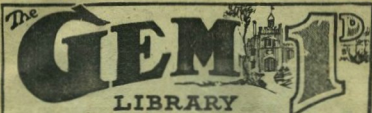


# COLOSSAL CONTEST! ROUND 2.

Complete  
Stories  
for ALL,  
and  
Every  
Story  
in  
GEM.



No.  
381.  
Vol.  
8.



## A SON OF SCOTLAND

A GREAT SCHOOL TALE OF A SCOTTISH BOY'S  
ADVENTURES AT ST. JIM'S.

**5/- MONTHLY.**

I supply the best of Currier's Cycles at **Percent below the Makers' Prices,** and deliver any make of cycle most used & desirable.

I will send you a high-grade cycle, guaranteed for 25 years—on 10 days' free approval, upon payment of £3-14-6 Cash. If you are not perfectly satisfied, write to me to-day for a Free List.

**HIGH-GRADE CYCLES**  
From £3-14-6 Cash.  
(Makers' Price £5 0s.)

**THOUSANDS OF TESTIMONIALS.**

**O'Brien** the  
THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER.  
(Day 2 ) COVENTRY.

**WRITE NOW FOR LISTS**

**6/6 each**

**The "LORD ROBERTS" TARGET PISTOL.**

Beautifully plated and finished. May be carried in the pocket. Trains the eye and cultivates the judgment. Range 100 yards. Targets 9d. per 100. Noiseless Ball Cartridges, 9d. per 100. Shot, 1/6 per 100. Send for list. **CROWN GUN WORKS, 8, WHITTON STREET, BIRMINGHAM.**

**LATEST JOKES** cause roars of laughter. **Smoking Powder, 6d.** Smoking Pipe, 1/6. **Shooting Powder, 6d.** Cat Fingers, 2d. 3 Card Tricks, 5d. Lot 1/6. **Fortifications, Conquerors, Battles, Card Tricks, 5d.** cards. **Illustrated Cards, Mirrors of 1000 Jokes, 6d.** each. **Free—British Supply Co., BILSTON.**

**A Real Lever Simulation.**

**GOLD WATCH FREE**

Guaranteed 5 years.



**SEND 6d. ONLY.**

A stupendous success offer from an established firm. We are giving away Watches to thousands of people all over the world as a huge advertisement. Give us your chance to win one. Write now, enclosing P.O. 6d. for postage expenses, for one of our fashionable Ladies Long Watches, or Gents' Alberts, sent carriage paid, to war with the Watch, which will be given Free should you take advantage of our invaluable offer. We expect you to tell your friends about us and show them the beautiful Watch. Don't think this offer too good to be true, but send 6d. only, for a watch opportunity, and gain a Free Watch. You will be amazed.

Coloured Order 1s.

**WILLIAMS & LLOYD, Wholesale Jewellers,**  
Dept. 16, 88, Cornwallis Road, London, W., England.

**RED NOSES**

Permanently Cured and Restored to their Natural Colour in a few days by a simple home-treatment. Particulars free. Enclose stamp to pay postage.—Mr. K. A. TEMPLE (Specialist), 33, Maddox Street, Regent St., London, W.

**IF YOU WANT Good Cheap Photographic Material** of Cameras and wanted for Samples and Catalogue **FREE—Works! JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL.**

Applications with regard to Advertisement Space in this paper should be addressed: "Advertisement Manager, "PLUCK" Series, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.

**This 1915 Model**

**30 DAYS Free Trial.**

**FROM £2-15s**

**EXTRAORDINARY OFFER 30 days**

Free trial on this brand of bicycles—the **Meas Coventry Flyer Superbe**, throughout 25 years. Fully fitted with 1000 cc. engine, 1000 cc. engine or 1000 cc. engine. We will accept it to you on approval, partial free and carrying paid, without a penny deposit in advance. This offer is absolutely genuine.

**WRITE TO-DAY** for big catalogue showing full line of cycles, for men, women, boys and girls, at prices never before equalled. **It's Free.**

**TY ES, SPEED-GEAR HUBS,** motor tubes, lamps, motorcycles, and parts for all bicycles at **half usual prices.** **Exceptionally Easy Payments Account of.** A limited number of second-hand bicycles taken in trade will be cleared at once, at **15/- to £2 10 0 each.**

**RIDER AGENTS** wanted in each town to ride and exhibit weekly. **Need provided for you.**

**It Costs You Nothing** to learn what we offer. You will be astonished and excited. **Do not buy a bicycle** from an advertisement until you get our catalogue and see special offers. **Write to-day.**

**MEAS CYCLE CO., DEPT. 92F, LIVERPOOL.**

**DO YOU LACK SELF-CONFIDENCE ?**

Do you suffer from nervousness, lack of self-confidence, indigestion, constipation, lack of self-control, nervousness, or any other ailment? Do you feel awkward in the presence of others? Do you find it difficult to acquire strong nerves and good concentration which will give you absolute self-confidence. No drugs, opiates, or pills. Send at once 2 penny stamps for particulars of my guaranteed cure in 14 days—**DR. HENRY ELLIOTT SMITH, 67, Imperial Bldg., Lincolns Inn, London, E.C.**

**BEFORE** **AFTER**

**ACCORDIONS**

These beautifully finished organ-toned instruments, made of the finest selected materials, are constructed for pure and robust tones, for which these instruments are famous. All the latest improvements. **Thoroughly new prices.**

**Sent on Approval. Easy Installments. Catalogue Free.**

**Douglas, 26 King's Chambers, Fourth St., London, E.C.**

**YOU** can have a luxuriously equipped **1915, Gold Medal "QUADRANT"** as ridden by **ROYALTY,** on 15 days' free approval. Prices from **£3-13-6** cash. Easy terms from **5/-** monthly. Write to-day for our Free Act List, and see for yourself the bargains we offer. Money refunded in full if dissatisfied. Buy direct from Factory and save 100%. 10 years' guarantee.

**QUADRANT CYCLE CO., LTD.,** (Incl. 25) COVENTRY.

**WRITE FOR FREE ART LISTS NOW**

**Chuckles**

**ONE HALFPENNY**

**THE CHAMPION COLOURED COMIC**

PUBLISHED IN TOWN  
AND COUNTRY EVERY  
WEDNESDAY MORNING

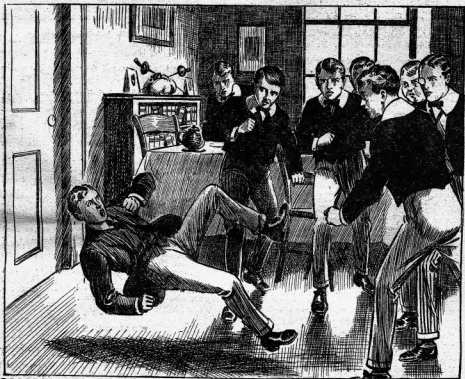


COMPLETE STORIES  
FOR ALL, AND EVERY  
STORY A GEM!

# A SON OF SCOTLAND!

A Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale Specially Written for Scottish Readers.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



The tea-party were on their feet in a moment. Half-a-dozen piles of hands grasped Craik, and he went spinning away, and crashed down into a corner of the room. "Oh! Ah! Ow!" "New come on if you want some more," said Blake. (See Chapter 2.)

## CHAPTER 1.

**Kerr is Not Taking Any.**

"FAG!"

It was Craik of the Sixth who was calling. And Craik's voice sounded decidedly unpleasant. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the "Co." of the New House at St. Jim's, were just going out. They were going over to the School House to tea with Tom Merry. And as Kerr of the Fourth happened to be Craik's fag, the voice of Craik at that moment was distinctly unwelcome.

"Fag!"  
"I thought the beast was out," said Kerr, with a grunt. "I suppose we shall have to go."

"Sounds as if his little temper is upset," remarked Figgins. "Hallo, here he comes!"

Craik of the Sixth came striding down the passage. He did not look in a good temper. He scowled at the sight of the Co.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed. "You heard me calling, Kerr?"

"Yes, I heard you," assented Kerr; "but the fact is, Craik, I'm just going out to tea. Couldn't you make Pratt do for once?"

Craik raised his hand.  
"Go to my study, Kerr!"

Kerr made a grimace to his two chums. They were both looking angry. There was really no reason why

Next Wednesday:

**"A HERO OF WALES!" AND "THE CITY OF FLAME!"**

Craik couldn't let his fag off for once; but the bully of the Sixth was not an accommodating person.

"See you later, you chaps," said Kerr, resigning himself to his fate. "Don't scold all the tommy, Fatty!"

Figgins and Fatty Wynn went on their way, and Kerr proceeded to Craik's study, in the Sixth-Form passage. Craik followed him with a frowning brow.

"Well, what's the orders?" said Kerr, as the Sixth-Former followed him into the study.

"Get tea—and something extra special!" said Craik, in his most bullying tone. "Make a good fire, and get toasted muffins and a decent cake and poached eggs."

Kerr looked into the cupboard. Like that of the famous Mrs. Hubbard, it was bare.

"Nothing here," said Kerr.

"I know that!"

"Do you want me to do the shopping?"

"Of course, you young ass!"

"Right-ho! Hand out the tin."

Craik did not hand out the tin. He turned towards the door.

"I shall expect tea ready at exactly six," he said. "If it isn't ready, look out for squalls!"

"But where's the money?" demanded Kerr.

"You must manage somehow. I'm stony!" said Craik.

"My hat!"

"Mind—six, sharp!"

"Look here," exclaimed Kerr, as the bully of the Sixth was leaving the study, "if you don't shell out, Craik, there won't be any tea. I'm not standing it."

Kerr was pink with indignation. He knew that Sefton of the Sixth sometimes gave orders to his fag, Dibbs, and Dibbs carried them out. It was a case of getting tea or getting a licking, and the fag generally contrived to get the tea somehow. But that was all very well for Dibbs. George Francis Kerr of the Fourth was quite a different person. He was made of sterner stuff.

Craik turned back in the doorway and glared at him.

"I'm not standing it out of my own pocket," said Kerr, deliberately. "and I'm not sneaking it out of another study. If you want tea—an extra special tea, too!—you will have to pay for it, Craik."

Craik did not reply. He closed the study door and picked up a cricket stump. Kerr promptly placed the table between him and the Sixth-Former, and watched him warily.

"Now, then, are you going to get tea?" asked Craik.

"Can't be did."

"Very well. After you've had a licking, you may decide that it can be did," said Craik unpleasantly.

"I'll see you blowed first!" said Kerr indignantly; "you owe me half-a-crown now, you know you do! You borrowed half-a-crown from me last week, Craik."

"Come here!"

"And I suppose you put it on a horse," continued Kerr, eyeing him warily across the table. "Didn't the horse get home, Craikey?"

"You cheeky young hound!"

Kerr bolted round the table as the enraged black sheep of the Sixth made a rush for him. Craik's little speculations on the races were more than suspected among the juniors, though his Housemaster knew nothing about them. Craik was rather a favourite with Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House.

But, as it is said that no man is a hero to his valet, so certainly Eldred Craik was not a hero to his fag. Kerr knew too much about him to have any respect for him.

The active junior kept his distance. He was quite as good at dodging round a study table as Craik was.

"You young rotter!" roared Craik, coming to a breathless halt after circumnavigating the study table three times. "Come here, I tell you!"

"Not just now, thanks!"

"Will you get the tea, as I've told you?"

"Yes, if you shell out the cash. I'm not a charity organisation," said Kerr coolly. "I'm not here to provide free meals for the poor!"

"You—you—" Craik made another rush, but the active junior slid round the table too fast for him.

The Sixth-Former stopped again and reached across the table, and made a "lick" with the stump which would certainly have hurt Kerr if it had caught him. But it

didn't catch him; Kerr jumped back in time. The stump crashed on the table.

"I—I'll smash you!" roared Craik.

"You look more like smashing the table," remarked Kerr.

Craik grasped the table with both hands, to drag it aside. He swung it into a corner of the room, sending books and papers and inkpot flying from it in his haste. Kerr made a break for the door, and whipped out of the study in a twinkling, and slammed the door after him.

He went down the passage like a deer.

But he did not go far. In a couple of seconds he had reached the door of his Housemaster's study, and, as he knew that Mr. Ratcliff was out, he opened that door quickly and stepped in, closing it behind him. He knew that Craik was not likely to look for him in that sacred and dreaded apartment.

The canny Scottish junior had judged correctly.

Craik came tearing out of his study in a towering rage, and rushing along the passage with the stump in his hand.

Kerr was not to be seen, and the senior rushed up the stairs to the Fourth-Form passage, but Kerr's study was empty.

Breathing fury, Craik rushed down again.

His heavy steps sounded in the passage again, and Kerr, with a grin, heard him go stamping by the Housemaster's door.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Sefton of the Sixth, as he met the enraged senior in the passage.

"My fag's dodging me!" panted Craik. "Have you seen him? Kerr, you know!"

"No; I saw Figgins and Wynn going over to the School House; he may be there," said Sefton.

"I suppose he's gone after them—I'll jolly soon see! You come with me, Sefton, as you're a prefect."

"Right-ho!"

Kerr smiled serenely as he heard the footsteps of the two seniors die away. He stepped out of the Housemaster's study as soon as the coast was clear. Very cautiously he peered out of the doorway of the New House. Sefton and Craik were crossing the quadrangle towards the other House. They evidently believed that Kerr had joined Tom Merry's tea-party there, and were going to look for him.

Kerr sauntered away cheerfully into the quad, as soon as the two seniors had disappeared into the School House. It was very necessary for him to give Craik and Sefton a wide berth for the present.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Order of the Boot.

TOM MERRY'S study in the School House was pretty well filled.

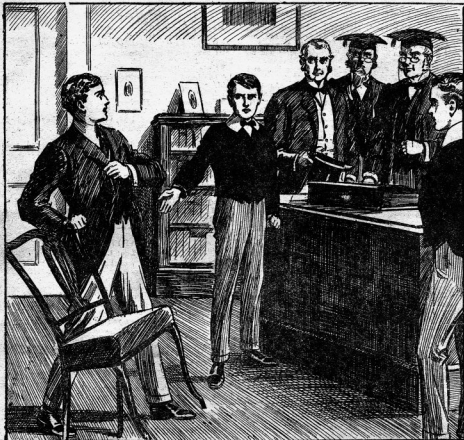
There were Tom Merry, and Manners, and Lowther and Talbot of the Shell, and Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy of the Fourth, who had come along from Study No. 6; and there were Figgins and Fatty Wynn.

As a rule, the School House juniors and the New House were on the warpath; but peace was reigning now. It had come to the ears of Tom Merry & Co. that Figgins & Co. were "up against it" financially. Money was tight with the New House chums. Long-anticipated remittances had not arrived. When one of the New House trio had a remittance all three were in funds. But it happened that there was a period of drought now. Kerr and Wynn and Piggy were all in the same boat. Urgent letters home had failed hitherto to bring any adequate response. And Tom Merry, with really kind thought for his old rivals, had asked them to a feed, instead of ragging them, as usual.

It was an act of generous thought which Fatty Wynn, at least, could appreciate fully. Fatty's plump face beamed as he came into Tom Merry's study. The table was spread with good things galore, and it was a sight to delight anybody's eyes, but especially Fatty Wynn's.

"Hallo, where's Kerr?" asked Tom Merry.





Craik staggered, and caught at the back of a chair for support. His eyes almost started from his head. "Calm yourself, Craik," said Mr. Ratoiff. "No one here believes Kerr's absurd statement. (See Chapter 13.)"

"Fagging for Craik," said Figgins. "The beast dropped on him at the last minute. He'll get over as soon as he can."

"He doesn't want us to wait for him," murmured Fatty Wynn.

"Bai Jove, that is wathah inconsiderate of Cwaik!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth. "Kerr should have pointed out to Cwaik that he had an engagement."

"He did!" growled Figgins.

"Then I wogard Cwaik as an inconsiderate boundah!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"If Craik could hear that," said Monty Lowther solemnly, "he would feel very small. I can just picture him hiding his diminished head."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I say, that pie looks topping," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll begin with the pie, if you don't mind."

And he did.

The juniors all followed his example, but the feed was scarcely under way when the study door was thrown open, and Sefton and Craik appeared.

The School House juniors glared at the two New House seniors.

"Forgotten to knock?" asked Manners.

"Where's Kerr?"

"Eh?"

"Is Kerr here?" shouted Craik.

"Kerr!" said Figgins. "Isn't he fagging for you?"

"You know he has bolted, you young rascal!"

"Bolted! By George!" said Figgins.

"Bai Jove! I quite approve of Kerr's boltin'," said D'Arcy. "It was vewy inconsiderate of you to keep him, Cwaik, when he had an engagement heah."

Craik glared round the study. There was no sign of Kerr, but the bully of the Sixth was not satisfied.

"I know he's here," he said. "I suppose he's hidden somewhere. Under the table, very likely."

Craik made a stride towards the table. There was a big tablecloth on the table, which extended half-way to the floor, and as the juniors were crowded round the table, anybody hidden underneath it would have been thoroughly concealed. The juniors did not move.

"Make room!" growled Craik.

"Go and eat coke!" said Tom Merry warmly. "What the dickens do you mean by giving orders here, Craik?"

"I know he's under the table!" howled Craik.

"Bow-wow!"

"If you don't move, Merry, I'll soon yank you out of the way!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"Just try it!" he remarked. "You'll go out of this

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 381.

"A HERO OF WALES!" NEXT WEDNESDAY.

3<sup>RD</sup> ROUND IN OUR CONTEST.

study on your neck pretty soon afterwards, you rotten bully!"

Craik clenched his hands furiously. Although he was in the Sixth, and Tom Merry a junior in the Shell, his black looks had no effect upon Tom. He was not a prefect, and even if he had been he would have had no authority in the School House.

"Hold on!" said Sefton. "Figgins, get aside, and you, Wynn."

Figgins and Wynn reluctantly got aside. As they were New House juniors they were under Sefton's orders.

Craik stooped down in their place to peer under the table, convinced that he would see Kerr hidden there. He lifted the cloth, and peered underneath, and then rolled back with a loud yell. A boot, belonging to one of the innumerable legs under the table, had come into violent contact with his nose.

"Oh!" roared Craik. "Yow! Oh! Yah!" He clasped his nose in anguish, and there was a chuckle from the tea-party.

"Hallo! Was that your nose, Craik?" asked Monty Lowther, in surprise. "I thought I felt my boot knock against something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"You young hound!" yelled Craik, making a jump at Lowther.

"Hands off!" shouted Tom Merry. "Collar the cad!" The tea-party were on their feet in a moment. Half a dozen pairs of hands grasped Craik, and he went spinning away, and crashed down into a corner of the room.

"Oh! Ah! Ow!"  
"Now come on if you want some more!" said Blake.

Craik sat dazedly in the corner, glaring at him. The School House juniors were quite prepared to give him some more. Craik had no right in their study.

"Kerr isn't here," said Sefton, glancing under the table. "He can't have come here, Craik. Take Figgins instead."

Craik staggered to his feet.  
"—I—I'll smash those cheeky fags!" he panted.

"Bai Jove! You will be wathah wuffy handled if you begin any smashin' beah!" said Arthur Augustus, pushing back his cuffs in a warlike way.

Perhaps Craik thought so, too, for he decided not to do any smashing.

"Come, Figgins!" said Sefton.  
"I say, I've come here to tea!" said Figgins.

"You'll do as you're told!"  
"I'm not Craik's fag!"

"Don't argue with me—come!" said Sefton.  
Figgins's jaw set squarely.

"I won't!" he answered.  
"If you don't follow me from this study instantly, Figgins, I shall report you to your Housemaster for disobedience," said Sefton.

"Report and be blowed!"  
Sefton made a stride towards Figgins. Tom Merry & Co. interposed.

"Get out!" said Tom tersely.  
"What!"

"Get out of this study, both of you. You're not wanted here!"

"Yaas, wathah! Kick 'em out, deah boys!"  
"Outside, you cads!"

"Will you come, Figgins?" shouted Craik.  
"No, I won't!" said Figgins doggedly.

"Then I'll take you!"  
Craik strode at Figgins, but the School House juniors pushed Figg out of the way, and tackled Craik themselves. The bully of the Sixth was in a furious temper, and he hit out savagely, and the juniors promptly hit out in return. Craik went down on the floor struggling wildly in the grasp of half a dozen. Sefton rushed to his aid, and was seized at once, and rolled over, too. There was a wild and whirling scene on the study carpet for several minutes.

But the juniors were too many for the seniors, big as they were, Craik went hurtling through the doorway, with his collar off, his waistcoat buttons all gone, and his jacket curled up round his head, and all sorts of things streaming out of his pockets. The next moment

Sefton went hurtling after him, and they bumped over together in the passage.

Manners slammed the door on them.  
"Now we'll have tea," said Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"I say, you'll get into a row if Sefton reports you, Figg," Digby remarked.

Figgins grunted.  
"The beast is always reporting me for something," he said. "It doesn't matter once more. May as well have tea."

"Yaas, wathah! If those wottahs come back we'll make an example of them, deah boys!"

But the "wottahs" did not come back. They had had enough. The juniors heard them limping away down the passage.

Ten minutes later the door was cautiously opened, and Kerr of the Fourth looked in. There was a chorus of welcome from the tea-party.

"Trot in, kid!"  
"Pway come in, deah boy!"  
"Lots of tuck left!"  
"This pie is ripping, Kerr, old chap!"

And Kerr chuckled, and took his seat at the festive board, and tea in Tom Merry's study proceeded quite merrily.

CHAPTER 3.  
The Lost Letter.

"A WPUL cheek!" was the comment of Tom Merry & Co., when Kerr related, over tea, the happenings in Craik's study.

And the rotter wanted to rag Figg, because you had done the vanishing trick," said Fatty Wynn.

"Fancy expecting a chap to miss a feed like this, you know. It ain't reasonable."

"There'll be a row when you go back," said Blake.  
"Oh, we can stand that!" said Figgins. "Pass the jam. We're always in rows with those two rotters. Craik has been worse than usual the last week or two. I fancy he's been having bad luck with the geegees."

"I wedged him as a wank outsiders," said Arthur Augustus. "I have a vewy stwong suspish dat Cwaik bets on horses, you know."

"I know he does," said Kerr, with a grunt, "and I know he's been losing lately, too. He's anxious about a visitor who's coming at six. I shouldn't wonder if it's somebody he owes money to."

"Awful rotter!"  
There was a tap at the door of the study, and Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, looked in. His glance was very curious as it rested on Kerr.

"Come in, Kildare," said Tom Merry hospitably. "I hope you've come to tea."

