

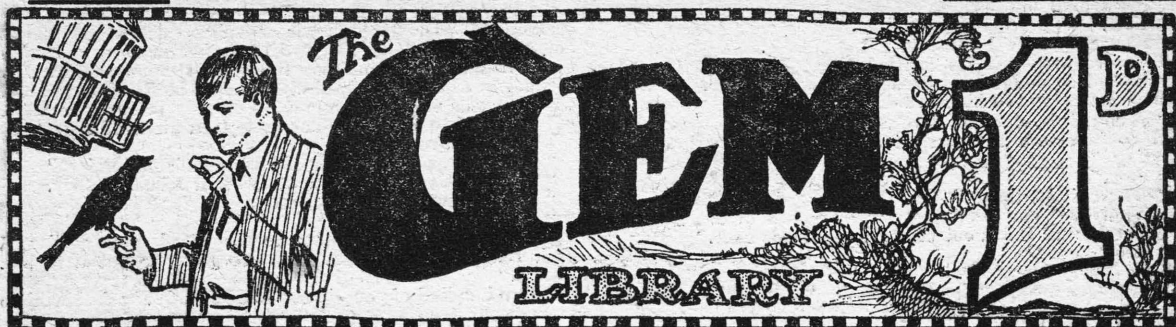
Next Thursday's
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"FIGGY'S FOLLY."

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An illustration showing a schoolboy in a dark suit and tie, standing on a raised platform and addressing a large crowd of other schoolboys. The crowd is depicted in various states of agitation, with some raising their hands. The scene is set outdoors with trees in the background.

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A splendid, new, long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. The Indignation Meeting.

"SHAME!"

"Rotten!"

"Quite imposs., deah boys!"

"We won't have it!"

"Never!"

Tom Merry jumped upon a form in the Big Hall of St. Jim's, with the innumerable crowd of juniors surging round him. Tom Merry's face was red with excitement, and his blue eyes were blazing. He waved his hand.

"We won't stand it!" he shouted. "Who's going to back me up?"

There was a roar:

"All of us!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth. "Evevyboday here will back you up like anythin', Tom Mewwy, deah boy!"

And the juniors roared and stamped their feet. St. Jim's was in a state of excitement that had seldom been equalled in the old school. Even the time when Figgins & Co., of the New House, had barred out their Housemaster had not been equal to this. It was not a barring-out this time. There was no trouble between masters and boys. It was not a House row, for fellows of both Houses were mingling in the crowd in complete accord. There were even a few senior boys in the crowd, apparently quite in harmony with the juniors.

A roar filled Big Hall from end to end.

More than two hundred juniors were there, and their united voices made a terrific din, and the old rafters of the Hall rang again with it.

Tom Merry held up his hand for silence.

But silence was not easy to obtain. It was an indignation meeting, and the juniors, being wildly indignant, were noisy, too. Jack Blake, and Herries, and Digby, and

D'Arcy, of the Fourth, were all shouting together. Manners and Lowther, of the Shell—Tom Merry's special chums—were roaring, and so were Figgins & Co., of the New House, though what they said could hardly be distinguished in the din. Redfern, of the Fourth, was waving his hand and evidently making a speech, but the speech was lost to the general ear.

"Order!" bawled Kangaroo, of the Shell, rapping on a form with a cricket-stump.

"Silence!"

"Silence for the chair!"

"Gentlemen of St. Jim's!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"Shame!"

"We won't stand it!"

"Let's have him out!"

"Hurray!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Faith, and we'll kick him out!"

Tom Merry gasped for breath. His face was growing the colour of a freshly-boiled beetroot in his efforts to make himself heard. The crowd of juniors surged to and fro in the wildest excitement. D'Arcy minor, of the Third Form, and a crowd of other fags, were stamping on the floor with their boots, with no apparent object but that of adding as much noise as possible to the din.

A prefect, of the Sixth, looked into the Hall from the upper end door. He shook his fist at the excited gathering. The juniors were not allowed, as a rule, to hold their meetings in Big Hall; but they had marched in and taken possession of it without even asking permission. Things were a little out of the usual order at St. Jim's that Wednesday afternoon.

"Clear out of here!" shouted Knox, of the Sixth.

The juniors would not have listened even to Kildare, the captain of the school, at that moment. As for Knox, he

Next Thursday:

"FIGGY'S FOLLY" AND "WINGS OF GOLD!"

was nobody to them, prefect or not. A roar of defiance answered him.

"Yah!"

"Buzz off, or we'll bump you!"

Two or three missiles hurtled through the air towards Knox, and he dodged out of sight quickly enough.

Tom Merry waved his hand desperately.

"Fellows," he shouted, "we've got to decide on something, and do it before the masters come in and break up the meeting!"

"Yah!"

"We won't let them!"

"We'll bar 'em out!" roared Lawrence of the Fourth.

"We've barred Ratty out of the New House once."

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry frowned.

"Do listen to me!" he exclaimed. "I'm junior captain, and I call upon you to shut up!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah! Dwy up, deah boys!"

"Gentlemen of the Lower School," proceeded Tom Merry, as there was a lull, "we don't want any trouble with the masters. The Head is a jolly old sport—"

"Hurrah!"

"And Mr. Railton is first chop, and so's Mr. Lathom."

"Hear, hear!"

"We don't want to treat them badly, and we've got nothing to bar them out for. Our row is with a fellow who's disgraced St. Jim's—"

Loud groans.

"He has acted like an awful cad, and he nearly got Brooke of the Fourth sacked by forging a paper in his handwriting, insulting Mr. Lathom—"

"Good old Brooke!"

"And now he's found out, we want him sacked from the school."

"Yes, rather!"

"Yah!"

"Shame!"

"And we're going to have it!" said Tom Merry determinedly. "The Head would have sacked him, as sure as a gun, but when he was found out he fell down in a fit, and he's been malingering ever since. We know Levison—"

Groans for Levison.

"We know he was only shamming all the time, and that he took the Head in, because he's an innocent old duck—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We know there's nothing whatever the matter with him, and that he's only malingering, and that it's one of his rotten dodges to save himself from being expelled. But we don't want a forger in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's."

"No fear!"

"Wathah not!"

"So we're not going to stand it. I propose a deputation to the Head of all the juniors of St. Jim's, of both Houses, to explain the matter, and insist upon our rights as decent chaps to have that awful cad sacked!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a roar of approval. The suggestion evidently jumped with the ideas of the juniors of St. Jim's. The whole school, seniors as well as juniors, were incensed against the cad of the Fourth. It had been proved beyond doubt that Levison of the Fourth had copied Dick Brooke's handwriting in a document of an insulting nature which Mr. Lathom had found in his desk. And although the cad of the Fourth was now in bed in the school sanatorium, presumably ill, all the fellows who knew him knew that it was only one more of his inexhaustible dodges.

The news had been made known that afternoon that Levison was not to be expelled after all, and the juniors were furious. They were quite convinced that he was taking the Head in, but they did not mean him to take them in as well. Levison had to go.

Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, strode in at the big door. There was a frown upon his handsome face as he surveyed the crowd of excited Lower School boys.

"What are you doing here?" he exclaimed. "You are not allowed to hold your blessed meetings here! Clear out!"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Go and eat coke!" roared Bernard Glyn of the Shell truculently. "This is an indignation meeting, and we don't want any prefects here."

"Yah!"

"Clear out yourself!"

"Hold on, you chaps!" exclaimed Tom Merry anxiously.

"Don't buzz at Kildare. Kildare, old man, we're going in a deputation to the Head about Levison. We're going to insist upon his being sacked from the school."

"Hear, hear!"

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"A TRAITOR IN THE SCHOOL!" is the title of the splendid, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library, now on sale. Price One Penn.

Kildare looked grimly at the captain of the Shell.

"Do you think the Head will let you dictate to him?" he exclaimed. "Dr. Holmes has already said that Levison is not to be expelled. He is in delicate health now, and he is to be flogged later on; but the medical man advised Dr. Holmes to assure Levison that he should be let off expulsion, or the results might be serious. You may be sure the Head did not want to keep him, but he's given his word now."

There was a roar.

"Levison was only pulling his leg! He's shamming."

"You can't possibly know that," said Kildare curtly.

"Oh, we know Levison!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We're going to deputation to the Head, anyway!" said Jack Blake of the Fourth. "We're going to put it to him plainly."

"Two hundred of you—in the Head's study?" asked Kildare sarcastically.

"No; we'll select a dozen or so, and the rest can stand under the Head's window in the quad. and yell!" said Tom Merry.

"Look here, you'd better clear off—"

But for once Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, and idol of the Lower School, was not obeyed. There was a sudden rush of Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers, and Kildare was swept out into the passage, and the door was slammed. He hampered on the outside of it a moment later, but Blake and Monty Lowther had their feet set against it.

"So much for Kildare!" grinned Figgins. "Now about the deputation."

CHAPTER 2.

The Deputation to the Head.

THE juniors of St. Jim's meant business. Excited as they were, and expending a great deal of their excitement in wild yelling, they were determined, too. The whole of the Lower School was up in arms on the subject of Levison of the Fourth.

Levison had transgressed more than once. Each time, with a cunning that seemed amazing in a mere boy, he had escaped the punishment which would most certainly have fallen upon anyone else. His luck had held good all the time, and now, at the last, he had outdone all his previous rascalities, and again he had escaped the penalty. The trick of falling in a pretended fit and affecting illness afterwards, until he was assured that he would not be expelled, was cunning enough, and it was not surprising that the kind and unsuspecting old doctor had been deceived. The medical man from Rylcombe, fussy little old Dr. Short, had been deceived, too, but that was not difficult, for a little judicious flattery, which Levison knew only too well how to administer, and a willingness to swallow all sorts of medicines however nasty, sufficed to gain the goodwill of Dr. Short.

Dr. Holmes had felt himself in an awkward position. He had intended to expel Levison for what he had done, as the whole school naturally expected. But the medical man's assurance that Levison was in a precarious state, owing to the fright he had received when he was found out, made the Head hesitate. Levison had played his game well, and Dr. Short fully believed that unless the culprit's mind was relieved on the subject of the expulsion, he would go from bad to worse. And so the Head had very reluctantly made up his mind to allow Levison to remain at St. Jim's, hoping that a public and severe flogging later on would have the effect of a lasting lesson to him.

That the boys would be dissatisfied with the verdict the Head knew; but he had not known that so wild an uproar would break out as soon as the boys learned that the cad of the Fourth was to remain.

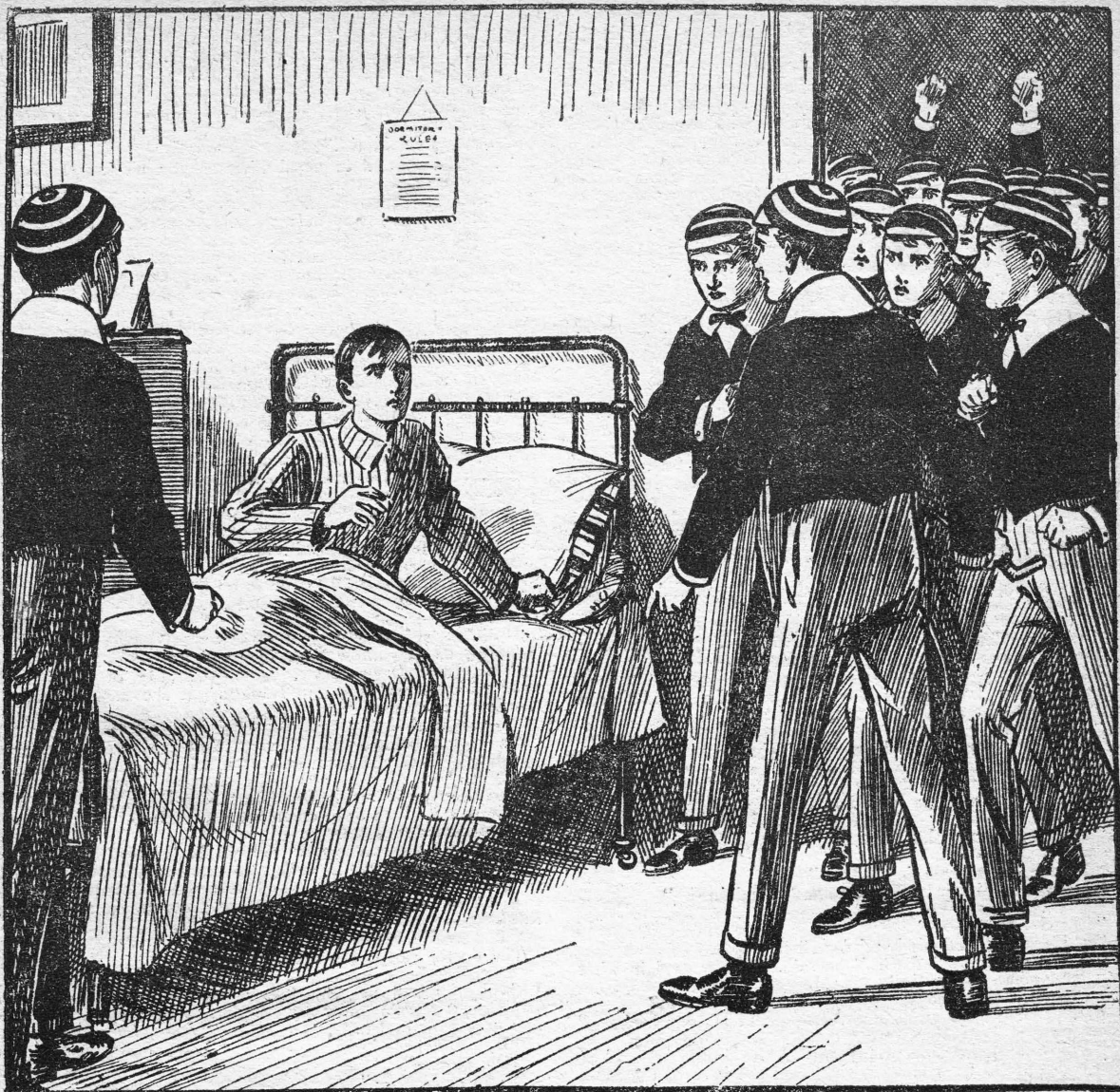
For once the bonds of discipline were broken, and even the respect for the Head, which the whole school felt, could not make them bow to the decision.

Levison must go. On that the whole of the Lower School uproariously agreed; and the senior fellows, the Fifth and Sixth, felt the same about it, only they felt also that their great dignity as seniors forbade them to demonstrate on the subject as the Lower School were doing.

Kildare, outside the door of Big Hall, hammered on the upper panels with his fists, his handsome face quite crimson with anger. He had never been brushed aside like that before, and it was a shock to the captain of St. Jim's. But the Lower School were excited now, and did not much care what they did. They let Kildare hammer outside the door, while they arranged the deputation to the Head.

Half the Shell and the Fourth, and most of the Third, considered that they ought to be in the deputation, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy especially was convinced that he ought to be the head of it. There was much heated argument.

"Weally, you fellows—"



Levison, quite forgetting in his surprise and dismay that he was supposed to be too weak to rise, sat up quickly in bed and stared at the juniors. "What do you want here?" he exclaimed in a voice rendered shrill by alarm. "We want you," said Tom Merry. "We're going to kick you out of St. Jim's!" (See Chapter 4.)

"Better select a dozen fellows from the Shell——"
 "Rats! It's a Fourth-Form bizney——"
 "What price the Third?" roared Wally.
 "Oh, rats!"
 "Look here——"
 "Weally, I considah——"
 "Faith, and I think——"
 "Order!" roared Tom Merry. "Look here, every Form in the Lower School ought to be represented—at any rate, the Shell, the Fourth, and the Third. We'll take four of the Shell, four of the Fourth, and two of the Third. That's more than enough."
 "Good egg!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 And that was agreed upon after much warm discussion. The suggestion that Mr. Railton might come in and break up the meeting hurried matters a little. The juniors did not contemplate shoving out a Housemaster as they had shoved out the head prefect of the School House.
 Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, and Thompson, of the Shell, were selected, and Blake and D'Arcy and Figgins and Redfern of the Fourth, and Wally D'Arcy and Jameson, of the Third. This having been arranged, the deputation prepared to march.

"All you fellows get under the Head's window," said Tom

Merry. "We want a big crowd in sight, to show the Head that the whole school is behind us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Give him a yell or so, to show you're there," said Blake.

"Faith, and we'll raise Cain intirely!" said Reilly.

"Hurrah!"

"Come on, then!"

The door was opened. Kildare, who was just hammering on it, almost fell in as it swung back. He turned a fierce look upon the juniors.

"You young rascals——"

"Sorry, Kildare, old man," said Tom Merry politely. "But we can't stand on ceremony just now. St. Jim's has got its back up."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! We are all in a fwiughtful wage," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his eyeglass into his eye, and giving Kildare a warlike look.

"You cheeky young asses——"

"Let's pass Kildare, old man."

"Where are you going?" demanded the captain of St. Jim's.

"To see the Head!"

"About sacking Levison?"

"Yes."

"Then you'd better not——"

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There was a roar from the crowd of juniors behind the deputation.

"Get aside!"

"Roll him over!"

"Bump him!"

Two or three more prefects had joined Kildare—Darrel and Rushden and Langton, of the School House, and Monteith and Baker, from the New House. At any other time, the half-dozen prefects would have driven the whole Lower School before them like sheep. But the times were out of joint now. If there had been two dozen of them, the juniors would not have been moved from their purpose.

"Pway let us pass, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus pacifically. "We're a peaceful deputation, you know. We're not goin' to eat the Head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"March on!" roared Owen.

"Knock their silly heads together!" exclaimed Monteith angrily.

"Yah!"

"Wats, deah boy!"

Monteith lunged out, towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It was the signal for trouble. There was a rush of the Lower School. Half a hundred excited juniors swarmed over the prefects, and they were swept away like sand before the sea. The way was cleared in next to no time, and the deputation marched on triumphant.

Gasping prefects and yelling juniors were left behind, and Tom Merry & Co. tramped on, and halted noisily at the door of the Head's study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tapped Tom Merry on the shoulder.

"I pwesume it's undahstood that all the talkin' is to be left to me?" he asked.

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, what is wequired just now is a fellow of tact and judgment, and I considah—"

Tap!

Tom Merry knocked at the door, and the Head's voice replied, in its deep and pleasant tones:

"Come in!"

Tom Merry opened the door. Dr. Holmes was seated at his desk, with a somewhat troubled frown upon his kind old face. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, was with him. Both the masters looked at the deputation in astonishment.

"Dear me!" said the Head, adjusting his glasses. "What do you boys want?"

