all I had, and I'm left square. Mellich sold his pocket-knife. Ian's Blake called upon to keep to his word!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "Play the game, Blake!"

Jack Blake calmed himself with a great effort. He realised that it was a new example of Levison's cunning and peculiar sense of humour in thus turning the words of the unfortunate chums against themselves. But undoubtedly they were fairly caught. They were in a cleft-stick. The chums had meant all they said about self-denial and making sacrifices, but they had not anticipated its being taken in hand by a third party and pushed to this awful extreme. Still, there was no way of getting out of it without eating their own words. Blake gave a curt nod.

"Pile in!" he said, with an effort.
 "You needn't consent to the sale if you don't want to, Blake," said Kildare.

"Oh, that's all right! Nobody shall say that I don't play the game and keep my word!" growled Blake. "I consent!"

Kildare laughed. The sale proceeded cheerfully; but the violin was not in much demand, and the violin was knocked down for four shillings to a Fourth-Former. Blake drew comfort from that fact, as he would undoubtedly be able to repurchase the violin from the purchaser later on when he was in funds once more. If the bidding had gone up to its value that would have been a more difficult matter.

"Lot No. 3!" rapped out Levison.

All eyes were eagerly turned on the auctioneer to see what Lot No. 3 might be. The juniors guessed now what Levison's little game was, and did not expect to see any of the auctioneer's own property among the lots. And they were right. Lot No. 3 proved to be a cornet. "There was only one cornet in the School House, and it was easily recognised as the instrument with which Herries sometimes made night hideous."

"Gentlemen, what offers for this handsome cornet—"
 "My cornet!" spluttered Herries.
 "Handsome cornet, with check action, back-pedal brake, and ball bearings complete."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure, I'll give a bob, if only to keep Herries from playing it any more, bedad!" said Reilly. Reilly of the Fourth had the study next to Herries, and he knew that cornet.

"Look here—" roared Herries.
 "Shush!"
 "Don't interrupt the sale!"
 "Play the game, Study No. 6!"

Herries trembled with rage and consternation. But Blake and D'Arcy and Digby gathered round him, urging resignation. There was nothing to be done. D'Arcy's bat was gone, and Blake's violin had followed, and there wasn't any reason why Herries' cornet shouldn't be sacrificed to save the honour of the study. At least, Study No. 6 would be able to keep their reputation for playing the game, though it began to look as if they would not be able to keep anything else.

"Pway take it calmly, Hewwies, deah boy. Bettah to play the game than to play the cornet," was Arthur Augustus's consolation.

"I'll scalp him!" muttered Hewwies furiously.
 "Gentlemen, I am offered a bob for this formidable—I mean, this valuable cornet. I put it to you that this cornet cannot go at a mere bob. Now, gentlemen, I am waiting for your bids. Remember the noble cause—"
 "Half-a-crown!" from Kangaroo.
 "Three bob!"
 "And sixpence!"

"Three shillings and sixpence I am offered for this awful—I mean, this admirable cornet, formerly the property of George Herries, and nobly devoted to the War Fund. Going to—going to Ray for three-and-six!" Kindly step up and pay the assistant, Ray."
 "Hold on, though!" said Ray. "Does Herries agree?"
 "Yes!" gasped Herries.

He could hardly find his voice. That cornet was the apple of his eye. It came only second to Towser in his affections.
 "You can have it back next week at the same figure, old chap!" said Ray, laughing. "I don't suppose I shall hurt it practising. Here are the boblets."
 "Lot No. 4!" said the auctioneer, amid loud laughter. There was a loud blast upon the cornet—Ray was already trying his new purchase. "Order! Gentlemen are not allowed to play their purchases in the sale-room. Lot No. 4, a handsome Russia-leather letter-case, with the initials R.A.D. on the back—"

"My letter-case!" howled Digby.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Where are the things that were in it?" roared Digby, with almost a homicidal glare at the cheerful auctioneer.

"They're safe," said Levison. "I put them in the waste-paper basket in your study for safety. Gentlemen, what offers for a Russia-leather letter-case—"
 "Oh, you rotter!" groaned Digby.

He made no further protest; he realised that he had to share the fate of his chums.

"Eightpence!"
 "Two bob!"
 "Three bob!"
 "Three bob I am offered. Gentlemen, what bids? Remember, this is Russia-leather—and Russia is our ally in the war against German barbarism. And there is an old proverb that there is nothing like leather. So this letter-case is doubly valuable. Did a gentleman say four bob?"
 "Yes," said Tom Merry, laughing.
 "Four bob!"

"Going, going, going—gone for four bob, to Tom Merry of the Shell!"
 And Tom Merry paid up, then took the letter-case, which he promptly slipped into poor Dig's hand.

"Settle up later," murmured Tom. And Dig gave him a grateful glance.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 364.

"Let's see Lot No. 5!" shouted Gore. "Buck up with Lot No. 5!"

Lot No. 5 turned out to be a match football. Nobody was surprised to see that it was Jack Blake's footer. They knew what to expect now. The crowd grinned joyously at the expression on Blake's face. But the owner of the footer raised no objection. He knew that he had to grin and bear it, though he mentally promised Levison all sorts of things after the sale.

The footer fetched quite a good price, footers being much in demand just then. Lot No. 6 proved to be a new silk hat, and there was a shout of laughter when D'Arcy gasped faintly that it was his newest Sunday topper.

The sale-room was in a ripple of merriment now, as Levison's scheme was fully understood. While the crowd had been waiting there, Levison and Mellish had evidently been packing in the big trunk all the movable property they could lay hands on belonging to Blake & Co., and then the victimised juniors had helped them to carry it to the auction. All the lots so far belonged to Study No. 6, and it was pretty certain that the rest of the things in the trunk were their property. And the juniors roared with laughter, and wondered how long they would stand it.

The Terrible Three were sympathetic towards the unfortunate propounders of the self-denial scheme, but they could not help laughing. After all, Study No. 6 were only being taken at their word. It was just like Levison, to play a monkeyish trick of this sort; but there was no finding fault with his action. Study No. 6 were there to stop the sale if they liked. Only they couldn't—being bound by their own programme of self-denial, which certainly they had urged on other fellows without mercy.

Blake & Co. looked at one another with sickly looks.
 "We're in for it," said Blake. "We've got to grin and bear it. Anyway, they sha'n't say that Study No. 6 wasn't as good as its word! We—we didn't expect this—but—we're playing the game!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"

D'Arcy's silk topper passed from hand to hand. It was a really handsome topper, with the very latest thing in brims—but the juniors wanted to try the fit before they bid. It was finally secured by Gibbons for half-a-crown. And it had cost the noble mind of the house of D'Arcy twenty-seven-and-six!
 "Never mind," murmured Arthur Augustus heroically, "we're keepin' up the prestige of Studay No. 6, and—and it's all for the good of the cause!"
 "Br-r-r-r!" murmured Blake.

And the sale proceeded amid great hilarity, shared in by all but the chums of the victimised study.

CHAPTER 10.

Very Satisfactory.

"GENTLEMEN, what offers for this handsome diamond-pin?"

Arthur Augustus jumped as if he had received an electric shock. The pin flashed and sparkled as Levison held it up to the light, and there was a general exclamation of admiration, Arthur Augustus turned almost green.

"Hang it! This is going too far!" exclaimed Kildare. "You had better give that pin back to D'Arcy at once, Levison."
 Levison looked at Arthur Augustus with his mocking grin.

"Does D'Arcy object to the sale?" he demanded.

The swell of St. Jim's raised his head proudly. It was "up to him," and Arthur Augustus was not found wanting.

"Certainly not!" he exclaimed.

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"Go it, auctioneer!"

"This handsome diamond-pin, formerly the property of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, especially valuable on account of its aristocratic associations—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "What offers for this diamond-pin—the diamond guaranteed genuine. It is well known that the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would wear nothing else."

"Five bob!" from Manners with the object of saving the pin for its unfortunate possessor.

"Ten!" came from Cutts, of the Fifth.

"Fifteen!" said Kildare, joining in the bidding for the first time, with the same amiable object as Manners.

FOR NEXT WEEK:

CAPTURED BY CIPHER!

Another Splendid Long, Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

—By—

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

—and—

OFFICER AND TROOPER!

—the First Instalment of our Grand New Army Serial—Order in Advance.

PRICE ONE PENNY.



The sight of the two juniors on the wall brought new hope to Mr. Ratcliff's breast. He rushed desperately towards them. "Help me up, Figgins!" he gasped. Meanwhile, Kerr tore off his jacket, and as the maddened animal careered up the Scottish junior flung the coat deftly. It caught on the horns, and smothered the bull's eyes, blinding him for the moment. (See Chapter 14.)

"Quid!" said Cutts coolly.
 "Only cash is accepted," said the auctioneer warningly.
 "Gentlemen bidding recklessly are reminded that I O U's are N.G."

There was a laugh. A good many of the fellows knew that Cutts of the Fifth had been "on the rocks" lately. But Cutts was evidently in funds again; the dandy of the Fifth was seldom out of them for long.

"Twenty shillings I am offered," said the auctioneer.
 "One quid for this gorgeous diamond-pin, presented by a member of the aristocracy to a member of the aristocracy. Any advance on one quid? Going—going—"

"Twenty-five bob!" said Tresham of the Fifth.

"Twenty-six!" said Kildare.

"Thirty!" rapped out Cutts.

"Thirty-five!" exclaimed Crooke of the Shell. And Crooke opened a purse and showed a little wad of one-pound notes.

Crooke had often envied that handsome diamond-pin in the tie of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and he could afford to buy it. And he meant to outbid the dandy of the Fifth, if he could—if only for the selt of doing so.

"Bravo, Crooke!" shouted the Lower School, delighted to see a junior bidding against Cutts of the Fifth. "Go it!"

"Two pounds!" said Cutts angrily.

Manners had dropped out long ago, and Kildare had followed suit. Kildare hadn't sovereigns to expend like Cutts and Crooke. It was left to the Shell fellow and the dandy of the Fifth to carry on the bidding.

"Two-five!" said Crooke.

"Two-ten!"

"Two-fifteen!"

"Three!"

There was great excitement now. The bidding was high, much higher than it had been previously. But as the pin

was worth ten pounds, the bidders were not in danger of losing their money. There were shouts of encouragement to Crooke of the Shell to "Go it!"

"Three quids I am offered," sang out Levison, rapping with the hammer—"three quids for this splendid diamond-pin."

"Three-ten!" cried Crooke.

"Hurrah!"

"Four!" snapped Cutts, with a glare of wrath at Crooke. He wanted that pin, but he did not want to run into pounds.

"Guineas!" said Crooke.

"Gentlemen, I am offered four guineas for this splendid pin, worn by a member of the aristocracy, presented to him by a member of the House of Lords. Any advance on four guineas?"

"Five!" rapped out Cutts.

"Go it, Crooke!"