"Yaas, wathah; quite an honah for us, deah boy."  
Kildare smiled.

"I haven't come to tea, thanks," he said. "I've received a complaint from Sefton that some juniors of his House are here, and won't go back to the New House at his orders."

"Oh, my hat!"  
"I wedged that as vewy low-down of Sefton."

"You kids had better clear off," said Kildare.  
Figgins & Co. rose to their feet. They had nearly finished tea. And they could guess that the good-natured Kildare had not hurried himself in looking into Sefton's complaint. He knew Sefton, and his bullying proclivities.

"All serene," said Figgins resignedly. "Thanks for the feed, you chaps. We'll do the same for you when the cof-bird perches in the New House again."

And the guests took their leave.  
"I wedged that as wotten!" said Arthur Augustus, and the tea-party agreed with the swell of St. Jim's.

Tea being over, Study No. 6 took their leave, and Talbot went back to his study. The Terrible Three proceeded to clear the table, as they had lines to do.

"Hallo!" said Lowther, suddenly. "who's been leaving letters about?"

He picked up a letter from the floor.

"One of us dropped it in the scrap, I expect," said Tom Merry. "Any name on it?"

"No."

"We'll stick it up in the rack downstairs, then, to be claimed."

"Ahem!" said Lowther, looking at the letter. "I don't think this merry epistle had better be stuck up in the rack."

Tom Merry and Manners looked at him, and Lowther passed them the letter. It was a type-written letter on business paper, and was headed in print: "H. Munsey, 100, High Street, Wayland, Bijouterie." Under the heading was the type-written communication:

"Sir,—You have neither returned nor paid for the two gold watches submitted to you on approval. As you have declined to do one or the other, I shall call upon you to-morrow, Tuesday, at six o'clock precisely, and unless the matter is then settled satisfactorily, I shall have no resource but to place the facts before your headmaster.—Yours faithfully,  
H. MUNSEY."

The chums of the Shell stared at that surprising letter, and at one another.

"Munsey—that's the jeweller in Wayland," said Manners.

"Somebody's been having watches—gold watches—on approval, and hasn't sent them back," said Tom Merry. "What a careless ass! This letter reads as if the man suspects him of wanting to bone them."

"He jolly well does," said Lowther drily. "This looks as if he's written to the chap before for his blessed watches, and hasn't had any satisfaction. Looks jolly queer, to me."

"But the chap couldn't mean to keep them. What would a fellow want with two gold watches?" said Tom Merry. "I—I say, this can't belong to a junior—junior's don't buy gold watches out of their pocket-money, and a jeweller would think twice before he sent two valuable watches on approval to a kid. Either Sefton or Craik must have dropped this letter here."

"Craik," said Lowther. "Kerr said he's expecting a visitor at six, and to-day's Tuesday."

"Looks like it."

The Terrible Three regarded one another, hesitating. They had had to look at the letter, to see whom it belonged to, of course. But if, after all, it did not belong to Craik, they did not want to hand it to him. It was most likely Craik's, but they could not be certain.

Under ordinary circumstances, a lost letter would be stuck up in the rack to be reclaimed by the owner. But the owner of that peculiar letter would certainly not desire it to be placed where anybody could read it. There would be trouble for him if it came to the knowledge of a master.

"Blessed if I know what to do with it," said Tom Merry. "It would be hard on the chap to put it in the rack. Anybody who's lost a letter would look at it to see if it was his, and inquisitive chaps like Levison and Mellish would read it anyway. It would be the talk of the school. And it would mean a row for the chap, whoever he is. We don't want to get even Craik hauled up before the Head."

"We can't keep the blessed thing."

"But we can't assume that it's Craik's. If it isn't his, he would feel insulted at having it supposed to be his."

Monty Lowther reflected.

"It must have been dropped in the scrap here," he said, at last. "I don't see how it could have been dropped before that. Of course, a lot of fellows have been in and out of the study. Still, suppose we go round to every chap who was here to tea, and ask 'em if they've lost a letter."

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry put the letter in his pocket, and the Terrible Three proceeded to Study No. 6. Blake & Co. were out, but they were run down in the quad, going to cricket-practice.

"Any of you chaps dropped a letter in our study?" asked Tom Merry; "we've found one."

"Blessed if I know," said Blake. "Might have dropped

my giddy eyelashes when I was rolling over with Craik without noticing it."

"Who is the letter from, dear boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Munsey's in Wayland."

"Then it isn't mine, dear boy. I am not in correspondence with Mr. Munsey."

Blake and Herries and Digby also shook their heads.

The Terrible Three bore down on Talbot next. Talbot was battling to Kangaroo's bowling, but he came off good-naturally as Tom called to him.

"Did you lose a letter in our study?" asked Tom. "A letter from Munsey the jeweller?"

"No," said Talbot.

"Then it must have been a New House chap. All serene!"

The Terrible Three started for the New House. They found Figgins & Co. in their study, doing lines. The New House trio gave them a grin of welcome.

"Licked?" asked Tom Merry sympathetically.

"I'm going to be reported to Ratty when he comes in," said Figgins; "that will mean a licking for me. We've got a hundred lines each to go on with. Craik's too busy to attend to Kerr—he's got a visitor in his study."

"Without any extra-special tea for him," grinned Kerr.

"We've found a letter in my study," said Tom. "We think somebody must have dropped it in the tussle, and we're going round inquiring. Any of you chaps had a letter lately from Munsey the jeweller?"

"Yes," said Figgins unexpectedly; "I didn't know I'd lost it. I wasn't scrapping in your study, I was only looking on. Glad you've found it—though it isn't of much importance."

"Isn't it?" said Tom drily. "I'd advise you to keep it out of sight, Figgys, all the same. Here it is."

He laid it on the table.

## CHAPTER 4.

### Up Against It!

TOM MERRY & CO. regarded Figgins curiously as he picked up the letter. They had asked the New House juniors merely as a matter of form, not dreaming that the letter would find an owner in Figgys's study. The discovery that it was Figgys's amazed them. They did not know what to think.

The tone of the letter hinted pretty plainly that the jeweller suspected his customer of dishonest intentions. How anybody could suspect rugged, open-hearted old Figgins of dishonest intentions was a mystery. But how Figgys could be such an ass as to lay himself open to such a suspicion was a still bigger mystery.

Figgins unfolded the letter, and looked at it, and uttered an exclamation.

"My only hat!"

"Well, if it's yours, there it is," said Tom Merry. "Really, old man, you've been awfully careless. I'd let Munsey have his watches back at once."

Figgins was staring at the letter.

"Watches?" said Kerr. "Figgys been buying watches?"

"Buying watches!" roared Fatty Wynn. "Figgys! My hat! You—you—your Prussian, you've been buying watches when we've been short of grub in the study. Oh, Figgys, I'd never have believed it of you!"

"You fatheads!" said Figgins. "I haven't been buying any watches! This isn't my letter. I don't think it's Kerr's or Wynn's, either. I suppose you chaps haven't been having two gold watches on approval from Munsey's, have you?"

"Two gold watches on approval!" gasped Kerr. "What the thunder—"

"Look at the letter."

"Well, my hat!"

"There's no name on it," said Fatty Wynn. "This must belong to somebody in the School House. New House chaps don't play these tricks. Try Cutts of the Fifth."

"Why, you fat bouncer—"

Figgys said it was his letter," said Tom Merry.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 381.

"I said I'd had a letter from Munsey's," said Figgins, "so I have. But this isn't the letter."

Figgins groped in his pockets and produced a crumpled letter.

"Here's mine," he said. "You can read it. Naturally, I thought I'd dropped it when you told me I had. It's about my diamond pin."

"Your which?" murmured Lowther.

"My diamond pin," said Figgins warmly. "The stone came out, and I took it to Munsey's to be put in again. He's written to say it's ready. There's nothing to cackle at, Lowther. I got that pin for ten bob, and it was a bargain. Chap who sold it to me said it was worth twenty quid. Chap named Isaacs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what are you cackling about, you duffers?" demanded Figgins.

"All serene," said Tom Merry. "This isn't your letter, Figgy, especially as you've got your letter there. We shall have to look further."

"Sefton or Craik," said Manners. "We've asked everybody else who was in the study."

"Craik, then," said Kerr. "Munsey says in this letter he's calling here at six on Tuesday. Well, he's in Craik's study now. Craik's visitor is Munsey."

"That settles it," said Tom.

"I say, Craik must be an ass," said Figgins. "That letter sounds as if Munsey suspects him of wanting to bone his blessed watches, you know. I suppose he's shovled them somewhere and forgotten them."

"I suppose we'd better take him his letter," said Tom. "If he finds he's lost it, he'll be anxious about it."

"Put him out of his misery," grinned Kerr.

The Terrible Three, glad to have discovered the owner of the letter at last, left Figgins's study. On their way to Craik's quarters they met Sefton, who bestowed a savage scowl on them.

"What are you doing here?" snapped the New House prefect.

"Looking for Craik," said Tom Merry meekly. "Somebody dropped a letter in our study, and we think it belongs to Craik."

"You can give it to me," said Sefton.

"Is it yours?"

"I'll take charge of it."

"You won't take charge of it unless it's yours," said Tom coolly. "The letter is from Munsey's in Wayland. If it's yours, you can have it. If not, not."

"I suppose you've read it," sneered Sefton.

"We had to look at it, to see whose it was, of course; it might have been our own," said Tom. "But it isn't a letter that the owner would like to have shouted out from the house-tops, so we're only handing it over to the chap it belongs to—see?"

Sefton gritted his teeth. His curiosity was evidently excited; but it was equally evident that the letter did not belong to him, and the Terrible Three had no intention whatever of gratifying his curiosity. They did not like Craik, certainly, but that was no reason why they should let other persons into the secret of his very peculiar dealings with the Wayland jeweller.

The chums of the Shell walked on towards Craik's study. Sefton looked as if he would rush upon them for a moment, but he thought better of it, and turned away scowling.

With smiling faces, the Shell fellows went down the Sixth-Form passage to Craik's study. As they came up to the door they heard a raised and angry voice.

"The value of the watches is thirty pounds. I told you so plainly at the time, Master Craik. I am perfectly willing to take them both away with me, and have all my trouble for nothing. But—"

Knock!

Tom Merry's knuckles descended loudly on the door. He did not want to hear any of Craik's private concerns. His loud knock effectually interrupted the speaker, and the voice ceased suddenly.

Craik opened the door himself. The Terrible Three started as they saw that his face was deathly pale and his eyes burning. His hands were trembling. Much as

they disliked the bully of the Sixth, the juniors felt compassion for him at that moment. It was only too plain that Craik was "up against it."

"What do you want?" muttered Craik. "One moment, Mr. Munsey. A stout gentleman in a frock-coat, with a silk hat on his knees, sat in the study with a frowning brow. "Merry, what—what do you want?"

"We've found a letter," said Tom quietly, holding it out. "Is this yours?"

Craik jumped as his eyes fell on the letter, and almost snatched it from the hand of the School House junior.

"Yes, it is mine."

"It was dropped in our study," explained Tom. "We thought you might be anxious about it. That's all."

"Get out!"

That was all the thanks the juniors received from Craik. They turned away without a word, and Craik closed the door after them.

The Sixth-Former turned back to his visitor, and there was again a murmur of voices in the study; but the Terrible Three hurried away at once. They left the New House immediately, with thoughtful faces.

"Looks as if that fellow is in trouble!" murmured Lowther. "Can't help feeling sorry for the beast—though he is a beast!"

"Blessed if I see it, all the same! If he doesn't want the gold watches, why doesn't he hand them back? He can't have lost them," said Tom Merry. "Blessed if I see why he had them on approval at all! He can't afford to buy a fifteen-quid gold watch."

"Blessed if I can make it out, either!" said Manners. "Well, it's no business of ours, and we've got rid of that blessed letter. Let's get down to the cricket."

On the cricket-field the Terrible Three soon forgot all about Craik and his visitor. As Manners remarked, it was no business of theirs. It was about ten minutes later that Mr. Munsey of Wayland left the New House, with an extremely dissatisfied expression on his face.

Craik remained in his study. If those who disliked the bully and black sheep of the New House most could have seen him then, they would probably have felt sorry for him. His face was white and almost haggard, and there were beads of perspiration on his brow.

"To-morrow!" he muttered, again and again. "To-morrow! It might as well be to-day. Thirty quid! Ha, ha!" He laughed discordantly. "To-morrow! And then—"

He flung himself into a chair and lighted a cigarette. Through the curling smoke his eyes stared haggardly, unseeing. The black sheep of the Sixth was evidently terribly "up against it." What was to happen "to-morrow?"

## CHAPTER 5.

### Golden Quids.

FIGGINS & CO. came in from the cricket-ground as dusk was falling, and found Sefton in the doorway of the New House. The chums of the Fourth had found time for half an hour at cricket after their lines were done. But Figgins knew that the prefect had not forgotten him. Sefton called to him as he came in, with his bat under his arm.

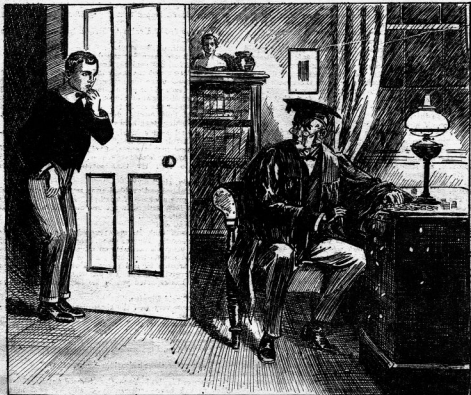
"Figgins, go to Mr. Ratcliff's study!"

Figgins granted. The prefect had reported him, and the interview with the Housemaster could not be avoided. Figgy handed his bat to Kerr, and walked along the passage to Mr. Ratcliff's study, rubbing his hands in anticipation. He knew that it meant a licking.

He tapped at the door, and not receiving a response, opened it, hoping that Mr. Ratcliff had gone out again.

But the New House master was there. He was too busily occupied to hear Figgy's tap at the door, and Figgins grinned as he saw how he was occupied.

The Housemaster sat before his desk, near the window, and a drawer that was protected by a Yale lock, and generally hermetically sealed, was open. On the desk before Mr. Ratcliff were arranged little piles of gold coins. The thin, unpleasant face of Horace Ratcliff was a little more cheery than usual in its expression. Mr.



Click! Click! Click! "Figgins!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, furiously. "How dare you enter my study without knocking?" "I did knock, sir," said Figgins, "Sefton told me to come here. Shall I pick up the money, sir? There is some on the floor." "Pick it up at once!" remarked the Housemaster. (See Chapter 5.)

Ratcliff was a stingy gentleman, and he liked handling money.

The Housemaster was not a miser, however. It was not his habit, in normal times, to keep a sum of gold in his desk and pore over it. It was his exceedingly cautious nature which led to that extraordinary display of gold in his study.

Mr. Ratcliff was one of those extremely prudent gentlemen who prepare with excessive caution for an evil day that is never likely to come.

In the days of stress and strain at the beginning of the war, there were many nervous old gentlemen who feared that the Continental panic would spread to England. In those excited days of August, 1914, paper money had lost its value in nearly every country in Europe.

Unhappy tourists in Switzerland, with thousands of francs in Swiss banknotes, offered those banknotes in vain; nobody would change them. The prudent Swiss shopkeepers declared that they had no change. In France a shopkeeper preferred to give a cigar or a packet of cigarettes for nothing rather than take the price of his goods out of a hundred-franc note. In Italy, an American millionaire, with pockets full of United States bills, was unable to pay his hotel-keeper. Level-headed John Bull remained level-headed; nobody in his senses doubted that a Bank of England five-pound note would always be worth five pounds. But in those days, uneasy old gentlemen, fearing that the panic might arrive even in John Bull's level-headed island, went about grubbing

after sovereigns, chirruping with joy when they found another gold coin to add to their secret store.

Thus it was with Mr. Ratcliff. He had spent much valuable time in picking up sovereigns and half-sovereigns wherever he could get them, till he had a store of gold like a miser, which he locked up in his desk, where it was much less safe than it would have been in his bank, and where he was losing the interest on it which would have accrued at his banker's.

With a store of gold piled up against a rainy day, Mr. Ratcliff felt secure. There might be tremendous runs on banks, food prices might soar up as high as in the days of the Corn Laws, but Mr. Ratcliff would not be "left."

The fact that his procedure was unpatriotic did not worry him. Certainly if everybody had been cautious and selfish to the same extent, there would have been a run on gold, and possibly a failure of confidence in banknotes. If that had happened, the cold and selfish man felt safe. Banknotes might turn out not to be worth the paper they were printed on. But he was safe with gold in his pockets; and so long as he was safe, he would not bother about anybody else or his country.

The natural result was that, after a short time, he found the bankers paying out gold as cheerfully as ever, and he might have turned all his savings of forty years or so into gold coin if he had wished, and if he had been foolish enough.

But Mr. Ratcliff did not forget caution. He kept his gold locked up in his desk in case of a rainy day, put-

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 381.

"A HERO OF WALES!" NEXT WEDNESDAY.

3<sup>RD</sup> ROUND IN OUR CONTEST.

ting himself on the back for his caution, till, after the lapse of six months, it occurred to him that, on the hundred pounds locked up, he had already lost two pounds that he might have had in natural interest.

The loss of that two pounds worried him. If he had put his money in the War Loan he would have helped his country, and found a safe investment, and pocketed four pounds every year in interest on that hundred "quids." Mr. Ratcliff never worried about helping his country. Perhaps he knew there were better men than himself to think about that.

But he could not be blind to the fact that in six months he had lost two pounds which ought to have accrued in interest.

It worried him. Yet he could not quite make up his mind to part with that precious store—in case the evil day should come which he had feared. He was not quite sure yet. Yet the thought of losing another two pounds during the next six months almost kept him awake o' nights.

He had compromised at last by taking fifty pounds to his banker, who had received them with a suppressed smile.

The other fifty remained in his desk. He could not bear to part with them, in case that dreadful day of general bankruptcy should come, which he foresaw in his nervous and despoetic imagination.

So he kept that fifty locked up, and every day he visited it to count it, and make sure that it was still there. For, although his desk was supposed to be safe, he did not feel secure. Gold coin cannot be traced if stolen, and at any other time he would never have dreamed of keeping such a sum in coin.

Of course, Mr. Ratcliff's secret store had been a dead, dead secret. He was ashamed of it in his heart. But such a secret was bound to leak out. He had counted it every day for two hundred days, and naturally it had come to be known.

Fellows passing his study had heard the clink of coin, and it had been observed that the Housemaster had gone to the expense of having a Yale lock put on a drawer in his desk; and several times somebody had entered his study while he was engaged in ascertaining that his treasure was safe, just as Figgins had done now. A housemaid had seen it, the house-dame had seen it, Monteith, the head prefect, had seen it, Sefton had seen it, and naturally they had talked of it.

Quite unknown to Mr. Ratcliff, his hidden gold had become a standing joke in his House.

Seniors and juniors had chuckled over it, and some of them had expressed an amiable wish that a burglar would walk off with it, as a punishment to Mr. Ratcliff for his unpatriotic folly.

Hence Figgins's grin as he saw Mr. Ratcliff's occupation. The Housemaster was piling the sovereigns into little heaps of ten each. There were five little heaps. Mr. Ratcliff's eye dwelt upon them with complacency. He liked the sight and the touch of gold. He was only worried by the thought that those gold coins, properly invested, could have brought him in two more every year. He was only one of some hundreds of fussy old gentlemen who at the present moment are hugging themselves with glee at having succeeded in amassing some miserable little store of "quids" in solid gold, all ready for the rainy day that will never come.

Figgins stood hesitating in the open doorway. He knew that Mr. Ratcliff would be annoyed at having been discovered in that ridiculous occupation.

But he had been told to come there, and he had come. He decided to cough.

So he coughed. At the sound of the cough Mr. Ratcliff started violently, and spun round from his desk so hurriedly that he knocked over one of the little heaps of sovereigns, and scattered them on the carpet.

"Clink! Clink! Clink!" "Figgins," exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff furiously, "how dare you enter my study without knocking!"

"I did knock, sir," said Figgins. "Sefton told me to come here. Shall I pick up the money, sir? Some's gone on the floor."

"Pick it up at once!" snarled the Housemaster.

Figgins groped about the carpet for the spilt THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 381.

sovereigns. Mr. Ratcliff watched him with hawkish eyes, as if he almost feared that Figgy would pocket one of them.

Figgy handed the coins to Mr. Ratcliff as fast as he found them.

"Is that all, sir?" "There is one more!" snapped the Housemaster.

"Oh, I'll find it!" said Figgins. He grubbed about the study industriously, hoping that his zeal would make his licking a little lighter when it came off. Craik of the Sixth came along the passage, and he stared at the sight of Figgins on his hands and knees, grubbing under the study table. But he caught sight of the pile of gold on the desk, and understood. Mr. Ratcliff, flushing, took hold of the door to close it.

"Come and lend a hand, Craik," said Figgins cheerfully. "There's a quid lost."

"You need not trouble, Craik!" said Mr. Ratcliff sharply. And he closed the door. "Figgins, you will continue to look for that sovereign till you have found it!"

"Certainly, sir!" Figgy grubbed and grubbed away round the study, and finally he gave a whoop of triumph. The sovereign came to light at last, wedged in a crack near the wall beyond the edge of the carpet.

"Here it is, sir!" Mr. Ratcliff took it, and proceeded to lock up his valuable treasure. Figgins stood, breathing hard, flushed and dusty after his scramble on all fours. He felt that Ratty could not do less than let him off with a caution after the trouble he had taken. But Mr. Ratcliff was not in a forgiving mood. He picked up a cane.

"Sefton has reported you to me for disobedience," he said.

"Ahem!" said Figgins. "You know very well the consequences of disobedience to a prefect."

"Selton is a bully, sir." "Hold out your hand!" "Swish! Swish! Swish!" "You may go, Figgins."

"Yow!" "You'll not utter those ridiculous exclamations."

"Yoop!" "Silence, Figgins! You—ahem!—need not mention the fact that I have temporarily—a sum of gold in my study," said Mr. Ratcliff.

Figgins snorted. If Mr. Ratcliff wanted to ask a favour of him he should have left the licking out, Figgy thought. Not that it was possible for Figgy to keep Ratty's absurd secret, for all the House knew about it already. And Figgins, smarting from his coming, could not forbear giving the heavy-handed master a rub.

"Everybody knows, sir," said Figgins coolly.

"What?" "I've heard lots of fellows speak about it, sir," said Figgins.