"Please, sir, we're a deputation."

"Yaas, wathah, sir! We've come to explain—"

"Dry up, Gussy—"

"Weally, Blake—"

Dr. Holmes raised his hand for silence.

"I do not understand this," he said. "Pray explain what you have come to my study for, Merry!"

"Pewwaps I had bettah explain, Tom Mewwy—"

Blake pinched the swell of St. Jim's, and D'Arcy broke off to gasp; and Tom Merry went on with the explanation.

"We're a deputation, representing the junior Forms of this college, and both Houses, sir," said the hero of the Shell firmly. "We've held a meeting, sir—"

"I have heard a good deal of noise," said Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir. We are wild, sir—I mean angry—we've got our backs up, sir. It's about that awful cad Levison—"

"That fwightful wottah, sir—"

"We want him sacked, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We regard his continued presence here as a stain upon the honour of St. Jim's, sir," said Manners, who had thought out that telling sentence coming along.

"Bai Jove, that's vewy well expressed, Mannahs, deah boy!"

"We want him sacked, sir!"

"Expelled, sir!"

"Kicked out, sir!"

The voices of the juniors were rising in excited chorus, and Dr. Holmes held up his hand for silence.

CHAPTER 3.

"Have Him Out!"

DR. HOLMES waited until the excited voices died away. The juniors were respectful enough, but they were in deadly earnest. It seemed that a time had come when the boys of St. Jim's found themselves set in opposition against the will of their headmaster, and when they were not prepared to give in. It was a strange state of affairs, and fraught with the possibilities of trouble and danger to the well-being of the school. The boys felt that, as well as the masters, and there was a general feeling of tension in

the study, as Dr. Holmes cleared his throat to speak, with the little cough the juniors knew so well.

"I quite understand your feelings, my boys," said Dr. Holmes at last, in his quiet tones. "You are naturally shocked and disgusted with the wicked conduct of Levison of the Fourth."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"I had intended to expel him, as you all know. But it has already been explained to the school that Levison's state of health has caused a change in my intentions. Dr. Short assures me that he is in a precarious state. The dread of being expelled, and of having to face his family in disgrace, has weighed upon his mind so much while he has been ill that it has brought him into a very low state; and the medical gentleman has assured me that the consequences may be serious if the patient's mind is not relieved upon that point. After thinking the matter out carefully, and consulting with Mr. Railton and Mr. Lathom, I had decided to allow Levison to remain at the school. When he is well he will be severely flogged. But he will not be expelled."

"If you please, sir—" began Tom Merry.

"I wish the boys of this college to know that I have not altered my opinion of Levison's conduct in any way," said the Head. "It was infamous. But he has already suffered for it, and he has given me an impression of being truly remorseful. I trust there will be a change for the better in him in the future."

"It's not likely, sir!"

"Merry!" said the Head sternly.

Tom Merry did not flinch.

"If you please, sir, Levison is an awfully deep beast!" he said. "He only pretended to fall down in a fit when he was found out—"

Dr. Holmes started.

"How do you know that, Merry?"

"We know Levison, sir. Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth used to have real fits, and Levison got the idea from that. We know the rotter!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I cannot believe this, Merry. You are surely mistaken, besides, I have the assurance of a medical man that he is really ill."

"Levison could work Dr. Short round his little finger if he liked, sir. He's deep enough for anything!" said Figgins.

Dr. Holmes frowned.

"You are allowing your natural feelings of indignation to carry you too far," he said. "I cannot allow you to speak of Dr. Short in this way. Neither am I inclined to believe that he is mistaken, on no better grounds than that you think so."

"But weally, sir—"

The doctor raised his hand.

"My dear boys, when you reflect calmly upon this matter, I think you will see that I have decided for the best. In any case, I cannot allow my decision to be questioned. The matter is now ended."

"But, sir—"

"Oh, sir—"

"You see, sir—"

"The matter is now ended," said Dr. Holmes, raising his voice a little. "You will kindly leave my study at once."

The juniors looked at one another.

The deputation to the Head had not been a success. As a matter of fact, they could hardly have expected the Head of St. Jim's to abandon his own opinion and adopt theirs. At the same time, they knew that the Head had been deceived, and that he did not know Levison so well as they did.

But for the great respect that all St. Jim's had for the

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Head, there would have been rebellious looks and perhaps words.

As it was, the juniors were silent.

They were not convinced, and their purpose was not changed. But they were silenced, and they left the study without another word.

Outside, in the passage, they looked at one another grimly. "Bai Jove! What's goin' to be done, deah boys?" said Arthur Augustus, polishing his eyeglass with a very thoughtful air.

"I suppose we've got to give the Head his head?" suggested Monty Lowther, with a grin.

"Oh, don't be funny, now, Lowther!" exclaimed Blake crossly. "We're not going to give in! Levison's got to go!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bucking up against the Head!" said Manners, with a whistle. "That's rather thick, you know!"

"Not so thick as letting an amateur forger stay in the school!" said Redfern.

"Wight you are, Weddy!"

"Let's go back to the Hall and hold another meeting!"

"Good egg!"

But the great door of the Big Hall was locked and closed against the juniors. The prefects had seen to that. There were to be no more meetings in the Hall. Tom Merry & Co. growled angrily. They were in a dangerous mood, and half inclined to break in the door and hold a meeting in the Hall in spite of the prefects. But calmer counsels prevailed, and they streamed out into the quadrangle, to join the crowd there, who were growing very impatient and excited. Two hundred eager voices demanded to know the result of the deputation to the Head.

Tom Merry was hoisted upon the shoulders of Jack Blake and Figgins to address the swaying, surging crowd.

"What's the answer?" roared Bernard Glyn.

"Tell us what he says!"

"Go it!"

Tom Merry swayed over the crowd on the shoulders of the two sturdy juniors. His face was set, and his eyes flashing.

"The Head refuses!"

There was a deep groan from two hundred throats.

"Levison has fooled the doctor from Rylcombe, and fooled the Head, and he's going to stay at St. Jim's!"

There was a wild roar.

"Never!"

"He's got to go!"

"We'll have him out ourselves!"

"Faith, and we'll take the law into our own hands intirely!"

"Hurrah!"

"Have him out!"

Some of the more excitable juniors surged off towards the school sanatorium. Tom Merry waved his hand to the crowd. As a rule, when there was excitement in the lower Forms, the captain of the Shell was on the side of peace. But now he was on the side of war, and plenty of it.

"Fellows!" he shouted. "The Head has been taken in, and the sawbones from Rylcombe is an ass, anyway, and anybody could fool him! Are we, the boys of St. Jim's, going to stand having Levison forced on us like this by a dirty trick?"

"No!" roared the crowd.

"He forged Brooke's handwriting, and nearly ruined Brooke. It was almost by chance that he was found out, or Brooke would be in disgrace now."

"Shame!"

"He might play some rotten trick of the sort on some of us if he stays here!"

"The cad!"

"The outsider!"

"He's got to go!"

"Let's hear what Brooke says on the subject!" roared Clifton Dane.

"Hear, hear!"

Dick Brooke, of the Fourth, was hoisted up. He looked over the crowd with a very red face, evidently not at his ease. There was a yell of encouragement.

"Go it, Brooke!"

"Pile it in!"

"On the ball, old man!"

"Well, chaps," said Dick Brooke, "Levison is an awful rotter, we all know that; but I don't like being the cause of all this trouble in the school, and that's flat! And I think it's our duty to obey the Head under all circumstances. I believe that Levison has taken the Head in; but—but we can't back up against the Headmaster. That's my opinion."

There was a roar of disapproval. The juniors had expected Dick Brooke, as the fellow most injured by Levison's treachery, to be bitterest of all against him. Brooke's views on the subject were decidedly unpopular.

The two juniors who had raised him up let him go quite suddenly, and he bumped down heavily on the ground, and there was a roar of laughter.

"Never mind Brooke," yelled Kangaroo. "He's only a giddy day-boy, anyway. We're not going to stand Levison!"

"Are you all agreed on that?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Hurrah!"

"Will you back me up in taking the law into our own hands, and kicking Levison out of the school?"

There was a yell of delight at the idea.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! We'll expel him ourselves!"

"Bravo!"

"Then let's go and have him out!"

"Hurrah!"

And the wild crowd, led by Tom Merry & Co., streamed off towards the school sanatorium, to have Levison out!

CHAPTER 4. Out of Hand.

LEVISON, of the Fourth, was reclining in bed in a cheerful, sunny room. Through the open windows the soft breeze of the early summer afternoon was wafting the scent of the flowers from the Head's garden.

Levison was alone, and there was a sarcastic grin upon his face.

The distant yelling in the quadrangle had reached his ears, but he did not attach any great importance to it.

He knew that the announcement that he was to remain at St. Jim's would throw the fellows into transports of rage, but that only added zest to his satisfaction in pulling the wool over the eyes of the Head and the medical gentleman from Rylcombe.

He had made good his escape, after all!

He was not to be expelled—he might yet devise some scheme to escape even the flogging—and he was filled with satisfaction at his success.

The fellows might rage, and doubtless would, but they could do nothing. Levison would keep his place in the school, in spite of them all. He might be sent to Coventry, but he could stand that. And the friendship of Mellish, of the Fourth, at least, he could be sure of. For Mellish had been his accomplice—a hesitating and reluctant accomplice, it is true—in the plot against Dick Brooke. Mellish would have to stand by the cad of the Fourth whether he liked it or not.

Levison listened to the distant echo of the shouting in the quadrangle, and grinned with sarcastic contempt.

But the shouting was coming nearer, and the grin died away from the face of the cad of the Fourth Form.

Were they coming to give him a demonstration of hostility under the windows of the school sanatorium?

He knew that very few fellows at St. Jim's would believe that he was really ill. He could not deceive the juniors who had lived and worked with him, and knew his character inside out, so to speak.

Well, let them yell—they could not touch him. He wondered that the prefects did not stop them from coming to the sanatorium, but, at all events, they would not venture to enter.

But his face changed as he heard the yells more clearly through the open windows.

"Have him out!"

"My hat!" muttered Levison. "They—they can't mean it! My hat!"

But he soon knew that they did mean it.

There was a heavy tramping on the stairs, and the door of the ward was thrown open, and a crowd of juniors surged in.

Levison, quite forgetting in his surprise and dismay that he was supposed to be too weak to rise, sat up quickly in bed, and stared at the juniors.

"What do you want?" he exclaimed, in a voice rendered shrill by alarm.

"We want you!" said Tom Merry.

"I—I'm ill!"

"Rats!"

"I—I—"

"Get out of bed!" roared Jack Blake.

"I—I can't! I'm ill!"

Blake produced a dog-whip.

"I give you five seconds," he said. "You'll hop out of bed, you malingering cad, or I'll make you hop in it. Now, then!"

The lash sang in the air.

Levison made a spring from the bed. He knew that he had to go, and it was no use being thrashed first with the dog-whip. There was a yell from the crowd. Levison's active spring out of bed had shown plainly enough that there

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was nothing whatever the matter with him, even if the juniors had doubted it before. The cad of the Fourth stood in his pyjamas, his fists clenched and his eyes gleaming with rage. Fear and fury were in his face, but nothing suggesting illness.

"Look here!" he shouted. "What do you want? You'll get flogged for this! When the Head knows you've come here—"

"We're acting on our own just now," said Tom Merry. "Get into your clothes."

"I—I won't!"

"Give him a taste of the dog-whip, Blake."

"What-ho!"

The lash curled round Levison's legs. The cad of the Fourth yelled, and made haste to get into his clothes. It was evident that the juniors were not to be trifled with.

Levison dressed himself in hot haste, the juniors standing round him. The plain proof that the cad of the Fourth had only been malingering, and was not really ill at all, exasperated the fellows more than ever. Levison ground his teeth as he dressed, and when he was finished, he looked savagely at Tom Merry.

"Now, what do you want?" he snarled.

"Come with us."

Levison backed against the wall.

"Where?"

"To the Big Hall! We're going to give you a school trial and expel you!"

"Hear, hear!"

Levison panted.

"Expel me! You're mad! What do you mean? You can't expel me! Only the headmaster can expel a fellow!"

"Well, we're going to this time, whether we can or not!" retorted Tom Merry. "You've disgraced St. Jim's, and you're going."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I—I tell you—"

"Come on. Take his arms, Blake and Lowther."

And Levison, in spite of his furious expostulations, was taken by both arms and marched out of the ward. The crowd followed, surging down the stairs.

"We can't get into Big Hall," said Figgins. "The prefects have locked it up."

"Yaas, it's imposs., Tom Mewwy."

"Break in the door!" roared Lumley-Lumley, of the Fourth.

"Hurray! Break it in!"

"No, no! The gym. will do!" Tom Merry exclaimed hastily. "We can make the gym. do. Don't have trouble with the masters if we can help it."

"Yaas, wathah! The gym. will be all wight."

"Bring the cad into the gym."

Levison attempted to struggle. He had no desire to be shut up in the gymnasium alone with the incensed juniors. But his struggles were not of much use, excepting to prove that he was quite as fit as ever, and that his illness was a falsehood from beginning to end. Blake and Herries and Lowther and Kerr lifted him off his feet, and he was carried bodily into the gymnasium.

"Help!" yelled Levison frantically, as he was borne in through the doorway. "Help!"

Two or three prefects came dashing up.

"Is that Levison you've got there?" shouted Darrel, of the Sixth.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We've got the cad!"

"Let him loose at once!" shouted the prefect. "How dare you take a boy out of the sanatorium! Bring him here!"

The juniors yelled defiance.

"Rats!"

"He's not ill!"

"He's a giddy malingerer!"

"We're going to cure him!"

Darrel forced his way through the crowd. Langton and Baker backed him up. But the juniors turned upon them, and the three prefects, as they drove their way into the doorway of the gym., were seized by innumerable hands, and flung out bodily into the quad. They rolled breathlessly on the ground, and the last of the junior crowd streamed into the spacious gym., and the door was slammed behind them and barred against all comers.

Darrel staggered to his feet.

"My hat," he gasped, "the school seems to have gone mad!"

"Mad as a set of giddy hatters!" panted Langton. "Can't wonder at it, either, for between ourselves, we all know that Levison has fooled the Head, though it wouldn't be respectful to say so."

"They can't be allowed—"

"I fancy they won't wait to be allowed. Levison will be jolly lucky if they don't tear him to pieces, I think."

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Darrel hammered on the door of the gym.

"Open this door at once, you young rotters!"

A roar of defiance answered from within.

"Yah! Go and eat coke!"

"Do you hear me? I'm Darrel, the prefect!"

"I don't care if you're a barrel of prefects!" yelled back Redfern from inside the gym. "We aren't opening the doors to anybody!"

"Wathah not!"

"I order you—"

"Rats!"

And that was all the reply that the prefect could get, and he ceased to hammer at the door of the gym. It was only too evident that the juniors of St. Jim's had taken matters into their own hands.

CHAPTER 5.

A School Trial.

LEVISON stood among the crowd of fellows in the gymnasium. His face was pale and his eyes glinting, but he did not look afraid. He had been handled somewhat roughly in his transit from the sanatorium to the gym., but he was not in fear of violence now. The intentions of the juniors were more serious than that. A ragging would not meet the case. Tom Merry had announced that if the Head would not expel the cad of the Fourth the juniors of St. Jim's would do it, and wild as the idea seemed, the fellows were in deadly earnest about it. For a fellow to be expelled by other fellows was certainly an innovation, but Tom Merry & Co. had made up their minds about it. There was no hint of discord among all the parties into which the juniors were usually divided. The Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 shared the leadership of the School House juniors, and they were quite in accord over this matter. And Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co., of the New House, had lined up with the School House party. Not a single voice was raised for the cad of the Fourth.

The knocking at the door had ceased; the prefect was gone to consult with the other seniors. Tom Merry & Co. were left to themselves for the time, and Levison was left to them. A bitter sneer came upon the face of Levison as they gathered round him. He was keeping his nerve wonderfully well.

"You'll have the masters here soon, Tom Merry," he said, between his teeth. "You are talking about expelling me. You are more likely to get expelled yourself for yanking a fellow out of bed in the sanatorium."

"I think any of the masters would see that you were only malingering if they could see you now," retorted Tom Merry. "You can't keep up the humbug about being ill."

"Wathah not, you wascal!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"The Head has announced that I am not to be sacked," he said. "Dr. Holmes can't go back on his word, whether I was spoofing or not."

"We're going to save him the trouble," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! We're goin' to expel you ourselves, you uttah wottah!"

"You can't do it!"

"Can't we?" said Figgins wrathfully. "You'll see! I propose that we give the cad a fair trial, and kick him out of school if found guilty—which he will be."

"What rot!" said Fatty Wynn. "We know he's guilty."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll give him a trial, though," said Redfern of the Fourth. "Fair play's a jewel. We want to be able to show the Head that we did everything fair and above board."

"I agwee with my friend Weddy—"

"Hear, hear!" shouted Kangaroo. "Pile in! The sooner the quicker!"

"We shall have the prefects here soon," remarked Manners. "Blow the prefects!"

"Yaas. At a time like this, when the honah of St. Jim's is at stake, we can't afford to considah the pwefects vewy much."

"Or the masters," grinned Bernard Glyn. "We're running this show. If anybody knocks at the door we can't hear them. Nothing like being a little deaf sometimes."

"Good egg!"

"Form the court," said Tom Merry. "We want a judge and jury—"

"I guess we all want to serve on the jury," remarked Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, and there was a shout of assent.

"I suppose you had better select me as judge," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a thoughtful way. "Undah the circs., what is required is a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"Well, it really ought to be a New House chap," said Kerr. "The cock-house of St. Jim's ought to be represented on the Bench—"

"The what?" roared a score of School House voices.

"The cock-house of St. Jim's! You see—"

"Weally, Kerr——"

"Fathead!"

"Bump him!"

Tom Merry raised his hand authoritatively.

"Peace, my children! We don't want to be all day about this. I back up Gussy as judge; he's got all the qualifications——"

"Yaas, wathah! I agwee with Tom Mewwy——"

"Judges are always long-winded, and Gussy is like that, you see," said Tom Merry; "and——"

"Weally, you ass——"

"Gussy's judge," said Redfern. "Carried unanimously—I carry it unanimously myself. You can put me down as prosecuting counsel."

"Hear, hear!"

"We shall want a counsel for the defence," said Tom Merry. "We've got to give the awful rotter every chance. Who's for the defence?"

There were no takers. Nobody wanted the task of defending Levison.

Monty Lowther spoke at last.