Crooke shook his head. He was done.

"Going at five guineas!" said the auctioneer. "Any advance on five guineas for this amazing diamond-pin? Going, going, going, gone!"—rap—"gone to Cutts of the Fifth for five guineas! Pay the assistant, please!"

Cutts laid five one-pound notes and five shillings on the table. The pin was handed over by the auctioneer, followed with a mournful eye by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Cutts coolly thrust the pin into his tie, and walked away with Tresham and Gilmore. He had cleared a good five pounds by the transaction, and he was satisfied. Arthur Augustus seemed to gulp something down.

"Buck up, old chap!" murmured Blake. "All for the good of the giddy cause!"

"Ya-a-a-as!"

"Next lot!" said the auctioneer briskly, and Blake's football-boots came into view. The football-boots went very quickly, being almost new. Dig's, which followed, were not new, and they were knocked down for a mere song. Lots followed thick and fast now, and Blake's fountain-pen followed D'Arcy's, and Dig's alarm-clock succeeded to Herries' flog-whip. The chums of Study No. 6 bore it with Spartan fortitude. With an elaborate air of unconcern they watched the progress of the sale, and handed over the purchased articles to the purchasers.

The trunk was empty at last, and the coffee-pot was simply flowing with cash. But the auctioneer was not quite finished.

"Now you can cawmy my trunk to the box-woom, you wotah!" said Arthur Augustus.

Levison did not seem to hear.

"Gentlemen, last lot! What offers? A very handsome and strong leather-bound trunk, suitable for week-enders or travellers to the North Pole. Warranted not made in Germany—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! My twunk—"

"Half-a-quid!" shouted Gore. Gore wanted a trunk.

"Bai Jove! It cost seven guineas!"

"One pound—"

"One pound ten—"

"Two quid!" shouted Gore.

"Going for two quid! This stunning trunk! Going—going—gone! Pay up, please!"

Gore paid up. The sale was over, and, with many chuckles, the crowd dispersed. The purchasers carried their purchases away with them, Gore being in some difficulty about his. Then Levison, with a bland smile, approached the chums of Study No. 6 with a coffee-pot nearly full of money.

"Jolly successful sale!" he remarked affably. "Let's count it out in public, please. No deception, ladies and gentlemen!"

"You—you—you—"

"This was simply a stunning idea of yours, you chaps," went on Levison. "If you Shell fellows are on the self-denying dodge to the same extent, I don't mind holding another sale to-morrow—"

"Pleased!" chuckled Mellish.

"Let me catch you shifting anything in my study, that's all!" said Monty Lowther wrathfully. "I'll shift some of your features if I do!"

"But the noble cause—"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"Well, here's the tin," said Levison, pouring the coffee-pot out on the table and counting his gains. "Ten—fifteen—fifteen—pounds—fifteen—shillings and sixpence. Sixteen—fifteen—and six for the fund. I really think I've done very well. Where's your biscuit-tin, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus had brought the biscuit-tin ready for the cash, little dreaming how the cash was to be raised. He held it out, and Levison slid the money into it.

"If I can help you in this way again, don't forget to call THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 354.

on me," said Levison blandly. "Always pleased to help you. Ta-ta!"

And Levison walked away with Mellish, chuckling.

Blake made a movement, and then stopped. Study No. 6 had gone through it with great fortitude, and he would not spoil the effect by taking vengeance upon the amateur auctioneer.

"Well, it's very satisfactory in one way," remarked Tom Merry. "I must say it's rather rough on you chaps, but it's a good thing for the fund."

"Yaas, wathah! Gentlemen, it's all wright. I wogard the result as very satisfactory!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. And he marched off with the biscuit-tin.

From a financial point of view the result undoubtedly was satisfactory. But it was noted that evening, for some reason or other, the chums of Study No. 6 did not wear wholly satisfied expressions.

CHAPTER 11.

Well Advertised.

TOM MERRY found a parcel waiting for him when the Shell came out of the Form-room the next morning.

It was from the printer's in Rylcombe.

"Hallo! A new number of the 'Weekly'!" exclaimed Blake, as he caught sight of the Terrible Three with the parcel. "You haven't told us about it—"

"Taint'the 'Weekly,'" said Tom Merry. "Blow the 'Weekly'! No time for the 'Weekly' in these days!"

"Then what the dickens are you having from the printer's?"

"Posters!"

"Posters!" repeated Blake.

"Certainly! Posters to advertise our new scheme for raising money for the War Fund," said Tom Merry calmly.

"More ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream, you know; and more ways of raising cash than selling up the happy home at auctions."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake rather crossly.

The auction was still a sore subject with Study No. 6. Indeed, Levison had been discovered that morning caressing a swollen nose, and the fellows attributed it to his skill and success as an auctioneer.

Tom Merry unrolled the contents of the parcel. There were a dozen large bills, printed in big type, in red and blue, and exceedingly striking in appearance. There was no doubt that they would catch the eye when they were posted up about the school. Tom Merry immediately proceeded to put one up in the Form-room passage. A crowd of juniors gathered round it at once.

Kildare and Darrel of the Sixth came along the passage, and paused at the sight of the poster and the crowd reading it. The Terrible Three were gone—with the rest of the bills—and were busily engaged in their new profession of bill-posters. Kildare uttered an exclamation at the sight of the poster on the wall:

"What the deuce—"

The grinning juniors made way for the great men of the Sixth. Kildare and Darrel stared blankly at the striking announcement in red and blue:

"NOTICE!

"RAMBLERS' FOOTBALL GROUND, RYLCOMBE.

GREAT MATCH IN AID OF THE

ST. JIM'S WAR FUND!

First Eleven v. Junior Eleven.

On Saturday afternoon this Great Match will be played between the St. Jim's First Eleven, Captain Eric Kildare, and the Junior Eleven, Captain Tom Merry.

Admission to Enclosure, 5d.

All Gate-Money to be handed, without deduction, to the St. Jim's War Fund.

ROLL UP!

All Patriotic Saints are requested to Rally Round and support the Good Cause!

(Signed) TOM MERRY."

"Well, my hat!" said Darrel.

Kildare compressed his lips.

"The young ass! The cheeky young rascal! I've told him

plainly enough that it's impossible. By Jove, I'll lick him for this!"

"You're going to play, Kildare?" exclaimed Blake.

"No!" growled Kildare.

"For the sake of the War Fund—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Weally, Kildare, you are called upon to put your pwide in your pocket for the sake of the War Fund. Think of the gate-money!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Consider the good of the cause, deah boy. Think of hwaive Tommy Atkins wollin' in mud and blood in the wagin' of battle!"

"Dry up!" snapped Kildare. "Take that bill down, Blake!"

Blake did not move. It was a very unusual thing for the popular captain of St. Jim's to have his orders disregarded. But it had happened now. Kildare stared at Blake, hardly able to believe his eyes.

"Do you hear me?" he thundered.

"Yes, I hear you," said Blake.

"Then do as I tell you!"

The chief of Study No. 6 shook his head.

"Can't!" he said.

"That's wight, Blake. Back up, old boy!"

"Do you want me to lick you, Blake?"

"You can lick me if you like, Kildare, old chap," said Blake resignedly, "but I'm not taking that bill down. It's up to you to play in the match. Call yourself an Irishman, and not be patriotic. Bow-wow!"

Kildare coloured. His patriotism was quite up to the mark, but to take his great eleven out to play a team of fags was a little too much. He did not quite see that. But he did not lick Blake. He jerked the bill down from the wall, crumpled it, threw it into a corner, and walked away with Darrel. As the two seniors left the School House Jack Blake picked up the poster, smoothed it out, and pinned it on the wall again.

The captain of St. Jim's looked decidedly wrathful as he strolled out with Darrel. The latter had a very thoughtful expression.

"The cheek!" growled Kildare. "The nerve! Tom Merry wants a licking badly."

"After all, it would bring a crowd, I dare say," Darrel remarked.

"I dare say it would."

"All the other fellows would go, and pay for admission, and a good many of the village people and other folk," said Darrel. "Quite a little sum might be raised. The fund is a jolly good thing, Kildare."

Kildare grunted.

"I know that. Of course I'd do anything I could. But to take out the First Eleven and play those silly fags with a big crowd looking on—hang it all, Darrel, we can't make ourselves look such asses!"

"Well, it would be rather infra dig.," said Darrel, with a smile. "But—"

"Hallo! What's that?"

Kildare halted, with gathering wrath in his looks. "That" was another poster, a replica of the first, pinned to a tree in the quadrangle, blazing with red and blue. Darrel smiled, and Kildare frowned darkly.

"They're posting them up all over the school," said Darrel, with a gesture towards another poster on the wall of the gymnasium which was being read and commented upon by a crowd of fellows.

"By Jove, I'll whop them!" growled Kildare. "Hallo, Monteith—"

Monteith of the Sixth, the head prefect of the New House, came striding towards them, with a somewhat excited face.

"Is that true?" he exclaimed.

"Is what true?"

"There's a poster stuck up in the New House, same as that," said Monteith, with a nod towards the poster on the tree. "Is it true that we're playing the fags?"

"No, it isn't."

"Then the sooner you stop that cheeky fag the better," said Monteith. "It's signed Tom Merry, so I suppose he's at the bottom of it. We can't make such asses of ourselves, fund or no fund."

"I know we can't," said Kildare. "I'll see Tom Merry at once—"

"There he is," said Monteith. "Sticking up a poster on the gate."

The Sixth-Formers bore down on Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell was pinning a poster on the gate in a prominent position. He turned away as he finished, and found himself face to face with the wrathful captain of St. Jim's. But he did not "cut." He faced Kildare with quiet confidence.

"What does that mean, Merry?" demanded the St. Jim's captain, pointing to the bill.

"That? That's the announcement of the footer match on Saturday," said Tom cheerily.

"I've told you it's not going to take place."

"We depend on you changing your mind, Kildare. You can't possibly refuse to back up the War Fund, for the honour of Ireland."

"You cheeky young ass!" said Kildare. "I tell you we can't let ourselves down in public by playing a fag eleven."

"Oh, we'll give you a good game!" said Tom Merry. "Besides, what does that matter? Even if we ain't up to your form, it's for the sake of the cause. I suppose you're thinking about the dignity of the Sixth. Well, blow the dignity of the Sixth."

"What!" ejaculated Kildare.

"Blow the dignity of the Sixth!" repeated Tom Merry.

"What the dickens does the dignity of the Sixth matter at a time like this? Why, nothing matters at all, excepting helping to back up fellows at the front. Nothing else is of the slightest importance."

Kildare stared at him. As a matter of fact, Tom Merry's words found an echo in his own heart. It was quite true—that was really the only matter of importance—for everybody to work to the utmost in his power to back up the brave fellows in the field. Darrel nodded assent involuntarily; and even Monteith looked impressed.