"Impossible!" "It's quite a joke, sir." "How dare you, Figgins!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff.

"I—I mean the chaps laugh about it, sir," said Figgins innocently.

Mr. Ratcliff made a movement towards his cane again, and Figgins beat a prompt retreat. It soiced him to have revealed to Ratty that his ridiculous secret was not a secret. As he hurried down the passage, half afraid that Ratty would call him back for another licking, he chuckled, in spite of the pain in his palms. He could guess how utterly absurd and humiliated Ratty would feel on realising that the whole House looked upon him as a nervous and fussy old donkey.

"Licked?" asked Kerr, as Figgy came into the study grinning.

"Yes, the beast!" said Figgins.

"Well, you look as if you've enjoyed it," said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins chuckled as he related the scene in Mr. Ratcliff's study, and the way he had enlightened the Housemaster about his dead secret.

"The old duffer actually thought nobody knew of it, when it's been a standing joke in the House for months

and months and months!" chuckled Figgins. "It was quite a treat to tell him! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The old donkey will be feeling pretty small just now, I should think!" grinned Kerr. "If he has any sense, he'll put the tin in the bank. It would serve him right if some Bill Sikes came along and burgled it. It's old duffers like Ratty who start runs on banks, and make no end of mischief."

"I hope somebody will burgle it!" said Figgins. Little did George Figgins dream that his wish, thus expressed, was destined to be fulfilled, or what the consequences to himself would be.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Exasperating!

"**B**AI JOVE! You are lookin' wathah down, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark in the Form-room passage the next day.

The Fourth Form and the Shell had come out of their Form-rooms, and it was to be observed that the plump face of Fatty Wynn wore a clouded expression.

"What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry cheerily.

"More trouble with your dear pet, Craik?" asked Monty Lowther. "By George, if we had him in this House we'd scrag him!"

"Shush!" murmured Kerr. "Here he is!"

Craik of the Sixth passed them in the passage, coming away from his Form-room. He did not glance at the juniors, however.

His brow was moody, and he strode away out of the House, and across the quadrangle to the New House without a glance round him. He appeared to be fully occupied by his own thoughts.

"No; Craik's given us the go-by," said Figgins. "I thought he would be awfully down on Kerr, after that affair yesterday, but he seems to have forgotten it. Of course, if he goes for Kerr, we'll make him sit up. Awful cheek to think that Kerr was going to stand him an extra tea out of his own pocket."

"He doesn't know Kerr is a giddy Scot, perhaps," said Monty Lowther.

"Rats!" said Kerr. "Scotsmen have too much sense to chuck their money away. Craik would never pay up. He owes me half-a-crown already, and I've asked him for it twice, and the second time he threw a boot at me. That isn't the way to encourage a chap to lend him any more money."

"Ha, ha! No; it wasn't tawful," grinned Tom Merry. "Craik must have had bad luck with his precious geesees. Can't say I'm sorry for him. If a fellow hasn't sense enough to keep out of that kind of thing, he deserves what he gets."

"He was going to stand that man Munsey a good feed, I suppose, and work round him that way," said Kerr. "Blessed if I see why. Looks as if he's kept his blessed watches, but he can't have done that. But he hasn't said a word to me about our row yesterday. I was expecting a thunderstorm, but it hasn't come off."

"Then wherever is this woolful cloud upon the fat brow of Falstaff minor?" asked Lowther.

Fatty Wynn grunted.

"Money's tight! We've been in an awful stony state for days now. My pater has actually written to me that I must keep within my allowance."

"And I haven't had an answer yet," said Kerr. "I don't mind, but it's awful to see Fatty going without anything to eat for a whole hour at a time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think I shall get a remittance to-day," said Figgins. "My pater's bound to write, anyway. I asked him most particularly to write, you know, and tell me what he thought about the war. I put in a postscript about being short of tin. He's bound to write."

"Yes; and we'll get his views on the war, and no tip," said Fatty Wynn dolorously. "I really don't care much what he thinks about the war. We're going to lick the Huns, and that's all I care about. But what I'm specially worried about is this awful famine in cash."

"Too bad!" said Tom Merry sympathetically. "But there are two studies in this House always open to porpoises in distress—my study and No. 6, you know."

"Yaas, wathah! You know you have the wun of No. 6, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I can weally sympathise with you. My patah is gettin' vovvy close with fivah's since the war broke out. He says it is vevy expensive keepin' up the hospital he has started in Boulogne for wounded soldiers. I dare say it is, and, of course, I'm vevy pleased to contribute to such a thing as that. So, upon the whole, I'm takin' it quietly. It is all the Kaisah's fault. I sincerely trust they will send him to St. Helenah when he is caught. They sent that chap Bonaparte there, you know, and he didn't do seahly so much mischief. Just imagine a wotten Prussian junkah—a widdleous Kaisah, you know—causin' a chap to be short of pocket-money."

"Awful!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "That must be mentioned specially when they're worrying about what to do with him."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"There will be a lot of pro-Huns getting up on their hindlegs and cackling beah about lettin' him down lightly," said Lowther. "But when it comes out that you've been kept short of fancy waistcoats—"

"Weally—"

"And neckties—"

"You uttah ass—"

"And new toppers—"

"I wegard you as a fathend, Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus, and he walked off with his noble nose high in the air.

"Suppose we go and see whether there's a letter for you, Figg?" said Fatty Wynn hopefully. "There's been a post in this morning while we've been in class—"

"Come on!" said Figg. "Can't you hold out till dinner-time?"

"Well, I'm thinking of tea, really. If there's a remittance, it will set my mind at rest. I don't want to be worrying all the afternoon about tea."

"Come on, Tubby!" said Figgins. "We'll have a look, anyway, and put you out of your misery."

Figgins & Co. walked across the quadrangle to the New House. Tupper, the New House page, was in the hall, and Fatty Wynn collared him at once.

"Any letters for us?" he demanded.

"One for Master Figgins," said Tupper; "it's in the rack."

"Oh, good!"

The three juniors made a rush for the rack. It was more than probable that Mr. Figgins's letter simply contained those views Figg had asked him for on the subject of the war. But it was possible that the old gentleman had been thoughtful enough to put in a postal-order. The trio were anxious to see.

"Hallo! Where's that letter?" exclaimed Figgins, scanning the rack.

There were half a dozen letters there, but none addressed to Figgins. The three juniors looked at all of them in vain.

"That blessed Tupper must have been pulling our leg," said Kerr. "There's no letter for you here, Figg."

"I'll slaughter him if he has!" breathed Fatty Wynn. Craik of the Sixth came along the passage towards them. He glanced at them and passed on, and went into the quadrangle.

Figgins & Co., burning with wrath, went in search of Tupper. They found him in the boot-room. Tupper looked a little alarmed as they rushed in on him with ferocious looks.

"What do you mean by it?" roared Figgins. "Get me a chopper, somebody!"

"Wharrer marrer?" gasped the page.

"You told me there was a letter for me—gloating over Fatty's sufferings," said Figgins sternly. "You knew we were stony, and you've pulled our leg. You're going to be executed!"

"Old on, Master Figgins! There is a letter—"

"Rats!"

"I put it in the rack with my own 'ands," protested Tupper.

"Then, where is it now? We've looked in the rack."

"My heye!" said Tupper. "I put it there, I know that! Addressed to Master George Figgins it was. I put it there. Some of the young gerls must 'ave took it for a joke."

"Well, we'll spare your life, if there is really a letter," said Figgins considerably. "You may live, Tupper."

"Thanky, Master Figgins!" grinned Tupper.

"But we'll find the merry joker who's hidden that letter, and make little tiny pieces of him," said Figgins.

And the Co. quitted the boot-room to search for the practical joker who had taken Figgy's letter out of the rack. They were wrathly, and with-reason. All the fellows knew that Figgy's study was suffering from a famine in cash; and it seemed that some unsoeing youth, with a misdirected sense of humour, had hidden the letter which possibly contained a remittance.

Figgins & Co. could take a joke, but there were limits. Fatty Wynn, especially, was almost breathing fire.

"Let's find him," gasped Fatty—"let's find him, and scalp him, and rag him, and boil him, and—and—and—There isn't anything bad enough to do to him! Let's find him!"

## CHAPTER 7. Corn in Egypt!

ALL the juniors were out of doors, and Figgins & Co. rushed forth into the quadrangle in search of the unknown practical joker. They came upon Redfern and Owen and Lawrence first, and bore down upon them truculently.

"Was it you?" demanded Figgins.

Redfern looked surprised.

"That depends," he replied.

"Did you take it?" roared Fatty Wynn.

"That depends, too."

"Where is it?"

"So does that—it depends."

"Look here! We can stand a joke," roared Figgins; "but this is more than a joke, when we've been stony for days, and we're hungry for a remittance. Hand it over, or we'll snatch you ball-headed! Will you hand it over!"

Redfern grinned.

"That depends," he said cheerfully.

"What do you mean, you fathead?" demanded Figgins, pushing back his cuffs.

"It depends on what you're talking about," explained Redfern. "At present, I haven't the faintest idea. If it's a thick car you want me to hand you, I'll do it with pleasure, and happy to oblige."

"Same here," said Owen.

"Rely on me, too," remarked Lawrence.

"Don't be funny," growled Figgins; "it's my letter I want. Some silly ass thinks it's funny to hide my letter, and I'm going to show that silly ass how funny it is when I spot him. If it was you—"

"Oh, bump 'em," said Fatty Wynn.

"But it wasn't us," said Redfern, with a grin; "we never knew you had a blessed letter. Not guilty, my lord!"

The three juniors chuckled as Figgins & Co. hurried away. Up and down the quad went Figgins & Co. in search of that practical joker. They questioned Pratt and Clampe and Thompson and Jameson and Koumi Rao and Dibs, and a crowd more, but nobody admitted being the practical joker, and everybody disclaimed all knowledge of Figgy's letter.

"Must have been some School House dummy," said Figgins, at last. "We stayed jawing to Tom Merry and other duffers after lessons, you know, and some funny ass must have slipped into the house and done it. We'll find him and scrag him. I suppose the idiot, whoever he is, thinks it will be funny to hide the letter till after tea."

"Oh," growled Fatty Wynn, "what an awful villain if he does!"

The New House trio marched over to the School House. Tom Merry & Co. were sunning themselves on the steps, while they waited for the dinner-bell to ring. They looked in surprise at the excited three.

"More trouble in the family?" asked Blake.

"THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 381.

OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND,"

PAPERS: Every Monday.

"THE MAGNET,"

Every Monday.

"THE DREADNOUGHT,"

Every Thursday.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

Every Friday.

"CHUCKLES," 10.

Every Saturday

"I've had a letter, and some funny idiot has taken it away from the rack," said Figgins heatedly. "I want to slaughter him! Some funny humorist is keeping us on tenterhooks because we're stony, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to chuckle at. Perhaps it was Lowther," said Figgins, glaring at the humorist of the Shell. "He's about the funniest idiot I know!"

"Couldn't have been," said Kerr. "Lowther was jawing to us after lessons. More like a trick of Levison's!"

"Wasn't any of you chaps?" asked Fatty Wynn.

There was a general shaking of heads.

"Pewwaps you've ova'looked it, deah boys," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It may have slipped behind some othah lettah, you know."

"I've looked jolly carefully," said Figgins.

"So have I," mumbled Fatty Wynn. "Do you think I should be likely to overlook a letter with a remittance in it, you duffer?"

"Hardly!" grinned Tom Merry. "Hallo, there goes the dinner-bell! Perhaps you'll find it's been put back, Figgy. I don't think anybody could be so stony-hearted as to keep Fatty in suspense all the afternoon."

"Let's get in to dinner, Figgy," said the fat Fourth-Former; "we'll find that villain, and scrag him afterwards."

"Look at the wack as you go in," advised Arthur Augustus. "I think it is verry pwob. that you have ova'looked it, deah boys."

"Oh, bow-wow!"

Figgins & Co. joined the stream of New House juniors going into that building for dinner. It was possible that the letter had been replaced by the practical joker, and Figgins & Co. ran along the letter-rack before following the rest into the New House dining-room.

Fatty Wynn uttered a whoop of relief.

"My hat! This there it is!"

Figgins took a letter from the rack. There it was, a stiff square envelope, addressed to George Figgins, in his father's handwriting.

"Oh, good!" said Figgins. "May have been here all the time we've been hunting for the beast who took it, now I come to think of it. I'll forgive him, though, if there's a remittance in it!"

"Come in to dinner," said Kerr, "Ratty will worry us if we're late."

"Open the letter first," urged Fatty Wynn, "your pater may have put in ten bob—"

"Come on!"

Figgins rushed away towards the dining-room, with the letter in his hand. Mr. Ratcliff was very strict upon the score of punctuality to meals, and Figgins did not want to catch the cold and glittering eye. The three juniors were the last in, but they were just in time, and they dropped into their seats at the Fourth-Form table.

Fatty Wynn fixed an imploring look on Figgins across the table. For once, dinner did not occupy his whole thoughts. He wanted to know whether there was a remittance in that letter.

Figgins grinned, and opened the letter under the table and felt inside the envelope. Then he grinned still more broadly, and held up for a moment a currency note for one pound into view.

"Oh, good!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"A quid!" murmured Kerr. "Your pater's a brick, Figgy!"

The three chums ate their dinner with great contentment.

That "quid" came like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. It relieved the famine that had reigned in the study, and it would tide the study over till allowances came round again. Truly, it had fallen upon the chums like the manna upon the Israelites in the desert.

Fatty Wynn's plump face was wreathed in smiles as he walked out of the dining-room with his chums after dinner.

"A whole quid!" he remarked. "I say, that's really ripping of your pater, Figgy! I thought it might be ten bob—but a quid—it's topping!"

"We can have those School House bouders to tea





That Russia will have a big say in the ultimate success of the Allies is certain, for her fighting sons have won world-wide renown on account of their fearlessness and valour. Our special artist shows in the above picture a section of Russian artillerymen dashing into action.

now," said Figgins. "Hold on a bit, I'm going to read the letter. I ought to, you know!"

"Yes; that's only cricket," assented Fatty Wynn.

Figgins dutifully read the letter. Then he looked a little puzzled.

"Startling original opinions about the war?" asked Kerr.

"Nunno. You read it."

Kerr and Wynn read the letter from Figgins senior. It ran:

"Dear George,—Thank you for your letter. I'm glad to see that you take a deep interest in the progress of the war to the extent of writing me a special letter on the subject—"

"Sarc.!" commented Kerr.

"Must be sarc. that bit" said Figgins thoughtfully.

"Perhaps be tumbled to it that it was really my postscript that was important."

"Ha, ha! Perhaps be did."

Kerr read on:

"I advise you, however, to follow the communiques in the newspapers, which will give you more information than I possibly could.—Your affectionate father,

"G. FROGERS."

"P.S.—Your postscript duly noted. In these hard times you should make an effort to keep within your allowance."

That was all!

"Deesn't mention the quid," said Kerr. "Looks as if he meant to send this letter without a remittance in it at all, the way he's worded it. I suppose his heart smote him at the last moment."

"Or, perhaps the mater tackled him," said Figgins thoughtfully. "Anyway, he decided to put in the quid. I can look over the letter, though it's awfully sarcastic,

as the old sport put in the quid, after all. We're all right now!"

"What about some ginger-pop?" suggested Fatty Wynn. "We ought to celebrate this."

"Hear, hear!"

Ginger-pop was very welcome on a warm afternoon to the juniors, who had been so long in that unpleasant state known as "stony," and Figgins & Co. promptly marched into Dame Taggles' little tuck-shop in the corner of the quad, gathering up the Terrible Three and Sturdy No. 6, and Talbot and Kangaroo on their way, and two or three other fellows. And a crowded tuck-shop drank, in flowing ginger-pop, health and long life to Figgys' pater.

## CHAPTER 8.

### An Ascending Accusation.

**A**FTER cricket practice was over that afternoon Figgins & Co. wheeled out their bicycles. They intended to ride down to Wayland before tea, to call at Mr. Munsey's for Figgys' diamond pin. Figgys had been much concerned about this diamond pin, and he was going to pay two shillings for the repairs Mr. Munsey had executed. The private opinion of Kerr and Fatty Wynn was that two shillings was about the full value of the pin, but not for worlds would they have told Figgins so. Figgins was not a suspicious youth, and he fully believed the statement of the gentleman who had sold him the pin—a gentleman named Isaacs.

The three cyclists arrived at Wayland, and jumped off their machines outside Mr. Munsey's shop, in the High Street.

Kerr and Wynn remained with the bikes while Figgins went in for his pin. Being in funds once more, Figgys

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 361.

**"A HERO OF WALES!" NEXT WEDNESDAY. 3<sup>RD</sup> ROUND IN OUR CONTEST.**

was able to pay the two shillings required—a matter that had been left over for some days, owing to the strained state of the money market.

The jeweller's shop was empty, and Figgins tapped on the glass case on the counter. Mr. Munsey came out of the back room, and, as the door opened, Figgins saw that he had a visitor there—Cralk of the Sixth. Figgins gave Cralk a cheery nod through the doorway, and the senior frowned. Figgins guessed that he was there to settle that mysterious matter of the two gold watches, and the satisfied expression on Mr. Munsey's face seemed to indicate that it was settled without trouble, after all.

"My pin ready?" asked Figgins. "I had your letter, Mr. Munsey, but I haven't been able to call before, owing to—ahem!—circumstances."

Mr. Munsey smiled, and handed Figgins the renovated pin. The valuable diamond was quite safe in the pin once more, and Figgins examined it with great satisfaction.

"Two shillings, please," said Mr. Munsey. Figgins paid the two shillings and jammed the pin into his tie, and surveyed the effect in a mirror with a nod of approval. "Good!" he said. "That's been done very nicely, Mr. Munsey. Good-afternoon. Ta-ta, Cralk, old scout!"

Cralk did not reply, excepting with a scowl at the cheeky junior, and Figgins left the jeweller's shop and rejoined his chums in the street.

Kerr and Patty Wynn gazed at the pin in loyal admiration, much to the gratification of George Figgins.

"Looks nobby, don't it?" said Figgy. "Topping," said Kerr. "Regular blaze!" said Patty Wynn. "If I hadn't had a remittance to-day, I was going to ask Mr. Munsey to buy that diamond," said Figgins confidentially. "I'd have let it go, you know, to keep the study in funds."

Kerr bent over his bike, looking at the valve. He had to turn his face away for a moment, as he imagined what the jeweller would have thought if he had been requested to purchase that famous diamond. Mr. Munsey would, perhaps, have replied that it was not in his line, and might have recommended Figgins to take it along to the glassware shop down the street. But if he had purchased it, certainly his highest offer would have been sixpence, or ninepence. Fortunately, Figgy had not been reduced to making that painful discovery.

The chums of the New House remounted their machines, and pedalled away to St. Jim's in great spirits. It was getting near tea-time, and they were getting hungry, and there was going to be a whacking feed in Figgy's study. It was agreed that all that remained of the quid should be expended in provisions, to make up for the long period of famine.

Figgins & Co. jumped off their machines at the gates of the school, and wheeled the bikes in.

"Hallo! Something's up!" said Kerr. It was clear at once that something was up. There was a crowd in the quadrangle; fellows stood in groups, talking in low voices, with excited looks. Figgins hailed Taggles the porter.

"What's up, Taggy?" "Somethin's 'appened in your 'ouse, Master Figgins," said Taggles.

"My hat! But what?" "There's bin a theft."

"Oh, draw it mild!" exclaimed Figgins & Co., with one voice incredulously.

"It's true, Master Figgins," said Taggles stolidly. "I 'eard Master Monteith say so, as 'ow something 'ad been taken in Mr. Ratcliff's study—some money."

"Great Scott!" "Which you're to go to your 'ouse at once, Master Figgins."

"I! Why?" "Master Monteith told me to tell you as soon as you came in. Which he seemed ratty that you was out," said Taggles.

Figgins looked puzzled. "Blessed if I see why," he said. "Nothing unusual in going out on a half-holiday, is there?"

Taggles looked stolid, and made no reply. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 331.

"I suppose Sefton or Cralk's been worrying again!" growled Patty Wynn. "I'm getting fed up with them."

"No; Cralk was at Munsey's," said Figgins. "He was in Mr. Munsey's parlour when I was there. Must be Sefton, I suppose, though I'm blessed if I know what he's got up against me this time. Do you, Taggy?"

"Which you'll soon see, Master Figgins," said Taggles unhesitatingly.

"So it is, Sefton?" grunted Figgins.

"No, it ain't."

"Then what is it?"

"You better go in at once, sir."

"Look here, what are you being so jolly mysterious about?" demanded Figgins, a little exasperated.

Taggles did not answer. "It's sickening," said Figgins morosely. "Somebody's always dropping on us, and just as we're in luck for once, too. Taggles, you hard-hearted old reprobate, I've come to a fortune to-day, and we're going to have a feed."

Taggles looked startled.

"Good evings, Master Figgins!" he exclaimed.

Figgins stared at him.

"What's the matter now?" he demanded. "Blessed if you ain't getting as mysterious as the heavy villain at Wayland Theatre Royal, Taggles. Nothing surprising in my getting a remittance to-day, is there?"

"Oh, Master Figgins!"

"Tain't the first time my pater's sent me a quid," said Figgins, astounded. "What on earth are you making that face about, Taggles?"

Taggles' face was a study.

"Don't tork like that, Master Figgins," he mumbled. "Don't! I won't repeat wot you've said to me. I can't believe it, anyway."

"You can't believe what?"

"Oh, nothin'!"

"You'd better leave the gin-and-water alone, I should say, Taggy," said Figgins, coming to the conclusion that the old porter had been drinking. "Come on, you chaps, no getting any sense out of Taggy. Oh and sleep it off, Taggy!"

The three chums wheeled their bikes in. Redfern ran to meet them.

"You're to go in at once, Figgy," he gasped. "Give me your bike. I'll look after it. I don't believe it, old chap—remember that—nobody believes it."

"What!" yelled Figgins.

Before Redfern could reply, Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, hurried up, his face troubled and frowning.

"So you've come in at last!" he exclaimed. "Where have you been, Figgins?"

"Over to Wayland," said Figgins.

"What for?"

"Blessed if I see what it matters; but I've been to Munsey's to get my diamond pin," replied Figgins. "It's been ready for me for some days, but I couldn't go before to-day, as I was stony, if you want to know all about it, Monteith."

"Oh, you were stony!" said Monteith, with a very strange look.