"I'll take it on," he said. "There isn't anything to be said for the rotter. But I'll say it if you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gather round," said Tom Merry. "This bench is the judicial seat. Sit down, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The whole giddy crowd is the jury, and I am master of the ceremonies," said Tom Merry. "I appoint Figgins and Blake and Manners and Kangaroo ushers of the court. Their duty is to bump anybody who interrupts the proceedings, and to punch any member of the jury who doesn't find the prisoner guilty. This is going to be a fair trial, or I'll know the reason why!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bring the prisoner forward."

Levison was brought forward.

"The court is now open," said Tom Merry. "H——
Hallo!"

Knock!

"Some blessed prefect at the door!"

"Hailo! It's Railton!"

The voice of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, came clearly through the door to the ears of the crowd in the gym.

"Please open this door, my boys!"

"Don't answer!" whispered Figgins. "We can't cheek Mr. Railton—he's a good sort. But we can't open the door."

"Wathah not!"

"Open this door at once!"

No reply.

"Is Levison there?"

Silence.

"You must take Levison back to the sanatorium."

Dead silence.

"My boys, I hope you do not intend to be disobedient, and compel me to call the Head."

Silence.

Mr. Railton did not speak again. They heard him walk away, and from the windows of the gym, some of the fellows watched him go back to the School House.

"We're in for it now!" said Herries.

"Bai Jove! Do you think he'll call the doctah?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No fear! The Head won't interfere now; he'll be too careful of his dignity to risk being disobeyed," said the hero of the Shell shrewdly. "I don't think the Head's likely to come out. They know we wouldn't have touched Levison if he'd been really ill, and they know we won't hurt the rotter. Go ahead with the proceedings."

"Hear, hear!"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"Gentlemen of St. Jim's, the court is now open. As it is the duty of the pvesidin' judge to make a short speech at the openin' of the assizes, I will now pwoceed to address a few words——"

There was a roar.

"Cut the cackle!"

"Dry up!"

"Weally, gentlemen——"

"The presiding judge having finished his speech, we will now get to business," said Tom Merry.

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye and gave Tom Merry a severe look.

"I have not finished my speech, Tom Mewwy——"

"We'll have the rest another time, then."

"Come down to bizney!" roared Thompson of the Shell.

"Yes, dry up, Gussy, old man!" said D'Arcy minor imploringly. "We didn't come here to listen to you doing vocal exercises, you know."

"Weally, Wally——"

"Pitch it to the prisoner, Mr. Judge!" exclaimed Lawrence. "Guilty or not guilty—that's the conundrum you have to ask him."

"Oh, vewy well! Pwisoner at the bah, do you plead 'Guilty,' or 'Not guilty'?" asked Arthur Augustus, sitting down.

"Oh, rats!" said Levison.

"What?"

"I'm not going to take any notice of this rot!" said Levison. "I'm not going to be tried. You're playing the giddy ox, and you know you can't expel me. Go and eat coke!"

"Weally, pwisonah at the bah——"

"Order!" said Tom Merry. "Ushers of the court, do your duty. Every time the prisoner shows contempt of court he is to be bumped——hard!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Refusing to answer questions put by the judge is contempt of court. Bear that in mind, Levison. Go ahead, Gussy!"

"Pwisonah at the bah, do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Rats!"

"Ushers, go ahead!"

The four ushers of the court seized the prisoner at the bar. Levison roared and struggled, but his struggles were not of much use against four determined juniors.

Bump!

"Yarook!"

Levison, looking dusty and savage, was set upon his feet again, at a sign from Tom Merry.

The ushers of the court looked ready to bump him again at a moment's notice.

"Pwisonah at the bah, are you guilty or not guilty?" asked D'Arcy calmly.

"Ow! Not guilty! Ow!"

"Gentlemen of the jury, the pwisonah at the bah pleads not guilty. Of course, that is all wubbish!"

Monty Lowther jumped up from the stool with which he had been accommodated as counsel for the defence. Monty Lowther was of a humorous turn of mind, and either for that reason, or from a desire to do Levison all the justice that was possible, he spoke up.

"I beg to remind the honourable judge that that remark is off-side," he exclaimed. "It is not in order to characterise the prisoner's plea as rubbish."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Oh, sit down, Monty Lowther!"

"Cheese it!"

"I am here to do my duty by my client," said the counsel for the defence firmly. "I insist that his lordship's remark was not in order."

"His lordship withdraws the remark," said Tom Merry. "Now——"

"But I don't do anythin' of the sort, deah boy!"

"Yes, you do. Get on with the washing."

"Vewy well. Gentlemen of the jury, the pwisonah at the bah pleads not guilty, and the twial will now pwoceed," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity. "The counsel for the pwosecution will open his case."

And Redfern, of the Fourth, opened his case.

CHAPTER 6.

Guilty!

"GENTLEMEN of the jury and your lordship, the prisoner is accused of having forged the hand of

Brooke, of the Fourth, in writing a paper of an insulting character, which he put in Mr. Lathom's desk.

This paper was found by Mr. Lathom, and was supposed to have been written by Brooke. Brooke got the order of the boot, which would have served him right if he had really written the paper. The paper was in reality written by the rotter at the bar—I mean the prisoner at the bar. My first witness is Brooke, of the Fourth."

"Brooke, of the Fourth, stand forward!"

Dick Brooke came forward.

"Did you, or did you not, write the insulting paper that was found in Mr. Lathom's desk in the Fourth Form-room, Brooke?"

"Certainly not!"

"Was it written in your handwriting?"

"Yes."

"Did you show the Head a set of papers upon which Levison was seen practising your hand?"

"Yes."

"Did he admit his guilt in the presence of the Head?"

"Yes."

"Very good. You may stand down, Brooke. Bernard Glyn, of the Shell, is my next witness."

"Glyn! Stand forward!"

The Liverpool lad came up, with his hands in his pockets. Redfern addressed him with great solemnity.

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"You are Glyn, of the Shell?"

Glyn stared.

"Yes, you ass!"

"That is not the way to speak in court," said Redfern severely. "You must answer questions that are put to you. I am confident that his lordship will protect me."

"Yaas, wathah!" his lordship exclaimed. "Pway answah the questions of the honouvable counsel for the pwosecution, deah boy."

"Well, I'm Glyn, of the Shell," said Glyn, with a grunt.

"Did you invent an invisible ink, and try it upon a sheet of paper in Study No. 6 in the School House?"

"Yes, I did."

"Did the invisible ink become visible, afterwards, on the very sheet that was used for the insulting letter to Mr. Lathom?"

"Yes; lots of the fellows saw it."

"You may stand down. Blake, of the Fourth, is my next witness. Are you Blake, of the Fourth?"

"I believe so," said Jack Blake humorously.

"You must not state what you believe. Only matters of fact are accepted as evidence in a court of law. Are you, or are you not, Blake, of the Fourth?"

"I am!"

There was a chuckle from the jury. Redfern frowned.

"Was the sheet of paper upon which Glyn wrote in invisible ink placed in the cupboard in your study in the School House?"

"It was."

"Was it removed from the study afterwards, and before Brooke, who is a day-boy, had come to the school again?"

"Certainly!"

"It was therefore impossible for Brooke to have taken that especial sheet of paper to write upon?"

"Quite impossible."

"You may stand down. Gentlemen of the jury, apart from the fact that the prisoner confessed his guilt in the presence of Dr. Holmes, I claim that the case is completely made out, and I call for a verdict of guilty. I lay my hand upon my heart, gentlemen of the jury, and call for this verdict with complete confidence."

"Hear, hear!" roared the jury.

"Vewy good!" said the judge. "I sentence the pwisonah—"

Monty Lowther jumped up.

"Hold on! You haven't heard the defence yet!"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that! Pway pwoceed, deah boy!"

Monty Lowther coughed behind his hand, not because his throat wanted clearing, but because it seemed a legal sort of thing to do.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, "you have heard the speech of my honourable friend opposite. I hope to smash my honourable friend's case into little pieces. My honourable friend lays his hand upon his heart and calls for a verdict of guilty. I am prepared to lay my hand anywhere, and call upon the jury, as men of sense and good feeling, and respectable fathers of families, to find a verdict of not guilty for my client."

Laughter in court.

"I shall now call my witnesses," said Monty Lowther.

"The first witness is D'Arcy minor, of the Third."

"Stand forward, D'Arcy minor!" called out Tom Merry.

Wally stared.

"But I don't know anything about the giddy case at all!" he exclaimed.

"That is not to the point," said the counsel for the defence.

"Stand forward! Are you D'Arcy, of the Third?"

"Yes; you know I am!"

"Pray do not add comments to your statements, D'Arcy, of the Third. What I know or do not know is not to the point. It is what you know or don't know that we have to deal with. You are D'Arcy minor, of the Third Form, otherwise called Wally?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Did you see the sheet of paper placed in the cupboard in Study No. 6?"

"No, I didn't. I wasn't there."

"I didn't ask you whether you were there, or where you were. It is a matter of no consequence to this Court whether you were there, or cooking herrings stuck on pen-nibs over the Form-room fire. Did you, or did you not, see the sheet of paper placed in Blake's cupboard in the study?"

"No!" roared Wally.

"Very well. Gentlemen of the jury, I leave this to your good sense and good feeling. My learned brother opposite has produced a witness who saw the paper placed in the cupboard. I have produced a witness who didn't see it placed there. I claim that the evidence of Blake is thus neutralised."

"Why, you ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"A TRAITOR IN THE SCHOOL!" is the title of the splendid, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

"Bai Jove!" said the learned judge, in amazement.

"I shall now examine the witnesses for the prosecution," went on the counsel for the defence severely. "In the first place, I require Bernard Glyn."

"Bernard Glyn!" shouted the ushers.

The schoolboy inventor came forward for the second time.

"You are Glyn, of the Shell?"

"Oh, yes."

"You invented an invisible ink?"

"Certainly!"

"You also invented a mechanical dog, which caused a great deal of trouble in the School House till Knox busted it?"

"Yes. It was a jolly good invention, too. I made it—"

"That will do. You may stand down. Gentlemen of the jury, I put it to you that a chap who will invent mechanical dogs is a dangerous lunatic, and his evidence is not to be relied upon!"

"Why, you ass—" roared Bernard Glyn.

"Gentleman of the jury, I have now concluded," said the counsel for the defence, with a great deal of dignity. "I lay my hand upon my heart, and call for a verdict of not guilty with complete confidence."

"Rats!"

"Vewy well! I sentence the pwisonah—"

"Hold on! The jury haven't decided yet!"

"Bai Jove! Gentlemen of the jury, pway considah your verdict. Is the pwisonah at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" roared the jury, with one voice.

"You are all agreed upon that?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Vewy good. Is it time to sentence the wottah now, Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes; pile in!"

"Prisoner at the bah, I sentence you to be expelled from the school you have disgraced, and ordah that you forthwith be conducted from St. Jim's, and nevah allowed to entah its pwecincts again. I wegard you as a howwid wottah. Kick him out!"

"Hurrah!"

And the court broke up.

CHAPTER 7.

Expelled!

TOM MERRY dropped his hand upon Levison's shoulder. The cad of the Fourth gave him a look of hatred.

"You have had a fair trial," said Tom Merry.

"Everybody here knew you were guilty, but we have given you a fair trial, and all the school finds you guilty. You are sentenced to be expelled from St. Jim's!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Expel him!"

"Kick him out!"

Levison gave the shouting crowd a bitter look.

"You can't do it," he said. "You can't kick me out, and you know it. And you'll all get flogged for this, hang you!"

"Weally, you wottah—"

"Gather round!" said Tom Merry. "The prisoner has been sentenced to be expelled. We are going to take him to the railway-station, bung him into a train for London, and see him off!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bai Jove! That's a wippin' ideah!"

"Get to the gates as soon as you can when we leave the gym," said Tom Merry. "We don't want any interference from masters or prefects. We want to do everything in order, and without trouble with the masters if possible. But Levison's got to go!"

"Hear, hear!"

The crowd formed up. Figgins threw open the door, and two hundred juniors marched out, with Levison in their midst. The cad of the Fourth looked wildly round. But there was no escape for him. On all sides the juniors hemmed him in.

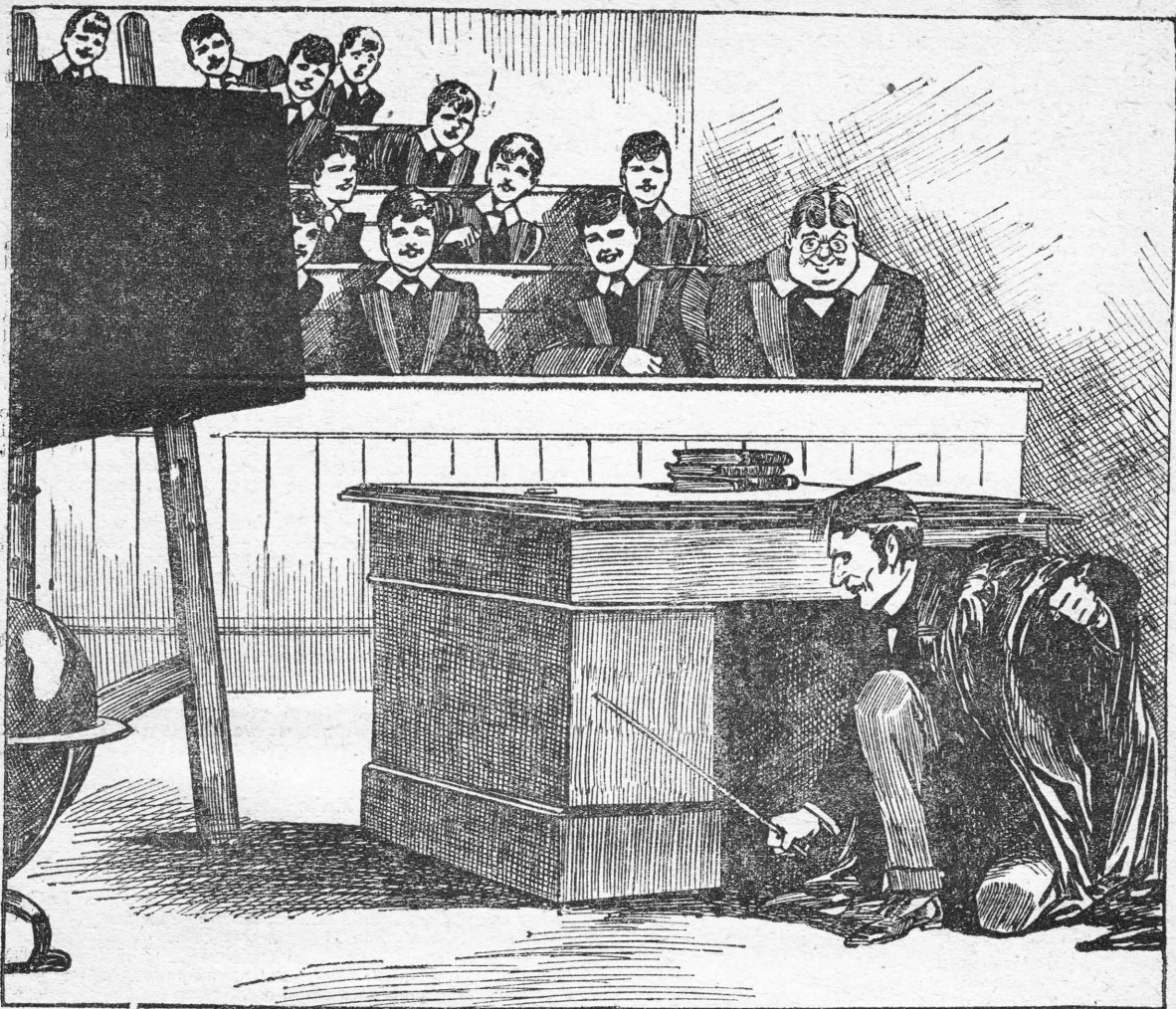
"Look here, Tom Merry!" he said hoarsely. "You can't do it. You know you can't!"

"We're going to do it, whether we can or not!" said Tom Merry coolly. "You're going to leave St. Jim's this afternoon—for good!"

"I—I can't—"

"You've got no choice in the matter. March him on, you fellows!"

Levison was trying to delay, in the hope that some master would come upon the scene. But they hurried him on to the gates. Probably no one outside the crowd knew that the cad of the Fourth was in the midst of it, surrounded as he was by a crowd of others. The juniors streamed out of the open gateway into the road.



"Where is that animal? Which of you boys dared to bring a pig into the Form room? This is outrageous!" Mr. Quelch swung round. The sound appeared to come from under his own desk. He caught up a cane and bent down to look. There was an irrepressible chuckle in the Remove Form, for the juniors knew that the schoolboy ventriloquist was at work. (For this amusing incident see the grand, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled, "A TRAITOR IN THE SCHOOL!" by Frank Richards, which is contained in this week's issue of "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

"Rylcombe!" said Tom Merry. "March!"

The crowd marched on, Levison in their midst.

The cad of the Fourth was very pale now. He had relied entirely upon the Head's announcement that he was not to be expelled. That the St. Jim's juniors would take the law into their own hands in this way he had never dreamed. As the crowd streamed away towards the village, Kildare and Darrel appeared in the gateway, looking after them. But if they saw Levison at all, they realised that it was useless to contend with an excited crowd of a couple of hundred fellows.

Down the lane went the marching crowd, and Levison, whenever he lagged, as he did several times, was helped on by the boots of those behind. They entered the village street, and nearly all Rylcombe turned out at the sight of them. Never had they seen such an excited and numerous array of St. Jim's fellows marching through the old High Street before.

The railway-station was reached, and there Tom Merry raised his hand.

The crowd halted.

"Half a dozen of you can bring Levison in," said Tom Merry. "We don't want to swarm the station. Lowther, Blake, Figgins, Redfern, Reilly, Kangaroo, please take charge of the prisoner."

"Right you are!"

Half-a-dozen juniors marched the pale and furious cad of

the Fourth into the railway-station. Tom Merry stopped at the ticket-office, and felt in his pocket.

"First, single, to London!" he said.

"Change at Wayland!" said the clerk, as he handed it out.

"Thank you!"

"I'm not going!" shouted Levison. "I tell you—"

"Bring him along! The train's due in ten minutes!" said Lowther.

"Now then, all together!" grinned Redfern.

With a shove and a rush, Levison was whirled upon the platform, and he stood there in the midst of his guardians, waiting for the train.

He realised, now, that it was all in deadly earnest; that he had to go.

He began to expostulate and plead; but the juniors turned deaf ears. There was a whistle down the line, and the train came into sight.

"Take your ticket!" said Tom Merry, holding it out.

"I won't!"