"Yes, that's so," said Kildare, after a long pause. "But if it were anything else—"

"The less you like it, the more it's your duty to do it, if it helps the good cause," said Tom Merry.

"Look here, I don't want you to teach me my duty," said Kildare. "Take that poster down."

"I can't."

"Why, I'll—I'll—" Kildare grasped the ashplant he carried under his arm.

"Go ahead," said Tom. "You can lick me, Kildare, but you can't make me act against my conscience."

"Your—your conscience!" ejaculated Kildare.

"Yes, I'm doing right," said Tom decidedly. "Go ahead; I can stand a licking!"

Kildare slipped the ashplant under his arm again.

"Cut off, you young rascal!" he said.

"Right-ho! I hope you'll think it over between now and Saturday, and decide to play. We shall raise quite a lot for the War Fund."

"Cut off!" roared Kildare.

And Tom Merry cheerfully cut off.

CHAPTER 12.

Kildare Gives In.

MR. RAILTON, the Housemaster of the School House, met Kildare as the latter came in, with a somewhat moody brow. The Housemaster was smiling.

"Quite a new idea this, Kildare," he remarked.

"What is, sir?" asked Kildare, starting.

"I was referring to the announcement of the football match, which I have just read," said Mr. Railton. "I think it quite probable that a good sum will be raised in gate-money, and I think you are doing very well, Kildare, in arranging this match."

"I haven't arranged it, sir!" said Kildare, taken aback.

"Tom Merry's idea, then, I suppose?" said Mr. Railton, laughing. "Well, I am glad you have fallen in with it—a very good idea indeed!"

And the Housemaster passed on before Kildare could reply.

Kildare grunted as he went into the house. Mr. Railton evidently took the announcement seriously, and did not see any harm in it. But Kildare was feeling very sore. Such a match would be simply farcical.

The junior eleven were a good team, for their age and size, a very good team. But, of course, they would not be able to hold the mighty men of the Sixth for a minute. It would be like a team of Goliaths playing eleven Davids. Defeat was not possible; but a victory would be ridiculous against such opponents. The whole thing would be ridiculous—big, tremendous players like Kildare and Darrel opposing mere "kids" in the Fourth and the Shell.

The First Eleven was the apple of his eye, and Kildare was not disposed to make it look ridiculous if he could help it.

But he was in a difficult position. There was no doubt that the match would bring in a good sum of gate-money.

In the first place, nearly every fellow at St. Jim's would come, and three hundred shreppences would mount up. Then the village folk would flock in, and people from Wayland and Abbotsford, quite a crowd. The First Eleven was well known; and, besides, the fact that all the gate-money was to go to the War Fund would attract everybody who could come. The takings might be very large. Certainly it was no time

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 354.

to allow questions of personal dignity to interfere with raising money for the benefit of the troops. Kildare began to feel that he couldn't get out of that match—that St. Jim's expected it of him.

But it was extremely irritating. Anything else he would have been glad to do, but that was too "thick."

He felt himself in a cleft-stick. He frowned as he passed the poster in the passage. There was a new line added to it, in the elegant handwriting of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy:

"P.S.—England expects every man to do his duty." Kildare read the line, and walked on, frowning. He went into his study, and uttered an exclamation of annoyance. Staring him in the face was a red-and-blue poster, pinned up on the wall of his own study.

"The cheeky rascals!" ejaculated Kildare. He jerked the poster down and tossed it out of the window. There was a chuckle outside, and he glanced out, and saw several juniors with the poster. They were sticking it up on the wall outside his window.

"Clear off!" rapped out Kildare.

The juniors laughed and cleared off, leaving the poster there. It was out of Kildare's reach from the window, so he had to leave it there. The captain of St. Jim's threw himself into his armchair to think it over. Darrel and Rusden came into the study. They looked as if they did not quite know whether to frown or to laugh.

"We seem to be in for it," said Rusden, handing Kildare the later number of the "Rylcombe Gazette." "Look at that!"

Kildare looked at it and growled. It was a displayed advertisement of the forthcoming football match on the Ramblers' ground at Rylcombe, with an exhortation to all patriotic citizens to roll up and see the match and swell the War Fund.

"And I hear the posters are out all over Rylcombe and Wayland," said Rusden. "Blake's just come in on his bike, and he says so."

"There'll be a crowd there to see the match, whether it comes off or not," remarked Darrel. "If those young rascals take the gate-money, and there's no match, they'll find themselves in trouble."

"They can hand back the gate-money," said Kildare.

"Yes; but I say, Kildare, it will look pretty rotten for us. Everybody will know that a good sum might have been raised for the War Fund if we hadn't refused to play the match," said Darrel uneasily.

And Rusden nodded solemnly.

"But we can't make ourselves look such asses!" exclaimed Kildare. "It's all right for those cheeky fags. They can talk about having played the First Eleven. But what about us? It's ridiculous—Hallo, Mulvaney!"

Mulvaney of the Sixth came in. He was grinning.

"Faith, we're in for it, Kildare!" he remarked. "The fags have beaten us. The Head has just congratulated me!"

"What for?" demanded Kildare.

"For this idea of playing a match, and raising tin for the War Fund!" chuckled Mulvaney major. "Took the wind out of my sails, bedad!"

"You told him we weren't playing?"

Mulvaney major shook his head.

"No jolly fear! I couldn't under the circumstances. You can tell him if you like. After all, my dear boy, it's only patriotic."

"We shall look a set of duffers, playing those kids!" exclaimed the exasperated Kildare.

Mulvaney grinned.

"Sure and I've got an idea about that entirely," he remarked. "I've been thinking it out. What you're afraid of is making the First Eleven look ridiculous playing the fags, isn't it?"

"That's it!" growled Kildare.

"Well, honey, suppose I could suggest a way of putting the boot on the other foot," said Mulvaney. "Making the fags look ridiculous instead of us—what?"

"That can't be done."

"Sure, and it can, and aisy, too. We've only got to show that we don't take them seriously," explained Mulvaney, "and we can do that as easy as fallin' in a ditch."

"How?" said Kildare doubtfully. "That would make it all right, of course. But—"

"I find me you're ears, as they say in Shakespeare," said Mulvaney major.

And Mulvaney major proceeded to explain, with his eyes dancing.

Kildare and Darrel and Rusden listened in surprise at first to the extraordinary suggestion propounded by Mulvaney major.

Then there was a roar of laughter in the study.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Kildare. "Ha, ha, ha! I THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 354.

rather think Mulvaney's hit it. The young sweeps will be sorry they spoke. I'm thinking!"

"Good idea—what?" grinned Mulvaney.

"Topping!" said Darrel, laughing.

"First-chop!" chuckled Rusden. "You'll play 'em now, Kildare?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes."

Kildare rose and hurried into the passage, where the poster was still attracting a crowd.

The fellows made way for Kildare, who took out his pencil. Underneath Tom Merry's signature, Kildare signed his own. There was a cheer from the juniors.

"Bravo, Kildare!"

"Bai Jove! You're playin', deah boy?"

"Certainly," said Kildare. And he went back to his study, whence sounds of loud laughter were heard to proceed.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rushed away in search of Tom Merry, with the good news. He found the captain of the junior eleven sticking up the last of the posters in the gym.

"All right, deah boy!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Eh?"

"Kildare's playin'. He signed his name on the postah. It's all right. He says he's goin' to play the match!"

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry was elated. He had expected Kildare to surrender, but he had hardly expected it so soon as this.

"Wippen, isn't it, deah boy?" said Arthur Augustus jubilantly. "Kildare is weally a bwick. He was laughin' like anythin' when he signed his name on the postah."

"Eh? What was he laughing at?" asked Tom Merry suspiciously.

"Weally, I didn't ask him, deah boy. But it's all right. I don't see quite what there was to laugh at—"

"Nevah mind that, deah boy. He's playin', and that's the point."

Certainly that was the point. In a quarter of an hour all St. Jim's knew that Kildare had agreed to play the First Eleven against the junior team in the War Fund match, and all the juniors rejoiced.

CHAPTER 13.

Mr. Ratcliff Does Not See It.

FIGGINS & CO. looked glum. Matters had not been going well with the chums of the New House.

The rival War Fund had been started, and the jam-jar in the New House contained a good many contributions. But Figgins & Co. had to admit that, so far, they hadn't an earthly chance of getting anywhere near the School House total. The School House being nearly twice the size of the New House, there were more contributions there. And then the auction sale had raised quite a large sum. And now the footer match, fixed up by Tom Merry, was likely to turn in a good sum in gate-money.

The jam-jar, in point of fact, was not likely to be "in it" with the biscuit-tin over the way!

Figgins & Co. had debated all sorts of methods of swelling the fund. They had cut down supplies in their own study—and Fatty Wynn's remittances, usually expended in the tuckshop, had been remorsefully transferred to the jam-jar. Fatty Wynn bore it like a hero, though with inward groans.

"But what we want is a whacking good sum," said Figgins. "We want to make a raise—a real raise! There's only one thing I can think of—and that's trying Ratty!"

"Ratty?" said the Co. dubiously.

"Ratty" was an abbreviation of the name of their House-master, Mr. Ratcliff. As Mr. Ratcliff was well known to be extremely sparing with his money, the Co. did not look upon Figgins's suggestion as hopeful.

"Why not?" argued Figgins. "Raitlon, over the way, has sent a good cheque to a fund, so he can't contribute to Tom Merry's fund. I think he's put five bob in the biscuit-tin. They're letting him off lightly, because they all know he sent ten guineas to another fund. Ten guineas is a big sum. Now, we all know that Ratty is better off than Raitlon. He gets a good screw, and he saves money—never spends anything, and never gives anything away. Now is the time for him to begin."

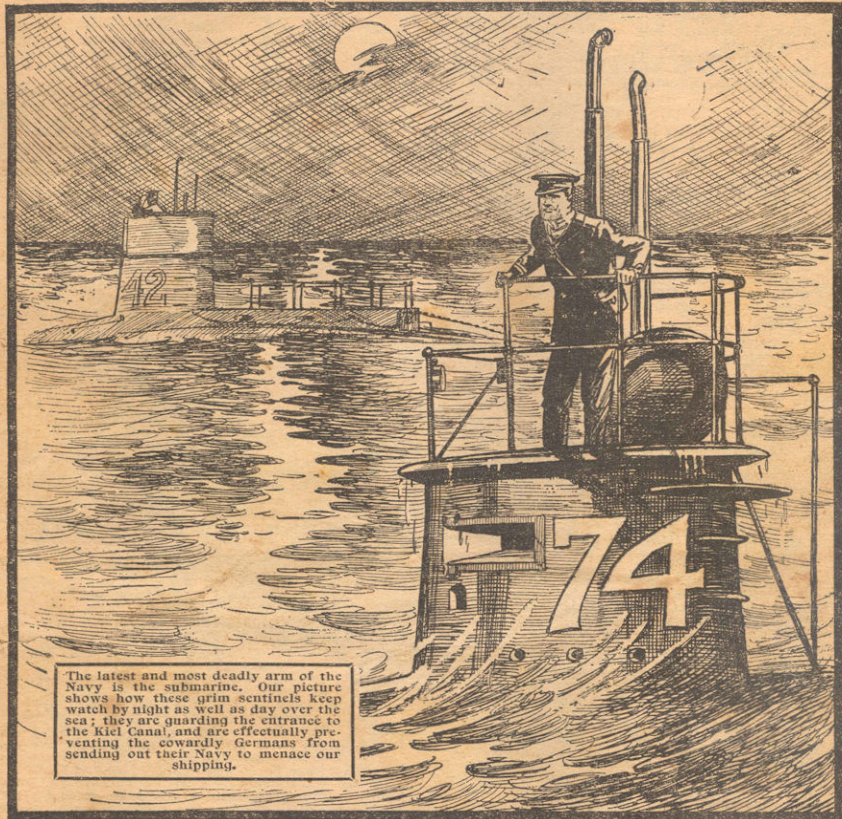
"He jolly well won't, all the same," said Kerr, with a shake of the head. "Might as well ask Shlyock."