"Yes, I fancy all the House knows that," grinned Figgins. "Never was such a drought in cash. We've been broke to the wide."

"And you are in funds to-day?"

"Yes, rather." Figgins jovially jingled in his pocket the change of his quid. "Rolling in tin."

"Figgins!"

"Well, not exactly rolling in gold, you know," said Figgins. "Rolling in silver and coppers, anyway. Sixteen bob left."

"Follow me at once, Figgins. Redfern will take your bike."

"Righto! But what's up?"

"You'll soon see."

Figgins, greatly wondering, followed his head prefect to the house. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made a dive at him near the New House.

"Figgy, old man!"

"Hallo!" said Figgins.

"It's all wot, dear boy. Old Watty is as mad as a

hahah! Pway beah in mind that we don't believe a word of it."

"Has everybody gone potty?" gasped Figgins. "What on earth's happened?"

"I know it's all wotten lies," said D'Arcy. "All beestly lies! Old Watty is mad—mad as a March hahhah—I mean a hare."

Monteith dropped his hand on Figgins's shoulder, and marched him on. Figgins was beginning to wonder whether he was on his head or his heels.

Round the doorway of the New House a crowd stared at Figgins as he came up with the prefect. He caught sneering looks on the faces of Mellish of the Fourth, and Crooke and Clampe of the Shell. Figgott of the Third was grinning. But most of the fellows were looking serious or downcast or indignant. Figgins gazed round at the circle of faces, but he had no time to speak. Monteith took him into the house at once.

Mr. Ratcliff was in the hall.

The New Housemaster was pale, and evidently furious. At the sight of Figgins he uttered an exclamation, or, rather, a yell.

"Ha! He has come back, the young reprobate!"

Figgins blinked at him.

"Here I am, sir," he replied. "Do you want me?"

"You young scoundrel!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff.

Figgins's eyes gleamed.

"What are you calling me? How dare you?" he shouted. "Let me go, Monteith. I'm going to the Head. I'll ask him whether I'm to be called a scoundrel."

"Quiet, you young ass!" muttered Monteith.

"You unscrupulous young reprobate!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "Where is the money you have taken from my study?"

Figgins almost fell down.

"The—the money!" he stammered.

"Where is it?"

"I suppose you're mad," said Figgins. "You must be, if you think I've taken any money from your study."

"Hear, hear!" yelled Tom Merry, from the quadrangle.

"Mad as a hahhah, deah boys!"

Mr. Ratcliff glared round furiously.

"Silence! Figgins, I give you an opportunity of handing back immediately what you have stolen, and in that case I will ask Dr. Holmes simply to expel you from the school. But unless you hand the money back the police will be sent for."

Figgins tried to pull himself together. He turned to Monteith.

"Has any money been taken from Mr. Ratcliff's study?" he asked.

Monteith looked very hard at him.

"Yes," he said.

"And does the old fool think I took it?"

"Shut up, you young duffer."

Mr. Ratcliff trembled with rage. He had never been called an old fool before by a junior in his House. But Figgins had never had been called a thief before, and he did not measure his words.

"Figgins," spluttered the Housemaster, "this insolence will make matters worse for you! I repeat—"

"You needn't trouble to repeat it," said Figgins. "You've accused me of stealing. Well, it's a lie!"

"You—you—"

"And I'm going to the Head! Let go my shoulder, Monteith!"

And as Monteith did not let go Figgins wrenched himself furiously away, and rushed out into the quadrangle.

## CHAPTER 9.

No. 7979797!

"SEIZE him!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. Monteith and Sefton and two other prefects made a rush after Figgins.

Mr. Ratcliff's impression was that Figgins was trying to escape. But that was not Figgins' idea at all. He was heading for the School House at a run. The prefects would probably have caught him in the gund, however, but there was a rush of juniors to interpose, and the pursuers bumped into the Terrible Three and Study No. 6 and a dozen more fellows.

It was easy to see that, so far, at least, Figgins' innocence was believed in by his schoolfellows, of both Houses, with few exceptions.

"Get out of the way!" roared Sefton.

"Wats!"

"Hook it, Figg!"

Figgins hooked it at top speed. He was only anxious to get to the Head. He had an instinctive reliance upon Dr. Holmes. The Head would see justice done.

Kerr and Patty Wynn joined him as he ran, and kept pace with him.

"What is it?" panted Kerr. "What's happened, Figg?"

Figg almost stuttered with rage.

"That beast has accused me of robbing him! I'm going to the Head!"

Kerr looked back. The New House prefects were mixed up with a crowd of juniors, and Mr. Ratcliff was raving with wrath.

"Good!" muttered Kerr. "Better get to the Head at once! We'll come in with you—better see it through together."

"Yes, rather!" said Patty Wynn.

Fatty did not even remember that it was tea-time just then.

They rushed into the School House.

Without a pause, they dashed on to the Head's study, and Figgins knocked at the door—a hurried knock that was unintentionally a terrific bang.

Then he opened the door, and they ran in.

Dr. Holmes was at his desk, but he was not reading or writing. There was a cloud on his brow. From the study window he had seen Figgins made that wild break across the quadrangle.

"Dr. Holmes," panted Figgins breathlessly, "I—I—"

"Well, Figgins?"

"Mr. Ratcliff says—"

"Mr. Ratcliff has already acquainted me with the matter, Figgins," said Dr. Holmes kindly and quietly. "Calm yourself, my boy."

"But he accuses me of stealing, sir!"

"I am aware of it."

"He says some money has been taken from his study." "That has certainly happened, Figgins. Fifty pounds in gold has been taken from his desk."

"But—but—" Figgins staggered. "You—you don't believe that I've done it, sir?"

The junior was almost overcome. He had had a vague idea that once the matter was placed before the Head it would be all right.

"Calm yourself, my boy," said the Head. "The matter will be carefully inquired into. I had requested Mr. Ratcliff to bring you to me immediately you returned. You were absent, I understand, when the discovery was made."

"I've only just heard of it, sir."

"Do you know nothing about it, Figgins?"

"How could I know anything about it, sir, unless I was the thief?"

Dr. Holmes compressed his lips.

"That is the point in question, Figgins. Mr. Ratcliff has not made this accusation lightly. There appears to be evidence."

"There can't be, sir. I suppose he's making an idiotic mistake," said Figgins. "I can't say I'm sorry my money has been taken. It serves him right."

"Figgins!"

"If he'd been decent, he wouldn't have had it there at

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 391.



"A HERO OF WALES!" NEXT WEDNESDAY.

3<sup>RD</sup> ROUND IN OUR CONTEST.

all," said Figgins. "Everybody in the house says the same."

"You must not speak of your Housemaster in that manner," Figgins, said the Head sternly. "Control yourself."

"Well, he calls me a thief," said Figgins.

Mr. Ratcliff entered the study. He was pale with rage, and he gave Figgins a bitter and furious look. Probably he had heard Figg's words as he came along the passage.

"Ah, you are here, Mr. Ratcliff!" said the Head. "We will go into this matter now."

"Kerr and Wynn are not needed here," said Mr. Ratcliff; and he pointed to the door.

Kerr and Wynn did not move, but they looked at the Head.

"We're Figgins' chums, sir," said Kerr. "Will you let us stay and hear what's the matter? We know that Figgins is innocent."

"There is no harm in these boys remaining, Mr. Ratcliff. I am glad to see that they have faith in Figgins, and I hope that this accusation may turn out to be a dreadful mistake."

"I have asked Figgins to return the money, sir, and he has refused. Have I your permission to telephone for the police?"

Dr. Holmes frowned.

"You are aware, Mr. Ratcliff, that it is not my desire to make a public scandal of this unhappy matter. We can decide it ourselves without troubling the police."

"The money must be returned, sir."

"The money will be returned, or it will be made good. If Figgins has taken it, it is hardly likely that he has been able to dispose of it so soon. But that is what we have to ascertain. Figgins, pray answer my questions, and reflect before you answer. You were aware that Mr. Ratcliff had a sum in gold locked up in his desk?"

"Everybody in the House knew it, sir."

"That is false!" said Mr. Ratcliff savagely. "The discovery was made yesterday by Figgins, when he entered my study. I have not said a word on the matter myself, and it is impossible that it should be known. No one but Figgins was aware of it."

Figgins laughed angrily.

"Ask any chap in the New House, sir," he exclaimed. "They'll all tell you."

"I shall certainly do so, Figgins," said the Head.

"Listen to me, my boy. Mr. Ratcliff went to his desk this afternoon to ascertain whether the money was safe."

"He does that every afternoon, sir," said Figgins.

"You have been spying evidently, then," said Mr. Ratcliff.

"I haven't been spying!" exclaimed Figgins fiercely. "Lots of fellows have heard the money chinking when they've passed the door. It's a regular joke in the House."

The Housemaster bit his lip savagely.

"Mr. Ratcliff found that the money was missing," resumed the Head. "It was safe when he saw it yesterday, and it is impossible that it can have been taken during the day. Some boy must have entered his study last night and taken it—some boy belonging to the New House—as it was impossible that the house could be entered from without. Some boy went down from his dormitory in the night and effected this robbery."

"Well, I didn't, and I can't imagine who did," said Figgins. "I know jolly well it wasn't anybody in the Fourth. Why, sir, how could I open a Yale lock without a key. We all

knew that Mr. Ratcliff had had a Yale lock put on specially, and that he kept the key about him. The fellows were cackling about it the day he had the locksmith here."

"This is mere subterfuge," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Figgins knows perfectly well how the robbery was effected."

"Pray leave it to me, Mr. Ratcliff. Figgins, the lock was not opened—that was impossible. The thief opened a lower drawer, and cut out the bottom of the drawer containing the bag of coin, so that he was able to take it from below. This must have taken him some time—a half-hour at least—as it is certain that it must have been done during the night. Did you leave your dormitory last night?"

"No, sir."

"You deny all knowledge of the matter?"

"Yes, sir."

The Head sighed.

"Then how comes it, Figgins, that you were in possession to-day of a currency note for one pound belonging to Mr. Ratcliff?"

Figgins stared.

"I wasn't, sir," he replied.

Dr. Holmes held up his hand.

"The fact is indisputable," he replied; and Figgins almost staggered. "Listen to me carefully, Figgins, and calm yourself. Mr. Ratcliff kept some other money in that drawer along with the bag of coin—several currency notes; in fact."

"Three currency notes for one pound each, and one for ten shillings," said Mr. Ratcliff acidly. "These were taken along with the gold."

"You hear, Figgins?"

"I hear, sir," said Figgins dazedly.

"Upon discovering his loss, Mr. Ratcliff tells me that he thought of you at once, being under the impression that you were the only boy who knew that the gold was there. But he made investigations immediately, hoping to trace the notes by the numbers, and his first step was to visit the school shop, to ascertain whether any boy belonging to his House had been spending money there in gold or currency notes. He found that you had changed a pound note there soon after dinner."

"That's true," said Figgins.

"Mrs. Taggles produced the note, and it proved to bear the number of one of the notes taken from Mr. Ratcliff's desk."

"That's impossible, sir."

"The number," said Mr. Ratcliff, in a grinding voice, "was 7979797. I make a careful note of all numbers—it is my habit. There is not the slightest doubt on the subject."

"What have you to say, Figgins?"

Figgins almost smiled now. It was clear to him that Mr. Ratcliff had made a ridiculous mistake, and that it could be proved.

"I say that the note I changed was mine, sir, and I can prove it. Mr. Ratcliff is mistaken about the number."

Kerr and Wynn breathed more freely now.

"If you can prove that the note was yours, Figgins, I must conclude that Mr. Ratcliff made a mistake about the number," said the Head. "But you must prove this very conclusively."

"I can do that easily, sir."

"Very good. Mr. Ratcliff tells me that he has made inquiries in your House, and it appears that you had been short of money of late."

"Quite so, sir."

"Yet to-day you were in possession of a pound note?"

For Next Wednesday—

## "A HERO OF WALES!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

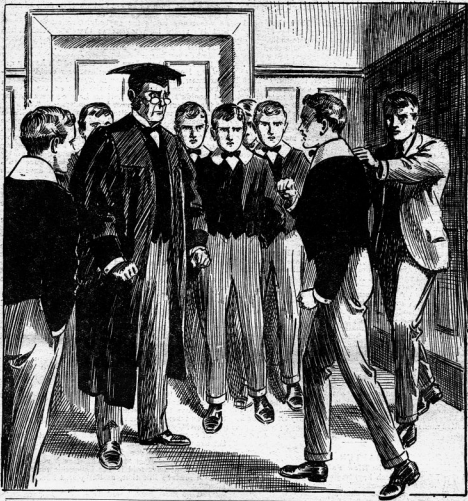
A Magnificent Story of School Life, specially written for Welsh "Gemites," in order to increase the popularity of this journal

## IN WALES.

The School Story appearing a fortnight hence has been written for the express benefit of "Gem" readers

## IN ENGLAND.

See Page 28 for full particulars of this GOLOSSAL CONTEST!



"You young rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. Figgins' eyes gleamed. "What are you calling me? How dare you!" he shouted. "Let me go, Monteith! I'm going to the Head! I'll ask him whether I'm to be called a rascal." "Quiet, you young ass," muttered Monteith. (See Chapter 8.)

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly explain this, then."

"It's simple enough, sir. I had a remittance to-day from my pater."

"You mean to say that your father sent you that note?" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, sir."

"A barefaced falsehood!" exclaimed the New House master furiously. "I repeat, Dr. Holmes, that there is not the slightest possibility of a mistake in the matter. I am a methodical man, and I have never omitted to take the number of a banknote in my possession."

"I can prove it," said Figgins. "My father's a banker, and bankers always take the numbers of their notes, I believe."

Dr. Holmes looked at him very hard.

"You had a letter from your father, Figgins, with the note!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Have you any objection to my seeing the letter?"

"Of course not, sir. Here it is."

Figgins handed over the letter at once. Dr. Holmes read it through.

"Your father makes no mention of a note being enclosed in the letter, Figgins. Indeed, the letter reads as if he had decided to send you nothing."

"I know that, sir. He must have decided to put it in at the last moment, or perhaps the mater did it. Anyway, he sent the note."

"The matter must then be referred to your father, Figgins. I will send him a telegram immediately asking him to furnish the number of the note he sent you in his letter."

"That will settle it, sir," said Figgins confidently. "You see, my father's a banker, and he's awfully careful with money. I'm quite sure he knows the number of the

note he sent me. Of course, I never noticed it myself, but the pater always does."

The Head looked at Mr. Ratcliff. Even that acrid gentleman seemed to be a little staggered by Figgins' evident confidence. Kerr and Wynn began to smile.

"That will settle the matter definitely," said the Head. "If your father sends this number, Figgins, you will be held to be perfectly clear of all suspicion, and Mr. Ratcliff will admit that he has made a mistake."

"I have not made a mistake," said Mr. Ratcliff. "That is inconceivable. I cannot believe for one moment that Mr. Figgins will send this number, as the number of the note he sent his son. Indeed, I doubt whether he sent Figgins a note at all. I must ask that Figgins is allowed no opportunity of communicating with his home."

Figgins turned crimson.

"Do you think my father would back me up if I'd stolen something?" he shouted.

Dr. Holmes raised his hand.

"That is a very unjust and unpleasant observation, Mr. Ratcliff. I am quite assured that Mr. Figgins would state the exact facts, and would never dream of deceiving us to shield his son. However, as you have expressed a doubt, for Figgins' own sake I shall see that he is kept under observation until a reply has been received from his father. Figgins, you will remain in this House, and I shall ask Kildare to see that you do not leave it."

"I don't mind, sir," said Figgins. "Mr. Ratcliff has accused me of being a thief, and now he says my father may be a liar—"

"Pray say no more, Figgins. I feel that this unhappy matter will be cleared up, so far as you are concerned, at least. I have your word that you will stay in the common-room until I send for you?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Dr. Holmes rang, and sent the page for Kildare. The captain of St. Jim's came in, looking very grave.

"Kildare," said the Head, "Figgins is at the moment under an unpleasant suspicion, and for his own sake he is not to have any opportunity of communicating with anyone outside the school until I have received a reply to my telegram to his father. Will you oblige me by keeping an eye on him till I send for him? He is to remain in the School House."

"I will do so, sir, of course."

"You may go with Kildare, Figgins."

Figgins & Co. left the study with the captain of the school. Dr. Holmes wrote out the telegram to Mr. Figgins, and Mr. Ratcliff took it down to the post-office with his own hands, where it was promptly despatched to Figgins' pater at Bristol. And very nearly all St. Jim's waited anxiously for the reply.

## CHAPTER 10. The Blow Falls.

"ALL wight, deah boy?"

"All serene—what?"

"Has Ratty been shut up?"

"How goes it, old scout?"

These and many more questions were simply rained on Figgins in the common-room in the School House. Word having been passed round that Figgins was there, Figgins' friends swarmed in from all quarters. They believed implicitly in Figgins' innocence, and they were eager to testify the same.

They found Figgins very quiet, but serene and confident. Figgins appeared to have no doubt about the result of the inquiry, but the bitter humiliation of having been suspected rankled in his breast.

"It's all right," Figgins told his friends—"right as rain, as far as that goes. Ratty has made a fatheaded mistake."

"Yaas; we all knew that, deah boy."

"Yes, rather!"

"Nobody was idiot enough to think anything else for a minute, Figgy," said Tom Merry. "You never doubted any of us, I'm sure?"

Figgy nodded.

"Well, I naturally should have expected that you'd back me up," he said; "only it's not pleasant to be

called a thief, even by an old fool who's made a mistake. I suppose Ratty was so wild at losing his money that he was ready to go for anybody. The queer thing is that it's really been taken; so there's a thief in the school somewhere, unless it was a burglar."

"It wasn't a burglar," said Kerr quietly.

"How do you know?"

"There would have been some trace of his having got into the House last night. Besides, how could an outsider know about that money in Ratty's desk? Besides, a burglar could have opened the lock on the drawer, and wouldn't have spent half an hour or more cutting out the bottom of the drawer from underneath."

"Trust a keen, canny Scot for working it out like a giddy mathematical problem," said Figgins. "I suppose Kerr's right. It seems that some New House chap has done it. Might have done it to give Ratty a fright, though. You see, we're all down on him for keeping the gold there when it ought to be in circulation. Beasty unpatriotic thing for the old bouncer to have gone grubbing after quids since last August. Might have made other people as silly and nervous as himself."

"It's a jolly serious matter," remarked Fatty Wynn. "Tain't pleasant to have a thief in the House. And if it's only a trick to scare Ratty, the fellow who's done it is a nilly idiot! He'll be taken for a thief."

"The best of it is that he can hide his plunder while Ratty's on a false track," remarked Jack Blake. "But what made the fathead jump on you, Figgy?"

"Because I saw the gold in his study yesterday. He was counting it over in his miserly way when Sefton sent me in, and he knocked some of it over, and I collected it up off the floor for him. The old ass thought from that that I was the only fellow in the House who knew it was there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, everybody's known it for months!" exclaimed Redfern. "I'll jolly soon tell the Head that if he wants to know."

"The awful duffer!" said Tom Merry. "Why, we've known about it in the School House, for that matter. We've heard you chaps joking about it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And is that all he's got against you, Figgy?"

"No; there's something more serious than that—a fat-headed mistake about the number of a note," said Figgins. "You remember I had a quid from my pater to-day, and we changed it when we had the ginger-pop at Mrs. Taggles'. Well, Ratty's got that note from Mrs. Taggles, and he says it's the same number as one of the notes that was taken out of his desk."

"Phew!"

"Of course, it's a mistake," said Tom. "Ratty's taken the wrong number down."

"Queer mistake for Ratty to make," said Kerr thoughtfully. "He's as methodical as a machine. I should almost have said it was impossible for Ratty to make a mistake like that, as Ratty said himself to the Head."

"But he must have," said Tom, with a stare. "I suppose Figgy's pater will be able to tell the number of the note he sent?"

"The Head's wired to him for it," said Figgins. "I'm shut up here till the answer comes. Ratty suspects I might wire home, and that my pater might tell a lie to screen me. He is good as said so to the Head. What do you think of that?"

"The cad!"

"The rotter!"

"The worm!"

"You mustn't speak of Mr. Ratcliff like that, kids," broke in Kildare of the Sixth.

"Ahem! Forgot you were here, Kildare," said Blake. "Sorry. But—if you weren't here, you know—Ratty is a howling cad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say it's teatime," remarked Fatty Wynn. "We were going to have a feed in our study, you know. It may be hours before they get an answer from Bristol. Of course, we're not going to leave Figgy. Suppose we have tea here?"

"Good egg!"

"We'll have a thumping big spread!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "A regular feast—a feast of confidence in Figgins."

"Hurrah!"

The suggestion caught on at once. The juniors were so sympathetic with Figgins, and so indignant against Mr. Ratcliff, that they were eager for a chance to display their feelings—and Tom Merry's suggestion was the right idea at the right moment.

Figgins was handing out his sixteen shillings, but Tom Merry stopped him.

"No; this is a School-House treat," he said. "You can stand your whack to-morrow, Figgy. Leave this to us."

Monty Lowther held out a cap for funds, and coins showered into it, and the Terrible Three went to do the shopping. They came back laden with tuck, and the big table in the common-room was soon groaning under good things. Figgins & Co. were the guests of honour, but half the juniors of both Houses crowded in. Kildare of the Sixth smilingly consented to join the party, as a testimony of confidence in Figgins, as Tom Merry put it; but as the captain of St. Jim's could not go to his study to tea, he was all the more willing to testify to his confidence in Figgins by joining in the junior spread.

The Sixth-Former's presence kept the tongues of the juniors somewhat in check. But covert allusions were made to Mr. Ratcliff and his ridiculous suspicions. In the prefect's presence they could not drink confusion to Mr. Ratcliff; but they could drink Figgy's health, and confusion to all his enemies, and down with Old Hunks, and Old Bones, and Long Nosey, and so forth, and the captain of St. Jim's affected not to recognise Mr. Ratcliff under those titles.

It was a merry tea-party, and every face was merry excepting one, and that one was George Francis Kerr's. Figgins, exasperated as he was by Mr. Ratcliff's suspicion, soon recovered his good-humour amid the general hilarity. But Kerr remained in a very thoughtful mood.

Indeed, from Kerr's silence and thoughtfulness one might have supposed that George Kerr was under suspicion, and not Figgins.

"Penny for 'em," said Tom Merry at last, slapping Kerr on the shoulder. "What the deuce are you browsing on, Kerr, old man?"

The Scottish junior smiled faintly.

"I'm worried," he said.

"But it's all right, isn't it?"