"Go without it, then! You're going, anyway!" Tom Merry thrust the ticket into Levison's waistcoat-pocket.

"Keep it or not, as you like."

The train stopped.

Jack Blake opened the door of an empty first-class carriage, and Levison was dragged towards it. On the carriage step he resisted, but he was lifted up and flung bodily into the carriage.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"FIGGY'S FOLLY."

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"Help!" he yelled.

The old porter of Rylcombe came lumbering up.

"Gentlemen—gentlemen!" he exclaimed.

"It's all right," said Tom Merry. "This kid is going to London. We're seeing him off."

"I'm not!" shouted Levison. "It's an outrage! Call the police! I won't go! I—"

"My heye," said the porter, in amazement—"my heye!"

"I'll get out at Wayland!" yelled Levison. "I'll—"

"Oh, will you!" said Tom Merry grimly. "Then we'll see you as far as Wayland, and put you in the express! Tumble in, you chaps!"

The juniors followed Levison into the carriage. Reilly ran back to tell the crowd outside where Tom Merry & Co. were gone. The rest sat in the carriage round Levison. The guard was already waving his flag.

"Stand back, there!"

The porter, shrugging his shoulders hopelessly, as if to say that he considered it no business of his, slammed the carriage door.

The local ran out of the station.

Levison sat white and furious.

The run to Wayland Junction was a short one, and the local train was timed to catch the London express.

As the local stopped at the junction, the juniors crowded out on the platform, with Levison in their midst.

The cad of the Fourth cast a wild glance round.

At the junction he had a faint hope of obtaining help and getting out of the hands of the juniors who had come to see him off to the Metropolis.

But he had no chance.

Blake and Figgins held an arm each, in a grasp of iron, and the other fellows kept close round him, and he was plainly warned that if he yelled he would get hurt.

The express was waiting on the opposite platform.

In two minutes the cad of the Fourth was bundled into an empty carriage, and the juniors closed the door upon him, and stood guarding it.

Levison picked himself up off the floor of the carriage, dusty, breathless, and furious. He turned a livid face upon the crowd of juniors at the door.

"I'll make you pay for this!" he shrieked.

"Get back! The train's going!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors stood back.

The express was moving, and it gathered speed as it glided out of the station. The juniors watched it go. The white, furious face of Levison was seen at the carriage window as the express raced away down the line.

The last the juniors saw of him was the pale face and the shaking fist from the carriage window.

Then the express disappeared.

"Gone!" said Tom Merry.

"Expelled!" grinned Redfern.

"And now," said Figgins, seriously, "we've got to go back and face the music."

"Yes; come on!"

And Tom Merry & Co. left the station, to walk back through the woods to St. Jim's and "face the music." Undoubtedly, after what they had done, there would be some music to face.

CHAPTER 8.

The Head's Decision!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY met Tom Merry & Co. as they came in at the gates of St. Jim's in the summer dusk.

"All sewene?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes."

"He's gone!"

"He's going to London at the rate of fifty or sixty miles an hour just now," said Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove, that's good!"

"Anything happened while we've been gone?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Nothin', dear boys. Only the pwefects are vewy watty, and Mr. Wailton has been lookin' awfly solemn. I haven't seen the Head."

"Does he know about our sacking Levison?"

"I don't know."

Toby, the School House page, came running across the quadrangle.

"Master Merry!"

"Hallo!"

"The 'Ead wants to see Master Merry at once."

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Now for it!" he muttered. "I'm in for it, you chaps. But he can't eat me, anyway."

"Hahn't we better all come?" asked Figgins. "You're jolly well not going to face it alone. We're all in this. It's a giddy school rag."

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"A TRAITOR IN THE SCHOOL!" is the Title of the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

"Yaas, wathah! I am bound to come. As havin' taken a leadin' hand in the pwoceedin's, I am bound to see the Head about it."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Better wait till the Head sends for you," he said. "He's sent for me now, and I had better go alone. You fellows will get it in the neck, too, in your turn."

"Wight-ho!"

Tom Merry followed the School House page across the quad. The excitement of the "sacking" of Levison had died down now, and a good many of the juniors were feeling a little nervous as to the result. Tom Merry was not nervous, but he was very grave. He knew that there might be trouble—very serious trouble, but he was prepared to face it with courage.

He knocked at the door of the Head's study and entered. Dr. Holmes was there, with Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House. Both of them fixed their eyes upon Tom Merry in a somewhat disconcerting way.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, Merry," said the Head gravely. "This is a very serious matter. It appears that you were the leader in the disturbance to-day."

"I had a lot to do with it, certainly, sir. But we were all in it. The whole school had its back up about Levison, sir."

"You have taken a boy who was under the doctor's orders from the sanatorium."

"He was quite well, sir. We knew that he was spoofing, and he admitted it himself when we had him in the gym."

"What have you done with him?"

"Expelled him, sir."

The Head started.

"What!"

"We gave him a fair trial, sir, before the whole of the Lower School," said Tom Merry. "Then we sacked him. He was guilty of forging the handwriting of another chap, and nearly getting him sacked. You were going to expel him, sir, but he spoofed—ahem!—deceived you into believing that he was ill. He wasn't ill, so we took it that the original sentence held good, sir."

"Where is he now?"

"In the train, sir."

"The—the train!" said the Head dazedly.

"Yes, sir."

"W-w-what train?"

"The London express from Wayland, sir."

Dr. Holmes half-rose to his feet.

"Do you mean to say, Merry, that you have placed Levison in the express train for London, and sent him away?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry respectfully.

"Bless my soul," the Head exclaimed, "I—I have never heard of such a thing! You have actually sent this boy away from school on your own initiative."

"Yes, sir."

"I—I never heard of such a thing," said the Head, caressing his chin thoughtfully with his hand. "Do you know, Merry, that many headmasters would expel you from the school for taking the law into your own hands in this manner?"

"I hope not, sir."

"And do you not see," went on the Head quietly, "that this defiance of authority can have only one result. Whatever I might have intended to do with Levison, if, as you say, he was deceiving us about his illness, I can do only one thing now—have him brought back to the school, and keep him here in order to show all St. Jim's that the headmaster's word is law in the school, and must be obeyed."

"Oh, sir!"

"That is the inevitable result of the action of the Lower School," said the Head severely. "You have placed it out of my power to expel Levison, if I wished. Law and order must be observed, and Levison must return—and stay."

Tom Merry was silent. He understood how the Head looked at the matter, and he realised that certainly the action of the Lower School had been somewhat injudicious and hasty. It looked as if they had defeated their own object by taking the law into their own hands, yet he was not sorry.

"If I did not sympathise with you, to a certain extent, I should punish you all very severely," the Head continued. "Had this been an ordinary boy you used so, I should have expelled all the ringleaders in this riot, and caned all their followers."

ANSWERS

"We shouldn't have done it to an ordinary fellow, sir."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"No; I realise that. As I have said, I sympathise with you to a great extent. Levison was guilty of infamous conduct, and I quite understand your disgust and contempt for him. It has carried you too far, and that was wrong, but I understand your feelings, which in themselves were quite just. But the boys of this school cannot be allowed to override the authority of their headmaster. You should surely be able to see that, Merry. You are a sensible boy."

"Yes, I see that, sir."

"I must, therefore, recall Levison, although I do not wish him at St. Jim's any more than you do," said Dr. Holmes quietly. "You have forced me to take this attitude. As for what you and the others have done, I shall deal with it as leniently as I can, but I cannot pass it over unpunished. There would be an end to all order and discipline if the boys were allowed to act in this way. I expect, therefore, a public apology from all the boys who were engaged in this absurd enterprise. To-morrow morning the school will be assembled in Big Hall before lessons, and every boy who has been concerned in this affair must apologise to me in public. Any boy who refuses to do so will leave St. Jim's by the first train."

"Oh, sir!"

"I have thought the matter over, and consulted with Mr. Railton, and he is quite in agreement with me."

"Quite so, sir," said Mr. Railton.

"Every boy will apologise, and promise to be guilty of nothing of the sort again," said the Head, "otherwise he will leave the school at once. I shall adhere to this decision, even if I have to expel from the school the whole of the Shell and the Fourth Form. You know me well enough by this time, Merry, to know that I shall keep my word. I would rather the whole school should be broken up than that my authority should be taken out of my hands."

"Yes, sir."

"You may go now, and acquaint the others with my decision, and you have to-night to reflect upon the matter," said the Head. "That is all."

"Very well, sir."

And Tom Merry, with a very downcast face, quitted the Head's study.

CHAPTER 9.

Toe the Line!

THE juniors were waiting in a crowd to hear the result of Tom Merry's interview with the Head. A chorus of inquiries greeted him as he came out into the passage. His expression told the juniors that matters were not going well.

"Come into the common-room," he said.

And they crowded into the junior common-room. Knox, the prefect, met them on the way, and he was injudicious enough to stop and speak.

"You young ruffians!" he exclaimed. "You are going to pay for your insolence now. I hope the Head will flog you all from one end of the Lower School to the other."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Blake.

"Shut up, Knox!"

"Get out!"

"We're going to be ragged by the Head," said Tom Merry, between his teeth, "but we're not going to be ragged by you, Knox. Hold your tongue!"

"You young hooligan—"

"Bump him!" yelled Blake.

"Why, you—you— Oh!—I—ah!—oh!"

Bump!

Knox was left gasping on the floor as the juniors crowded on. He sprang up, red with rage, and clenched his fists, and seemed about to rush into the crowd, hitting out, but he thought better of it. The juniors of St. Jim's looked in a dangerous mood—as, indeed, they were. As Tom Merry said, they would put up with ragging from the Head, but they were not at all inclined to stand anything of the sort from Knox of the Sixth. Kildare and the other prefects, wiser than Knox, let them severely alone, till they should have quieted down.

The juniors crowded into the common-room, and the door was closed. Then Tom Merry was called upon to explain what had passed in the Head's study.

"Let's have it, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "Let's hear the giddy worst, and get it ovah! Was the Head vewy watty?"

"Well, no. But—it's a serious bizney, you chaps."

"We know that!" grunted Herries. "What's the verdict?"

"We've all got to turn up in Hall after prayers to-morrow morning, and apologise to the Head before the whole school, and promise never to do the same again."

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We won't!"

"Phew!"

"But what about Levison?" demanded a dozen voices.

"He's coming back."

"What!"

"Shame!"

"We won't have him back!"

Tom Merry waited for silence.

"I'm afraid there's no help for it, you chaps," he said.

"As a matter of fact, we have piled it on a bit too thick. We can't expect the Head to let the juniors in a school run the whole show. He's really letting us off lightly. He might have expelled a dozen of us and flogged the rest. Some headmasters would. Every chap who refuses to join in the public apology to-morrow morning will have to leave the school by the first train!"

"Oh!"

"It would be a bit difficult to explain to one's people at home, you see," said Tom Merry. "As a matter of fact, if any of us chose to be sacked, our people would send us back to apologise."

"I—suppose so!" said Figgins.

"And some of us can't go, anyway," said Tom Merry. "Reddy, for instance, is here on a scholarship, and he can't afford to lose it."

"Just so!" said Redfern.

"Besides that, I must say I think we owe the Head an apology for disregarding his authority," said Tom Merry. "I don't mind that so much. It's Levison coming back that worries me. The Head explained that he's bound to have Levison back now, to show the whole school that he's headmaster, and not us."

"Bai Jove! There's somethin' in that, you know."

"How we're to stand Levison, I don't know," said Tom Merry. "But we've got to stand him, or else it's the sack for us."

"The Head can't sack the whole Lower School!" exclaimed Thompson, of the Shell. "I'm for holding out, and chancing it!"

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"The Head has told me that every fellow who refuses to promise will be sacked, even if the whole of the Fourth and the Shell have to go," he said. "You know he'll keep his word. I know it's a rotten position for us—we were quite right to kick Levison out. I'm not sorry for that—I'm sorry we had to back up against the Head."

"We can't have him back!"

"We won't!"

"We'll have another barring out!" yelled Pratt, of the Fourth. "We barred out Ratty in the New House, and brought him to his knees. We'll bar the Head out!"

"Hurray!"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry. "We can't bar the Head out. We've got no quarrel with him, except that he doesn't want the Shell to run the whole school. My children, it's time for us to pull in our horns. I don't like it any more than you do; but it's a pill we've got to swallow. I hate to have Levison back as much as you do, but we've got to have him."

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

"We won't!"

"Shame!"

"Well, think it out for yourselves," said Tom Merry. "I'm not backing up against the Head, for one. He's a good old sport, and he's been jolly lenient with us over this. It would be rotten ungrateful to give him any more trouble. As for Levison, if he comes back we're not bound to speak to him. He may have the decency enough to keep away, too."

"No fear!"

"That's not likely."

"Well, if he comes back, we can send him to Coventry," said Tom Merry. "The Head can't interfere with that, and if he did, we should be within our rights in backing up against him, and I'd be the first to do it. Levison will be a giddy pariah—not a fellow need speak a word to him. I think that will make him glad to go, of his own accord, in the long run."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We won't have him!" roared a score or more of truculent voices.

"Well, the Head's given us the night to think it over in," said Tom Merry. "Every fellow can decide for himself. That's all!"

And the meeting broke up in great excitement. Most of the juniors realised clearly enough that the rag had come to a natural end, and that it was time to toe the line. But the more truculent spirits announced their intention of holding

out, and kicking Levison out of the school if he ventured to return. How the matter would end there was at present no telling

CHAPTER 10. Levison's Return.

HERE was much excited talk among the juniors of St. Jim's that evening. In every study in both Houses the matter was discussed and re-discussed, but the passing of time had the anticipated effect of quieting the juniors, and gradually they came round to Tom Merry's view of the case. Defiance of the Head was all very well in theory, but being expelled from the school, and facing the people at home, was a less pleasant prospect when looked at closely. Some of the fellows still declared that they would not apologise, and would not promise to let Levison alone. But when the morning came, and they were put to the test, it was probable that they would line up with the rest of the Lower School.

Dr. Short came from Rylcombe in the evening to visit his patient again, and was astounded to find him gone. The little medico almost tore his hair. He announced that he would not be responsible for the consequences, and pooh-poohed the mere suggestion that Levison had been deceiving him as to the state of his head. Dr. Short explained in words of four or five syllables the complications that might ensue, and left St. Jim's in a great rage. But the fellows who heard his verdict were not alarmed. They knew perfectly well that Levison was not ill, and that there would not be any complications.

There was still a feeling of unrest in the school when bedtime came, and the boys went to their dormitories.

But sleep brought calmness. When the rising-bell clanged out in the morning St. Jim's rose as usual, and the boys thought with something like amazement of the wild excitement of the previous day.

After prayers the school were assembled in Big Hall, and the fellows who had talked highest about resistance to the bitter end were the first to obey the prefects' orders to assemble in Hall.

It was quite evident that the matter had sputtered out like a firework, and that the school would resume the even tenour of its way.

When the Head entered by the upper door there was a deep silence. Dr. Holmes gazed over the crowded hall, and spoke in his calm, quiet tones.

"All the boys concerned in the riot yesterday will come forward and apologise for their conduct," he said. "They will promise that there shall be no recurrence of it. Any boy who refuses leaves the school at once."

There was a dead pause.

Then Tom Merry walked quietly forward. He had been the leader in the outbreak, and he felt that it was "up" to him to play the leader now when the rioters had to eat humble pie. He advanced up the hall, and his chums followed him, and then the rest of the rioters came into line.

Tom Merry meant to express his regret for what had happened, because he felt that it was right to do so, and there was no shame in his face as he stood before the Head.

"We are sorry we disregarded proper authority yesterday, sir," said Tom Merry, in a clear voice. "We know that that was wrong. We shall not interfere with Levison when he returns to the school."

"Yaas, wathah! Undah the cirocs., sir, we feel that we owe you an apology," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Very well," said Dr. Holmes. "Do you all say the same?"

"Yes, sir!"

There was no dissentient voice.

"I am glad of this," said the Head. "I should have been very sorry to compel any of you to leave. The feelings that actuated you, I know, were very right and proper. You were disgusted with Levison's wicked conduct. But now that you have had time to reflect, I am sure that you realise that you did wrong in taking the matter into your own hands. Levison will return to the school to-day, and it is your own action that has made that necessary. The matter is now ended. Dismiss!"

And the school marched out.

The boys went very quietly into their respective Form-rooms.

Morning lessons passed off as usual, or more quietly than usual.

The juniors seemed to have expended all their exuberance in the riot of the previous afternoon.

The return of Levison was a bitter pill for them to swallow, but, as Blake said, they had to get it down, and it was no good making a wry face about it.

Levison had not come yet, and the juniors wondered when he would appear. Dr. Holmes, they knew, had written to his father explaining the matter, and it was to be supposed that

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Levison was having a far from pleasant time with his people. He had had to leave Greyfriars, his previous school, for some rascally conduct, and so any excuses he might make for the trouble at St. Jim's were not likely to satisfy his father. Blake expressed a gentle hope that his pater would give him a record licking before he came back.

"We'll meet him when he comes, and give him a warm reception," said Gore. "Suppose we all stand round and hiss the cad?"

"And bump him!" said Glyn.

"No, no!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It's better to take it quietly. We've agreed to let the brute alone, and the best thing we can do is to send him to Coventry."

"Yaas, wathah! That would only be playin' the game."

It was late in the afternoon when the junior who had been kicked out of the school returned.

He came in the station hack from Rylcombe, and came up the steps of the School House, with a sneering smile on his face.

Many juniors saw him come, and the word was passed round that Levison was back again, and a crowd gathered to look at him.

The lesson he had had did not seem to have had much effect upon the cad of the Fourth. He was evidently triumphing in his return.

There were some hisses from the crowd, but for the most part the juniors took Tom Merry's advice and let him alone.

Levison was called into the Head's study at once.

He found Dr. Holmes there, and his sneering grin vanished as he entered the presence of the Head. Dr. Holmes's face was very hard.

"Levison," he said, "I have allowed you to return to the school. I should have been better pleased if your father had kept you away; but he has decided to send you back, and I permit you to take your old place here."

"Yes, sir," said Levison.

"That does not mean that I condone your conduct. You have acted infamously. But it is necessary, for the discipline of the school, that you should be allowed to return. But you will be well watched, Levison, and I warn you plainly that if you are guilty of any transgression in the future you will be instantly expelled, without the possibility of return."

"Very well, sir."

"If this lesson has not been lost upon you, you will make some attempt to amend your conduct," said the Head. "I hope that will be the case."

"I will try, sir."

"I hope you will—it will be better for you. Words cannot express the disgust and scorn I feel for the baseness you have been guilty of."