"Well, you never know; even Ratty must be patriotic a bit," said Figgins. "After all, if it wasn't for Tommy Atkins in the fighting-line, where would Ratty be now? Where should we all be? I think Ratty ought to shell out."

"He ought," said Fatty Wynn; "but he won't."

"We haven't asked him."

"He'll lick us if we do."



The latest and most deadly arm of the Navy is the submarine. Our picture shows how these grim sentinels keep watch by night as well as day over the sea; they are guarding the entrance to the Kiel Canal, and are effectually preventing the cowardly Germans from sending out their Navy to menace our shipping.

"Well, as founders of the fund, it's up to us," said Figgins resolutely. "If we can squeeze ten guineas out of him—and he could afford it quite easily, much easier than old Railton—it would swell our fund tremendously."

"Might as well ask him for a pound of flesh!" grunted Kerr.

"Well, I'm going to ask him," said Figgins, rising and taking up the jam-jar. "You chaps can come and back me up if you like."

"Oh, we'll come!" said Kerr. "I don't mind a licking, if you don't."

It was in that far from hopeful spirit that the chums of the New House proceeded to Mr. Ratcliff's study with the jam-jar.

There was no reason why Ratty shouldn't contribute, if he wanted to. He was a very well-to-do man, of a saving turn; his very stinginess was a reason why he should have money to spare. And Figgins had an idea that if it were put very nicely to Ratty, Ratty might see it in the proper light, and shell out accordingly. As Figgins argued, what would become of Ratty's bank account if the Germans landed? It was simply rotten for a man to shelter behind Tommy Atkins, and refuse to hand out something to help in the cause. Which was quite true; only it was doubtful if Mr. Ratcliff would look at it in that light. Mr. Ratcliff was one of those gentlemen who prefer to buy their safety cheap.

However, Figgins meant business. He knocked at Mr.

Ratcliff's door, and the snappish voice of the Housemaster rapped out, "Come in!"

The Co. entered. Mr. Ratcliff was on the table, and he was putting on his gloves, apparently ready to go out. He looked frowningly at the juniors, and stared at the jam-jar. He had heard of that jam-jar.

"If you please, sir—" began Figgins, very respectfully.

"What do you want?"

"We are raising a fund in the New House, sir—"

"I have heard of it," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I regard it as nonsense. Is that all?"

"Ahem!" murmured Figgins, somewhat discouraged. "No, sir; that isn't quite all. Considering what the soldiers are doing for us, sir, we thought it our duty to do something for them."

"Nonsense!"

"Ahem! And we ventured to hope, sir, that you—"

"Figgins!"

"Mr. Railton sent ten guineas to a fund, sir—outside St. Jim's. We saw his name in a list in 'The Times'—"

"You may leave my study, Figgins!"

"We thought, sir, that you might like to hand us ten guineas for our fund, sir," said Figgins, sticking to his point.

"Ten guineas!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "Is the boy mad? If Figgins had asked him for his ten toes or fingers, Mr.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 354.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and Talbot. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT WEDNESDAY—**"CAPTURED BY CIPHER!"**

Ratcliff could hardly have been more horrified at the idea of parting with them.

"Yes, sir. We thought—"
"You have no right to think anything of the sort, Figgins. Take that ridiculous jar away at once, and take fifty lines."

"Oh, sir!"
"Now leave my study!"
"But, sir, surely you'd like to back up the fund, sir," persisted Figgins. "Everybody will think it looks rather rotten, sir, if you're the only one left out."

Mr. Ratcliff's face was a study. Figgins, in his enthusiasm for the good cause, was certainly speaking a little more plainly than was usual from a junior schoolboy to a Housemaster. Mr. Ratcliff caught up a cane from his table.

"Hold out your hand, Figgins!"
"Oh!"
Figgins despondently handed the jam-jar to Kerr, and held out his hand. He had come there prepared to hold it out, in fact, but he had hoped it was to receive something other than a caning.

Swish—swish!
"Ow, you!"
"Now leave my study!" said Mr. Ratcliff, breathing hard. "And if I hear any more of this nonsense I shall punish you severely, Figgins."

Figgins & Co. retreated. Figgins jammed the jar down on the table in his own study, with a jolt that almost broke it. His face was furious.

"Did you ever hear of such a rotter?" he gasped. "Two licks—for asking the boast for a subscription! I—I wish the Germans had him!"

And Figgins shook a furious fist at the study window, as he caught sight of the lean figure of Mr. Ratcliff crossing the quad towards the gates.

Evidently it was N.G. The New House fund would have to hide its diminished head beside the fund of the School House. Figgys' last hope had failed.

The chums of the New House strolled out moodily into the quad, Figgys rubbing his hands. They met Arthur Augustus near the gates.

"How's the fund getting on, dear boys?" asked D'Arcy, turning his eyes glass on the Co. "Goin' up by leaps and bounds—what? Oh, you wot!"

Arthur Augustus struggled with his silk hat, which Figgins had morosely jammed down over his eyes, in response to his unfortunate inquiry. Figgins & Co. strolled out of the gates with moody brows.

"Nothing doing!" growled Figgins. "It's rotten! Ratty ought to have played up. We ought to think of some way of making him play up. He owes our fund ten guineas—that's how it stands. How are we going to make him pay?"

"Echo answers how!" grinned Kerr.
The Co. thought it over as they sauntered along. They were quite convinced on the point that Mr. Ratcliff "owed" their fund ten guineas, and that he was a wicked defaulter if he didn't pay up. But dunning him was evidently out of the question. Figgins's palms were still smarting from his Housemaster's cane.

"Have a sandwich, old chap?" said Fatty Wynn comfortingly, as Figgins stopped and leaned against a stone wall beside the road, deep in moody thought.

"Blow your sandwiches!" said Figgins crossly.
"Well, they're good!" said Fatty mildly; and he proceeded to show his belief in their goodness by demolishing them at a great rate. "Can't think anything out on an empty tummy, you know. Always a good idea to lay a solid foundation."
"Oh, rats!"

Figgins thought it out, but the more he thought the less hopeful appeared the chance of screwing out the subscription from Ratty. And there was no other prospect of swelling the New House War Fund.

In his deep and moody thought, Figgins did not notice a loud and angry bellowing proceeding from the field on the other side of the wall.

"Hallo! That's old Blount's bull," said Kerr. "Some ass crossing the field. He nearly killed a man the other day. There ought to be a notice up."

"Help!"
It was a loud yell from the field, and the juniors spun round. But the stone wall was eight feet high, and they could see nothing. But they knew the voice.

"Ratty!" ejaculated all three together.
"Ratty—and Blount's bull!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn.

"It's a giddy judgment!"
"Help!"
Bellow!

The juniors forgot their resentment against Mr. Ratcliff. If the unfortunate Housemaster was in the field with the

savage bull, he was in danger. Figgins retreated a little distance from the wall, made a run and a spring, and caught the top in his hands and drew himself up. Kerr followed his example. Fatty Wynn strove to do the same, but he fell short. He had considerably more weight to lift.

Figgins and Kerr, looking over the high wall into the field, beheld a startling sight. The long, lean figure of Mr. Ratcliff was in sight, tearing across the field, and behind him rushed and bellowed the bull. Mr. Ratcliff's hat had fallen off, and the bull had paused to wreak his rage upon it, which was fortunate for the Housemaster. Mr. Ratcliff was not an athlete, and he had "bellows to mend" with a vengeance.

"This way, sir!" yelled Figgins.

CHAPTER 14.

Ratty Dubs Up.

MR. RATCLIFF ran blindly on. In his terror he hardly knew whether he was going, and he was panting and puffing and gasping, his scanty locks floating in the wind as he ran. Figgins drew himself actively on top of the wall, and yelled:

"This way! This way!"
Mr. Ratcliff heard him then, and came loping on towards the wall. The Housemaster had been crossing the field by the footpath, without noticing the bull. But the bull had noticed Mr. Ratcliff. Farmer Blount's bull was accustomed to having his field all to himself—for very good reasons. Mr. Ratcliff had entered it in ignorance of the animal's existence, but a terrific bellow had warned him of the bull's presence, and he had taken to his heels. He was too far from the gate to reach it, and he had run to the side of the field, where he found himself shut in by a high and impenetrable hedge. He swerved off towards the wall which bordered the road, and there he heard Figgins's welcome voice.

The sight of the two juniors on the wall brought new hope to Mr. Ratcliff's breast. He rushed desperately towards them.

"Help me up, Figgins!" he gasped.
Bellow! The bull had succeeded in impaling Mr. Ratcliff's silk hat on one of his horns, and it seemed to irritate him there. He lashed his tail furiously and roared, and made another rush for the Housemaster.

Figgins, with his chest on the top of the wall, leaned over and held his hands down to the Housemaster. Mr. Ratcliff grasped them convulsively. Clinging to Figgins, he made frantic efforts to scramble up the wall, finding foothold for his toes in the rough stones. Kerr tore off his jacket, with his eye on the bull. As the maddened animal careered up, the Scottish junior flung his jacket deftly, and it caught on the horns and smothered the bull's eyes, blinding him for the moment. With a hoarse bellow the great animal spun round, leaping to and fro in the effort to get rid of the blinding jacket.

"Lend a hand, Kerr."
The bull was occupied for a few moments at least. Kerr leaned down, and got a grip on one of Mr. Ratcliff's arms. With united efforts the two juniors dragged him up, till he was able to seize hold of the wall with his hands.

He hung there, panting and breathless, wanting the strength to drag himself further up.

"H-h-help me!" stuttered the terrified man. "The—the bull—"

"He's off, sir!" said Figgins.
The bellowing animal was dashing away across the field, the rags of the jacket fluttering from his horns and lashing him to fury. Mr. Ratcliff screwed his head round, and gave a gasp of relief as he saw that the bull was fifty yards away.