"I hope so."

"I don't see anything to worry about," said Figgins. "Ratty can't do less than beg my pardon when the pater's telegram comes."

Kerr nodded.

"Then what's worrying you?" demanded Figgins.

"I can't understand it, about that number," said Kerr at last. "I'd have sworn that that methodical old Johnny wouldn't make a mistake in such a matter. They can't have printed two notes of the same number by mistake. I can't understand it. It beats me hollow. I wish that wire would come."

"Dash it all, Kerr, old man," said Figgins, "that really sounds as if you thought it might be Ratty's note I changed at the shop!"

"You know I don't think that, Figgy," said his chum quietly. "But I can't understand it. I've got a feeling that there's more in this than meets the eye. Old Ratty is like a machine, and a machine doesn't make mistakes in numbers. It beats me hollow, and it worries me."

"That's the worst of being a blessed Scotchman," said Fatty Wynn slyly. "You think too much, you know. If there's a difficulty, you can work it out all right, and if there isn't one, you make one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr smiled. Although Figgins was the great chief of the celebrated Co., and Kerr was his loyal follower, it was no secret that the Scottish junior provided the brains of the firm. Kerr's observation cast rather a "damper" on the cheerful spirits of the juniors who heard him.

"But the wire from Figgy's father will settle it," said Blake.

"I hope it will," said Kerr.

"But it must," said Tom Merry.

"Well, it must then, if you like," said Kerr. "I only

wish it would come. If it turns out to be a different number—"

"But it can't," said Figgins.

"No, I suppose it can't."

But Kerr was evidently uneasy. What he feared he hardly knew himself; but he saw more deeply into the matter than the other fellows, and he felt that there was something more in it than they had seen—something behind, something he could not grasp. He would almost have sworn that Mr. Ratcliff had not made a mistake in taking down the number of the note; yet to believe that Figgy's note was Ratty's property was to believe that Figgy was the thief, which was inadmissible. The Scottish junior felt all at sea. He was puzzled and baffled by the strange affair, and he waited with feverish eagerness for the reply to come from Bristol.

To the other fellows, however, the time passed quickly enough.

Toby the page put his head into the common-room at last. He spoke to Kildare.

"The 'Ead wants you and Master Figgins, sir."

Kildare rose.

"Come, Figgins."

"Has there been a telegram, Toby?" asked Figgins.

"Yessir. I've just took it in to the 'Ead. Mr. Ratcliff's there."

The Co. followed Figgins. Kildare did not appear to notice them. In the common-room the rest of the juniors remained waiting. They expected that in a few minutes now it would be made known that Figgins' name was cleared. If Mr. Figgins' wire announced that the number of the note he had sent his son was 7979797, even Mr. Ratcliff would have to acknowledge that he had made a mistake.

Kildare tapped at the Head's door, and entered with Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. Mr. Ratcliff, standing by the window, bent a bitter look upon Figgins. There was a sneering curl to his thin lip.

The Head sat at his table, with a telegram open before him. His brow was dark. He raised his eyes, and fixed them on Figgins.

"I have received a reply from your father, Figgins."

"Yes, sir," said Figgins confidently.

"He states that he sent you no money at all to-day."

Figgins stared. For a moment the Head's words carried hardly any meaning to his mind.

"You may see the message," said the Head.

Figgins mechanically took the telegram. It ran:

"No note enclosed in letter to my son.—G. FIGGINS."

Figgins read that curt, stunning message, and the study seemed to swim round him. He looked wildly at the Head, and pressed his hand to his brow. Kerr's firm grasp closed on his arm.

"Keep steady, old man," whispered Kerr

## CHAPTER 11.

### GUILTY!

FIGGINS gazed at his chum without replying.

He could not speak. His head was throbbing; the room was swimming before his gaze. His father denied having sent him a note in the letter. Was he mad or dreaming?

Dr. Holmes' brow was stern, inflexible now. With Mr. Figgins' wire before his eyes, there was only one conclusion that he could possibly come to—that Figgins had told him a lie; that the junior had attempted a "bluff," hoping to be able to communicate with his father, and to get the old gentleman to see him through; or else hoping that his falsehood would stop further investigation.

"Figgins"—Dr. Holmes' voice was very deep—"you see what your father says?"

"I—I see," stammered Figgins, trying to pull himself together. "I—I don't understand it, sir."

"You stated that a one-pound note was enclosed in the letter from your father."

"Yes, sir."

"Your father states that no note at all was enclosed in the letter."

"I don't understand."

"The wording of the letter you showed me bears out

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 38L

your father's statement, if it needed it. It is clear that your father did not send you a remittance at all. You had asked him for a remittance, and in reply he advised you to keep within your allowance. I wired to your father—Please send number of note remitted to your son in letter received to-day." He has replied, as you see—"No note enclosed in letter to my son." It is a great shock to me, Figgins, to find that you could utter falsehoods in my presence with so convincing an air of truth that I myself believed you."

"Falsehoods, sir!" gasped Figgins.  
"You will now, I trust, confess what you have done with the rest of Mr. Ratcliff's money, and restore it. In that case, the matter may be kept out of the hands of the police, you may be sent home quietly, and a scandal avoided."

Figgins looked wildly at the Head.  
"I don't know anything about Mr. Ratcliff's money," he muttered brokenly. "What should I know about it?"  
Dr. Holmes' face hardened.

"Is it possible, Figgins, that you think of keeping up your useless denials, when your guilt is proved by your father's own evidence?"

"My guilt!" said Figgins dazedly. "My guilt! I—I think I must be going mad, or else the pater is. There was a one-pound note in my letter, wasn't there, Kerr?"

"Yes," said Kerr steadily.  
"Mr. Figgins states that there was not," said the Head.

Figgins passed his hand over his burning forehead.  
"I—I see he does," he said; "I can't understand. There was a note in the letter—Kerr and Wynn know it. Kerr saw me open the letter."

"Figgins was sitting beside me at the dinner-table, sir," said Kerr. "He took the note out of the letter."

"He appeared to do so to deceive you, Kerr," said the Head sadly. "Doubtless he had the note in his hand ready. He wished to deceive you, my boy, as you knew that he had no money, and he had to account for having it."

"Perhaps Kerr is prepared to state that he actually saw the note in the envelope," said Mr. Ratcliff bitterly.  
Kerr did not falter.

"Figgins opened it under the edge of the table in the dining-room," he said. "I saw the note in his hand as soon as he had opened the letter."

"It would be easy for him to make it appear that he had taken it from the letter, Kerr," said the Head.

"I suppose it would, sir," said Kerr quietly; "if Figgins were that kind of chap. But the note was in the letter."

"How can you know, Kerr?"  
"Because Figgins said so, sir," replied Kerr.  
The Head sighed.

"Your faith in your friend does you credit, my boy," he said. "But you see that Figgins' father states that he sent no note. You do not suggest that Mr. Figgins is telling an untruth which could only ruin his son?"

"Of course not, sir. Mr. Figgins says that he did not put a note into the letter, and so he did not, I suppose. But there was a note in the letter when Figgins opened it, because Figgins said so."

"You are stating an impossibility, Kerr. Please say no more. Figgins, I ask you once again, will you reveal what you have done with Mr. Ratcliff's money?"

Figgins burst into a harsh, savage laugh.  
"I don't know anything about his rotten money, and I don't care!" he shouted. "I'm not a thief! That's all I know!"

"We know you're not, Figgy, old man," murmured Fatty Wynn. "They can say what they like, but we know better." The plump Welsh junior was on the point of "blubbing," but his faith in his chum never wavered. "It's a rotten shame! We know you're all right, old chap."

"There's been a trick somewhere—somehow," said Kerr, between his teeth. "I felt all along there was something behind, now I know. It's a trick of some kind."

"That will do, Kerr!" said the Head sharply. "Even Figgins, I presume, will admit now that the note he changed with Mrs. Taggles was Mr. Ratcliff's property?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 351.  
OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," "THE MAGNET," "THE DREAMBOGHT," "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," 1D.  
Every Monday. Every Thursday. Every Friday. Every Saturday

"It—it looks like it, sir," stammered Figgins. "But—but how did it get into my letter, then?"

The Head made an impatient gesture. Not unnaturally, he was angered at Figgins keeping up the same story, in the face of such overwhelming evidence.

"Do you understand, Figgins, that unless you confess, I shall be obliged to send for the police?" he asked.

"I'm not going to confess to what I've not done!" said Figgins stubbornly.

"Shall I telephone, sir?" asked Mr. Ratcliff, looking inquiringly at the Head.

Dr. Holmes hesitated.

"I am reluctant to allow the matter to go so far," he said; "I will give this wretched boy time to reflect on his position. I will also send for his father. Mr. Figgins may have some influence over him, and when the money has been restored, he may take Figgins with him away from the school. If he can bring his son to reason, it will save a dreadful scandal. Otherwise, the matter will be placed in the hands of the police. Take Figgins away, and place him in security."

Figgins was dazed; he did not speak another word as the New House master led him from the study.

In the wide passage a crowd had gathered; the juniors had come out of the common-room to give Figgins a triumphant reception on his acquittal.

But the cheer that trembled on their lips died away in a low murmur at the sight of Figgins' stricken, haggard face struck almost a chill to their hearts.

"I—I say! What's the matter?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Figgy, isn't it all right?"

Figgins gave a bitter laugh.

"Oh, I'm guilty!" he said. "I've been found guilty, anyway. They say I'm a thief, and I'm going to be kicked out of the school."

"But—but your father—"

Mr. Ratcliff broke in. In his enjoyment of this moment Mr. Ratcliff was almost consoled for the loss of fifty-three pounds ten shillings.

He knew how the tide had run in favour of Figgins, and how heartily all St. Jim's had condemned his accuser. The blow he had struck now was a solace to him.

"The matter has now been cleared up," said Mr. Ratcliff, in his acid voice. "The result may be made public in the school. Figgins' father, in reply to the Head's telegram, declares that he did not send Figgins a remittance in his letter."

"Oh!"  
"Bai Jove!"

"The note Figgins changed with Mrs. Taggles was stolen from my desk last night, along with other money. Figgins is to be given the choice of handing back what he has stolen or being handed over himself to the police in the morning. Come, Figgins!"

Figgins followed his Housemaster without a word, and the juniors were left looking stunned—dumbfounded. Five minutes later, George Figgins was locked up in the punishment-room of the New House, to await the arrival of his father.

An urgent telegram was immediately despatched to Mr. Figgins, and, later, there came a reply that the Bristol banker would arrive at the school that evening.

In the punishment-room Figgins remained alone. He was locked in, and for some time he was left to himself. He sat on the bed in a dazed state, incapable even of thought. The blow that had fallen upon him had numbed him.

It was clear that the note he had changed in the tuck-shop was Mr. Ratcliff's note. He could not doubt that now. And that one stunning fact dumbfounded him. How could anybody doubt his guilt, or doubt that he had lied to hide his guilt? He felt that he must go mad as he tried to think of it. How had that stolen note come to be in his father's letter? It was an impossibility, and Figgins felt that his brain would turn as he strove to think it out. He sat dumb, numbed, in despair. How could anybody doubt his guilt? Would he himself have doubted such evidence against another? He felt, with a shudder, that he would not.

Was he guilty?  
Had he, in some strange aberration of mind that had left no recollection behind it, done this thing?



Was it possible?

For his guilt was clear! His own chums—could they believe him innocent? Could they? How could they?

He groaned aloud at the thought.

Tap!

He started to his feet as he heard the cautious tap on the door. He ran to the door, his heart throbbing.

Tap!

Figgins answered the tap. There came a whispering voice from without—a voice that whispered under the door, and Figgins bent to catch the words.

"Figgie, old man!"

"Kerr!"

"Keep your pecker up!"

"Kerr!" Figgins almost sobbed the words. "Kerr! You—you don't believe—"

"Don't be an ass, Figgie!" came back the retort. "We know it's all right! I can't stay a minute, or I shall be spotted here. But keep your pecker up. It's a trick—a dirty trick; I don't know how. But I know you're innocent, Figgie, and I'm going to get at it somehow. Keep your pecker up!"

There was a hurried sound of retreating footsteps. Kerr had gone before his chum could reply.

But he left Figgins with comfort in his heart. Kerr, then, still believed in him, in spite of evidence that would have convinced a judge and jury, that must have convinced the whole school. His loyal Scottish chum believed in him, and was working for him. If anybody could read this dreadful riddle it was Kerr; Figgins knew that. The cool, clear-headed, canny Scottish junior, many a time, when poor, old Figgins had been bothered and puzzled with some knotty difficulty, Kerr had set the matter right in a moment or two!

Kerr's keen wits were at work, and the knowledge of that comforted Figgins. But even Kerr, how was he to penetrate the darkness of that stunning mystery, how could he do it? But Figgie's faith in the sagacity of his chum was great, and Kerr's whispered words under the door had brought balm to his tortured heart.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Kerr Does Some Thinking.

**K**ERR sat in his study. The Scottish junior sat in the study armchair, his hands driven deep into his pockets, a deep wrinkle on his brow.

He was thinking.

Fatty Wynn sat astride a chair, his fat arms resting on the back, his plump chin resting on his arms. He was watching Kerr's face. There were signs of tears on Fatty's plump cheeks.

His chum Figgins was adjudged guilty of a base and despicable crime. On the morrow he was to be expelled from the school, and handed over to the police unless he restored the stolen money. He could not restore it, as he had never taken it. Fatty knew that he had never taken it.

His conviction came from his warm, loyal heart, not from his head.

For the evidence was conclusive.

Figgins had passed a note belonging to the sum stolen from Mr. Ratcliff. That was established. He had stated that it came to him in a letter from his father, and his father denied having sent him a note at all.

Those were the crushing facts.

All the school knew them, and had been forced to draw the inevitable conclusion. Tom Merry & Co. had said nothing. But their silence and their miserable looks showed what was in their minds.

How could they doubt?

All they could hope was that Figgins had done this in a moment when he was not himself—some moment of mental aberration. They would rather believe that he was mad than that he was a thief.

But that he had done it—who could doubt it? How could anybody believe that there had been a note in the letter when his own father denied it? That kind and affectionate father who was fond and proud of his son.

There had been little talk on the subject. The fellows

respected the feelings of Figgins' chums. When Mellish, in the School House, had made a sneering remark Tom Merry had sent him spinning with a blow in the face, but without denying what Mellish had said.

Figgins must be mad; and if his chums believed in him still they must be mad too. Fatty Wynn felt, with a shudder, that to doubt Figgie's guilt was like doubting the sun at noonday. Yet he held fast to his faith. He would rather doubt the evidence of his senses than doubt Figgins.

There was a curious expression of almost dog-like fidelity on Fatty Wynn's face as he watched Kerr.

His faith in Kerr equalled Figgins' faith in him. Kerr would work it out somehow.

Fatty Wynn did not venture to speak. Silence reigned in the study. He sat in a state of utter misery, waiting for Kerr to speak.

Kerr was thinking hard. He had need to think hard. For, if Figgins was innocent, the mystery was one that might have baffled a trained detective.

For a whole hour not a sound had broken the silence in the study, save the dull ticking of the clock. Fatty Wynn waited, wavering between hope and fear, his eyes never leaving Kerr's wrinkled face.

The Scottish junior spoke at last.

"Fool!"

Fatty Wynn started.

"I—I say, Kerr!" he murmured. "I—I didn't say anything—"

"I wasn't speaking to you, Fatty. I was speaking to myself," said Kerr, grinding his teeth. "Fool! Idiot! Dolt! Why didn't I think of it before?"

"You ain't a fool, old chap," said Fatty encouragingly. "You've got all the brains in this study, Kerr, old man. If you can't work it out somehow, Figgie is done for. I—I won't stay here if he goes. It's a rotten shame!" Fatty Wynn's voice broke. "I—I say, Kerr, it's up to you. You've got to get old Figgie out of this."

Kerr clenched his hands.

"It's a trick!" he said. "I knew there was some trick. I knew old Ratty hadn't made a mistake about the number of the note. Figgins passed Ratty's note right enough."

"B—but Ratty's note couldn't have been in his letter, Kerr."

"It was in his letter."

"Oh, Kerr!"

"Don't you believe Figgins, Fatty?"

"Of course I do," said Fatty Wynn indignantly.

"Well, then, you must believe that Ratty's note was in his letter."

Fatty Wynn groaned.

"I—I know! It was there all right if Figgie says so. Only—only it couldn't have been, you know."

Kerr gave his fat chum a compassionate look. Fatty Wynn was loyally standing up against the evidence of his own senses, and deliberately stating his belief in an impossibility. Loyalty to his chum could not go much further than that.

"It was there," said Kerr quietly. "We take Figgie's word for that. But Figgie's pater, of course, didn't put it there at Bristol. It must have been put there after the letter got here."

"Oh, Kerr!"

"Well?"

"We saw Figgie open the letter, you know."

"Yes," said Kerr, with a fierce snap of his teeth; "and if I hadn't been a howling idiot, I shouldn't have needed to think about it for an hour. Don't you remember what happened to that letter before Figgie got it out of the rack?"

"Eh? Oh, that joker, whoever he was, hid it for half an hour, and then put it back in the rack," said Fatty.

"We thought it was some silly practical joker," said Kerr. "But it wasn't."

"Who was it, then?"

"The thief!" said Kerr.

Fatty Wynn stared at him blankly.

"Don't you see?" said Kerr.

Fatty made a hopeless gesture.

"Tupper told us the letter was in the rack," said Kerr.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 381.

"We found it had been taken away. When we came in to dinner we found it there all right. It was gone in less than half an hour. Who took it? Who'd want to take it? The thief, of course."

"But—but why?" stammered Fatty.

"To put Ratty's note in it."

"B-b-but why should he want to give away a note he'd stolen, Kerr?" stammered Fatty. "And—and, besides, the letter wasn't opened. Figgy opened it."

"Fathend! Haven't you ever heard of opening an envelope with steam, and closing it again?" snapped Kerr.

"Oh!"

"That was how it was done, of course."

"But—but I don't see. Why should the thief give Figgy a note he'd stolen?"

Kerr almost smiled.

"You fat duffer! Some thief went down last night, and scooped Ratty's money. Well, as soon as it was found out, there'd be a row—as there has been. Do you think the thief wanted to be bowled out? It must have been some chap who was hard up—some chap who owed money perhaps—some chap whose private circumstances wouldn't bear a close investigation. See? There was only one way of keeping himself safe. That was by fixing it on somebody else."

"Good heavens!" muttered Fatty Wynn.

"Being a chap in our House, he knew we were hard up," said Kerr. "That might put our study in his mind at the time. It would make it look more likely. Perhaps it's a fellow who's got something up against us, too, and that would help. I believe it's just the blindest chance that it was fixed on Figgy. It might have been fixed on you, Fatty, or on me."

"But how?"

"It depended on which of us received a letter. Look at it. It's been a regular joke in the House about our being hard up, and expecting remittances. The thief has made up his mind to plant one of the stolen notes on somebody, to keep suspicion off himself. He sees a letter in the rack addressed to Figgins. He takes it out, scoots off to his study, opens it with steam, puts the stolen note in it, and takes it back to the rack when the coast is clear, sealed up again, and looking all right. See?"

"I—I say, he would have to be an awful villain!"

"If it had been a letter for one of us, he'd have done the same. Naturally, expecting a remittance, we shouldn't have been surprised to find a pound note in the letter. It was the safest way of planting it on us. It wouldn't have been safe to plant it among our things. You see, if we'd found it there, we should have given it up at once, knowing it wasn't our property, and then it would have been clear that it was planted on us. We might have found it before a search was made. Anyway, we should have declared that it was planted on us, and we're known to be decent enough for our word to be believed on that. But putting it in Figgy's letter did the trick, for it made Figgy think it was his, and he passed it in the tuckshop, and after that there was no crawling out of it."

"I—I say, Kerr, I—I think you've hit it. But—but—"

"But what?"

"You can't prove it."

"That's the next step, after working out what happened," said Kerr.

"You see, the chap won't keep the money about him," said Fatty Wynn. "Of course, if the other notes were found on him—"

"The other notes are burned long ago," said Kerr. "He wouldn't be idiot enough to keep them, or to try to pass them, as they are numbered. He took the notes along with the gold, with the intention of planting one of them on somebody else to clear himself."

"But he took four—"

"Of course he did, ass. If he'd taken only one, and left the others, it might have been guessed what he wanted it for."

"Oh!"

"But you can bet that he's got rid of the others," said Kerr. "He wouldn't be imbecile enough to keep them

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 351.

OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND," PAPER: Every Monday.

"THE MACHET," Every Monday.

"THE DREADNOUGHT," Every Thursday.

"THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday.

"CHUCKLES," 1D. Every Saturday 2

in existence. As for the gold, of course, gold can't be traced."

Fatty Wynn gave a groan.

"I—I thought you'd got on to something, Kerr, but this is no good. What's the good of working this out if we can't prove anything?"

"I'm not stopping at that, Fatty. The next step is to find the thief. Now we know it was a New House chap. Run 'em over in your mind, Fatty, and think of the one who might be scoundrel enough to do a thing like this."

Fatty Wynn shook his head.

"Don't ask me, Kerr. I can't believe it of anybody. I—I know it's so, as you've worked it out, and it must be so, but—but—"

"Whoever it is," resumed Kerr, "is an awful rascal, but he wouldn't have done it unless he had been driven to it. It must have been some chap who was in a fearful fix for money, and Ratty, being a silly fool enough to keep a large sum in gold in the house, put the idea into his head. He wouldn't have dared to steal notes. But he figured it out that gold can't be traced, and Ratty's miser store was just what he wanted. Some chap who was in difficulties for money—some chap who wanted a good sum."

"That means some chap who's been betting," said Fatty Wynn sagely.

"Exactly. Other fellows get into debt, but not to the extent that they're driven to steal. A fellow wouldn't steal to pay for a new hat, or the hire of a motor-car, or a new bat. It's some fellow who's been in an awful fix, owed a large sum, and there is only one way a fellow could get in such a fix—betting. That narrows it down; we can be pretty certain that it wasn't a junior."

"Oh!", said Fatty.

"Some of the juniors—fellows like Levison over the way—do betting, but they wouldn't be in it for large sums. It's much more likely to be a senior, and we know there are at least two seniors in this House who bet."

"Sefton and Craik."

"Yes. Both of them are pretty thick, too. Suppose one of them owed a sum of money, and couldn't pay!"

"But—but that's only supposing, Kerr."

"Not quite. You remember Mr. Munsey coming to see Craik yesterday, and you remember that letter."