Levison winced a little. The Eastern proverb says that contempt will pierce even the shell of the tortoise—and even the cad of the Fourth, perhaps, was not quite so thick-skinned as a tortoise.

"I am very sorry, sir," said Levison, in a low voice. "I know that I did wrong, sir, but I didn't realise it at the time. I—I think I should have confessed, sir, even if I hadn't been found out."

The Head's face softened a little.

"I hope you are speaking the truth, Levison. Certainly the contempt of all your schoolfellows should show you that you were foolish as well as wicked to act as you did. I hope to see signs of amendment in you. Whether you will ever be able to set yourself right with your schoolfellows, I do not know; but I advise you to try. Repent of your wickedness, and try to make the boys understand that you have repented. That is the best advice I can give you. You may go."

"Thank you, sir."

And Levison went.

Outside, in the passage, a bitter sneer came upon the face of the cad of the Fourth. The Head's words had made but little impression upon his hard heart. Repentance did not come easily to Levison; he was more likely to depend upon cunning and trickery to help him out of his difficulties.

In the Lower Hall he met a crowd of juniors, who stared at him, and there were a few hisses. The Terrible Threo were standing in the doorway, and Levison came up to them, with a derisive grin on his face.

"I've come back, you see," he remarked.

Tom Merry looked at him.

"Yes, I see that," he said.

"I told you I should."

"Yes, I know."

The quietness of Tom Merry's answer surprised Levison. He had expected impotent anger and threats, and he was amazed and a little uneasy.

"Well, you're taking it jolly quietly," he said.

"We've promised the Head not to touch you again."

"I suppose he would have sacked you if you hadn't!" sneered Levison.

"Exactly!"

"You won't get rid of me so jolly easily!" said Levison. "I'm here again, and I'm going to stick here. You fellows will have to make the best of it."

"We're going to make the best of it," said Tom Merry—"and the best we can make of it is to send you to Coventry. Not a fellow will speak to you. And you will oblige me by not speaking to me again."

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know that I want to," he said.

"Then that will suit both of us."

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Enough said!"

"But, I say, I tell you—"

The Terrible Three turned their backs upon him, and walked away. Levison gritted his teeth with rage. He turned, and found Jack Blake at his elbow.

"Blake—" he began.

Blake walked away without speaking.

Levison clenched his hands. He had triumphed over his enemies by returning to the school, but his triumph, after all, was a hollow one, and he was beginning to realise that.

CHAPTER 11.

In Coventry!

LEVISON was somewhat at a loss. With all his keenness, he had not expected this new development. He had expected that he would receive black looks on his return, and perhaps some ragging, and then that matters would go on as usual. But that was evidently not to be the case. The juniors of St. Jim's had been compelled to receive him back among them. But they would have nothing to do with him. He was as a pariah, and there was no one to give him a word.

He spoke to several fellows, but he found that the sentence of "Coventry" was being rigidly enforced.

Fellows stared him in the face and turned their backs when he addressed them, and not from one of them did he get a word in reply.

He went up to his study in a state of suppressed rage and uneasiness. His study in the Fourth Form passage was shared by Mellish and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. Mellish had always been Levison's close associate, but he had avoided him since his return to St. Jim's. He had no desire to share Levison's punishment, though he had had a hand in the act that had brought it about.

Lumley-Lumley and Mellish were beginning their preparation when Levison came into the study. Lumley-Lumley looked up at him and frowned.

"Well?" said Levison, with a sneer. "Ain't I welcome in my own study?"

Lumley-Lumley did not reply.

He rose from the table, collected up his books, and left the study without a word.

Mellish half rose, as if to follow his example. Levison, snapping his teeth, pushed his old associate back into his chair.

"You don't go!" he said.

Mellish stammered.

"I—I—really, Levison you know, I—"

"Sit where you are!" Levison closed the door after Lumley-Lumley. "Now, Mellish, we'll have this out. The fellows are sending me to Coventry, because of that affair over Brooke."

Mellish nodded.

"Are you thinking of joining in it?"

"I—I don't want to, but it's got to be. If I speak to you they'll send me to Coventry, too," said Mellish.

"So you are going to turn your back on an old chum?"

"I don't know about an old chum," said Mellish, with a show of spirit. "You never showed me much friendship excepting to suit yourself."

"And the same with you, Mellish. We've been useful to one another," said Levison. "Now, look here, the fellows can play this fool's game as long as they like, and I can't stop them. But I'm not having it from you."

"I've got no choice in the matter," said Mellish sullenly.

"You've got to stick to me."

"I can't!"

"Have you forgotten that you had a hand in the affair with Brooke?" asked Levison unpleasantly. "You stole his impot. from the Form-room to get me a copy of his writing, and you got his paper out of Study No. 6."

"You made me do it; I didn't want to."

"If you turn your back on me with the rest, I'll jolly soon let the fellows know that you were in the game with me."

"I—I can't stick to you. I'd like to, but—but I can't. I should be ragged by all the Fourth if I did."

The door of the study opened. A dozen juniors appeared

in the passage, and some of them came into the room. Levison stared at them angrily.

"Can't you knock at a fellow's door before coming in?" he demanded.

No one answered.

"Mellish," said Tom Merry quietly, "that fellow is sent to Coventry. Anybody who speaks to him will be sent to Coventry, too, by the whole school. Lumley-Lumley is going to do his prep. in Reilly's study, and you can go into Gore's study for the present, if you like. We've arranged it. Levison can have this room to himself. If you choose to stick to him, you'll be cut by everybody else. You can take your choice."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mellish hesitated.

"Well, what's your answer?" asked Tom Merry sharply.

"I—I—I shall do as the rest of you do, of course!" stammered Mellish.

Levison broke in.

"I haven't told you fellows before," he said, "but Mellish was in the game with me. He knew what I was doing all along, and he helped me. He stole the sheet of paper belonging to Brooke out of Study No. 6."

"Bai Jove!"

"He made me do it!" said Mellish, pale to the lips. "I never wanted to. I objected all along, and I was a fool to give in! He made me do it!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I've no doubt you helped Levison," he said. "You are cad enough, I know that."

"Yaas, wathah! You must admit that you are a wotten cad, Mellish, deah boy!"

"But Levison was the worst of the two, and I know it was his idea, and he did most of it," went on Tom Merry; "and what you did you did under his influence, I'm sure of that. If you leave Levison alone now, we'll say nothing about your share of the matter. Levison was the one to blame."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison ground his teeth. No one had answered his speech.

"You can share Gore's study for the present," said Tom Merry. "Take your things out now, and we'll see that Levison doesn't interfere with you."

"All right," muttered Mellish.

He began to collect up his books.

Levison watched him with a furious face. His betrayal of his associate had done him no good. The juniors had suspected before that Mellish had had a hand in his rascality. But they knew that Levison was the leader, and Mellish a more or less reluctant follower of the cad of the Fourth.

Mellish took his books and his other belongings under his arm, and several of the juniors lent him a hand to carry away his property.

He left the study.

"So you're deserting me?" said Levison.

"Don't answer!" said Glyn.

And Mellish did not answer. Levison clenched his hands. Mellish went down the passage, and the juniors followed him, leaving Levison alone in the study.

Alone!

Levison remained standing where he was for a long time.

His face was pale, and his brow was wrinkled in painful thought. Although he was, probably, incapable of friendship, he could feel the slight of being cut, especially by a fellow like Mellish, who had always been his humble follower. He was alone—abandoned! While he remained at St. Jim's, he had the prospect unchanging before him—solitude! He was not of a cordial or friendly nature; but he did not like solitude—he was seldom sufficiently amused by his own company. In company he generally made himself unpleasant; but he did not like being alone.

What was he to do?

He was no fool. He realised quite clearly that this was no storm that would blow over, leaving affairs to take their usual course, in a day or two. His sentence was for always—so long as he stayed at St. Jim's. The juniors had not been able to prevent his return, but they would not associate with him; they would not speak a word to him. They would go on their way as if he were not there.

Levison, as he realised what it would mean to him, felt his heart sink.

For the first time, something like regret and repentance came into his obdurate heart. If he could not feel the wickedness of having sinned, he could feel at least the inconvenience of having to suffer the consequences.

He realised now, as he stood in the lonely study thinking it over, that with all his cunning, all his self-confidence, he had been a fool.

If he had played the game, this would not have happened. He had sneered and derided at the mere idea of playing the

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game if it did not suit his purpose. Why should he trouble to live up to rules that he had not laid down? That was how he put it to himself. And he had never troubled to do so.

And this was the result.

The scorn of everybody who knew him, and solitude! He had not chosen to play the game, and was left to play a lone hand by himself.

What a fool he had been!

It was a difficult confession for the cad of the Fourth to make, even to himself—that all his cunning, all his trickery, all his deep tactics, had been folly—worse than folly! The biggest duffer in the School House had done better than he had! Even a muff like Skimpole, whose brain powers Levison heartily despised, who lived in a series of blunders without end, had never been in danger of getting himself into a fix like this. Even an ass like Pratt or Hancock had too much sense to make himself the object of hatred to the whole crowd of fellows whom he had to live among.

The reflection was bitter, but perhaps it did Levison good. Even if he did not repent, it was something for him to learn that honesty was the best policy, and that it did not pay to be a rascal.

Could he change?

He did not want to change. But if it was only by a complete change that he could regain what he had lost, he felt that he could make the effort. But even so, probably it was too late. He might repent now; he might resolve to turn over a new leaf and "play the game," but who would believe in him now? Who would believe that his repentance was anything but another of his endless cunning tricks?

CHAPTER 12.

Under Punishment.

TOM MERRY & CO. had marked out the course they intended to follow, and they did not depart from it. Levison, of the Fourth, was in Coventry, and he remained there.

The day after his return to St. Jim's, the cad of the Fourth made several attempts to break through the grim silence which was his punishment. But he failed every time.

Fellows he spoke to turned their backs without answering, and Levison gave it up at last. He even tried to get on speaking terms with fags in the Third and Second, but fags even would have nothing to do with him.

When he looked into the Third Form-room Wally hurled a book at him—without a word, and Levison departed. And Levison realised more and more that his success had been a hollow one. He was back at St. Jim's, but he might as well have been upon Robinson Crusoe's island.

And Levison thought the matter over very carefully. On Friday the grim silence towards him continued unbroken. Fellows chatting among themselves suddenly became dumb if Levison ventured a remark. If he joined a group, the group broke up at once. If he looked into a study, he was pushed out—in silence.

On Friday evening Levison knocked at Tom Merry's door, when the Terrible Three were doing their preparation.

Tom Merry did not know, of course, who was at the door, and he called out in his cheery tones: "Come in!"

Levison came in.

The Terrible Three looked up from their work, and Monty Lowther pointed silently to the door. Levison did not take the hint. He came into the study, closed the door, and stood looking at the chums of the Shell.

Monty Lowther's finger remained pointing. Levison took no notice of it, and Lowther ceased to point, and picked up a cricket-stump.

"Hold on!" said Levison, his cheek flushing. "I've got something to say to you fellows—something important!"

Tom Merry shook his head. "I know I've been a rotter," said Levison desperately. "I did a rotten thing in planting that paper on Brooke! But I'm sorry!"

Another shake of the head.

"I'm really sorry!" said Levison. "Dash it all, can't a sinner repent? I'm sorry for what I did, and I'm willing to beg Brooke's pardon!"

Shake.

"Don't you believe me?"

Shake.

"Look here, I'm giving it to you straight!" said Levison miserably. "I've had a rotten time since I came back! I want this to end. I'm willing to do anything to show that I'm really sorry!"

Shake.

"You mean to keep me in Coventry?"

Nod.

"All the time I stay here?"

Another nod.

"Even the rest of the term, and after?"

Nod.

"And you won't let me off, even if I say I'm sorry?"

Shake.

"Hang you, then!" said Levison.

And he went out of the study, and slammed the door with a slam that ran the length of the Shell passage.

Monty Lowther shrugged his shoulders. Manners went sedately on with his work. Tom Merry looked a little uneasy.

"I—I wonder if he's really sorry?" remarked Tom Merry, in a tentative sort of way.

"Rot!" said Monty Lowther. "He's only spoofing."

"H'm! I suppose he is."

"Of course he is!" said Manners. "He would laugh at us in his sleeve if we took him at his word. He would congratulate himself on having pulled the wool over our eyes once more."

"Yes, I suppose you're right."

"Haven't we let him off lots of times?" demanded Monty Lowther warmly. "When he played that rotten game on Figgins, and led Cousin Ethel to believe that Figgy had looked at an exam. paper in Ratty's desk, we ought to have sent him to Coventry, but we were too soft. Then there was the time he pinched Glyn's letter with a patent specification in it. And lots of other times. We've been too soft, and he's taken advantage of it. When a chap shows time and again that he's a hopeless cad, it's time to come down heavy. If we let up on him now, he would laugh at us."

"Yes; you're right, Monty!"

But Tom Merry sighed as he bent over his work again. He had a very tender heart, and he was only too willing to believe that Levison was sincerely repentant. But it was impossible to trust the cad of the Fourth.

Levison went slowly down the Shell passage. Was he really repentant? He hardly knew, himself. But he knew that he was willing to say or do anything to escape from the punishment of his offence.

Dick Brooke, of the Fourth, was coming out of Mr. Lathom's study as Levison reached the lower passage. Brooke was a day-boy, and should have gone home, but he had stayed behind for extra tuition, which the Form-master was giving him. Brooke was working for an examination, and Mr. Lathom was helping him to prepare for it.

Brooke glanced at Levison and passed on, but Levison quickened his pace, and caught him by the sleeve.

"Just a word with you, Brooke."

Brooke shook his head, and coloured awkwardly. He did not want to be hard on Levison, though he had been the most injured by Levison's treachery. But he had agreed with the rest to send Levison to Coventry, and he did not intend to depart from it.

"Look here, Brooke, I'm sorry for what I did," muttered Levison. "I know that it was caddish. I'm really sorry. You believe me?"

Brooke did not reply. "I'd do anything to make it up to you," said Levison.

"You've only got to say what I can do, and I'll do it."

Brooke shook his head. "You don't want me to do anything?"

Shake!

"A word from you would help to set me right with the

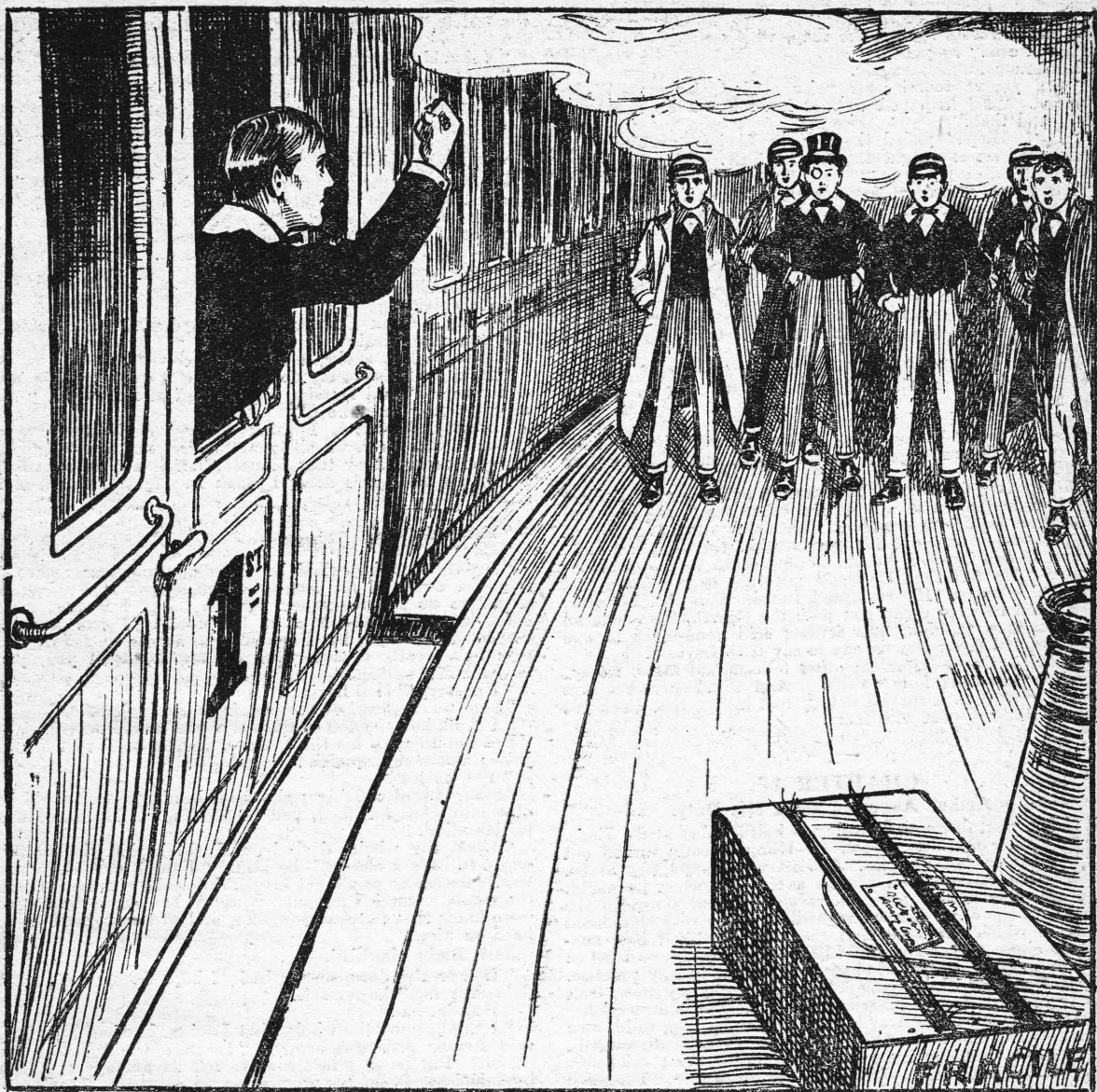
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The train gathered speed as it glided out of the station. Levison picked himself up off the floor of the carriage, dusty, breathless, and furious. He turned a livid face upon the crowd of juniors who had expelled him from St. Jim's. "I'll make you pay for this!" he shrieked, shaking his fist. (See Chapter 7.)

fellows," pursued Levison. "I know I don't deserve it, but you might pity a chap who's down."

Brooke was silent.

"Don't you believe in a chap repenting when he's done wrong, and been punished for it?" said Levison.

"Yes," said Brooke, breaking silence at last. "I hope you're really sorry, and I'm sorry for you, but the whole school has agreed to send you to Coventry, and I stand in with the rest. You ought not to have come back. Any decent chap would have stayed away, under the circumstances."