"Help me up before he comes back, Figgins!"
A peculiar expression came over Figgins's face. He closed one eye to Kerr, and ceased to drag at the heavy Housemaster. Kerr looked puzzled, but he followed Figgys' lead loyally. Mr. Ratcliff hung on the wall, with one arm thrown over it, and the other hand grasping Figgins. He had not the strength to climb higher, but the two juniors could have pulled him up. If the bull had returned towards his victim, they would have done so instantly, of course. But the bull was careering about the field, tearing the jacket to shreds. There was no hurry.

"Figgins, why don't you pull me up?" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "That fearful animal may return at any moment—"

"Sorry, sir—"
"Pull me up instantly, I command you!"
"My hands are smarting, sir," said Figgins respectfully.

"It's rather hard to get a grip when a chap's hands are smarting from being caned."

Mr. Ratcliff panted. He was much given to caning juniors,

and he had seldom regretted the infliction of punishment.

But he regretted it then with his whole heart.

"I—I am sorry I cased you, Figgins," he stammered. "I

—I beg you to pull me up, my boy. Pray make an effort."

"All right, sir; when I get my second wind," said Figgins.

"Hang on for a bit, sir, and then we'll make an effort."

"But the bull—the bull!" Oh dear!"

"He's not coming yet, sir," said Kerr encouragingly.

"He may come at any instant. I shall be gored—killed!"

Oh dear! Pray make an effort, my dear boys! You—you need not do the lines I gave you!"

Figgins suppressed a grin. Ratty was climbing down now with a vengeance. But Figgins was not done with him yet. Figgins's mighty brain was at work.

"Must rest a bit, sir, before we make an effort," he said.

"I wanted to speak to you again, sir, about a rather important thing—"

"Figgins! At this moment— Oh, I can hear him coming!"

"All serene, sir! He's not coming yet. About our fund, sir—"

"Figgins! How dare you—I— Oh, my goodness, hold me!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff, as Figgins seemed to relax his grasp.

"I've got you, sir. That was a near thing, though," said Figgins.

"Sorry I can't pull you up. My hands are smarting, sir. About our fund, sir. If you could see your way to paying up that ten guineas—"

"Figgins—"

"It's for a good cause, sir—a splendid cause—and your name would appear in the list posted up in the House, and then we should be able to say that our Housemaster had done quite as well as the Housemaster over the way, sir—"

"Help me up—"

"You are very good, sir. This will have a very encouraging effect upon the fellows, and make them subscribe—"

"Pull me up!"

"I'll try, sir! I've got my second wind now. Go it, Kerr!"

"Bellow! Bellow! Thud! Thud! Trample!"

The bull was coming! Apparently Mr. Ratcliff had promised his subscription only just in time. Figgins and Kerr exerted themselves, and dragged the Housemaster upon the wall out of reach of the threatening horns. The bull pranced furiously inside the field, bellowing hoarsely, but robbed of his prey. Mr. Ratcliff sprawled across the wall, gasping for breath, utterly exhausted and terrified.

"Let's help you down, sir!"

"T-t-thank you, Figgins!"

The juniors helped Mr. Ratcliff down into the road, Fatty Wynn receiving him, and steadying him as he landed. On the other side of the high wall the bull was still raging. But Mr. Ratcliff was safe now.

He stood panting for breath in the road. Figgins kindly dusted him down. Then the juniors waited, hardly knowing whether they were going to get that subscription for the War Fund or the licking of their lives. Ratty had promised; but they did not wholly trust their Housemaster. Mr. Ratcliff, when he had recovered his breath, looked at the three serious-faced and sympathetic juniors in a very peculiar way. To break his promise was not easy, but to keep it was hard. But Mr. Ratcliff realised another thing—that if the juniors told the story of his undignified flight and scramble over the wall, it would become a standing joke in the school. Mr. Ratcliff did not mind inspiring fear and dislike, but he had a very strong objection to inspiring ridicule. He was in the hands of those three solemn-looking young rascals, and he knew it. It helped him to keep his word.

STARTS NEXT WEDNESDAY		STARTS NEXT WEDNESDAY
OUR GRAND NEW ARMY SERIAL STORY!	DON'T MISS THE OPENING INSTALMENT!	

"Yes, sir; I'm holding on—"

"Cannot you manage to draw me up on the wall, Figgins?" panted Mr. Ratcliff. He was making great efforts to pull himself up, but in vain. But for the grasp of the two juniors, in fact, he would have slid down the wall to the ground.

"Bellow! Bellow! The bull had got rid of the jacket at last, and was roaring in the middle of the field, glaring round for his enemy. The deep bellow from the savage animal made Mr. Ratcliff shudder. The perspiration was thick on his brow. Perhaps the fact that the smart in his hands was all the keener by his grasp on Mr. Ratcliff made Figgins more merciful.

"I—I shall be gored!" moaned Mr. Ratcliff. "Pray pull me up! Oh dear! This is—this is—dreadful! Figgins, I order you— Oh dear! I am slipping! Hold on—I mean. I beg of you to exert yourself, Figgins. I—I will think about your fund! Help me!"

"We're holding you, sir," said Figgins. "As soon as I get my second wind I'll pull you up like anything."

Figgins seemed a long time getting his second wind, and it dawned upon Mr. Ratcliff that Figgins would not get his second wind until he got Mr. Ratcliff's promise of a handsome subscription to the War Fund.

"Figgins! I—I— Help me! Don't let me slip! Figgins, I will contribute a guinea—oh, I am falling—I mean two guineas— Hold on, Figgins!" screamed Mr. Ratcliff.

"All serene, sir!"

The Housemaster panted.

"I—I will give you a cheque for five guineas for your fund, Figgins, if you succeed in pulling me over this wall! Oh, I am slipping again! Figgins—Kerr—help! I—I mean ten guineas!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff.

From that moment Mr. Ratcliff did not slip again.

"You promise us ten guineas for the War Fund, sir?" said Figgins cheerily, quite as if that had nothing whatever to do with holding on to Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, I—I promise!"

"All right now, sir?" asked Kerr.

"Ye-es," muttered Mr. Ratcliff. "I—I am obliged to you. And—and I shall be still more obliged to you if you will—ahem!—refrain from mentioning this incident in the school. It is very—very unfortunate—very—very absurd! That dreadful animal ought to be slaughtered, and—and—"

"Not a word, sir," said Figgins. "We shall only say that you are subscribing ten guineas to the fund, sir—nothing else!"

"You young—ahem!—yes, exactly, Figgins. I—I will give you a—a cheque for that sum for the fund when—when I return."

"Thank you so much, sir. I'll go back and put your name on the list at once, sir," said the delighted Figgins.

A couple of hours later Figgins & Co. might have been seen—and, in fact, were seen—walking in the quadrangle of St. Jim's with exceedingly satisfied and triumphant expressions on their faces. And Tom Merry & Co. spotting them, naturally inquired the cause of their elation.

"Fund getting on all right?" asked Blake, with a grin.

"Piling up—what?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Oh, fairish, fairish," said Figgins negligently. "What with coin and currency notes and cheques, we shall make up a tidy sum."

"Cheques!" exclaimed the School House juniors together. There were no cheques in the School House collection.

"Oh, yes; a cheque from our Housemaster," said Figgins carelessly.

"My hat! Ratty has ponied up?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in amazement. "Rats!"

"Gammon!" said Lowther.

"How much?" asked Blake incredulously.

"Ten guineas!"

The School House fellows almost fell down.

"Ten guineas!" gasped Tom Merry. "Why, that's as much as Raillon sent to the 'Times' fund. Ratty stood ten guineas! Oh, come off!"

"Fact!" said Kerr. "Of course, our Housemaster backs up our funds. That's only to be expected—Alum! Ta-ta!"

Figgins & Co. walked off cheerily. They left Tom Merry & Co. staring at one another in astonishment. "Well, this beats the giddy band!" said Blake. "Fancy Ratty ponying up ten giddy guineas! It's the unexpected that always happens. The chap who said that the age of miracles was past was a frabjous ass!"

And the School House juniors agreed that he was!

CHAPTER 15.

Football Extraordinary.

SATURDAY, the day of the great match, was hailed with joy by Tom Merry & Co. The junior eleven were in the highest of spirits. Tom Merry had been serenely certain all along; but the members of the eleven had had their doubts. But all doubts had been removed by Kildare's acceptance of the challenge. After that, it was all plain sailing.

And the young rascals gleefully reflected that it was not only a great success for the War Fund, but a triumph for themselves. They were going to play the First Eleven! That great and lofty band—as select as the Sacred Band of Thebes in olden time—had to play the junior eleven! And the cool and confident juniors were not without hopes that they might beat them. But whether they beat them or not, nothing could alter the fact that they had played them; that was honour enough for the junior eleven. They would be able to remark in a careless sort of way, when talking footer, "Oh, yes, I remember the time we played Kildare's lot," or "So-and-so occurred on the day we played the First Eleven!" It was a feather in the cap of the junior team, and they knew it; and rejoiced accordingly. Half the senior eleven were prefects; but they would not be able to "come the prefect" over juniors they were meeting in the footer-field. It was a great privilege for a Fourth-Form fag to be able to shove a prefect off the ball, to bump into the captain of the school, or to yell opprobrious epithets at some lofty Sixth-Former at whose frown he would have trembled—off the footer field.

Curiously enough, the First Eleven appeared very genial at first. They did not seem to mind in the least the fact that they were entering into a match which might have been supposed to touch their lofty dignity. Most of them were laughing when they started for the Ramblers' ground.

It was observed that they were carrying unusually large bags with their change, and it caused some surprise. What the First Eleven wanted—those big bags for to carry their football "clobber" the juniors could not guess. They know later.

Nearly all St. Jim's walked or cycled down to the Ramblers' ground. A dozen fellows took charge of the gates, and extracted gate-money from all who entered. Thereupon was the fixed price, but it was announced that all who liked could pay more, and those who were short of "tin" could pay less. It was noticeable that a good many paid less, but the takings were brisk; for besides a huge crowd from St. Jim's, half Rylcombe had turned up to see the match, and a great many countryfolk came in, and a crowd from the market-town of Wayland. The enclosure was a good size, but it was crammed; and a few seats that had been provided at a shilling a time were all crowded.

Tom Merry & Co. looked over the crowd with great satisfaction. There was no doubt that the gate-money on that historic occasion would swell the War Fund tremendously.

The dressing-rooms on the Ramblers' ground were not palatial, nor were the conveniences first class, which, perhaps, accounted for the very long time the First Eleven took to change. Tom Merry & Co. were in their football rig, and out in the field long before there was any sign of the seniors.