"But that was only about some watches he'd had on approval, and hadn't sent back."

"Two gold watches," said Kerr, with a nod. "Craik has a watch of his own. What did he want with two gold watches on approval, and why didn't he send them back? Old Munsey thought he was trying to swindle him plainly. My impression is, Fatty, that Craik couldn't send those watches back."

"But—but why not?"

"Because they weren't any longer in his hands. He had them from Munsey to raise money on them; he'd sold them to pay a gambling debt, hoping to raise the money later to pay Munsey. You see, when a fellow, at his last gasp he'd do anything rather than go under."

"But—but he could be sent to prison for doing a thing like that," said Fatty Wynn, his eyes opening wide.

"Of course he could, and that would make him ready to raid Ratty's bag of coin, and to put it on Figgins to keep himself safe."

"Good heavens!" murmured Fatty.

"Why did Craik let Munsey dun him for the watches, even to the extent of coming here to demand them back? Only one reason, he'd parted with them. It was a trick to raise money, getting them on approval. But he had to pay Munsey, by hook or by crook. I've worked it out, Fatty, as if it was a mathematical problem. I've worked it out that Craik took Ratty's money to pay the jeweller."

"But you can't prove it, Kerr."

"You remember we went over to Munsey's to-day for Figgy's diamond pin. Craik was there, in Munsey's parlour."

"Yes, Figgy said so. But—but you can't trace gold, Kerr; one sovereign's the same as another, and—"

"But if Craik paid a big debt to-day in gold, Fatty, that settles his hash, if we can prove that. Gold isn't

plentiful nowadays; everybody uses currency notes. And large sums are always paid in banknotes, anyway. If Craik has paid away twenty, thirty, or fifty pounds in gold he will have to prove where he got it from. There's only one place he could have got it from."

"Ratty's desk."

"Yes."

Fatty Wynn's face lighted up.

"If—if it's only true, Kerr! But—but how will you find out?"

"By going over to Munsey's and asking him," said Kerr, rising to his feet.

"The gates are locked, and Munsey's are closed long ago."

"He lives behind the shop," said Kerr, "and I'll have him out if I have to yank him by the hair of his head. But he'll come over fast enough when he knows what's the matter. He's a decent man. Besides, he'll have to. If Craik's paid him a sum in gold to-day he will be anxious enough to prove his own innocence, and not be taken for a confederate."

"Blessed if you don't think of everything, old chap," said Fatty Wynn. "You—your're going out, then?"

"Yes. Mind, not a word, Fatty. If it isn't Craik we've got to start fresh. If it is Craik he's not to be put on his guard. I'm going to have Munsey here by the time Figgy's father arrives if I can." Kerr stared at his fat chum. "What the dickens are you blubbing about, Fatty?"

"I—I c-c-can't help it," sobbed Fatty. "Just to think that old Figgy will be seen through after all, and—and you've done it, and—and I never thought—"

"We're not certain yet," said Kerr. "Only pretty certain."

He quitted the study. Fatty Wynn was left alone, but his face was brighter now. Had Kerr, with his cool, clear brain, worked out the problem correctly? Was Figgy to be saved after all? Hope and fear alternated in Fatty Wynn's breast, but hope had the upper hand.

## CHAPTER 13.

### Light at Last!

FIGGINS rose to his feet as the door of the punishment-room opened.

Mr. Ratcliff stood before him.

"Follow me, Figgins," he said coldly.

"Has my father come?"

"Your father is with the Head, and I am about to take you to him. I trust that you will have the common decency to confess in your father's presence, and let this unpleasant matter end with as little public disgrace as possible."

"I shall tell my father the truth," said Figgins steadily.

"I trust so," snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

Figgins followed him. Several juniors looked at them curiously in silence as they came downstairs. Fatty Wynn was waiting in the hall, and he ran to Figgins.

"Back up, Figgy," he whispered. "Kerr's on the track."

Figgins' face lighted up.

"Thanks, old man!"

"Stand back, Wynn! How dare you speak to Figgins! Take a hundred lines," said Mr. Ratcliff harshly; and Figgins followed the Housemaster out into the dark quadrangle.

They crossed in silence to the School House.

Many eyes greeted them there; it was late in the evening, but not yet bedtime. Figgins kept his eyes steadily before him, and his head proudly erect. He followed Mr. Ratcliff to the Head's study, and they entered.

A kindly-looking old gentleman was seated there, and he rose as the New Housemaster came in with Figgins. His sorrowful glance was fixed upon the boy's face.

"Father!" said Figgins.

The tears started to his eyes as he saw the expression on his father's face. The kind old gentleman had received a terrible blow in hearing the story from the Head.

"You—you think I did it, father?" panted Figgins.

## Health and Economy



Whether it's to the links or the knitting party—wherever your business or pleasure takes you—the reliable Rudge-Whitworth is the best way of getting there, cheaper and healthier than train or tram, and just as reliable.

Write for a free copy of the splendid newspaper called "The Rudge-Whitworth Record" and for the 1911 Catalogue, which shows you how to get a Rudge-Whitworth on easy terms.

Rudge-Whitworth, Ltd. (Depot 231), Coventry  
London Depot: 1, 2, 3, Tottenham Court Road, Oxford  
Street, W. 1, 2, 3, Holloway, Victoria, E.C. 4, 1911

**Rudge-Whitworth**  
Britain's Best Bicycle

"My boy," said his father miserably, "you do not deny that Mr. Ratcliff's note was in your possession!"

"No. It was in the letter."

"My boy, you cannot expect Dr. Holmes to believe that statement."

"But you believe it, father? You know I'm not a thief," said Figgins, almost wildly. "You can't believe that your own son is a thief, father!"

"Heaven help me!" said his father. "George, the evidence against you would convict you instantly if this matter were taken to a court of law. But I cannot believe it. You must leave the school with me. I do not blame Dr. Holmes; the evidence is too convincing for that. But I cannot believe it."

"Thank you, father. I—I hope it will come out," said Figgins. "I've got a chum who's doing his best for me, and he's awfully keen—a Scotch chap—"

"My dear sir," rapped out Mr. Ratcliff, "I feel for you. I assure you I feel for you in this very painful situation. But I cannot listen patiently while doubts are expressed of the guilt of this wretched boy. I expect you to use your influence to make him give up what he has stolen. Otherwise—"

"The loss will be made good," said Mr. Figgins. "I will write out a cheque for the amount at once."

"I did not take it, father!"

"I am trying to believe that you did not take it, my boy. But I must make Mr. Ratcliff's loss good, and you must leave the school with me. It is too late to return to Bristol to-night, but we can stay in the hotel at Wayland. My boy, if—if you have anything on your conscience I beg you to make a full confession." The tears stood in the old gentleman's eyes as he spoke.

Figgins almost groaned.

"If I had anything to confess, father, I'd confess. But I haven't. Mr. Ratcliff's note seems to have been in my letter, but I don't know how it came there."

"Did you open the letter yourself?"

"Yes."

"It was not opened before it came into your hands?"

"No; I opened it."

Mr. Figgins sighed. His faith in his son was being put to a very severe test. Mr. Ratcliff was making very evident movements of impatience. Dr. Holmes did not speak a word.

"I will not trouble your patience any longer, Dr. Holmes," said the banker. "I admit that the evidence against my son being what it is, you have no resource but to adjudge him guilty. I cling to my faith in him, in spite of the evidence. Mr. Ratcliff, I will write out your cheque, and take my son away."

"I cannot say how sorry I am for this, Mr. Figgins," said the Head, deeply moved. "Your son has always

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 381.

"A HERO OF WALES!" NEXT WEDNESDAY. 3<sup>RD</sup> ROUND IN OUR CONTEST.

appeared an excellent character. I was more surprised and shocked than I can express at this dreadful discovery. If there were a loophole of doubt, I should not have been convinced. But there is none—none."

"The truth will come out," said Figgins, in a firm voice. "I am innocent, and it will come out some day. I'm ready to go."

Tap!  
The door opened, and Figgins started at the sight of Kerr of the Fourth. Mr. Ratcliff frowned angrily.  
"Kerr! How dare you come here? Go back to your House at once."

Kerr did not heed. He came into the study.

"You hear Mr. Ratcliff, Kerr?" said the Head.

"I hear him, sir. I've come here because I've got something to tell you, sir," said Kerr quietly. "Mr. Figgins, you will be glad to hear what I've got to say. I hope you know already that I, for one, never doubted Figgins for an instant."

"Then there are some who still believe in my son," said the old gentleman, in a moved voice. "I thank you, my boy."

"Wynn and I, sir, at least."

"This is sheer obtuseness and nonsense," broke in Mr. Ratcliff. "Kerr, this insolence—"

"Figgins is innocent," said Kerr, without heeding his Housemaster. "I'm only glad I've got that out before he left. I can prove it!"

"Prove it!" stammered Figgins. "Kerr, old man—"

"Yes, prove it!"

"How dare you say so, Kerr?" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff passionately. "If you do not leave this study at once, I will—"

"I insist upon Kerr speaking," exclaimed Mr. Figgins indignantly. "If he has something to say in favour of my son, I insist upon its being heard. I appeal to you, Dr. Holmes."

"Undoubtedly," said the Head. "Pray proceed, Kerr."

Mr. Ratcliff's note was put into Figgins' letter before he received it, sir. That letter arrived when we were at morning lessons. Someone took it out of the rack, and kept it some time. You remember, Figg? We thought at the time it was a joke on us, because we were hard up and very anxious about a remittance. But I know now that it was taken for another reason. It was opened by steam, and closed again, and put back in the rack with the stolen note in it.

"Utter nonsense!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

"We can prove that the letter was taken, sir," said Kerr, addressing the Head. "Fifty Fellows, at least, know that Figg and Wynn and I were hunting for the chap who took it. We can prove that it was in somebody else's hands for half an hour before it came to Figgins. In that time the stolen note was put into it. It was done to put suspicion on Figgins, to keep the real thief safe."

"If this circumstance can be proved, it certainly raises a doubt," said the Head.

"It is already proved, Mr. Ratcliff, that others besides Figgins knew of the money in your study. I have questioned Monteith on that point."

"A wild surmise," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Kerr does not seem to think that his statement is, in fact, an accusation against some other boy. Whom do you accuse, Kerr?"

"Craik of the Sixth!" said Kerr unexpectedly.

"What?"

"Have you grounds for this, Kerr?" said the Head very gravely.

"Send for Craik, sir, and you will see that I can prove it."

"Utter nonsense!" repeated Mr. Ratcliff.

"I insist upon this boy Craik being sent for," said Mr. Figgins. "My son's good name is at stake, Mr. Ratcliff."

Dr. Holmes rang, and Toby was despatched to the New House for Craik of the Sixth. Kerr stepped to Figgins, whose rugged face was joyous. He squeezed Kerr's arm ecstatically.

"Oh, Kerr, old man," murmured Figgins, "I had a feeling all the time that you'd get me out of this, you know."

"Heaven grant that it is so," said Mr. Figgins.

Mr. Ratcliff entered, but was silent. The Head's face

was very sombre. The door opened at last, and Craik of the Sixth appeared.

Eldred Craik looked uneasy. He had told himself, as he crossed the quad, that he had nothing to fear. But his miserable heart was quaking within him, in spite of his assurances.

"You—you sent for me, sir?" stammered Craik.

"Yes," said the Head.

"Kerr has made a wicked and ridiculous accusation against you, Craik," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Have no fear that justice will be done."

"I know I can rely upon you, sir, and upon the Head," said Craik meekly. "What am I accused of?"

"Of breaking into Mr. Ratcliff's desk last night," said Kerr coolly, "and stealing fifty pounds in gold, and three-pound notes."

Craik grew deadly pale.

"You deny it, of course, Craik?" said Mr. Ratcliff. "It is hardly necessary; but, as a matter of form, you deny it?"

"Certainly, sir," said Craik, trying to control his voice. "I—I deny it! It is a—a—an infamous falsehood, sir!"

"You spoke of proofs, Kerr," said the Head sternly. "Unless you have some to offer, you will be punished very severely for making this accusation."

"I expect that, sir. If Figgins leaves St. Jim's, I want to leave with him," said Kerr calmly, "but I can prove what I say!"

"You young liar!" hissed Craik.

"Let Craik answer my questions, sir. Has he had a sum of gold in his hands to-day—and if he has, where did he get it?"

"You can know nothing about it, Kerr; whether he has or not," said the Head.

"Let Craik answer the question, sir."

"Certainly I have not!" said Craik. "My study is open to search, sir, if you think it necessary. I have a couple of pounds on me—my own money. I am willing to face the strictest investigation—in fact, I demand it, as this ridiculous accusation has been made."

"You haven't a large sum in gold?" said Kerr.

"You know I haven't!"

"And you haven't had it to-day at all?"

"No!"

"Very well," said Kerr, "I say you have. I say that early this afternoon you had more than twenty pounds in gold."

Craik sneered.

"Am I to listen to this, sir?" he asked.

"You deny Kerr's statement, Craik?" asked the Head.

"Absolutely, sir!"

"He denies that he has had as much as twenty pounds in gold in his possession at any time to-day, sir," said Kerr. "Is that so, Craik?"

"I refuse to answer you, you young cad!"

"Answer me," said the Head.

"Very well, sir, I do deny it. Where on earth should I get twenty pounds in gold from? This is a silly trick to put his friend's guilt on me. If he says he saw a sum of gold in my possession, he is lying!"

"You have not yet produced your proofs, Kerr," said the Head grimly.

"Craik has done that for me, sir," said Kerr coolly. "He has denied having in his possession a sum of gold more than twenty pounds. I can prove that he had!"

"Do you mean to say that you saw it?"

"Oh, no, sir. I mean to say that Craik paid a debt to-day of thirty pounds, and paid it in gold!"

"What?"

Craik staggered, and caught at the back of a chair for support. His eyes almost started from his head.

"Calm yourself, Craik," said Mr. Ratcliff. "No one here believes Kerr's absurd statement."

"Thank you, sir," said Craik, in a dry voice. "I—I was startled—of—of course. It is a wicked lie!"

"I can produce the tradesman to whom Craik paid the money," said Kerr pitilessly. "I have brought him here with me. He is in the next room, where I asked him to wait."

Kerr stepped to the door. There was a dead silence

in the study as the Scottish junior went out. Craik sank into a chair, his legs refusing to support him.

Kerr came back into the study, followed by Mr. Munsey. The Wayland jeweller was looking very flustered.

"This is Mr. Munsey, the jeweller of Wayland, sir."

"I am acquainted with Mr. Munsey," said the Head, with a courtly bow to the jeweller. "I thank you for coming here, Mr. Munsey, to help us clear up this matter. Is it a fact that this boy, Craik, paid you a large sum in gold to-day?"

"This afternoon, sir," said Mr. Munsey. "Thirty pounds, and I gave him the receipt. I hope you fully believe that I had not the faintest suspicion that the money was not his own, until Master Kerr told me so this evening, and asked me to come here."

"No one doubts your honesty, Mr. Munsey. May I ask for what Craik paid you this large sum?"

"For two gold watches, sir."

"Craik has purchased two gold-watches from you? Surely that is very extraordinary?"

"Very!" said Mr. Munsey drily. "A fortnight ago Master Craik called at my shop to see some watches, and saying that he could not make up his mind, asked me to send two that he selected, on approval, so that his father could see them. He said that his father was coming to the school a day or so later. I sent them—and he neither returned them nor paid for them. I wrote to him several times, and at last I called here yesterday, intending to speak to you about the matter, sir, unless the watches were given up at once. I could not help suspecting that Master Craik had disposed of them. I did not wish to be hard upon him, however, or to make a scandal, which would cause you annoyance, and I agreed to wait twenty-four hours for the money. I was willing to take the watches back, of course, but the boy had already sold them. I warned him that he was liable to imprisonment for what he had done, and he confessed that he had had to pay a debt—I do not know of what nature. I agreed to wait until to-day for the money, and if it was paid, to keep my own counsel. This afternoon Master Craik called and paid me thirty pounds in gold. I was naturally surprised to receive so large an amount in coin, but he explained that he had borrowed it, a sovereign here and a sovereign there, among his schoolfellows."

Craik had buried his face in his hands. Mr. Ratcliff looked thunderstruck.

"Craik!" said the Head.

There was a groan from Craik.

"Craik, answer me! Where did you obtain thirty pounds in gold to pay to Mr. Munsey?" said the Head. "I do not forget that you have just denied having had any sum in gold in your hands to-day. Craik, what have you to say?"

The wretched black sheep of the Sixth groaned again. The game was up with a vengeance, and he had nothing to say.

"I think nothing could be clearer," said Mr. Figgins, whose face was very bright now, "and this boy, Kerr, has prevented a terrible injustice being done."

"I thank Kerr from the bottom of my heart!" said the Head. "I am sure that Mr. Ratcliff thanks him, too."

Mr. Ratcliff gasped.

"Yes, yes," he stammered. "It—it appears that—that Craik is guilty. I—I am sure I am glad that the truth has come to light. I—I am astounded! I have always had the highest opinion of Craik. I will telephone for the police at once. The utter young scoundrel had better be handed over to them!"

There was a cry of misery from the wretched Craik.

"Not the police, sir!" he gasped. "Don't do that! Dr. Holmes, don't let him send for the police!" His voice rose to a shriek. "Anything but that! I shall be sent to prison!"

"As you richly deserve!" said the Head, with indignant scorn. "I could never have believed anyone guilty of such baseness. You confess that you stole the money from Mr. Ratcliff's desk?"

"Yes," groaned Craik.

"What have you done with the remainder of it?"

"I—I burnt the notes, excepting the one I—I put in

Figgins' letter!" muttered Craik. "The—the rest of the gold is hidden in the old tower under a stone."

"And you deliberately planned to place the guilt of your crime on the shoulders of Figgins?" said the Head, in a tone of wondering horror.

"I—I was afraid of being found out. And—and he was a cheeky young cad, and I never liked him; and—and there was his letter in the rack, and I knew he was hard-up and expecting a remittance, so—so it was so easy. And—and I was in terror of being found out, and—and—"

His voice died away in a moan.

"Take Craik back to the New House, Mr. Ratcliff, please! He will leave the school by the first train in the morning, and his father will doubtless make good your loss. If he does not, the matter must go to the police!"

"Undoubtedly!" said Mr. Ratcliff viciously. "Follow me, Craik!" The New House master paused for a moment. "Figgins, I am sorry you have been suspected."

"Thank you, sir," said Figgins.

Eldred Craik rose heavily to his feet. Mr. Munsey drew a bag from his pocket, and laid it out on the Head's desk.

"There is the thirty pounds that was paid to me," he said. "I shall look to that boy's father for payment for the watches."

"And I for payment of notes for two pounds ten shillings which this abandoned young rascal has destroyed," said Mr. Ratcliff, taking up the bag. "Mrs. Tuggles will also expect payment of a sovereign for the note she has given up."

"I'll pay that, sir," said Figgins. "It wasn't mine, though I thought it was. I've got sixteen bob—I mean shillings—left."

Craik left the study with Mr. Ratcliff. The wretched black sheep looked as if he could scarcely drag one foot after another. Mr. Munsey, still looking very flustered, took his leave, the Head thanking him warmly for the assistance he had given. Mr. Figgins shook hands with Kerr about a dozen times, while Figgy was shaking his other hand ecstatically.

"Kerr," said the Head gravely, "I am sure you understand how much we feel that we owe you, my dear boy. You have prevented a very great injustice from being done. You have shown a sagacity and a good sense surprising in a lad of your years. I thank you from the bottom of my heart!"

"Oh, sir!" murmured Kerr.

Mr. Figgins, I hope you will accept my hospitality for this night!" said the Head courteously. "Figgins, I dare say your friends will be glad to hear what you have to tell them. You may go."

Figgins and Kerr quitted the study. They almost danced down the passage. At the end of the passage they found Patty Wynn waiting for them, anxious and eager. He had seen Craik pass with Mr. Ratcliff, and guessed that it was "all right." But at the sight of his chums' faces he knew.

"All serene?" he gasped.

"Right as rain!" said Figgins, hugging his fat chum. "Right as giddy rain!" And Kerr did it. What a stroke of luck to have a giddy Scotsman in the family—what!"

"Hurray!" yelled Patty Wynn.

Tom Merry & Co. and a swarm of School House juniors formed a guard of honour for Figgins back to his own House. Arrived there, they gave three thunderous cheers, which brought out a crowd of New House fellows to inquire what the row was about. When they learned what the row was about they joined in and made it louder, and the ducky old quadrangle rang out with cheering.

Figgins & Co. were marched into their House shoulder high, amid thunderous cheers, and for once Mr. Ratcliff did not chip in. The juniors cheered and cheered to their hearts' content, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy waving his famous eyeglass in wild enthusiasm. And among the many happy faces the brightest was that of the junior who had been saved by his chum.

THE END.

(Next Wednesday the Great Welsh Number of "THE GEM" Library will appear, featuring Paddy Wynn or St. Jim's. O. der you a copy now!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 381.

"A HERO OF WALES!" NEXT WEDNESDAY.

3<sup>RD</sup> ROUND IN OUR CONTEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS OF OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY.

# THE CITY OF FLAME!

The Opening of our Great New Serial Story of Thrilling Adventure.

Specially Written for "THE GEM" Library.

By **ALEC G. PEARSON.**

## THE OPENING CHAPTERS:

Harold Mackenzie and Jim Holdsworth, while cruising in their yacht, the Isis, in the Red Sea, land on one of the barren Hanish Islands, where they discover information relating to a mysterious City of Flame.

An Arab suddenly appears, and says he is Anubis of Shoa, the country in which is situated the City of Flame. He warns the comrades of awful dangers they will encounter if they attempt to reach the unknown city, and then vanishes.

Harold Mackenzie, Jim Holdsworth, and Bob Sigbee, an American member of the crew, form themselves into an expedition for discovering the City of Flame, but after reaching the country of Shoa, or Sheba, they are captured by the natives, but, by means of a clever stratagem, escape.

They obtain a native canoe, and after being on the water for some time, are carried by a swift current through a tunnel which runs under the Great Barrier, the dividing-line between the outside world and the Land of Sheba—the Unknown.

Suddenly the comrades are startled by the sound of rushing water. They are being carried helplessly towards an underground cataract!

(Now go on with the story).

## Shooting the Rapids!

"You know what that noise is?" said the American.

Harold Mackenzie nodded his head, but Jim Holdsworth admitted he did not know.

"I could make a fairly good guess, perhaps," he said, "but I don't want to make guesses. Let me hear the water."