"I had to come back; my pater sent me."

"You ought to write to him, then, to take you away again."

"He wouldn't," said Levison miserably. "I was sacked from my last school, Greyfriars. If I get sacked from here, the pater says he won't send me to a public school again."

"You ought to have thought of that before. Hang it all, Levison, people have been sent to prison for doing what you did! You've got off jolly easily, and you can't expect fellows to speak to a chap who's forged another's handwriting. You oughtn't to speak to me; you nearly got me sacked from the school."

"I know I did, but I should have owned up, I think."

"I can't believe that."

Brooke walked away. Levison muttered something between his teeth, and stood in the passage miserable and undecided. Where was he to turn now? He walked out into the dusty quadrangle. Most of the juniors were indoors now, but Levison caught sight of Jameson, of the Third, a New House fag, outside the tuck-shop. Jameson was regarding with hungry eyes an array of jam tarts, which a temporary want of funds did not allow him to sample. Levison tapped him on the shoulder. Jameson looked round at him, and drew away, and took out his handkerchief, and in a very deliberate way wiped his shoulder with it where Levison had touched it, as if to wipe away some contamination.

Levison reddened, but he affected to take no notice of the action.

"Like some jam tarts, Jameson?" he asked, in a very friendly way.

Jameson would certainly have liked some jam tarts, but he did not reply to Levison. He did not want to be treated by the cad of the Fourth.

"I'm in funds," said Levison. "Come in, and I'll stand you half a dozen."

Jameson turned his back.

Levison's eyes burned, and he reached out and boxed the fag's ears with savage force.

Jameson reeled against the shop, with a sharp cry.

"You cad!" he yelled.

Levison grinned savagely.

"Oh, you've found your voice at last, have you?" he sneered. "I'll help you to find it again. Take that, and that, and that!"

"Ow! Help!" yelled the fag, as Levison grasped him, and boxed his ears right and left. "Yah! Yaroo! Help! Rescue!"

There was a rush of footsteps in the quad. Redfern, of the Fourth, came dashing up. He did not speak, but he grasped Levison by the shoulders, and swung him away from the yelling fag, and hurled him to the ground.

Then he pushed back his cuffs, and stood waiting for Levison to rise. Levison rose slowly, but he did not "come on," as Redfern's attitude plainly invited him to do.

"Ow! Ow!" groaned Jameson. "The beast slogged me because I wouldn't speak to him, Reddy. Ow! Go for him! Yow! Oh!"

Redfern brandished his fists. His gestures said "Come on!" as plainly as his tongue could have said it, but he did not speak.

Levison turned and tramped away.

"Never mind, Jimmy," said Redfern consolingly. "If the rotter touches you again, let me know, and I'll lick him bald-headed!"

But Levison did not trouble Jameson again, and he did not try that method with any of the other fags. He had had enough of Redfern's handling. With slow steps he returned to his study, and did his preparation there—in solitude. When it was finished, he did not go down to the common-room. He felt that he could not face dead silence and scornful glances. He remained in his study till bedtime, and when he went up to bed with the Fourth, there was no word spoken to him. The fellows said good-night to one another, but there was no one to say it to Levison.

In the darkness, after the other fellows had fallen asleep, Levison remained long awake. And the Fourth-Formers would have been surprised if they had known that Levison's pillow was wet—wet with tears.

CHAPTER 13.

Arthur Augustus Does His Duty.

THE next day was Saturday, a half-holiday at St. Jim's. After morning school, the fellows mostly turned out for cricket practice. Cricket was compulsory at St. Jim's, but Levison had always avoided it when he could. On this special afternoon, however, he went down to the nets with the other fellows, regardless of the very significant glances which conveyed that the juniors wished him anywhere else. As nobody would bat to his bowling, or bowl to his batting, he had little chance of getting in any practice. He hung about the playing-fields, with a gloomy brow, once or twice venturing a remark, which remained unanswered.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had done some batting, to his own satisfaction, and he leaned against the pavilion afterwards, with his monocle in his eye, surveying the other cricketers with bland patronage. Levison came up to him. The swell of St. Jim's jammed his eyeglass a little tighter into his eye, and surveyed Levison from head to foot with a withering stare. Levison took no notice of it.

"I want to speak to you, D'Arcy," he said.

D'Arcy's stare would have made a stone image feel uncomfortable, but it did not seem to have that effect upon Levison.

"I've often heard you say, D'Arcy, that when a chap's done wrong, an apology to the injured party will set the matter right," said Levison.

"Yaas, watah!" said D'Arcy, involuntarily.

"I've apologised to Brooke for what I did."

"Indeed!"

"I'm sorry for it. I'm willing to apologise to the whole school," said Levison. "Don't you think I've had enough?"

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"I've had it piled on me pretty thick the last few days," said Levison. "I'm sorry, and I can't say more than that, can I?"

"I—I suppose not," said D'Arcy.

There was a shout from the cricket-field.

"Gussy!"

"Yaas, Blake, deah boy?"

"What are you talking to that cad for?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"He's in Coventry, you ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

Jack Blake came off the cricket-field with an angry brow.

Several other fellows collected round, looking grim.

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"Chaps who speak to Levison are to be sent to Coventry themselves," said Kangaroo. "You know what to expect, Gussy."

"I should wefuse to be sent to Coventry, Kangy."

"Ass!" said Monty Lowther. "Don't jaw to Levison, then!"

"Talk to us if you must talk," said Digby. "I know you can't help talking; but I'm willing to be the victim if you must wag your jaw."

"Weally, Dig——"

Levison gave the juniors a bitter look. The days that had elapsed had made no difference to the detestation they felt for the schoolboy forger. But Arthur Augustus had a very thoughtful expression upon his aristocratic face.

"Weally, you fellows!" he remarked. "Levison says that he's weally sowwy——"

"All humbug!"

"He's spoofing!"

"Sorry he's in Coventry, I've no doubt!" said Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"He says he's apologised to Brooke——"

"He'd apologise to my dog Towser if it would get him out of a scrape!" said Herries, with a sniff of contempt. "We all know how sorry he is!"

"Weally, Hewwies, I think a chap ought to have a chance! Of course, we all know that Levison is a fidgetful cad—he cannot deny that himself; but if a chap says he's sowwy for what he's done, I think he ought to be given a show."

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Chump!"

"I wefuse to be called by those oppwobvious names!" said the swell of St. Jim's indignantly. "If Levison is willin' to do the wight and pwopah thing, I wegard it as only decent to take him at his word. I feel awfully disgusted with him, but I wouldn't be hard on a fellow who says he's weally sowwy. You do say so, don't you, you unspeakable wottah?"

"I'm sorry!" said Levison.

There was a growl of derision from the juniors.

"I think he's spoofed us often enough," said Bernard Glyn.

"I'm fed-up with his lies! Leave him to stew in his own juice; that's my opinion!"

"Yes, rather!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head. D'Arcy could be obstinate when he liked, and he liked now. He had made up his mind.

"Upon the whole, deah boys, I think that the wottah ought to have a chance," he said. "I think that if he was weally decent he would get his patah to take him away from the school. But it's no good expectin' Levison to be decent—we knew that from expewience, and so we oughtn't to be hard on him."

Jack Blake chuckled.

"If ever I'm down on my luck, I hope Gussy won't start defending me," he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think, upon the whole, that Levison has had enough," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "He is a wank wottah, of course! But he says he's sowwy, and an apology ought to be sufficient, from one gentleman to another. That's my opinion."

"Oh, your opinion isn't worth shucks, I guess!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Weally, Lumlay-Lumlay——"

"Come and bowl to me, Gussy, and don't talk rot!" said Jack Blake. "And mind, you're not to talk to Levison!"

"Upon the whole, Blake, I considah it my duty to talk to Levison——"

"Well, it would serve Levison right——" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Come away, you ass!" said Blake, catching Arthur Augustus D'Arcy by the arm. "Come and play cricket, and don't play the giddy goat!"

"I wefuse to come and play cwicket!" said D'Arcy firmly.

"I'm goin' to talk to this awful wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——"

"Enough said, Blake, deah boy! I wegard it as my duty!"

Blake frowned.

"If you talk to that cad, Gussy, you'll be sent to Coventry by the rest of the school, including ourselves," he said. "It's agreed by all the Lower School, and if you back up against all the school, you'll have to face the music!"

"I'm quite willin' to face the music, from a sense of duty, Blake!"

"Fathead!" roared Blake.

"I decline to be called a fathead! Levison, deah boy, pway wemain with me! I take you undah my wing now, and I shall pwotect you!"

The juniors glared at D'Arcy. They knew that it was of no use arguing with him, and even bumping was only likely to make him more obstinate. They were in deadly earnest—anyone who spoke to Levison was to share his exclusion, D'Arcy as well as any other.

"For the last time, Gussy—" said Blake.

"For the last time, Blake, deah boy, I wegard it as my dutay to give this feahful cad a chance, and I'm goin' to do it!"

"You mean that?" demanded Blake savagely.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then don't take the trouble to talk to me again! I sha'n't answer you if you do!"

"Nor I!" said Digby.

"Same here!" growled Herries.

"Vewy well. I shall have to stand it, deah boys! I have always wegard an apology fwom one gentleman to anothah as quite sufficient to—"

"Oh, rats!"

The juniors walked away, leaving the swell of St. Jim's alone with the outcast. There was a strange expression upon Levison's face. Perhaps his repentance was real, after all, even if it was only for the time. D'Arcy's kindness and generosity stirred strange and new feelings in his breast.

"It seems that we are to be left to ourselves, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "But nevah mind—we shall have to keep one anothah company, that's all!"

Levison shook his head.

"They mean it!" he said. "If you speak to me, D'Arcy, you will be sent to Coventry by all the Lower School!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm not going to get you into trouble," said Levison, with an effort. "I know I've been a cad, but I'm not such a cad as that. You'd better let me alone!"

Arthur Augustus stared at him in blank amazement. If St. James, the patron saint of the old school, had dropped down into the quadrangle with a rusle of wings, and made that speech, it would hardly have surprised Arthur Augustus more.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, I mean it!" said Levison, with a somewhat forced laugh. "I know you don't expect me to be decent in any way; but I'm not all cad, you know. It's no good your quarrelling with all your friends on my account. I'm not going to have it. You'd better let me alone. I shall have to stand it."

He walked away with his hands in his pockets.

Arthur Augustus, too astonished to speak, gazed after him in silence. When he recovered his voice he uttered a single ejaculation:

"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 14.

Figgins Wanders in His Mind.

FIGGINS of the Fourth was batting when four o'clock boomed out from the clock-tower of St. Jim's. Then Figgins of the Fourth acted in a very singular way. Just as the ball came down from Tom Merry, Figgins of the Fourth gave a start and stepped back from the crease, and the ball went right through the wicket. Figgins did not seem to mind.

"Four o'clock!" he exclaimed.

"How's that?" roared Tom Merry.

"Out! Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove, so it is!" said Figgins. "I forgot!"

"You ass!" said Kerr, who, being Figgys' closest chum, was privileged to call him names if he liked. "You frabjous ass! What did you do that for?"

"Eh?"

"What did you let that School House ass take your wicket for?"

"Oh! My wicket?" said Figgins.

"Yes, fathead!"

"Oh! It's four o'clock."

"Well, suppose it is four o'clock!" exclaimed Kerr. "Is that any reason why you should let a School House boulder take a New House wicket?"

"Well, we're only at practice, you know, and—"

"Wickets are wickets!" growled Kerr.

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "I suppose Figgins is getting hungry, and he's thinking that it's near tea-time. Still—"

"Four o'clock," said Figgins, walking away from the pitch.

"What about it?" shrieked Kerr.

"Cousin Ethel's coming at four."

Kerr understood, and did not argue. Whenever Cousin

Ethel came to St. Jim's Figgins was liable to these sudden attacks.

Kerr picked up the bat Figgins tossed to him and went in, and Figgins went off. Figgins grinned a most agreeable grin as he came up to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. D'Arcy, as Miss Ethel Cleveland's cousin, was a very important personage on the occasions when the girl came to the school to spend a week-end with Mrs. Holmes, the Head's wife.

"Time your cousin was here, D'Arcy," said Figgins agreeably.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Might get down to the gates," suggested Figgins.

"I was just goin' down to the gates, deah boy."

"I'll come with you."

"Pway don't bothah!" said the swell of St. Jim's politely. "I am quite capable of escortin' my cousin fwom the gate to the Head's house."

"Well, the more the merrier, you know," said Figgins feebly. "And—and I want you to give me some tips about a new topper I'm going in for, D'Arcy."

The swell of St. Jim's was all smiles at once. Sometimes he suspected Figgins of taking too much interest in his cousin. Indeed, he had once or twice remarked to his chums, with some asperity, that Ethel might really have been Figgys' cousin, and not his at all, by the way Figgins seemed to hang about when she came to St. Jim's.

But if a fellow wanted advice on the subject of silk hats Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was just the fellow to give it to him. As the best-dressed fellow at St. Jim's, and the glass of fashion in the Lower School, D'Arcy was an authority on that subject. He could tie a tie, select a waistcoat, and utter the last word on the subject of toppers, without fear of a rival in the whole school.

And so the two juniors strolled away to the gates together with great cordiality. Figgins was thinking of Miss Ethel, and wondering whether she had driven over from Cleveland House, or come by train, or whether she would come walking in at the gates. D'Arcy was thinking of silk hats, and he expatiated upon that subject to considerable length.

"I'm glad to see you takin' an intelligent interest in this subject, Figgay, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus cordially. "You will excuse my wearkin' that you were done when you bought your last Sunday toppah. The bwim should have been much flattah."

"Should it really?" asked Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! Of course, there are some hattahs who are quite unsewupulous, and they think nothin' of palm'n' off a last yeah's toppah on a chap, you know, if he hasn't got his wits about him. I suppose that's what people mean when they talk about the depwavity of human nature."

"I shouldn't wonder!" agreed Figgins.

"You should be careful, too, about the band. That is a very important thing—one should always pay attention to the band."

"Oh, yes."

"Do you always wegard the band with sufficient attention, Figgay?"

"Eh? Oh, always! I'm fond of music, you know," said Figgins absently.

Arthur Augustus paused, and jammed his eyeglass in his eye, and regarded Figgins in blank amazement.

"Would you mind wepeatin' that we mark, Figgins?" he asked.

"Eh? Oh, certainly!" said Figgins, colouring as he realised that he had not been listening very attentively to Arthur Augustus. "I—I said I was fond of music."

"And what has that got to do with the subject we were discussin'?"

"I—I— You—you asked me if I always listened to the band, didn't you?"

"You uttah ass! I asked you if you always paid attention to the band."

"Well, that's the same thing, isn't it?" asked Figgins innocently.

"I was alludin' to the band that goes wound a silk hat."

Figgins turned very red.

"Oh!" he stammered. "Oh! I—I see! I—I shouldn't think of paying attention to that kind of band, of course."

"I do not believe you are interested in the subject of silk toppahs at all, Figgay. You have been twyin' to pull my leg."

"Oh, not at all! I—I always have a band on my hat," said Figgins earnestly. "I wouldn't think of wearing a hat without a band."

"Weally—"

"I—I consider it a most important part of a hat," said Figgins. "I always have an orchestra—I mean a band—"

"I wegard you as an ass, Figgay!"

"You—you see—"

"I consider you a frabjous chump!"

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Figgins.

D'Arcy stared, but he soon saw that Figgins's exclamation was not in reply to the remark he had made. A graceful, girlish figure had just entered the gates of St. Jim's, and Figgins, forgetting silk hats and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at the same moment, rushed off to greet Cousin Ethel.

The girl met him with a bright smile. Arthur Augustus walked up with a great deal of dignity, but Cousin Ethel's cheerful smile soon cleared his clouded brow. The two juniors walked one on either side of the girl towards the Head's house.

"Did you come by twain, Ethel?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes, and walked from the station," said Ethel.

"Oh, I wish I'd known," said Figgins. "I could have come to the station. It really wasn't safe for you to walk alone, you know. Chap was robbed on that road once at midnight!"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"But it is the middle of the afternoon now," she said.

"Yes, I know, but—"

"Don't mind Figgins," D'Arcy murmured, sotto voce, on the other side of Cousin Ethel. "He's wathah wandewin' in his mind this aftahnoon. I was talkin' to him about bands on silk hats, and he thought I was talkin' about brass bands, you know. Figgy nevah shows at his best when you come here—he always seems to get into this wandewin' state of mind."

"Dear me!" said Cousin Ethel.

"Yaas, it's queeah, isn't it?" said D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"You are stayin' ovah to-morrow, of course, deah boy—I mean deah gal?"

"Yes; till Monday," said Ethel brightly.

"Good egg! We'll go on the wivah to-morrow."

"Might make up a party," suggested Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy unsuspectingly. "A good many fellows in our House would like to come, Ethel."

"Ahem! And in the New House, too," said Figgins, colouring. "As the—the two Houses have been so—so united lately, I—I think all these little things ought to be arranged in—in union."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass severely upon Figgins.

"What a good idea!" said Cousin Ethel. "And what have you been so united about?"

"Oh, we wanged up shouldah to shouldah to kick Levison out," said Arthur Augustus. "We expelled him from the school, you know, for playin' a wotten twick on Bwooke, of the Fourth—vewy decent chap, Bwooke—but the Head let him come back again."

"Oh!" said Cousin Ethel.

They had reached the Head's house now, and Levison, who was near, raised his cap to Cousin Ethel. Ethel gave him a cold nod. She did not like the cad of the Fourth, for she could not forget the time when he had slandered Figgins, and made her believe—though only for a short time—that Figgins had been guilty of a miserable trick. Levison seemed to have forgotten the matter; perhaps he had too many sins upon his conscience to remember any one specially. He came towards the girl.

"So glad to see you at St. Jim's again, Miss Cleveland," he said.

"Thank you!" said Ethel coldly.

Figgins looked daggers at the cad of the Fourth. It seemed to him almost like sacrilege for a fellow like Levison to speak to a girl like Cousin Ethel. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked very uncomfortable.

"I've wanted to see you again, Miss Cleveland," said Levison. "I wanted to speak to you. I did a rotten thing—about Figgins, you know—and I wanted to tell you I was sorry."

"I am glad you are sorry," said Cousin Ethel.

And, with a nod to Figgins and D'Arcy, she went into the Head's house. Figgins turned towards Levison, his fists clenched and his eyes blazing.

"How dare you speak to Cousin Ethel, you cad?" he said, in a low, furious voice.

Levison looked at him with a bitter expression.

"I suppose it's for Miss Cleveland to say whether I may speak to her or not?" he replied.