They kicked the ball about merrily while they waited. They were in the highest of spirits. A crowd of fellows from the Grammar School, headed by Gordon Gay, gave them a rousing cheer as they appeared in the field. Tom Merry waved his hand to them cheerily. He was glad that Gordon Gay & Co. were there to see the St. Jim's juniors play the mighty men of the First Eleven.

Grimes was there with his whistle to referee. The greocer's youth looked very natty in his Norfolk. The crowd was very good-humoured, but they began to show some signs of impatience when the senior eleven did not appear.

"Come out!" shouted Gordon Gay. "Got a move on!"

"Where are the old fogeys?" shouted Wally of the Third.

"Wake 'em up!"

"Bai Jove, they do seem wathah a long time!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wondah what 'can be detainin' them?"

"Here they come!" said Grimes. "They—what— My at!"

Grimes stared in astonishment, so did the junior eleven, as the First Eleven walked solemnly out into the field.

There was a gasp from the crowd. It was followed by a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What the dickens—!"

"The asses—the 'duffers! What the—!"

"My word!"

There was a reason for astonishment. Kildare and his followers came out into the field with perfectly serious faces, excepting Mulvaney major, who was grinning. There were the senior eleven, ready for the football match. But they were not dressed as footballers. Every member of the senior team wore a tail-coat, white gloves, spats, and a silk hat.

They looked as if they were dressed for church parade rather than a match on the football-field.

And they looked quite grave; unmoved by the howls of laughter from the crowd.

"Ready?" said Kildare.

"What the—the-what—?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Sorry we kept ye waitin'," grinned Mulvaney. "Sure it took us some time to change."

"Bai Jove! You uttah asses, you are not goin' to play like that!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ikke what?" asked Darrel.

"G'weat Scott! In tail-coats and toppahs—"

"We can choose our own colours, I suppose?" said Kildare.

"Yas; but—"

"You can't play in those things!" shouted Figgins.

"Pardon. We can, and we're going to!"

"But—but it turns the whole thing into a farce!" howled Monty Lowther. "They'll laugh at us—"

"Better at you than at us," said Monteith, with a chuckle.

"You kids have brought this on yourselves. We're going to play you like this. It will show the precise opinion we entertain of the junior eleven."

"Look here, you—you've got no right to g'uy us like that!" exclaimed Tom Merry, his face crimson with wrath.

Kildare smiled.

"We're wasting time," he remarked. "Toss for ends."

"But—but—"

"You're keeping us waiting."

"Bai Jove! I protest—"

"Play up!" roared Gordon Gay. "Go it, Toppers!"

Play up!" roared the crowd, in great delight.

The junior eleven looked at one another with sickly expressions. They were playing the First Eleven as they had planned. But Mulvaney major had been one too many for them; they guessed that the suggestion had come from him. The First Eleven were "guying" them in the most merciless manner. A match with a team of fellows in tail-coats and silk hats was utterly absurd, and could not be taken seriously at all. But there was no help for it. Kildare & Co. had a right to dress as they liked; and, anyway, there they were.

Tom Merry glumly tossed for ends. The kick-off fell to the seniors, and the ball rolled from Kildare's foot. Grimes was laughing so much that he could scarcely blow the whistle.

"Never mind!" muttered Blake. "They can't run and kick in that rig, anyway; and we'll beat them!"

"Yaas, wathah! We'll wallop them to the wide, deah boy!"

But it was not as easy to "wallop to the wide" such players as St. Jim's First, in spite of their inconvenient rig for footer. They followed up the kick-off with a rush, and the junior were scattered by sheer weight. In goal, Patty Wynn was on the look-out, and when Kildare sent the ball in the fat Fourth-Former punched it out promptly.

"Well saved, Fatty!"

Then there was a howl of laughter as Kildare, gracefully removing his silk hat, headed the ball into the net, and replaced his topper after a polite bow to the goalkeeper.

"Goal! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cwumbs!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I'm afraid the crowd are laughin' at us, deah boys." There wasn't much doubt on that point. The crowd were yelling with laughter. In spite of the silk hats and the tail-coats, the juniors were hopelessly outmatched by their opponents.

The match was one howl of laughter from beginning to end. Tom Merry & Co. played hard, and several times there were crunched silk hats on the ground. But the senior players picked them up, and punched them into shape again, and put them on, and played on serenely. When a fellow took off his hat to head the ball there was a yell of merriment from the spectators. At half-time, the senior score was three goals to nil. In the second half Tom Merry & Co. played up desperately, and Blake succeeded in putting the



Stories of splendid gallantry and undying heroism reach us daily; and our comrades in the firing-line have shown that they are not one whit less brave than their predecessors of Wellington's day. The heroes of the Royal Army Medical Corps have already won a high place on the scroll of honour on the scroll of this respect. Our artist shows an incident in the Battle of the Rivers, when one of these fine fellows assisted a wounded officer into safety at extreme peril to himself. Such deeds as this are daily performances, and the name of those who have merited the Victoria Cross is legion.

ball into the senior net, amid cheers. The Sixth Form goal-keeper tossed out the leather, and carefully dusted his white gloves afterwards on a scented handkerchief, amid peals of laughter.

"Broken our duck, anyway," said Tom Merry.
 "Yaas, wathah! I wouldn't mind the lickin', if they weren't guyin' us, the wotahs!" said Arthur Augustus plaintively. "I really do not see any reason for this excessive amount of laughtah."

But the spectators evidently did, for they laughed uproariously all the time.

When Grimes blew the whistle for the finish, the score was six goals to one. That did not matter to the juniors; they had hardly expected to win. But for the great match to be nothing but one roar of laughter from beginning to end—that was too bad. At the final whistle, the senior eleven walked back solemnly to the dressing-room, raising their toppers in response to the shouts from the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, what a match!" gasped Gordon Gay. "What a giddy match! Ha, ha, ha!"

In the junior dressing-room, Tom Merry & Co. changed in grim silence. They had had their way, but it was likely to be a long time before St. Jim's allowed them to forget how they had been rotted.

"Nevah mind, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcey, when the eleven gathered in Study No. 6 for a well-earned feed. "Aftah all, we've weached our object. There's eight pounds for the fund! It was worth being guyed for that!"

And Tom Merry & Co. tried to think that it was.
 At all events, the fund was a great success. And when all the collections were pooled, upwards of sixty pounds were realised, to be forwarded to the proper quarter. So, in spite of their "guying" in the great match, the juniors of St. Jim's had reason to be satisfied with the result of Tom Merry's War Fund.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. next Wednesday, entitled "Captured By Cipher!" Place the order with your newsagent to-day!)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 354.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and Tatbot. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"CAPTURED BY CIPHER!"

THE CONCLUDING CHAPTER OF OUR GRAND WAR SERIAL.



READ THIS FIRST.

When war breaks out between Britain and Germany, Paul Satorys, the rightful heir to the throne of Istan, succeeds in reaching England with the Istan troops, and, staking all on a bold coup, he declares himself to the army as the rightful king. Stanton, an impostor, and the exact double of Satorys, flees, and Paul comes into his own. Herr von Blumstock, a German Secret Service agent, uses the likeness between Paul and Stanton for his own benefit, and pays Stanton to secure information in London likely to be of use to Germany. Strolling down the Strand one evening, Stanton meets a very old friend of his, Sam Bourke. The latter realises that his former associate is a spy, and resolves to thwart him in his treacherous designs. Meanwhile, Satorys, who has been decoyed to a house and trapped at Blumstock's orders, makes his escape. He proposes to warn the police of the headquarters of the German spies, but this is most difficult, as the neighbourhood in which he was confined is alive with aliens. Sam Bourke comes to his aid, however, and the police are warned. Bourne succumbs as the result of a melee, having freely atoned for the past. Satorys effects the arrest of Stanton on a charge of espionage, but the traitor escapes, and, in his frenzy to elude his pursuers, dashes over a parapet and is drowned. Blumstock is also seized, but Satorys is badly hurt in the process. His fiancée, Grace Lang, who had previously been decoyed by Stanton, is released, and accepts a proposal of marriage from Satorys.

(Now go on with the Story.)

The Fall of the Curtain.

The few days which followed were a period of peace, though, as the girl nursed back to health the man to whom she had pledged herself long before in the past, when he had first made his bid for a throne, there came news to that quiet countryside which sent the blood tingling through Satorys' veins, causing him to long for the moment when he could once more take his place in the fighting-line as the ally of Britain and France, mighty Russia, and splendid little Belgium, which had seen its fair lands laid waste.

The Germans were on the defensive now, being slowly driven back towards the rightful frontier of Germany—the Rhine; but the resistance was stubborn, and there was no sign of a speedy end to the campaign.

But there was that break in the long spell of fighting so far as Satorys was concerned, and it came to him that if it were not for stern duty calling him he would have been content to let the world slip, to remain on in that remote corner of rural England where happiness might be.

But as he stood at the side of Grace Lang in the little village church, and heard the words which joined their two lives, he heard, too, the distant trumpet-call from far away in Europe.

"You would not have me not return?" he said, as they travelled to London.

"No," said the girl. "No, I would not, for it is your duty, THE GER LIBRARY.—No. 354.

FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE

is the principal character in one of the complete stories contained in

A Bid for a Throne.

A Thrilling War Story.

By CLIVE R. FENN.

Paul; but I pray that there may be a swift end to all the horror."

As the train glided on Satorys glanced at a newspaper which he had bought, saw the tale of suffering, knew that what the Germans had done in Belgium and the north of France was something too horrible to be set down in words—crimes which shrieked to Heaven for punishment on their vile perpetrators, these vermin who preached of "culture," and who spoke of the mission of the German race.

The ruthless sweep of the torrent of war had brought desolation on peoples who had done nothing but try pitifully to protect their own. What matter that? It was the will of the scoundrelly tyrant of Germany who strove for world empire, and who would get, it might be trusted, the fate he deserved.

A few days later Satorys set out once more for the scene of the war. He had no more fears for the girl who was now his wife. She was safe—really safe this time—with friends; and Satorys yearned to be doing his share of the work of revenge—joining in that march onward, ever onward to Berlin, where there were long accounts to settle.

Blumstock was out of harm's way. His nest of conspirators was also precluded from further mischief, and Stanton was dead.

Yes, Stanton was dead—Stanton, the man who had well-nigh wrecked the life of the man he had impersonated—Stanton, ex-convict and worthless adventurer!

Stanton was surely dead!

But what if it were not so?

The doubt seized hold of Satorys as he was hastening to the front, and he was chilled.

It was a relief to Satorys to get back to the scene of hostilities, and to take his part in the work of slowly pushing the invaders back across the Rhine. His own troops, the men from Istan, the great South American dominion which owed allegiance to Satorys, were participating in all the glory of the war, and, thanks to his position, their leader had his place in the councils of General Joffre and Field-Marshal French, who were carrying out to the letter a long-considered plan of campaign.

"It doesn't seem as though there will be much of Germany left, sir, when they have done with it," said Peter one night, as he stood in the tent where Satorys was seated with Anton.