"Wal, that is the noise of falling water!" explained Sigbee. "It may be rapids, or it may be a cataract, but by the sound of it I should put it down as a cataract. Out in the open we should stand some sort of a chance, but here in the bowels of the earth"—he flung out his hands with a sort of despairing gesture—"there don't seem to be any kind of loophole."

"Come, Sigbee," exclaimed Hal Mackenzie; "it isn't like you to give in like that!"

"I'm not giving in, cap'n," replied the other, "and I don't fear death, but I do like to have a fighting chance. If we'd had to plant our backs against a rock, for instance, and taken our gruel from those Anharas, though givin' them something to remember us by until we went under, then I wouldn't have complained. It would ha' been a man's death, anyway. But this thing, goin' under like rats in a sewer—wal, I don't fancy it."

"We may about the falls all right," said Mackenzie.

"If we could see," answered Sigbee, "we might have a dog's chance. But this bit of a flicker from Jim's tinder-box is barely enough to show up our faces. Gee! That's gone out now!"

"But there's a light ahead of us!" cried Jim, who had dropped the tinder-box and fuse to the bottom of the boat.

"A light! What sort?"

It was rather difficult at first to answer that question, but as they all crouched in the bows of the canoe, staring ahead, they saw a pale, wavering light, now gleaming clearly, now sinking down until it was barely visible, in the pall of darkness.

The thunder of the cataract grew louder and louder until it was almost deafening. It fetched a thousand echoes from the walls of rock in that confined space, where the waves of

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 381.

OUR COMPANION

PAPERS:

"THE BOYS' FRIEND,"

Every Monday.

"THE MAGNET,"

Every Monday.

"THE DREADNOUGHT,"

Every Thursday.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

Every Friday.

"SHUCKLES,"

Every Saturday.

sound, like the waves of the sea driven hither and thither by stormy winds, found no outlet where their force could be expended.

The mystic light was also increasing in power, or it was becoming more clear as they drew closer to it, though it never became brilliant. It was pale and unsteady, and it gave their faces a ghastly appearance as it shone on them.

"That's a queer, ghostly sort of radiance," said Bob Sigbee. "We sure haven't got into the next world already? That chief of the Anharas said we were to be sacrificed to the spirits of the Great Beyond—"

"Stow it!" interjected Jim Holdsworth. "I don't want to be reminded of the time I spent on that altar, trussed up like a fowl ready for cooking. I'd sooner be where I am."

"That light comes out of the water," exclaimed Mackenzie, "where it breaks over the rocks! It is phosphorescent. Look there!"

He reached his hand over the side of the canoe, and moved it slowly to and fro in the water. Immediately a dull, phosphorescent light appeared around his hand. It is common enough in the sea under certain conditions, but seldom seen in fresh water.

The weird light now lit up the cavern to such an extent that objects fifty or sixty yards away were plainly visible. The vaulted roof was high above their heads. The stream was about thirty feet in breadth, with smooth, glistening walls of black rock on each side.

There was no foothold anywhere, if the canoe should capsize.

Ahead of them, and only a very short distance off now, the torrent broke in foam over some partially submerged rocks. These rocks were at the edge of the fall. Beyond—well, they could not see what lay beyond, and they had no means of judging the height—or depth, from their point of view—of the cataract.

Sigbee gripped a paddle, and crawled to the stern.

"I can, maybe, steer her between those rocks," he shouted. "It was necessary to shout to make himself heard."

"After that, I guess—"

"Sit tight!" yelled Jim. "And hold on tight!"

He and Mackenzie clutched the gunwale of the canoe with both hands, while Sigbee crouched in the stern, steering the craft to the best of his ability with the short paddle.

Like an arrow from a bow the boat sped onwards. Then all at once it leaped into the air like a thing of life, and Jim gave vent to a gasping sort of cry.

There followed a sickening drop through space. It probably lasted about three seconds, but it seemed an age. Then the canoe struck the water again, fortunately right side up, with a tremendous crash, which seemed enough to split it into fragments. A wave swept over the side and half-filled it.

"Bale!" yelled Sigbee. "Bale! We may win through yet!"

They baled the water out with their hats, working frantically. Onward the canoe was swept by the roaring, seething torrent, but there were no longer any rocks to threaten them with destruction. The cataract was behind them, and the thunder of the falling water became fainter and fainter. The phosphorescent light grew dim, and gradually faded away, leaving them once more in darkness.

"If this canoe had been built like an ordinary boat," said Mackenzie, "it would have been smashed to pieces when it went over the fall. But it has been hollowed out of a single great tree, and the bottom is several inches thick, so it was able to stand the shock."

"Yes, jolly lucky!" murmured Jim. "I say, I am as

sleazy as an owl. Can't make it out. Can't keep my eyes open."

"I'm feeling just the same way," said Bob Sigbee. "Snakes, I'm most as fat-headed as—"

"It's gas—some kind of gas—that lies low in the tunnel," said Mackenzie. "It's the same in some caves I've visited. Overpowers you. Try and keep awake."

He looked around him stupidly. Sigbee had collapsed. The next instant Mackenzie rolled over sideways, and his senses left him.

#### The Writing of Patrick O'Hara.

Mackenzie had been the last to succumb, and he was the first to recover consciousness. A breath of cool air on his face caused him to open his eyes and stare upwards. There was nothing but darkness overhead. Then he slowly got up into a sitting position, and, feeling the still motionless form of Bob Sigbee close against him, he remembered what had happened.

He crawled along the bottom of the canoe where Jim was lying, but he had not yet recovered consciousness.

"As I've pulled round I expect they will," thought Mackenzie. "A little water will help them on the road."

He splashed some in their faces, and presently Sigbee moved. Then Jim Holdsworth sat up suddenly like a Jack-in-the-box, and began rubbing his eyes. The American came to an upright position more slowly, but memory came back to him instantly.

"Gee, that was a funny kind of sleep to go off into!" he exclaimed. "Kind of unconsciousness more'n sleep. Are we all awake?"

"I don't think Jim is properly awake yet."

"Oh, I'm getting all right!" said Jim. "My word, that was the soundest sleep that ever I've had! It makes me feel as though I had been dead for a year or two. What can have been the cause of it?"

A gas of some sort that evidently lies on the surface of the water in that part of the tunnel," replied Mackenzie.

"For want of a better name we may call it the sleeping gas."

"Well, the forty winks seems to have done me good," said Jim, who was becoming quite cheerful again. "I feel better after it. What I should like to know is, how long were we asleep?"

"I don't figure how we're going to make any sort of a guess at that," put in Sigbee, "as every hour of the twenty-four is the same in this tunnel. All darkness. Are we ever going to see the sun and the sky again, I wonder?"

"I think so," replied Hal Mackenzie slowly. "The air blowing on our faces is fresh and cool, and— What do you make of that?"

It was a pin-point of light, which seemed to be miles away ahead of them, to which he had called his comrade's attention.

"No more of that luminous water, I hope," said Jim.

"I think not," said Mackenzie. "I don't want to be in too great a hurry to say anything, in case my belief is simply what I hope. But I have an idea—"

"It's daylight!" exclaimed Sigbee. "I'll risk my bottom dollar on it!"

"Then let's hurry along a bit!" cried Jim. "Get to work with the paddles. The stream isn't running half so fast now. Never before have I had such a longing to see a patch of sky. I don't care what colour it is—blue, grey, green, or anything, so long as it isn't black."

The velocity of the underground river had certainly decreased very considerably, and, as Mackenzie and Sigbee were just as eager as Jim to see the sky over their heads again, they paddled vigorously towards the point of light.

It was very much nearer than they had at first supposed, for it was showing through a thick screen of creepers. Then suddenly Jim Holdsworth sprang to the bows, and thrust outwards with the blade of his paddle.

The others went to his assistance, for the canoe was in the midst of a perfect network of the tough, trailing branches of a creeper, which bore hundreds of scarlet blossoms.

Another minute, and the canoe was forced through. They emerged from the tunnel and floated out upon clear water. It was broad daylight, and the sun was well up above the horizon. The three adventurers shouted in their joy.

"We're through the Barrier!" cried Jim, pointing to the precipitous range of hills, several thousand feet in height, which towered above them. "Out of the river of darkness, and into the Unknown."

"And we can't get back the way we came, even if we wanted to," observed Sigbee. "Only a boat with powerful engines could stem that current, but it couldn't climb up over the catarnact. I guess when we hanker after civilisation again we've got to find another way out of this country."

"No need to think of returning yet," declared Mackenzie.

"We have to go forward, not back—forward, to the City of Flame."

They now had a look at the country, which was spread out on each side of the river. It was flat and marshy near at hand, but in the distance to the right they could make out a belt of timber. But what attracted them more than the general aspect of the country at the moment were the numerous wild-fowl that were either flying about or down on the ground feeding.

"The sight of those birds reminds me that I am very hungry," exclaimed Jim, "and we have nothing to eat in the canoe."

They were all hungry, as nothing had passed their lips but water for twenty-four hours.

"Sorry the provisions were all blown into the air when I exploded that dynamite," said the American, "but it couldn't be helped." He picked up his rifle, and slipped a cartridge into the magazine. "We'd been a sight worse off if I hadn't brought these rifles and some ammunition along," he continued. "Seems a pity to waste a bullet on a bird, but we ain't got a shot-gun, so here goes."

He aimed at a pos-hen that was strutting on the shore, and pressed the trigger. The bird—a fine, plump one—rolled over dead.

"There's our dinner," he said.

They paddled to the shore, and ran the canoe up on the marshy bank. Then, while Sigbee plucked the hen, Jim and Mackenzie collected some driftwood and started a fire. An hour later they were enjoying a hearty meal, and although bread and vegetables were lacking, they did full justice to it.

Five or six hundred yards away from where they had camped down, a conspicuous pillar of rock rose sheer up out of the ground to a height of fifty feet or so.

At first they had merely glanced at it without any particular interest, but now they gave it more attention. Sigbee pointed out what looked like a large, oblong board that was fastened to the pillar.

"It's a notice-board," he said, "with 'Trespassers will be Prosecuted' painted on it, sure."

They all laughed. The reaction, after their terrible experiences in the tunnel through the Mountain Barrier, and also the good meal which they had just had, combined to raise their spirits to a point of exhilaration.

"We'll go and have a look at it," said Mackenzie.

The pillar of rock was a natural outcrop from the earth, which may in the dim past, when the Queen of Sheba was the living ruler of the country and not an uncertain memory, have formed the end of a projecting shoulder of the Barrier Mountain.

The "notice-board," as Sigbee had named it, was not a board at all, but a flat piece of metal on which some writing was engraved. It was fixed to the rock pillar about eight feet above the ground, and Hal Mackenzie declared that the metal was similar to that of the tablet which they had discovered on the Red Sea island. The inscription on it was of considerable length, but it was impossible to read it while standing on the ground, as the tablet was damp and blurred.

So Mackenzie mounted on to Jim Holdsworth's shoulders, seating himself in a comfortable position, and rubbed the tablet clean with a piece of canvas. Then he uttered an amazed exclamation.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "This is queer, if you like."

"What's queer?" demanded Jim. "Out with it! Don't keep us in suspense!" For Mackenzie was continuing his study of the inscription without giving them further enlightenment. "And don't dig your heels into my ribs; I'm not a horse."

"What's the writing in English?" replied Mackenzie.

"In English!" ejaculated Holdsworth and Sigbee, in the same breath.

"Well, in Irish-English," pursued Mackenzie.

"Let's hear it," said Jim.

Then Mackenzie read out as follows:

"This is the writing of Patrick O'Hara, set down in the hopes that some white man may see it—if to be any white man penetrates to this land of heathens—and, reading it, comes to my rescue. Never a one of my own colour have I seen since I was brought into the country, barrin' only the Queen. If I was King—but thin I'm not, I'm part prisoner and part a kind of saint, and I'm tired of being both. I want to escape, but I can't without help. Two years in this heathen temple of the sun. The priests can't read this writing, and I've told them 'tis a magic spell, which will prevent any stranger entering the land, if so be it's hung up fermit the Barrier Pass. Months I've been learnin' the way of writing on this metal, and months it took me to do this bit. If any white man reads it, and is willing to help me, let him travel due west till he reaches the White Mountain, whin he will see the temple. Be cautious, for there'll be danger.

PATRICK O'HARA."

Mackenzie slid down from his chum's shoulders to the ground, and for several moments the three adventurers simply stared at each other without speaking, their astonishment at this amazing message being too great for words.

"Waal, that lays over everything that ever I heard tell of," exclaimed Sigsbee, at length. "We reckoned we were the first white men to get through, and here's an Irishman who appears to be a prisoner in a temple. See me you'll always find an Irishman wherever you go. I wonder that when they discovered the South Pole they didn't find an Irishman sitting on top of it."

Jim Holdsworth burst out laughing.

"Part prisoner and part saint!" he said. "That seems a queer mixture. What do you make of it, Hal?"

"Wholly a prisoner, I should say," replied Mackenzie, "though Mr. Patrick O'Hara is evidently a man who makes the best of things. How far he is a saint we shall have an opportunity of finding out, I hope. The Temple of the Sun is on the White Mountain, he states, and, if you remember, the White Mountain was referred to in that other tablet written by Anubis the Egyptian, and Orestes the Greek. We have to cross the White Mountain to reach the City of Flame."

"Where it appears there is a white queen," put in Jim Holdsworth. "I wonder what she is like?"

"As Patrick O'Hara has seen her, she evidently doesn't live in seclusion," laughed Mackenzie, "so you'll perhaps have the chance of satisfying your curiosity on that point. But, seriously, there is a mystery about the whole of this business which deepens as we go on. It is startling, and it grips me more than ever. O'Hara's statement corroborates in many particulars that which I translated from the three-thousand-years-old tablet we found on the island. There was a queen of the Flame City named Clytemna, there was the White Mountain, there was the temple which was to be built by those two old-time treasure-hunters, and the man who warned us against attempting to reach the city, and who made it very clear he is an enemy to be reckoned with, called himself Anubis the Shea."

"Well, he wasn't three thousand years old, anyway," said Jim.

"A man would be middlin' tired of life who had put in all those centuries, and hadn't fixed up a home for himself," observed Sigsbee drily. "Have a kind of out-of-date feelin', I reckon. But we needn't worry about him just now. It's up to us to rescue that Irishman. That's our next business. What say, cap'?"

"Surely," replied Mackenzie. "But first of all we must have a proper night's rest, for we need it, despite the sleep we had in the Barrier tunnel. We can spend the remainder of daylight in making our preparations for the journey. We don't know what's in front of us."

"Perhaps it's just as well we don't," said Sigsbee.

### The Lake of the Crocodiles.

Three days had passed without any adventure worthy of note having occurred, and the evening of the third day saw them entering a shallow lake of considerable size.

On Mackenzie's advice they had stuck to the river, so long as it continued its course in the direction they wanted to go, for it was obviously much easier to travel by water, in a canoe that could be easily handled and propelled swiftly, than tramping over land which teemed with natural obstacles such as morasses, deep gullies, or dense tropical forests.

They had made good progress, and as there were plenty of wildfowl on the reedy banks of the stream and plenty of fish in the river, they never ran short of food.

But it seemed likely that their journey by water would have to come to an end now, for they could make out that the river, when it continued its course from the far side of the lake, curved sharply round to the south. It would be no use to them if it continued in that direction for any distance, and Mackenzie was of opinion that it did.

Jim Holdsworth was standing up in the bow of the canoe, keeping a look-out for a suitable landing-place, but he seemed to have a difficulty in finding one. On one side of the lake a dense jungle came right down to the water's edge, and on the other side there was a wide stretch of flat country; but it was only in the centre that the lake had any depth, and there was no more than a few feet.

But all round the sides the depth was no more than two or three inches, while in many places banks of sand and mud rose above the surface. And on these mud-banks huge crocodiles lay basking, while they could see others swimming in the deeper water.

Neither Jim nor his companions, however, were disturbed by the sight of these unpleasant reptiles, monstrous in size though they were, compared to the same species found in the Tropics.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 381.

OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND."

PAPERS: Every Monday.

"THE MAGNET,"

Every Monday.

"THE DREAMTHOUGHT,"

Every Thursday.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

Every Friday.

"CHUCKLES," 1D.

Every Saturday 2.

Nile, for they had encountered quite a number, on their way down the river and had become quite expert in avoiding them.

They wasted no bullets on them, for ammunition was too scarce, and a machine-gun would scarcely have made any impression on their hides. The only sure way of killing one was to get a lucky shot through the eye, and so into the brain.

"Steer to the right—sharp!" called out Jim. "The sand looks fairly hard there, and perhaps we can walk on shore. There's no more than three inches of water over it. No use trying to wade through that sticky mud further on. We should sink up to our knees in it."

"Right—ho!" said Mackenzie.

A couple of minutes later the canoe was driven stem on to the sand, and Jim Holdsworth stepped out. But immediately he sank almost up to his knees.

"It's a quicksand!" he gasped. "Haul me out!"

Mackenzie and Sigsbee gripped hold of his arms, and pulled him inboard again.

"That's worse than the sticky mud!" exclaimed Sigsbee. "You'll notice those blame crocodiles know enough to avoid the quicksands. They're all right on the mud. They don't sink into that."

"But we should," replied Mackenzie. "Let us try further up the lake."

They backed the canoe off, and paddled round a wooded point. A low islet, partially covered with stunted bushes, came into their line of vision, and, wonder of wonders! Standing up near the centre of it, alone, was a girl. She was the first human being they had set eyes on since they had come through the Barrier, and they stared at her as though she was some unreal-vision, that had taken shape out of nothingness.

"My!" ejaculated Sigsbee. "That's something good to look at! I was wondering whether there were any females in this benighted land, for the Anharas hadn't any womenkind with them. She's alive, sure!"

"Oh, she's alive, right enough," laughed Mackenzie, "though I could scarce believe my eyes when I saw her. We may as well land on that islet. As she has got there, I suppose we can."

It strikes me that the trouble with her is that she can't get off again," said Jim. "Apparently she hasn't a canoe. And do you see those crocodiles? I have counted five of them round the islet. You can see the snouts of four of them above the water. The brutes! It is as though they were on watch, waiting for their victim. The fifth one has crawled out of the water, and is squirming towards her."

"I see a spot where we can land!" exclaimed Mackenzie. "Just to the left of that big bunch of reeds. We must make a dash for it, and jump out of the canoe quick. That girl is in danger, for when the tide rises the islet will be almost covered with water."

They put their backs into it, paddling with all their strength, and sending the canoe skimming along at racing pace.

There was a jerk which almost flung them on their backs as the canoe took the ground. Out they all leaped, and, gripping hold of the gunwale, lifted the craft bodily up, carrying it inshore until they were two or three yards beyond the water's edge, when they dropped it on to a bed of reeds.

All this time the girl had not moved from the position in which they first saw her. Her astonishment at seeing them was far greater than theirs had been on beholding her, but also there was an expression of fear on her face.

She was tall and graceful, and had clear-cut, beautiful features, which Mackenzie declared reminded him of those of a Grecian goddess. Presumably he had gained his knowledge of the appearance of a Grecian goddess from statuary, as he could never have seen one in the life. The girl's complexion was very little darker than a woman of Southern Italy. Her hair was nearly black, and hung loosely over her shoulders. She wore an orange-coloured robe of a material which looked like silk, that was fastened at the waist by a girdle of flexible gold.

Harold Mackenzie approached her, and, raising his hat, as he would have done to a lady in a civilised land, addressed her in Arabic:

"Maiden," he said, "you need not fear us, for we are friends. We thought you were in some danger—with a movement of his hand he indicated the waiting crocodiles—"so we came to your assistance."

# ANSWERS



The girl listened to him wonderingly, and it was clear she understood what he said. She answered him in that dialect of Arabic which was spoken by the Anharas.

"You are surely strangers in this land," she said, "that you should offer to help me?"

This reply, as Jim whispered to Sigsbee, was "rather a staggerer." Was it not the custom of the men of that country to help a woman in distress?

"We are strangers," admitted Mackenzie, "and know not the customs of the country."

"We know some of them," growled Sigsbee, "and if the rest are anything like the sample provided up to date, I allow some alterations are wanted—just a few."

"But we see no reason," continued Mackenzie, "why we should not help you if you are in need of help. But perhaps you can escape from the crocodiles without our assistance."

The girl shuddered, and cast a wild, terrified glance towards the great reptiles.

"You know not why I have been brought to this place," she said.

"We do not know," replied Mackenzie. "But you say you were brought here. That is to say, you did not wish to come. You were carried here against your will."

The girl flung out her arms with a dramatic gesture.

"I am young," she cried passionately, "and life is very sweet! Can you think, then, that I wish to die? Yet that is why I have been left here. Soon the water will cover this island, and then—and then—"

There was no need for her to finish the sentence. Her listeners quite well understood the dreadful fate to which she had been condemned. The ring of hungry reptiles was closing in upon them as the water slowly rose.

"Who placed you here, and for what reason?" asked Mackenzie.

"It is by order of the queen," replied the girl. "In some way I have offended her—I know not how."

"And so you have been condemned to death like this?" The girl bowed her head.

"Well, we are going to save you from it," pursued Mackenzie, in his calm, matter-of-fact way.

"But you cannot!" exclaimed the girl, though there was a gleam of hope in her eyes nevertheless. "It is the queen's order. No person may dare to interfere. If any do so they will surely be killed."

"We'll take our chance of that," replied Mackenzie grimly. "Who will attempt to kill us?"

"Those who brought me here,"

"Say, cap'n," interposed Sigsbee at this juncture, "we'd best be gettin' a move on us! This islet don't stand up like the water much higher than an overturned dish, and the tide's ripplin' around our feet already. Maybe this young lady can pilot us to a safe landing-place; but we've got to hustle into the canoe if we want to get away with our legs still fixed to our bodies."

Jim had snatched his rifle out of the canoe, and had slipped a cartridge into it.

"That big brute has wriggled up a precious sight too close to us!" he exclaimed, indicating the nearest of the scaly monsters. "I'll put a bullet into its brain."

Sigsbee laid a restraining hand on Jim's arm.

"Save your bullets," he said. "We're more spy on our feet than the crocs, and so long as we've got firm earth under us we can dodge 'em. And I reckon we may want all the bullets we've got presently."

"What for?"

"Men," replied Sigsbee laconically. "Look over yonder, just where the timber thins out."

Jim looked, so did Mackenzie, so did the girl, and they saw three tall natives, wearing leopard-skin robes, watching them from among the trees.

"Those are the servants of the temple," explained the girl, "who carried out the queen's order."