"You—you cad! I—I—"

"You seem to have forgotten that I'm in Coventry," said Levison bitterly. "You mustn't talk to me, you know."

He swung away with a shrug of the shoulders. Figgins contained himself with a great effort. If they had not been under the windows of the Head's house, and in danger of being seen by Cousin Ethel if she looked out, he would have laid violent hands upon Levison on the spot.

"Pway keep calm, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Do you know, I have come to the conclusion that Levison isn't such a twightful cad, you know, and—"

"Oh, rot!" said Figgins.

And he stalked away, leaving the swell of St. Jim's speech-
1083 with indignation.

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CHAPTER 15.

Not Allowed!

C OUSIN ETHEL had tea with the juniors in Tom Merry's study, as she generally did when she came to St. Jim's. After tea, Figgins escorted her back to the Head's house, and a gleam came into his eyes as he saw that Levison was standing by the elm-tree in front of Dr. Holmes's residence. Cousin Ethel did not seem to notice the cad of the Fourth. She went into the house, and Figgins came back towards Levison. He fixed his eyes upon the School House fellow, and clenched his hands.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"Leaning against a tree," said Levison.

Figgins choked.

"You were waiting for Cousin Ethel to pass," he said.

"Perhaps."

"I've told you you're not to speak to her."

"And I've told you that I don't care twopence what you tell me!" said Levison.

"Will you come into the gym. with me, Levison?"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"No!"

"Will you step out of sight of those windows?" asked Figgins, his voice trembling with rage.

"No!"

"You—you cad! I—I—"

"Are you going to make a row here for Cousin Ethel to see?" asked Levison. "Her window overlooks the quad."

"If it wasn't for that I'd smash you!" said Figgins, bottling up his wrath with a great effort. "Why don't you come into the gym.?"

"Because I don't choose to!"

Figgins turned away. He could not trust himself with Levison any longer. Figgins returned to the School House, tramped upstairs with a black brow, and burst into Study No. 6. Jack Blake and his chums were eating chestnuts, which Digby was roasting at the study fire, when the door opened, and Figgins burst in.

"Hallo!" said Blake, looking round in surprise. "What's the matter? Wherefore that frown upon the majestic brow of the great Figgins?"

"Oh, don't rot!" said Figgins sulphurously. "I shall smash him—I know that!"

"Smash whom?"

"That awful rotter!"

"Which?" asked Herries. "There are several at St. Jim's—Levison, and Mellish, and Crooke of the Shell—"

"Levison, of course!" growled Figgins. "I want to tell you fellows about it, so that you can keep an eye on the awful beast."

"Bai Jove! What has he been doin'?"

"He wouldn't come into the gym. with me—"

Blake chuckled.

"Well, I can't blame him for that, Figgy," he said. "I suppose he doesn't want to be smashed. He prefers to remain whole."

"He was waiting outside the Head's house for Cousin Ethel," said Figgins. "You remember how he pitched her a yarn once, and made her—and you silly chumps!—believe a rotten thing about me—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, he was waiting there to speak to her now. I don't know what his game is, but it's something rotten, of course. That awful cad can't be allowed to speak to Ethel!" said Figgins excitedly. "It's—it's contamination!"

Jack Blake nodded.

"Quite right," he said. "Gussy has been standing up for Levison to-day, but we're not going to be fooled by him."

"Rather not!" said Herries and Digby emphatically.

"If you mean to imply that I am bein' fooled, dea boy—"

"Of course you are!" said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"I can't keep an eye on the rotter, as I'm in the New House," said Figgins; "but you chaps can do it. It makes me sick to think of such a fellow speaking to Cousin Ethel! He will have to be stopped!"

"We'll jolly soon stop him!" said Blake.

"Good! That's what I wanted to say."

And Figgins, still sulphurous, quitted the study.

"I agree with Figgins there," Arthur Augustus remarked thoughtfully, when the New House junior was gone. "I am wathah inclined to think that Levison is weally wepentant, but I bah his talkin' to my female welations. It's a chap's duty to look aftah the gals of his family."

"I bar him altogether," said Blake. "He doesn't repent any more than a giddy stone image would, and he's rotten all through. We'll keep an eye on him, and if he tries to speak to Cousin Ethel, we'll bump some sense of decency into him."

"What-ho!" said Herries. "Of course, he was only

humbugging Gussy. Levison is cruel to animals—you know I've caught him ill-treating my dog Towser when poor old Towser was chained up and couldn't get at him. A fellow who would do that would do anything. He's not fit to talk to a beetle!"

Digby, who had gone to the open window to cool his face after roasting the chestnuts, and was looking out into the quad., uttered a sudden exclamation.

"There he goes!"

"Who goes?" asked Blake, looking up.

"Levison! He's going to the Head's garden!"

Blake jumped up.

"The cad! He knows that Ethel will very likely be there! He's going there to see her! I never heard of such awful cheek!"

And Blake dashed out of the study, with Herries and Digby at his heels. The Terrible Three were coming along the passage, and it needed only a word from Blake to make them join in the rush. Six juniors pelted down the stairs and out into the quad., and ran across towards the gate of the Head's private garden.

They caught sight of a school cap among the shrubberies on the other side. Juniors were not allowed in the Head's garden without special permission; but Levison had evidently risked it, for the sake of speaking to Cousin Ethel. What he wanted to speak to her so badly for was a mystery. But

Levison was lifted bodily off the ground, and tossed over the gate. Herries, and Digby, and Manners, and Lowther grasped him and rushed him away, panting, across the quad., half-carrying and half-dragging him, at top speed.

Blake and Tom Merry turned round, breathlessly, to face the new-comer, whose footsteps were too close for them to escape unseen. It was Cousin Ethel who was coming down the path. The girl looked at them in surprise.

"I thought I heard someone call!" she exclaimed.

"No!" gasped Tom Merry. "That is to say, yes. I mean, no—yes—ahem!"

"Exactly!" said Blake incoherently. "That's how it is."

Cousin Ethel looked very much surprised—as, indeed, she had reason to do. The replies of the two juniors were not the most lucid possible.

"I hope you have not been fighting with one another?" she said severely.

"Oh, no!"

"Honour bright."

"We're not allowed in this garden, you know," murmured Tom Merry. "We'd better bunk!"

"Ex-exactly!" stuttered Blake.

And they raised their caps to Ethel and vaulted over the gate and disappeared, leaving the girl in a state of great astonishment.

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the juniors could only believe that he had some caddish motive, knowing him as they did. And considering that he was in Coventry, barred by the whole school, it seemed a piece of the most outrageous insolence on his part.

"Levison!" called out Blake, leaning breathlessly on the gate.

The cad of the Fourth started, and looked round.

"Come out!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"What have you gone in there for?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Come out!"

"Rats!"

"If you don't come out, we'll come in and fetch you!" said Monty Lowther.

"Come on, then!" said Levison.

He evidently believed that the juniors would not risk making a scene where it was possible that Cousin Ethel might see them. But the chums of the School House were excited. Blake and Tom Merry jumped over the gate and rushed at Levison, and they had him pinned by the arms in a second.

Levison struggled furiously.

"Let me go!" he shouted.

"Quiet, you cad!"

"Let go!" yelled Levison.

"The rotter! He wants Cousin Ethel to hear!" gasped Blake. "Have him out! Pitch him over the gate! Quick! I can hear somebody coming!"

CHAPTER 16.

Levison Takes His Chance!

THE next day was Sunday—a day of rest and quiet at St. Jim's. After morning service the juniors had the morning to themselves. In the afternoon a party of juniors had been arranged to take Cousin Ethel for a quiet row on the river; but in the morning it was Ethel's intention to visit her old nurse, who was married and had settled down in a cottage near Wayland.

The girl left the school soon after morning service for that purpose, and she had smilingly given permission for her friends to meet her at the footpath in the wood as she came back.

The chums of the School House were keeping an eye on Levison, as Figgins had recommended them to do. Since the scene in the Head's garden the cad of the Fourth had made no effort to see Cousin Ethel, and he seemed to have given up the idea. He disappeared during the morning, and the juniors forgot about him.

They would not have dismissed him from their minds so soon, however, if they had known the direction he had taken. Levison knew of Ethel Cleveland's intended visit to the cottage near Wayland, and he crossed the wood by a short cut and came out into Wayland High Street half an hour after Ethel had passed that way. He walked through the town, and took the path to the cottage, and halted when he came in sight of the red-tiled roof in the distance over the green fields.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "FIGGY'S FOLLY." A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

He sat down upon a stile and waited.

The St. Jim's juniors, with their experience of Levison, had been justified in thinking that his attempt to get speech with Cousin Ethel had been with some motive that would not bear the light.

But, as a matter of fact, they were not right in this instance. It was not with the intention of uttering some cunning slander or innuendo that Levison sought Ethel.

The junior's face, as he sat on the stile waiting, was very thoughtful, and it was sad, but there was nothing of malice in its expression.

Levison was feeling utterly downhearted.

His punishment was too heavy for him. He had defied the school, and the school had come down upon him heavily, and Levison, like Cain of old, felt that his punishment was greater than he could bear.

But when Cousin Ethel came he thought he saw a gleam of light. If he could speak to the girl, if he could convince her that he was really repentant, he felt that she would help him.

For Levison felt that he was coming to the end of his tether. He did not want to leave St. Jim's; but if the sentence of Coventry continued he felt that he would have to go. He had sneered at it at first; but he had come to realise that it was too much to bear. The thickest-skinned fellow could not stand long, alone and unaided, against general scorn and aversion.

Something must be done, or he would have to go. He felt that. And in Cousin Ethel was his only hope.

"What a fool I've been!" he muttered to himself, as he sat there in the sun, his straw hat pulled over his eyes. "What an utter fool! I'd don't know that I've been much worse than Mellish; but I've got it in the neck, and he hasn't! It's rotten! If Ethel Cleveland believes me—"

He broke off.

Why should Ethel believe him? He had lied to her before—lied so cunningly that she had been deceived.

Would she not believe that he was lying again?

In the old fable the shepherd boy cried "Wolf!" so often when there was no wolf, that when at last the wolf really came no one would listen to his cries. Levison was in the same position now. He had lied so often that when at last he came to tell the truth he could not expect to be believed.

And it was the truth this time—whether temporary or not, it was the truth that the cad of the Fourth was sincere.

He raised his eyes at last and glanced towards the distant cottage. Cousin Ethel had just come out, and was standing by the porch, shaking hands with an old woman who had followed her from the cottage.

Levison drew a deep breath.

She was coming. His last chance, such as it was, was at hand. He turned his head in the opposite direction, and gritted his teeth. On the edge of the wood in the distance, past the heathery moor, he could see moving dots, which he knew were the caps of the juniors of St. Jim's. They had come to see Cousin Ethel home; and it occurred to him that they must have seen him there, sitting on the stile. A gleam of anger came into his eyes. If they had seen him, they would hurry—and again they might prevent him from seeing Cousin Ethel alone.

He fixed his eyes upon them intently. The caps were moving in his direction, and he knew that he had been seen.

"Hang them!" he muttered miserably.

But they were still very distant. He looked back towards the red-tiled cottage. Cousin Ethel had said good-bye to the old woman, and was coming down the track across the field.

She looked up from the path, as she reached the stile on the opposite side of the meadow, and saw Levison.

There was a field's width between them, but Levison could see the expression of repugnance that came over the fair face.

She had seen him, and she knew that he was there waiting for her to pass. What would she think he wanted? Would she try to avoid him?

He soon knew.

Instead of entering the meadow that separated them, Cousin Ethel turned by another path, across another field, to take a more roundabout path to the wood.

Levison gritted his teeth.

She would not give him a chance to speak to her, then. He could not blame her, when he remembered what he had said the last time she listened to him.

The high, green hedge hid the girl from his sight.

Levison could catch glimpses of the pretty summer hat, when it passed gaps in the hedge, but the girl he could not see.

He gave a sudden start, as he looked towards the field she was traversing. She was following a path that ran beside the high hedge at the edge of the field. Further on, in a far corner of the same field, Levison caught sight of a large black bull, and he saw that the animal had ceased to graze, and had

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his gleaming eyes fixed upon the girl. Cousin Ethel had not noticed the animal when she turned into the field. Levison's heart seemed to turn to ice.

He knew that bull, which was kept in the field with locked gates. Once the brute had escaped, and had chased several juniors belonging to St. Jim's, and had charged into the school quadrangle, and several fellows had had narrow escapes. And the quivering of the animal's powerful flanks, the flicking of its tail, showed Levison that it was in its usual savage mood. There was a red flower in Cousin Ethel's hat, and that spot of red had caught the glaring eye of the bull.

"Good heavens!" panted Levison. "She will be killed—she will be killed! It's my fault—my fault!"

It was his fault!

If he had not been there, Ethel would have come back by the public path, instead of going round, and she would not have entered the field where the black bull was confined. His fault!

Levison stood trembling in every limb, his heart beating almost to suffocation. He shouted—but his voice did not carry across the wide field.

What could he do?

There came a deep, thunderous roar across the meadows. The bull had given voice. The roar startled the girl—and through a parting in the hedge, Levison saw her stop, and face round towards the animal. The wind brought a faint cry to his ears, and he saw Cousin Ethel try to scramble through the hedge. But thick wire ran through the thickets, to prevent the passage of the bull, and Cousin Ethel could not get through. Levison groaned.

"Run!" he shouted. "Run! Run!"

But the wind was against him, and his voice did not reach her. But the girl ran. She disappeared from his sight, but he could see the red flower on the hat glancing among the twigs as she ran along the hedge.

Another deep roar from the bull. He was pawing the ground in a fury, and Levison knew that he was about to thunder down upon the girl as she ran.

If anyone had told Levison, a week before, that he would ever risk his life to save any human being from danger, the cad of the Fourth would have laughed cynically.

But now—almost without previous thought—he broke into a desperate run across the meadow, tearing along as if his life depended upon it.

He reached the stile on the opposite side, breathless, panting. He cleared the stile at a bound, and was in the field.

He looked round with an agonised glance. Ethel was half-way along the hedge—and the bull, from the opposite side of the field, was running towards her. By putting on desperate speed Levison had time to get between them.

For one moment he hesitated.

In that moment Cousin Ethel's life hung in the balance. But then all that was decent in Ernest Levison rose to the surface. He tore off his jacket and held it in his hand, and dashed forward at top speed. Faster—faster—with starting eyes and thumping heart, his breath coming and going in sobs. He was not in good condition, and that terrific burst of speed told upon him heavily. But he succeeded. He reached the intervening space between the fleeing girl and the charging bull, and he faced the charge of the thundering animal.

"Run!" he shrieked. "The fence—quick!"

Cousin Ethel turned her head.

She saw Levison, in terror and wonder—she saw the charging bull—she saw his fearful danger, and she stopped. Levison waved his hand wildly.

"Run!" he yelled. "Run for the fence! Quick! I'm all right! For mercy's sake, run!"

He had no time to say more. The earth seemed to shake under the heavy tread of the black bull as it charged down upon the junior.

CHAPTER 17.

Levison Earns His Pardon.

LEVISON faced the bull, his heart beating almost to suffocation, and a mist sweeping before his eyes. He was not cool—he was not collected. He was afraid—horribly afraid. But he did not run. He could not run without sacrificing Cousin Ethel, and, afraid as he was, he would not do that. And in a few seconds it was too late. If he had run now, it would only have been to feel the bull's lowered horns behind him, and to be tossed and gored without a chance of defending himself.

His nerves were in a quiver, but he acted instinctively and as cunningly as if he had been quite cool.

He faced the charge of the bull, his loose jacket ready in his hand, knowing that he had but one chance, and that if it failed he was lost.

The bull gave a deep bellow, and rushed right at him.

The lowered horns were within three or four feet of him when Levison made a desperate spring aside, and flung his jacket over the lowered head.

It caught on the horns, and hung over the bull's head, and the animal gave another deep bellow of rage and surprise.

Then Levison ran.

The bull, blinded by the cloth that hung and swung over his eyes, whirled round, and tramped madly in the wrong direction, and then dashed his head into the grass, striving to tear off the strange encumbrance.

He roared with rage as he tore at the jacket, and between the ground and the horns it was quickly ripped to shreds.

Levison had but a few seconds.

But he made the best use of them. He dashed after Cousin Ethel, who seemed to be rooted to the ground.

"Run!" gasped Levison.

"Oh, Heaven!"

"Come—come—quick!"

He caught the girl by the arm, and dashed on with her.

Cousin Ethel ran with him.

As they fled towards the fence there was a wild roar behind them, and a frantic trampling.

The black bull had got rid of the blinding jacket, and was glaring about him furiously in search of his victims. The roar announced that he had seen them, and the ground seemed to shake again under his heavy tramp.

Cousin Ethel was panting wildly.

"I—I can't run any more!" she gasped, stumbling on the rough ground.

Levison's grip closed like a vice upon her arm.

"You must! Come—come!"

He half led, half dragged her on. They were at the fence now, and the junior helped the girl over it, and Ethel fell almost fainting upon the other side.

Bellow—bellow!

Levison clambered wildly at the fence. His strength was spent, and it seemed to him that he would never get over in time.

He dragged himself frantically up, and rolled over it, and as he did so there was a terrific crash.

Crash!

The lowered head of the bull had struck the fence where the junior had been a few seconds before, and the whole fence shook with the concussion.

But Levison was safe, and he rolled down in the grass on the safe side of the fence, gasping and panting.

Loud bellows came from the disappointed bull, and they could hear him racing up and down on the other side of the fence, evidently seeking for an opening.

Cousin Ethel bent over Levison as he lay panting.

"You—you have saved me!" she cried.

Levison staggered to his feet.

"Let's get out into the road. He may get through somehow!" he gasped.

"Yes—yes! Quick! Let me help you!"

"I'm all right!"

"Take my hand!" said Ethel.

Hand-in-hand they ran across the meadow which separated them from the road. They crossed a stile, and stood safe in the Wayland Road. And a hundred yards down the road a bunch of St. Jim's juniors came in sight, running as if for their lives. Tom Merry & Co. had seen Ethel's danger from the far distance, and they were running to her aid as they had never run on the cinder-path for a prize. But they would have arrived too late—too late but for Levison.

Cousin Ethel leaned against the stile, panting, almost fainting now. But she did not faint—she was not of the fainting kind. Levison leaned heavily on the stile, his breath coming almost in sobs, and his head swimming. In the distance still sounded the bellowing of the disappointed bull.

The juniors came panting up.

"Ethel, deah gal—"

"Are you hurt?"

"Oh, Ethel," almost sobbed Figgins—"Ethel—Ethel!"