"I dare say not," was the reply. "But make yourself comfortable, my man, just as in the old days."

The Istan officer on duty at the entrance smiled. He and his comrades were thoroughly accustomed to the vagaries of the old sailor, and they had no objection now, for Peter was a jester, and, moreover, he was as brave as any there.

Satorys had been back at the front for some weeks, sharing in all the hardships of the war, but in those weeks the advance had been so rapid that he had had no opportunity to tell his faithful followers all that had occurred during his residence in London.

Peter opened his mouth to speak again, and then stopped.

"What is it?" asked Satorys.

"I was only going to ask you, sir, about Stanton."

"CHUCKLES," 1d.

"He's dead."

"Then I can't honestly say that I am sorry, sir. He was no good to anybody. But there! When one thinks of it all, one man seems just nothing at all. Yes, Germany will look a bit silly when we come to carve her up, as she must be if the world is going to be safe. I have been reading about it all, and it seems France is to have her own back—Alsace and Lorraine—and a bit more if she cares for it; and Denmark as well, and Hanover, and, of course, Belgium, must have her slice, to say nothing of Poland. That will be just fair play all round, and it will be a lot more comfortable for the Germans to live quiet and easy without an Emperor who was always buzzing round like a wasp in a treading-tub."

The sound of extra heavy firing interrupted the sailor. Satorys jumped up and hurried out of the tent just as a mounted officer galloped up, leaped to the ground, and saluted.

"It is another of their alleged surprise attacks, sir," said the officer. "We are moving forward on the right wing."

But the fresh attack, like its predecessors, was doomed to failure. The Allies had now to meet an army which had lost power, and realised at last that it was playing a losing game, for the tale of the bloodstained battlefields of the Marne, the Sambre, and the Aisne was one which had burned itself into the understandings of the foe. The British force had been despised by the authorities at Berlin. It would never be despised again. Stiffening, as it had, the French armies, the divisions from Britain had proved irresistible in its grim opposition to the German hordes.

Satorys moved forward with his staff to see the morning light behind the hills east of the Rhine. The roar of artillery fire was dying away. The British cavalry was extending now, engaged in a sweeping movement over the ground which the enemy had struggled for during the past hour, and as it advanced Satorys saw another sign of the downfall of the German power, and the removal from Europe of a despotism which made lasting peace impossible.

He trotted forward to obtain a better view of the retreat of the foe, and then suddenly he was brought back to the little things of the world, for his name was called, and, looking down, he saw a man lying by a clump of bushes, a poor fellow whose work was done, one of the countless myriads who had come to death through the terrible war.

For the moment Satorys was alone—alone with the wounded man. He had sprung to the ground, and hurried forward, not seeing anything but the poor fellow who was struggling up, to fall back once more, realising nothing of the splendour of the morning, the red light behind the crested hills, and the surrender of the German force, a victory for the Allies which brought them one day nearer on the long, long march to Berlin.

"You know me, then?"

Satorys was bending over the injured man, supporting him, ready to forget that Stanton—for the victim was none other—had lived to do him wrong.

"Yes, I recognise you, Jem Stanton," said Satorys gravely, as he tried to do something for the other.

"Of course you can't forgive me, sir. But there was something I wanted to tell you. More than likely I should never have been able to say what I wanted. It's the end, and I deserve it. But now, at the last, I want to try and play the game." He pressed his hand to his side, and then darted Satorys a look of deep gratitude as his former enemy held his flask to his cracked lips. "I escaped—no need to tell you

that—and dodged the London police. I had been a king"—there was a pitiful smile—"I was going to try and end like one out here, and they gave me a chance as one of their soldiers."

Satorys nodded. Indeed, it was well that the other should have found the end in this way, renegade as he was, rather than be arrested as a criminal, and sent back to punishment by the police of the country he had outraged.

"But that wasn't it, sir," Stanton went on. "I was going to let you know that the marriage was all wrong. I was married at the time—maybe it doesn't matter now. I deserted my real wife. That poor lady is free."

There was silence. Stanton sank back helpless. "I have messed it all the time," he said faintly. "Savage I was with the Old Country for what it did for me. Never had a chance. But it is all pretty clear now—my fault. But though I fought against it—the old flag—I want to salute it now."

He fought against his weakness, and struggled into a sitting posture, and his hand was raised towards the red, white, and blue of Britain, which were seen across the level ground, fluttering in the wind over the bastion a mile away, from where the enemy had been driven at deadly cost. That effort was his last. Stanton fell prone, and Satorys removed his uniform cap for a second.

Death wipes out all.

For the rest, how much is to be said, and how little! The campaign went forward, driven towards the only fitting termination, with the hopes of the Hohenzollerns broken, and the advancing armies ever pressing on to Berlin—Berlin, which was not sacked, as had been the case with many a fair town which had suffered at the hands of the Germans, but which was the meeting-place of the Powers—Russia, Britain, and France—whose mission it was to bring back peace to the world.

Through the fire and wreckage of a continent, glory had come to Istan, whose army had been instrumental in the work of chastisement. The power of Germany was crushed. She had spread fire and devastation, sacked cities, warred on the innocent, desolated countless homes, but the reckoning was sure.

It was weeks later. Satorys was about to start with his wife back across the seas to his own land, where a throne awaited him, and the enthusiastic welcome of a free people. He was entering his temporary headquarters in London, and Peter, who was his faithful follower still, jumped down from the front of the motor-car and opened the door.

"Do you hear them, sir?" he said to Satorys. "They have gone cheering mad in this country. It's one of them French generals leaving the King's palace now, and they are letting him have it same as they did you."

Satorys stopped a moment at the lighted entrance of the mansion, to see his wife coming towards him. Down the lighted streets came a sound of huzzaing, then a burst of triumphal music.

"As my brother Bill used to say to me, sir—" Peter began. He got no further.

Satorys laughed, and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Ah, yes!" he said cheerily. "You and your brother Bill! I owe you a lot, Peter, for your assistance in my Bid for a Throne."

THE END.

OFFICER AND TROOPER.



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FROM THE FIRING-LINE!

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(Exclusive to "The Gem" Library.)

No. 7.—

THE ARMOURD TRAIN FIGHT!



We have been having a sultry time since I sent you my last despatch. While the artillery and infantry duel was going on, we of the cavalry had something of a breather. We've made up for it since.

The saddles of our brave, stick-it-to-the-last horses have served us for beds. Daylight and darkness have seen us galloping and charging and fighting hand-to-hand. We've fed and drank in the saddle. Each of us who can still flourish a sabre can boast of having as many lives as the proverbial cat.

Still, for all that, for all the hard work, I haven't heard a single chap of the King's Dragoons grumble—unless it was to have yet another "go" at the Berlin butchers. All the King's horses and all the King's men wouldn't drag them back to London again.

You heard just as soon as us, no doubt, that Antwerp had fallen. It gave us a bit of a pang at first. The censor will probably let me tell you how that was hoping the heroic Belgians could hold out until we came along with irresistible power and swept the invaders back to their own frontier. The Belgian part of the scheme has failed, but perhaps the sweeping part will come off yet.

The fall of Antwerp hasn't softened the heart of Tommy Atkins to the German hooligans by a very long chalk.

Now for the armoured train fight, which was really the start of our going on overtime. It began on a delightful, sunny Sunday afternoon. We'd pulled up for a brief rest outside Lille, which you probably know is France's Manchester. We were on the outskirts of the town, near the railway lines, when we saw a Belgian armoured train being turned off to a siding.

It did not strike us at the moment as anything very extraordinary. We were less than a squadron in strength, and were the advance guard of the cavalry, sent out to clear the way. We were expecting before long to link up with the Belgians.

But we got a big surprise. We saw a signalman appear at a cabin window, making frantic signs to us, and indicating the armoured train. We were about a mile away. I was standing near the colonel at the moment.

"That chap's jolly excited!" cried the colonel "Go and have a jabber with him, corporal."

Before I could turn my mare's head round, however, there was a succession of shots. To our amazement, the windows of the signal cabin were shattered. The Frenchman fell back, as we discovered afterwards, with his chest riddled with bullets. To complete our astonishment, out from the train appeared swarms of Uhlans.

It was a trick. They'd captured the train. This was their first move to intercept our plan of linking up with the Belgians.

In a jiffy we formed up, and, with a good old British yell ripping from our throats, we galloped down to meet them. The sweet little "ewe-lambs" were mounted by this time. At a rough guess, there were between three and four hundred of 'em—twice our number. But they did not wait for a proper introduction.

The skunks did not even make a stand. We emptied our carbines into them, emptying a score of saddles at the first volley, as we chased them across the railway into the road leading to Raubais and Tourcoing.

We soon tumbled to their manoeuvre. They were leading us into a trap. At the fork of the road was a big body—about three thousand—of German infantry, who opened fire

on us. We had to get back until the French infantry, coming up, could get into position. In that time the Germans seized the tramway depot, shooting down the employees, and began an onslaught on Lille itself.

Monsieur, the gallant Frenchie, soon gave them pepper, while we, cutting round on the German flank, proceeded to rub it in. Kaiser Bill's innocents were forced back. The Uhlans couldn't avoid a scrap this time. It was like a circus performance.

We went through them and all round them, dressing 'em up and dressing 'em down. It was all sabre play. We gave 'em lessons free, gratis, and for nothing. Those of 'em who got away—there weren't many—will remember that teaching long after Kaiser Bill is in a felon's cell at Newgate.

We went back to tea, toasted muffins, and jam-tarts—I don't think!—after that. The Germans had been given their meal, and they didn't come back for supper. They were up early next morning, however, calling for their breakfast—not the Uhlans, dear little souls, but the infantry, urged on from the rear by their officers with sword or revolver in hand.

They got their breakfast all right! The first course was cold lead, and the other courses were much the same. For two hours the banquet continued. Then the Prussian officers couldn't keep their slaves at it any longer; they broke ranks and fled in a rout towards Tournai.

Meanwhile, the King's Dragoons were out looking for the Uhlans. We guessed that the party we had sliced up the day before were only a section of a much larger force.

"As they're in the humour for a fight, corporal," said the colonel, "we'll do our best to oblige them. Send out patrols, so that we can get in touch with them as quickly as possible. May as well have a look round yourself."

There's nothing I like better than going off and acting "on my own." Half a dozen patrols were soon sent out to search different areas. I chose the Tournai district for myself, for we knew positively that the Germans were there. The four of us rode off.

We were at first very disappointed. A couple of hours' scouting gave us no sign of the enemy. It was ideal weather for riding—a sunny, blue sky, with just a nip in the air.

That cavalry as well as infantry had passed along that road not many hours before, our eyes assured us. We crossed a wooden bridge over a small river, and halted at a farmhouse for a drink, where a couple of terrified women—mother and daughter—came out of the cellar at our call.