"Are there any more of them?" asked Mackenzie.

"Yes, there are more," was the reply, "though I know not how many. For here dwells the Keeper of the Sacred Fish and those who are with him."

By "Sacred Fish" she evidently meant the crocodiles.

"And is that the only place we can land—where they are standing?"

"Yes. If you try anywhere else you will be swallowed up in the sand or the mud."

"Very well, then, we will land there," said Mackenzie. "If those men offer any opposition we will fight. You are not afraid to come with us?"

"I do not fear," replied the girl. "If we have to die, we die. But any death is better than this!"

"Most any," agreed Sigsbee. "Get the girl into the boat!"

The rising tide had now reached the canoe. They helped

the girl in, and two of the monster reptiles, their fishy eyes gleaming, waddled with incredible rapidity, considering their bulk, towards them.

"We'll have to waste one cartridge!" exclaimed the American. "Plug that one, Jim, that's got his mouth open ready to take a bit out of one of us. He's too close!"

The reptile was no more than three yards away.

Jim took aim at its right eye, and fired. The bullet entered its brain. The crocodile stopped, and its great jaws closed with a snap.

"Dead as a red-herring!" exclaimed Sigsbee. "Never mind the others. We'll vamoose."

They launched the canoe, and scrambled on board, but only just in time, for two more of the reptiles made for the craft, eager for their prey, and almost capized it.

But Mackenzie and the American had seized the paddles, and, with vigorous strokes, propelled the canoe away from that particular danger zone. They were approaching another, however; but they meant to land, for they had had more than enough of that fearsome lake, which would have been a veritable nightmare of a place in the dark. And darkness was close upon them, for the sun had set.

As they drew near the shore other natives came into view, armed with spears. There were seven lined up at the water's edge, and they looked decidedly threatening. There may have been some more in the wood. One, a powerfully-built fellow, with a savage, scowling face, shook his spear at them and shouted.

"You have done an evil thing, white men, for which you will have to pay with your lives!"

The canoe was now about fifty yards from the shore. Sigsbee and Mackenzie ceased paddling, and picked up their rifles.

"You do the talking, Hal," said Jim.

"We are not so easily killed," called out Mackenzie in reply, "as you may have seen. The largest of your Sacred Fish is now of less account than a log of wood, and the others could not harm us. And it is you, and those with you, who have done an evil thing, in that you abandoned this maiden to a horrible death. It was the work of cowards."

"It was the order of Queen Clytemna," returned the other, "and so shall dare to disobey her."

"What do you say is the name of your queen?" Mackenzie fairly yelled out the question. "Clytemna!"

"I have said so," answered the man, who seemed rather surprised at Mackenzie's outburst.

"That's queer!" said Mackenzie, and he looked round at his chum.

Jim Holdsworth was rubbing his chin in perplexity. "Oh, it can't be!" he muttered. "It is merely a coincidence that this queen's name is Clytemna. Or, perhaps every succeeding queen has to take that name—a law of the land, you know."

But they were both thinking of that sentence engraved on the ancient tablet: "O Great and Wondrous Clytemna, Queen of the Flaibe City, Goddess who knows not Death!"

However, Sigsbee was not bothering his head about it. He was getting impatient, and he was handling his rifle as though he foresaw he would presently have to use it in a hurry.

"Say, Mackenzie," he growled, "just give that sour-looking guy our ultimatum. Tell him that no matter who gave the order, this girl must be allowed to go in safety. The sentence on her was murder, and nothing else, and it shall not be carried out."

Mackenzie rendered this ultimatum into fluent Arabic, adding some pointed and vigorous remarks of his own.

"Shall not be!" yelled the tall, scowling native, almost choking with rage and astonishment. "You white dog, you would speak thus to me! You would dare to try and prevent the queen's commands from being carried out! Your death and that of your companions shall be a more speedy one than that of the girl you would protect!"

He drew back his arm and hurled his spear with all his strength. Had not Mackenzie ducked quickly his career would have been ended that moment. As it was, the blade of the weapon grazed his left shoulder.

"That ends the talking!" muttered Sigsbee, as he levelled his rifle and fired.

The spear-thrower uttered a loud cry, clutched his hands to his side, and fell.

"The ball has opened," exclaimed Jim Holdsworth, "and we've got to see it through to the last dance! Pull up your socks, chaps, and set to partners!"

*Another fine instalment of this thrilling tale will appear in next Wednesday's "THE GEM." Make sure you copy by plain; a regular weekly order with your newspaper. It is the only way to avoid disappointment!*



# THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to —  
**EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.**  
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON, E.C.  
**OUR "THREE" COMPANION PAPER'S!**  
**"THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY CHUCKLES."**  
**— LIBRARY — ; — POPULAR — ; — 1/2° —**  
**EVERY MONDAY ; EVERY FRIDAY ; EVERY SATURDAY.**

## WHICH IS THE KEENEST NATION? Our Great International Contest.

As all my chums are aware, I am endeavouring to ascertain, by means of four special stories in "The Gem" Library, which nation in the British Isles can produce the keenest number of readers. Ireland has had her turn; Scotland steps into the field this week; and next Wednesday my Welsh chums will join in the Great International Match.

Wales is a small country, so far as actual territory goes; but—and make no mistake about it, my readers of other nations—it is moved by a tremendous wave of enthusiasm for the companion papers. I have paid a personal visit to Wales, and in Cardiff and Swansea—to mention only two of the towns—I was struck by the immense popularity in which the "Gem" and its fellow-journals were held.

There will be an unprecedented movement afoot in Wales next Wednesday, when the grand long, complete story of St. Jim's, entitled

### "A HERO OF WALES!" By Maeria Clifford,

appears on the market.

Mr. Clifford's latest yarn is in every way a masterpiece, and Fatty Wynne, the plump, good-humoured Welsh junior, is considerably in the limelight. For a long time there are strained relationships between Wynne and his study-mates, owing to a strange and altogether mysterious course of action on Fatty's part. By repeatedly leaving the school without any explanation, the Falstaff of St. Jim's gets into bad odour all round, but it eventually transpires that he has been performing a deed of self-sacrifice such as might be expected from his generous nature; and when the rift in the lute is mended again there are great scenes of revelry and rejoicing in Tom Merry's study, where due homage is done to

### "A HERO OF WALES!"

My Welsh chums are strongly urged to place substantial orders with their newsagents for next Wednesday's issue of "The Gem" Library; I look to them to see that the great feast of fiction which has been prepared for their special behoof is accorded a rousing reception, and have no doubt that they will give ample proof that my words on the subject of Welsh enthusiasm ring true.

Next Wednesday's issue must go like hot cakes if plucky little Wales is to be "in at the death" in our great international campaign. So rally round, all who read the good old "Gem" in Wales, and see that every possible effort is made to spread the fame of

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S SPECIAL WELSH NUMBER!

## GRAND PICTURES GIVEN AWAY!

If any Gemite would like a presentation copy of a bumper number of our companion paper, "The Boys' Friend," containing a beautiful Art Plate showing a Boy Scout cheering his mother on her husband's departure for the front, I shall have pleasure in sending him—or her—a free copy, post paid, on receipt of the full address.

I have only a limited number of these superb issues for distribution, and applications will be dealt with strictly in rotation.

## REPLIES IN BRIEF.

F. F. (Vancouver).—Many thanks to you and your British Columbian chums for your splendid support.

Ben Headford (Cairo).—My best wishes go out to you and your soldier chums. I hope you will experience no difficulty in obtaining your favourite papers.

Grace F. (Exeter).—You are quite right in what you say, but the interest in the stories would have been spoiled had I done what you suggest. Tom Merry will come into his own shortly. Very best wishes.

A. E. Curtis (Plymouth).—Very many thanks for your nice letter. I am glad your parents approve of the companion papers.

"Three Chums" (Merton Park).—Your wish shall be realised shortly.

C. Leader (Clapton).—You will experience no difficulty in obtaining the "Gem" when you go to Ireland.

Ernest Pike (Manchester).—Sorry I cannot supply you with the current issue of "The Greifians Herald."

"Two Girl Chums" (Cambridge).—The boys you mention are each fifteen years of age.

A. F. Seamons (Tufnell Park).—The answer to your question is half a million.

R. L. (London, E.).—The profession you speak of is an excellent one for any girl to take up, and you have my best wishes for your success.

D. E. (Hull).—I do not think it would be practicable to do as you suggest.

W. T. H. (Walthamstow).—Thanks for your letter of appreciation. Please note that storyettes for our Weekly Prize Page should always be sent in on postcards.

Private G. Brown, 7th A.S.H., Ward B2, Craigleith Military Hospital, Edinburgh, will be glad to hear from other readers of "The Gem" Library.

"A Devoted Reader" (Lancs).—Send me your full name and address, and I will see what I can do for you.

C. H. (Kennington).—I note your remarks, and will pass them on to Mr. Martin Clifford.

Harold Norman (Pockham).—The reader in question is satisfied.

"Four 'Gem' Readers" (Birmingham).—Many thanks for your letter and suggestion.

W. J. Fell (Clapham).—I sympathise with you in your trouble. My advice to you is to await events, and not rush into another situation. The profession you speak of is overdone nowadays.

"A Newcastle Girl".—Thanks for suggestion, which shall be borne in mind.

L. F. (Hamstead).—In reply to your queries, Marie Rivers is seventeen years of age; and the Third is not the lowest Form at St. Jim's. As regards the other matter you speak of, I do not think my huge boy public would be best pleased if girl characters loomed too largely in the "Gem" stories.

"A Loyal Reader" (Wigan).—Many thanks for your letter and for enrolling new readers.

C. W. M. (Bristol).—Thank you for your letter and loyalty.

A. E. Johnson (Birmingham).—The story you refer to is out of print. D'Arcy and Blake are each fifteen years of age.

Hornoe P. (Boxmoor).—Very pleased indeed to hear from you, and hope you will write to me again.

Madge Scott (Manitoba).—Your letter was most interesting. Glad the "Gem" occupies such a high place in your esteem.

L. W. S. (Sydenham).—First of all, I must thank you for your energy in securing new readers. Your remarks concerning D'Arcy are duly noted, and I will put your suggestion into practice. Very best wishes.

"A True Reader" (Hyde).—The characters you mention are still at St. Jim's.

THE EDITOR.

# THE MODERNS' MISTAKE!

A Magnificent School Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood.

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

## CHAPTER I.

### Very Mysterious

Jimmy Silver looked suspicious. He felt suspicious.

Jimmy Silver had strolled down to the tuckshop in the corner of the Big Quad at Rookwood. His object was to purchase supplies for the afternoon—the afternoon being a half-holiday, and Jimmy Silver & Co. having planned an excursion and a picnic for that half-holiday.

Three juniors were gathered together outside the tuckshop, conversing in eager tones. They were Tommy Dodd and Cook and Doyle, the chums of the Modern side, and, therefore, the deadly rivals and foes of Jimmy Silver & Co. They were so deeply interested in their discussion that they did not observe Jimmy Silver approaching. Hence the suspicions that were awakened in the breast of the Classical junior.

For what could Tommy Dodd & Co. have to discuss with such absorbing interest, if not some scheme that was up against their rivals of the Classical side?

"It's the chance of a giddy lifetime!" Tommy Dodd was saying.

"We're on!" said Cook.

"Sure, it will make those Classical spalpeens turn green and yellow!" chuckled Doyle.

Such were the remarks that Jimmy Silver heard as he bore down upon them. Then they caught sight of him, and Tommy Dodd muttered hastily:

"Ware cads!"

The Modern trio moved off quickly. Jimmy Silver stopped outside the tuckshop. He forgot about supplies and tuck and half-holiday. If Tommy Dodd & Co. were on the war-path it was necessary to keep an eye on Tommy Dodd & Co.

The three Moderns sauntered away round the clock-tower towards Little Quad. They disappeared from view.

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows thought. He was still wrinkling his brows and thinking when his chums found him.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome stared at him in surprised inquiry.

"Got the stuff?" asked Lovell.

"Eh?"

"Where's the 'tuck'?" demanded Rabe.

"The tuck?"

"He's dreaming!" said Newcome pleasantly. "Gone to sleep standing up like a horse. Wake him up!"

"Hold on!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, as his three chums seized him and shook him. "Cluck it, you asses! Steept!"

"Well, what's the matter with you?" demanded Lovell, when Jimmy Silver had been reduced to a breathless and gasping condition. "What are you hanging about like a boiled owl for, instead of getting the tuck?"

"Fatshead!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Here's something on!"

"Dinner will be on soon, ass, and we've got to start immediately after dinner if we're going to picnic on the downs."

"How the picnic! Those Modern cads are up to something!" said Jimmy Silver. "I found 'em here por-wowing, and they sneaked off,

They're up to something that's going to turn us green and yellow."

"By gum!"

"Follow your uncle!" said Jimmy Silver.

And he led the way on the track of the Modern trio. Raby and Lovell and Newcome followed him.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were spotted again in Little Quad. They were standing in a group, and Tommy Dodd had a newspaper open in his hands. Three heads were bent over the newspaper, and three pairs of eyes were reading the same paragraph. Tommy Dodd was talking.

"It's a cinch, you chaps! Those Classical duffers would never think of a thing like this! It's a real cinch!"

"What the deuce are they burblin' about?" murmured Lovell.

"Ware cads!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd once more.

He shoved the newspaper into his pocket, and the Modern trio strolled off.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another. The mysterious goings-on of the Modern trio roused their curiosity to burning-point.

"Look bees, we've got to get on to this!" said Jimmy Silver. "It must be something up against us. They said it was going to turn us green and yellow. Collar 'em, and make 'em own up!"

"They won't own up!" said Raby.

"They will if we duck their heads in the fountain!"

"Good egg!"

The Classical four made a rush towards the Moderns. For once in a way, Tommy Dodd & Co. were not looking for a "scrap." Generally they were prepared to give the Fistical Four all the fist cuffs they wanted. On this occasion an unaccustomed peacefulness obtained. The Modern trio dodged away round the fountain and fled.

"After them!" howled Jimmy Silver.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome dashed after the three, and Jimmy Silver cut back to the stone arch that led into Big Quad to cut off the retreat of the Moderns. He reached the archway first.

Dodd and Cook and Doyle came rushing down on him, with Lovell and Raby and Newcome hot on their track.

"Stop!" shouted Silver.

"Bow-wow!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Kneek that ass over!" Jimmy Silver faced the rush manfully. He was determined that the Modern trio should not get away without explaining their mysterious whisperings and mutterings, even if he had to hold their heads in the fountain till they were nearly drowned.

As the three Moderns rushed on him he tackled Tommy Dodd in Ruggier style, and they came to the ground together and rolled over one another.

"Yow! Draggimoff!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

Cook and Doyle clatched hold of Jimmy Silver and dragged him off, bumping him heavily on the ground. Tommy Dodd leaped up and ran on with his comrades, and they vanished

through the archway into Big Quad. Lovell and Raby and Newcome, coming on full tilt, rushed right into Jimmy Silver and sprawled over him. Four yelling Classics were mixed up on the ground.

"Wharree you at! Gerroff!" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You thumping ass—"

"Yooooooo!"

The Fistical Four sat up dazedly. The collision had been violent, and they were winded.

"You burbling chumps!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "What did you roll over me for—eh?"

"What did you spread yourself in the way for?" howled Lovell.

"You silly ass—"

"You dummy—"

"Oh, my nose!" groaned Raby.

"What silly idiot jammed his silly elbow on my nose?"

"Wow-wow-wow-wow!" came from Newcome.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Yow-wow! Some silly idiot jammed his silly head on my funny-bone! Ow, ow, ow!"

"Never mind!" said Jimmy Silver, staggering to his feet. "It's all in the day's work! Why, my hat, look here!"

He pounced upon a newspaper that lay upon the ground. Tommy Dodd had evidently dropped it in the struggle with Silver. Jimmy Silver grabbed it up at once, and his eye fell upon a paragraph marked round with red ink.

Then he gave a yell.

"God it!"

"Well, what have you got?" growled Lovell.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"This is what those Modern asses were por-wowing over. Listen to this!"

He read out the paragraph, and the Co. listened with deep attention:

"The German writer, Karl Schmitzel, who was recently arrested on a charge of espionage, and escaped from the police, is still at large. He has been traced to the neighbourhood of Coombe, and is supposed to be hiding among the quarries. A reward of ten pounds is offered for information leading to his arrest. The description furnished by the police is as follows:

"Height, five feet four inches. Stout, floral complexion, reddish beard and moustache, reddish hair. Has a slight limp in the left leg. Speaks broken English. Dressed in shabby check suit, brown boots, and cloth cap. Wears large spectacles."

"This is the 'Coombe Advertiser,'" said Jimmy Silver. "The giddy German spy is mooching about in the quarries, only a couple of miles from here. And those Modern asses—

—Ha, ha, ha!"

"(Holla! Why is Jimmy Silver laughing? Has he just thought of a great wheeze! Could not he—Ah, but that's telling! You must finish this magnificent complete tale in 'The Boys' Friend,' out to-day.)"

## A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.

# Our Weekly Prize Page

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

### COMPETITION!

A tailor, finding business very bad, posted up outside his shop the following notice:

"With Every Pair of Clothes I Give a New Hat Free!"  
A florist situated opposite, not to be outdone, also posted up a notice:  
"With Every Pot of Flowers I Give the Earth!"—Sent in by W. F. Chapman, Cardiff.

### GAVE THE GAME AWAY.

In the court-house an Irishman stood charged with stealing a watch from a fellow-citizen. He stoutly denied the accusation, and brought a counter-charge against his accuser for assault and battery committed with a frying-pan.

The judge was inclined to take a common-sense view of the matter, and, regarding the prisoner, said:  
"Why did you allow the prosecutor, who is a much smaller man than yourself, to assault you without resistance? Had you nothing in your hand to defend yourself?"  
"Indeed, yer Honour," said Pat, "I had his watch, but what was that against his frying-pan!"—Sent in by Alice Butler, Sheffield.

### MISUNDERSTOOD.

A blacksmith, who knew much more about shoeing horses than his rival here, sprained his wrist one afternoon, and lost his time in hustling to the doctor.  
The physician examined the wrist, and then took a small beetle from a shelf, but found it was empty.  
"Jamme!" he said, turning to an assistant, "go upstairs and bring me down a couple of these plants."  
"What's that?" exclaimed the patient, suddenly showing signs of a desire to depart.

"I was merely asking my assistant to bring me down a couple of phials from upstairs," answered the doctor.  
"Fie!" shouted the blacksmith. "No, you don't, doc! If that hand has got to come off, you can use an axe or a saw—but files! Not if I know it!"—Sent in by J. Leslie Martin, Wrexham.

### CLEVER LAD.

Young Charlie's class at school had recently been undergoing instructions in hygiene and first aid. It was about this time, too, that Charlie's father found it necessary to apply coercive measures to his offspring.

As the strap was about to be administered, Charlie interposed firmly:  
"Father, unless that instrument has been thoroughly and properly sterilised, I desire to protest!"

"This caused the old man to pause, strap in mid-air.  
"Moreover," continued Charlie, "the germs that might be released by the violent impact of leather upon a porous and textile fabric so recently exposed to the dust of the thoroughfares would be apt to affect you deleteriously."  
The strap fell from a nerveless hand.—Sent in by W. J. Adams, Burnley, Lancs.

### PRUDENCE.

First Scot (in train, to his neighbour): "You'd a bonnie lassie in the corner. D'ye ken her?"  
Second Scot: "I dae weel."  
First Scot: "Why 'doh't ye go over an' talk to her?"  
Second Scot: "Hist, mon! Wait till she pays her fare!"  
—Sent in by Colin Hamilton, Carrickfergus, Ireland.

### UNDER OBSERVATION.

A Pressman stood watching a rehearsal of a picture-drama in a large film-producing studio, when he remarked to a lady standing next to him:

"I wonder Mr. D. doesn't make love better to such a pretty girl. His love-making is very tame and spiritless."  
The lady frowned.  
"He won't put any more spirit into it while I've got my eye on him! I'm Mrs. D.," she replied.—Sent in by Miss J. Scott, Stoke Newington, N.

### THE RELIC.

"Professor, what's become of young Jack Otterley? Wasn't he studying with the class last year?"  
"Ah, yes. Otterley! Poor fellow! A fine student, but a bit careless in the use of chemicals. That discoloration on the ceiling—notice it?"  
"Yes."  
"That's him."—Sent in by E. W. Tomas, Battersea, S.W.

### ASTONISHING!

Two cleaning damsels had borrowed the old sailor's telescope to watch a passing steamer. On handing it back, one of them remarked that it was a very nice telescope.  
"Yes, missie," chirped the ancient mariner, "but no wonder! That there glass was given to me by His Majesty Lord Horatio Nelson."  
The girl smiled.  
"Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "Why, Lord Nelson has been dead over a hundred years!"  
But the old tar was quite equal to the occasion.  
"Well, I'm blowed!" he said. "Ow the time do fly!"—Sent in by Miss M. Heaton, Liverpool.

### NOT SO WEAK, AFTER ALL.

An Irishman applied at the wharf for work as a stevedore. He was only four-and-a-half feet in height, and the boss was dubious.

"We're loading three-hundred pound anvils into that boat," said he, "and a little chap like yourself couldn't handle 'em."

"Try me!" said Pat.  
And the boss put him to work.  
Pat hustled the anvils aboard all right. The cargo was nearly all stowed in the hold, when the boss heard a splash. He ran to the rail, and, looking over, saw Pat struggling in the water.  
"Throw me a rope!" he yelled as he went under.  
He reappeared soon, and again called loudly for a rope. Then he disappeared again. Once more he rose to the surface.

"If you don't throw me a rope," he spluttered, "I'm a-going to drop this anvil!"  
—Sent in by H. Ray Longden, Chesterfield.

### CAUGHT.

A certain musician, disgusted with the continuous talking that went on during the performance of the orchestra, arranged with the performers that the music should stop suddenly in the midst of the loudest passage in the piece.  
It was done. And, clear and distinct above the rest of the loud talkers' voices, these words were heard:  
"Oh, yes! We always fly ours in lard!"—Sent in by E. P. Chambers, Kingston-on-Thames.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

## THE BOYS' FRIEND, 1d.

Published every Monday,

in order to give more of our readers a chance of winning one of our useful Money Prizes. If you know a really funny joke, or a short, interesting paragraph, send it along (on a post-card) before you forget it, and address it to: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, E.C. Look out for YOUR Prize Storyette in next week's GEM or BOYS' FRIEND.