My! They were pleased to see honest British faces! We only wanted water for our horses and ourselves, but they offered us wine and food and tobacco. Eight out of the good woman's eleven sons had met with a hero's end, yet she was cheerful and determined still.

"Jean and Armand and Henri will avenge their brothers," she told me.

The Germans had been overnight at the farmhouse, robbing it of every atom of food they could find, and with threats and abuse compelling the poor woman and her daughter to wait on them.

She had given them wine from the cellar until they could drink no more. But she had saved a little food from the glutens, and it was this she was offering to share with us.

We went hungry rather than take it. She gave us particulars of the German forces who had passed the farmhouse

(Continued on page 111. of cover.)

recently, and, bidding her be of good courage, we got into our saddles again.

In less than half an hour after this we got busy again. We had come down a lengthy slope, at the bottom of which lay a small manufacturing town, and were about to cautiously reconnoitre it, when we heard a guttural shout behind us.

From a branch road about a dozen Uhlans had appeared. Their shout was the signal for a pursuit. I weighed up the chances. I had as good as decided to make a stand-up fight of it, when from the direction of the town there came a solid mass of cavalry, led by the pantomime artists, the Death's Head Hussars.

We were in the jaws of a pair of nutcrackers. There was no way of escape. On either side of us were high embankments, topped by stout hedges. We could have scrambled up them, leaving our horses. The Germans would have taken such a course, no doubt; but our horses are our pals.

"Right about!" I shouted, quickly making up my mind. "We'll tackle the dozen 'ewes' first!"

My three chums were tough nuts. They were round like winking. Behind us we could hear the thunder of the massed cavalry. The skull and crossbones crew were shouting and roaring with delight. They were four hundred strong, and swarms—as far as the eye could see—representing other branches of the cavalry, were following them. We were only four of "General French's contemptible little Army"—to quote Kaiser Bill's famous proclamation to his troops.

The Uhlans, yelling and brandishing their sabres, rode down the hill towards us. When they were still about twenty yards from us I gave the order to halt. We pulled up saddle by saddle. Behind us the thunder became greater.

The Uhlans, triumphant, pulled up, and called on us to surrender. So sure of us were they that their officer, a bullet-headed podge, rolled out of his saddle.

"Charge!" I yelled. "Give 'em ginger!"

We leapt off the mark as if we were trying for an Army athletic championship. We were into the ewe-lambs before they had got over their yawn of amazement.

The podgy officer went down before my mare's hoofs. For about three giddy minutes I scarcely knew what was happening. I was slashing and stabbing, chopping and countering, whilst my horse pranced and backed, and everything seemed mixed up—trees, horses, and German faces. And then it was all over, and the four of us were galloping steadily up the hill.

"What's up?" I asked, putting my hand over my perspiring forehead.

"What's down, you mean, corporal?" grinned Ted. "By hokey, it was a daisy of a scrap! That sword of yours did five of 'em in!"

I looked back. There were a number of prostrate figures in the white road. Three horses were bolting precipitately after us, with empty saddles. Only one Ulan was able to stand erect. Between us we had put eleven of them out of action.

Still, there was no time then for crowing. We were jolly lucky to get through. The Death's Head Hussars, a solid

mass of them, pursued us up the hill. It became a race. They streamed out in a line. But though one of their officers, riding a big bay thoroughbred, could have reached us, he contented himself with getting within revolver distance and losing off a few bullets.

One struck the crupper of my saddle with a noise like a stiek thumped on a door. That was his best shot, and did no damage.

Still, it was only our horses that saved us. Considering the work they've put in since the war started, and the way we've been compelled to use 'em, our faithful old pals have done their part magnificently.

We rode down into the valley full pelt. The hussars gave it up as soon as they breached the hill, for except for emptying their carbines harmlessly after us, they gave no further chase, and we saw nothing more of them.

As we had got into touch with what looked like a main advance of the enemy's cavalry, I decided to get back to Lille with all speed.

It was pitch dark when at last we halted outside a farmhouse on the outskirts of a village a few miles from Lille.

Ted and I, seeing that the place had been gutted by fire, and its walls holed with shells, hurried round to the barn at the rear, in the hope that we should be able to obtain some fodder or a drink for our horses. As I struck a match there was a movement in the straw.

To my amazement, I found that we were surrounded by more than a dozen Germans. Some were lying on the straw, huddled up in the attitude of men thoroughly worn-out. Six, however, had struggled to their feet and stood between us and the door.

"Bagged at last!" I muttered to Ted, drawing my revolver.

The tiny flame spluttered out. Ted and I made a dash for the door, colliding with several of the brutes. Our revolvers were knocked out of our hands in the scuffle. Then began as merry a dust-up as ever I've had between us and the Bosches—three rounds rolled into one, without timekeeper or seconds, and all in the dark.

Round and round the ring—I mean, the barn—we bumped and crashed and fought, till at last a throaty voice called out in English:

"All right, mates; we chuck up the sponge!"

The speaker was a German barber from Elington who had been called up by the Fatherland. He and the others, all infantrymen, had become detached from their regiment in the fight round Lille, and, worn out and starving, had sought shelter in the barn.

There were fourteen of them in all. We marched them into camp the same night. They were jolly glad to be made prisoners. The barber himself told me so when, after they had been given warm food and drink, I looked in.

I must conclude now, as orders have been issued to get ready to meet the skull-and-crossbones crew, and I wouldn't miss it for anything!

(A further exciting war adventure will be told by our chum at the front in next Wednesday's GEM. Make sure of getting a copy!)

Breezy Ben

and

Dismal Dutchy

are on the front page of

CHUCKLES $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

OUT TO-DAY!

You Must Not Miss
Them!



A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE

LAWS OF COMPENSATION.

Old Mr. and Mrs. Muldoon were in close converse round the peat fire, discussing the natural laws of compensation, though that wasn't exactly what they called the subject.

"Jest fancy," exclaimed Bridget, "according to this paper, when a man loses one of his senses another gets more developed. For instance, a blind man gets more sense in hearing and touch."

Pat thought the matter over long and anxiously.

"Sure, an' it's quite true," he remarked learnedly, after a while. "O'iv'e noticed it meself. When a man has got one leg shorter than the other, begorra the other's longer!"—Sent in by A. Tarbutt, Ilford.

AN IRISHMAN'S LETTER.

"Dear Mick,—O! have lost ye address, and as Oi can't find it, will ye send it as fast as ye can, as Oi want to tell ye that ye Uncle Dan doid very sudden after a long illness. He laid for many days quiet and spacheless, all the toime inquiring for water with a little phwiskey. The doctor tells me that his death was caused through illness, but Micky, me bhoy, between ourselves, 'stoppage of the heart' was the cause of most of his death. He was eighty-five years of age last March, all but fifteen months, and had he lived till now he would have been six months dead. I enclose ye foive shillings which ye father sends unbeknown to me.

"P.S.—I would beg of ye not to break the seal of this letter until two or three days after ye have read it, by which toime ye will be better prepared for the sorrowful news.—PAT."—Sent in by J. Newbold, Burton-on-Trent.

PROVED HIS POINT.

A certain regiment was on the march, and the companies were ordered to move with a few minutes interval between each, and to keep each other in sight, the band leading. The band soon got a long way ahead, and, on reaching a bend, halted for a few minutes' rest. Presently up galloped a mounted officer in hot haste, and shouted for the band sergeant.

"What do you mean," he said, "by getting out of sight of the leading company?"

"We were not out of sight, sir," answered the sergeant.

"What do you mean by telling me that?" raged the officer. "You were out of sight. I saw you myself!"—Sent in by Percy Asplen, Sheffield.

WHAT ROT IS IT NOT?

A duel was lately fought in Texas between Alexander Shott and John S. Nott. Nott was shot, and Shott was not. In this case it is better to be Shott than Nott. There was a rumour that Nott was not shot, and Shott avows that he shot Nott, which proves either that the shot Shott shot at Nott was not shot, or that Nott was shot notwithstanding. Circumstantial evidence is not always good. It may be made to appear on trial that the shot Shott shot shot Nott, or, as accidents with firearms are frequent, it may be possible that the shot Shott shot shot Shott himself, when the whole affair would resolve itself into its original elements, and Shott would be shot, and Nott would be not. We think, however, that the shot Shott shot shot not Shott but Nott; anyway, it is hard to tell who was shot.—Sent in by Wilfrid Robinson, Oldham.

A HUNDRED YEARS HENCE.

The aeroplane, making a twelve-hour journey from London to Hong-Kong, had encountered difficulties among the stars. Something, apparently, was wrong with the engine, for the customary comet-like speed of the airship had suddenly slackened considerably.

"Good heavens!" cried the skipper. "We shall be half a second late! What makes her go so slow?"

"Why, sir," replied the engineer, "we're passing through the Milky Way, and the propeller's full o' butter!"—Sent in by Ernest Brown, Leeds.

AT THE FANCY-DRESS BALL.

Policeman: "I'm sorry, mum, but I cannot admit anyone but children."

Excited Lady: "But my child is here dressed as a butterfly, and she has forgotten her wings!"

Policeman: "Well, mum, I can't help it. You'll have to let her go in as a caterpillar!"—Sent in by R. E. Hayward, Walsall.

A NEW DISCOVERY.

The wife of the great botanist beamed at him across the supper-table.

"But these," she exclaimed, pointing to the dish of mushrooms set before her, "are not all for me, are they?"

"Yes, Mabel," he nodded. "I gathered them especially for you."

She beamed upon him gratefully. What a dear, unselfish husband he was! In five minutes she had demolished the lot.

At breakfast next morning he greeted her anxiously.

"Sleep all right?" he inquired.

"Splendidly!" she smiled.

"Not sick at all—no pains?" he urged.

"Why, of course not, Archie," she responded.

"Hurrah, then!" he exclaimed. "I have discovered another species of mushroom that isn't poisonous!"—Sent in by George Moore, Brentwood.

WARM TRAVELLING.

Yankee (puffing a big cigar): "We've got trains in America that travel one hundred and fifty miles an hour. Yep!"

Britisher: "That's nothing! My wife and I once booked third-class tickets from London to Glasgow, and went there in a second!"—Sent in by Frank Watton, Leeds.

PAINFUL RECOLLECTIONS.

It was Sunday morning, and the congregation yawned and nodded their heads in their pews as the minister rolled out his words in a deep, singing voice. Suddenly an old woman who sat at the back, and who had been watching the minister intently, burst into tears, and sobbed as though her heart would break. When church was over, and the people had filed out, the minister went to her and said kindly:

"My dear woman, was it the sermon which made you show such emotion?"

"No, sir," she replied, breaking out afresh, "it wasn't the sermon; but to see your beard a-wagging like that reminds me of my old billy-goat which died a month come Monday."—Sent in by C. Minton, Liverpool.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED.

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the sender will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED—The Editor, "The Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in otherwise than on postcards, will be disregarded.