"We saw you! We couldn't get here in time!"

"Oh, Ethel!"

The girl tried to smile.

"I'm all right now," she said. "I'm not hurt."

"Thank goodness, deah girl!"

"But—but for Levison—" said Ethel. She shuddered as the deep, angry bellowing came from the distance. "Oh, I thought I should be killed! Oh!"

"My deah gal, why did you take that path instead of the footpath?" asked Arthur Augustus. "It was awfully weckless, you know!"

Ethel coloured.

"I did not know the bull was there," she said. She would not explain why she had avoided the regular footpath.

But Levison broke in:

"Miss Cleveland did not take the other path, because she saw me waiting there," he said. "She ran into danger to avoid me."

"Bai Jove!"

"I am sorry, Levison!" said Ethel simply.

Levison laughed grimly.

"You needn't be sorry," he said. "You were quite right. The last time you let me speak to you I told you a pack of lies about a friend of yours, and you were quite right to leave me alone. Only—this time—it was something else I wanted to speak about—only it doesn't matter now."

"I'm sorry I avoided you," said Cousin Ethel—"very sorry! It was very, very brave of you to act as you did! It was brave and noble!"

"And you wouldn't have expected it of me, either?" said Levison, with one of his old, unpleasant grins.

"Don't speak bitterly now," said Ethel. "I am grateful, and I shall never forget your courage!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with the air of an oracle. "Didn't I tell you chaps that Levison wasn't such an awful wottah aftah all? You can always wely on my opinion, deah boys. In a case of this kind you should wely upon a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"Oh, cheese it!" murmured Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I considah that cires. have borne out my judgment," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Levison, deah boy, may I have the honah of shakin' you by the hand?"

Levison grinned.

"Have you forgotten that I'm in Coventry, and barred out by the whole of the school?" he demanded.

"Yaas," said D'Arcy firmly. "I'm goin' to forget that, and all these fellows are goin' to forget it, too. You're not such a wottah, aftah all, and you're not in Coventry any longah, aftah savin' my cousin's life!"

And the swell of St. Jim's shook hands with Levison.

"We all say the same," said Tom Merry. "Blessed if I know whether this will last in you, Levison, but after what you've done, you ought to have a chance. The sentence of Coventry is all over, of course."

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins, though with something of an effort. "And there's my fist on it, if you like to take it."

"And mine!" said Redfern.

Levison, with a very strange expression upon his face, shook hands all round with Tom Merry & Co., Cousin Ethel's face beaming.

"I'm so glad!" she said softly.

And the party walked back to the school on the best of terms, and in the best of spirits.

And the St. Jim's fellows, when they saw them come in, were amazed to see Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, walking arm-in-arm, in the most amicable way, with the cad of the Fourth, whom he had judged and sentenced when Levison was kicked out of the school.

THE END.

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MAURICE FORDHAM and **LANCE MORTON**—Two healthy and wealthy young Britons, owners of the yacht *Foamwitch*, and the wonderful aeroplane, *Wings of Gold*.
PROFESSOR LUDWIG VON HAAGEL—The famous German scientist, also noted for his clumsiness.
CROOKS—The ship's cook.
JOSEPH JACKSON or **SHOREDITCH JOSE**—A Cockney member of the crew, whose constant companion is a game bantam named the *Smacker*.
TEDDY MORGAN—Ship's engineer.
WILLIAM TOOTER—The hairy first mate.

The *Foamwitch* is on an expedition with the object of exploring the strange land which is believed to lie beyond the barrier of eternal ice near the South Pole.

As soon as the first land is reached the construction of the aeroplane, *Wings of Gold*—which has been carried in pieces on the *Foamwitch*—is proceeded with, and in it begins a wonderful voyage into the heart of the Antarctic.

Fearful creatures, thought to be extinct since prehistoric times, are encountered when the adventurers reach a mysterious mountain country never before trodden by the foot of civilised man.

Once the aeroplane is wrecked; but, by dint of much ingenuity and hard work, is repaired, and her head is turned towards the North. A terrific wind, however, springs up, and *Wings of Gold* is forced through a ravine in the mountains, and the crew find themselves flying over a large inland lake, surrounded by the vast, unknown mountains. They encounter such fearful creatures here that they decide to go back and return to the *Foamwitch*; but investigation reveals that the ravine is now blocked up, and they are prisoners in that vast enclosure.

Their tinned provisions have all gone bad, and the adventurers are in a bad case, when, cruising gently along, they come upon first an isolated human being, a jet-black giant nine feet high, and then upon a whole city, which they name the *City of Triangles* from the way it is laid out. Suspicious at first, the race of black giants and their king soon become well-disposed towards *Wings of Gold*, Crooks particularly making a great impression. The cook conceives the idea of engaging one of the natives as an assistant or "valet," as he puts it; and his friend the king parades a number of young men before him to choose from. Crooks selects a fat fellow, whom he immediately christens *Tarrytop*, to the delight of the king.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Professor's Latest Scientific Discovery.

"Well," laughed Morgan, "you've got queer ideas, cook."
 "I wonder what he'd look like in livery," said Crooks, rubbing his nose, "wi' nine rows of brass buttons? Why not? I don't think he'll run away. Haw, haw! We must cut his 'air."

Crooks took his new servant over the side, and, surrounded by a smiling crowd of natives, gave *Tarrytop* a haircut that almost left his scalp bare. *Tarrytop* laughed and giggled all the time as if he enjoyed it. Then Crooks beckoned him to follow, and rigged him out in a pair of white canvas trousers, a cook's pancake hat, and a flowing apron.

The result was so absurdly funny that Crooks sat down on the galley table, and roared.

"You was a beauty, you was, pretty dear!" he grinned.
 "Haw, haw! Josh, was that you? Come 'ere!"
 Jackson came in, and burst into a roar of mirth.

"What is it?"
 "It was my valet. Why not?" said the one-eyed man.
 "And its name it was *Tarrytop*. It was a pretty dear."

"If it was mine I'd chase it rahnd wiy a chopper to git its fat dahn!" said Jackson. "Did yer 'ave it given wi' a pahnd of tea?"

"It was a present. Why not?" growled Crooks. "*Tarrytop*, you was goin' to work washin'-up."

The cook placed a quantity of dishes, a pail of hot water, and sundry swabs on the table, and, leaving his slave to scour them, strolled on deck to finish his nap. *Tarrytop* worked industriously. It was a high honour to have been chosen to serve the white men who came from the skies. *Tarrytop* felt proud. He also felt curious to explore the vessel, which he almost believed was a living creature. He was very careful with the crockery, and very handy, too. He polished and polished until the outside of the pans were quite bright, and he could see his face in every dish and pan.

There was not much furniture in the *City of Triangles*, and *Tarrytop*, fancying the table a kind of throne or bed, placed the articles on the floor. Most of them were enamelled iron.

for the pottery had been demolished at the time when *Wings of Gold* had nearly been demolished herself.

Having completed his task, *Tarrytop* thought he would go in search of his master, Argami, the lean and one-eyed. As he left the galley he flung a rug over the rail to air, and the rug fell across the porthole of the galley like a heavy blind, filling the place with gloom. No natural light ever entered the corridor except through the hatch, or when the doors of the saloon, galley, or cabins were open. *Tarrytop* found it rather gloomy, for Morgan was not wasting electricity. Of course, he went the wrong way. Hearing a curious grating sound, he entered the saloon. The blinds were drawn. In the chair he saw a fat and snoring figure.

"It is the white man with four eyes!" muttered the native. "Wonders! He can move them!"

Professor Von Haagel had pushed up his spectacles. *Tarrytop* stared at the miracle in awe. To get a better view of the marvellous person with four eyes he crept nearer.

"Sno—r—r—e!" said the professor's nose, and the professor stirred.

Tarrytop, quite startled, jumped back, hit the piano, and put both his hands down heavily on the notes. The unexpected uproar quite frightened him out of his wits. He jumped a yard into the air, and sat down on the keyboard.

"Br-r-r-ong!"
 Then *Tarrytop* got out of the room, perspiring with terror, and bolted to the galley. He heard a crash behind him. Von Haagel had started from his sleep, and caught a glimpse of the study in black and white. The big easy-chair went over, and the professor lay yelling for help. *Tarrytop* was horrified. He did not know what he had done, but he thought it was something serious enough to hang him.

"Ach! Help! Thieves!" yelled the professor.
 Lance was just dressing. He wrenched open the door. The extraordinary apparition was just rushing past. Lance, of course, knew nothing of Crooks' importation. With a yell, he darted after the intruder. The wretched *Tarrytop* saw a pair of legs hastily coming down the ladder to cut

him off. He recognised the galley door, and dived under the table.

"Got you!" roared Lance.

Lance was mistaken. He put his foot into a pie-dish, and skated on his left leg. Away behind him shot his right foot, lifting a basin of greasy water into the air, and placing it beautifully, and smothering Tooter, who had come to see what it was all about.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "What am I doing? Where is he?"

There was nobody else in the galley except Mr. Tooter, who was wet and angry. Tarrytop had left home without waiting to give the usual month's notice to his employer. He had not notified his departure, owing to pressure of business.

"Is that you, William?" asked Lance.

"It was," spluttered, Mr. Tooter. "Blackbirds! Spa! I'm pizened and—blinded!"

"But what's become of that fellow? What are all these things doing over the floor? I might have broken my neck. Can't you speak, idiot?"

"No," roared Tooter; "I can't!"

"Don't be insolent!" said Lance.

"You'd be insolent, sir," growled Tooter, "if your 'air was full of tea-leaves!"

Luckily, Mr. Crooks arrived, and so did the professor. The cook soon knew what had occurred. Lance and the good-natured professor laughed heartily, but Mr. Tooter did not.

"Your slave has scouted, anyhow," said Lance. "I'm sorry I drenched you, William. You can have one of my flannel shirts to make up for it."

"Drat it!" said Tooter. "Is life worth living? I believe that one-eyed villain was born to make me uncomfortable. Ain't he enough to bear wi'out bringing along a fat, man-eatin' savage? Is that black thing comin' back?"

"Ach, Tooter, be not bad-tempered!" said Von Haegel soothingly. "Crooks is ein fine fellow. Look at me—how all laugh at me, and of me make choke. I am not angry. Und Crooks when he chaff you, it is but fun. Why should he not haf ein servant to help him? Shaf! We must lif and let lif. You shall shake hands mit Crooks."

Tarrytop was brought back and forgiven, and for two days he worked like the nigger he was, for Crooks kept his forty horse-power eye on him. The professor was making splendid headway with the language now.

The almanac showed it to be the 8th of November, and, therefore, a good part of the summer was still left before them. It was the professor who brought the astounding news that the sun shone on this strange land throughout the year, and that there was no long winter of gloom and silence.

"Impossible, dad!" said Lance.

"Absurd!" said Maurice.

"Ach! So I think, dear lads!" puffed Von Haegel. "Hercules tell me."

"It can only be a mock sun, then," said Lance. "We know the world moves, and her relation to the sun at any moment of the year. It is an utter absurdity! The sun can't show above the horizon—and Hercules, if he meant that, was talking out of his hat. My stars, if there were fifty mock suns, I don't want to see them! I want to go Northward-ho!"

Von Haegel bit his nails thoughtfully.

"I haf mistaken him," he said. "I did try hard to make him understand about the passage out. He look at me strangely."

"Couldn't you get an answer?"

"Nein, dear Maurice."

"Then, by thunder," said Teddy Morgan, "we must be off and look for ourselves! We've wasted enough time as it is. We want to fill our larder first."

"But we can always come back here, Teddy."

"Yes, Mr. Maurice. But that's more waste of time. Let's be prepared, and take advantage of the summer. We know what autumn is like on the ice when it blows hard enough to skin a Polar bear. I say, make a move."

"We'd better organise a big hunt," suggested Lance. "We'll leave that to you and Crooks, dad. You must arrange it with the king. I'm as restless as anybody, and longing for home, sweet home."

"Me, too," said Teddy. "I'm getting fat and idle."

"But I haf not yet learned der language, dear lads of mine," sighed the professor.

"Oh, let that slide!" said Fordham. "You'd never make a fortune teaching it in Heidelberg."

The people of the City of Triangles must have lived chiefly by hunting. They kept no flocks, and nothing resembling sheep, goat, or cow had ever been seen. There were no birds either, and the bantam created great astonishment and some consternation among the natives.

His Majesty looked pleased when he learned that his white visitors would like to be present at a hunt.

Early in the afternoon the warriors began to leave the

city in small parties. The women were very busy. Piles of damp wood were placed outside every hut, and earthenware pans containing brine stood in rows down the streets.

"It's going to be a big thing, Morry," said Lance.

"His Majesty does things in style, my son," answered Maurice, as he watched a shrivelled old hag crouching over a steaming pot of salty water. "They are making big preparations to smoke and pickle the stuff. There must be tons and tons of game to feed all these people."

"Don't forget the fish. There are some beauties."

A canoe had just come in, and a number of fishermen passed, carrying a fine haul of great ganoid pike on poles and paddles. They halted for Crooks to make his choice.

Crooks selected one of the smallest, and paid for it by tugging the angler's ear playfully and telling him that he was an ugly, bandy-legged son of a cracked inkpot. Then he hurled the fish at Tarrytop; and Tarrytop fell over a deckchair with the fish in his arms, at which the natives roared, and told each other that the lean one with the shining eye had indeed a merry heart and a sure aim.

Tarrytop took it as a joke or else a game, for he came up smiling. Mr. Tooter winked at the native and jerked his thumb towards Crooks.

"Sling it back, you idiot!" he said.

"Yus, chase him wiv it!" said Jackson.

The native seemed perplexed. Crooks was looking the other way. Their meaning dawned on Tarrytop. He swung the fish by the tail.

Von Haegel, always thirsting for knowledge, was down below, trying to talk to the old hag—who sat like a witch stirring her cauldron—and jotting down in his pocket-book the native method of preparing a pickle for salting down meat.

"Nah then, smite him!" said one of the tempters.

"Clean on the collar-stud!" said the other.

The big fish whizzed away.

"Roitten shot!" growled Tooter.

"Silly!" said Jackson, in disgust.

Perhaps the fish was slippery. It soared yards above the cook's head. However, it was not totally wasted. There was a splash, shriek, and a loud roar. With horror depicted on every face, Tarrytop dropped overboard into the sand and bolted for home.

If tasting and feeling helped him at all, Von Haegel ought to have understood the components of the pickle perfectly, for the pike had plumped into the pan of warm brine. As there was not room for all the pike and all the pickle at the same time, most of the latter had got out and deluged the professor and the lady. Von Haegel got most of it. He gave one bellow, that made the old woman scuttle into her house like a rabbit into a burrow. Then he whipped off his damp spectacles. A few native children, seeing him with two of his eyes in his hands, screamed and ran away. Von Haegel danced round the pot, waving his drenched notebook.

Lance, Maurice, and Crooks, and the two culprits laughed wildly.

Suddenly Von Haegel saw the fish. On went his spectacles. He looked up at the sky.

"Shaf!" he gasped, forgetting his discomfort. "Supline—wonderful! No, dot cannot be! Yet from where did he come? He fall out of der air. Pouf! Why did I not look sooner? Der brine, it kill him at once. Hi, dear lads! Hi—yi!"

The next moment Von Haegel, with the fish in his arms, was panting and puffing towards the aeronef.

"Der flying fish!" he shouted. "I haf discovered dot der ganoid fish can fly!"

"Ow!" yelled Lance, collapsing on the deck chair. "I'm fainting!"

"Haw, haw!" sniggered Crooks. "Them's the sort that was caught wi' birdlime! Why not?"

The roar of laughter convinced Von Haegel that the discovery he had made was not one of great scientific value.

"Shaf!" he cried. "Was this ein choke?"

"No, daddy," answered Maurice. "It was an accident."

"Haw, haw, haw, haw!" chuckled the cook.

Crooks' deep-throated laugh irritated the professor. It was bad enough to be half pickled without being laughed at. He made the pike fly. It was his intention to hit the cook, but he failed, though for Von Haegel it was a splendid attempt. The cook shot out his bare and bony wrist, and then bent double with delight as the fish glided off into the grinning, hairy features of Mr. William Tooter.

"Cock-a-doo-oo-o!" crowed the bantam in delight.

"Blackbirds! I'm pizened again!" howled Mr. Tooter.

"Haw, haw, haw, haw, haw!" gurgled the cook, holding his ribs.

Jackson took the fish by the tail. It was a ten-pounder.

"Nah, I'll chase 'im," he remarked, "for England, 'ome, and mutton-pies, and not 'alf!"

He smote, and the cook was at a disadvantage. The lusty blow drove him forward on hands and knees till his head

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went under the rails. The agile Cockney vaulted over and wrapped his legs round the one-eyed man's neck. Crooks was panned. He could neither advance nor retreat.

"Wade in, little Willie!" said Jackson. "Give him fish!" "Shaf! Beat him soundly, der rogue!" said Von Haagel, beaming once more. "Beat him, Tooter!"

Mr. Tooter took the advice of both. He brought down the fish until it did not resemble a fish at all, while the bantam made ferocious pecks at the cook's bare ankles. Then they freed the victim. Mr. Crooks sat up. His eye wandered through the air as if in search of something. Then he blew his nose and growled:

"They has sheered off. Why not? They was flies, and they tickled me!" The eye settled on the professor. "Haw, haw! It was a hidea, sir. Shall I catch you some of those flying fishes on fly-papers? Why not? Haw, haw, haw!"

Without another word the cook went to recover his runaway servant, and brought him back by the ear, to find everybody grinning.

"William," said Crooks tragically, "I was a man. Beware! You have struck me. Why not? You have punched me w' a haddock. So be it! Take your choice. Shall I cut your whiskers or your throat? I was desperate!"

"Cut your sticks, and get some grub, idiot!" grinned Lance.

"No matter! The worm will turn, and so will wheels!" growled the cook. "Josh, your doom is sealed! This insult shall be wiped out in gore! Haw, haw! Come, you son of a crow, come!"

Mr. Crooks hustled his servant down the ladder. Later on, Mr. Tooter was descending the ladder, and had reached the last step but one, when suddenly a whole avalanche of heavy, clammy bodies poured through the gloom above, and Tooter lay down under a pile of ganoid fishes.

"Do fishes fly?" growled a voice. "Why not? Ax little Willie—he knows. Why not? Haw, haw, haw!"

A Record Drive.

There was again a brilliant moon, but nothing in comparison with the one that had shone on the night of the great battle with the ichthyosaurus. Thousands of warriors left the town, and also a good many boys. Tarrytop was able already to say "Yessir" and "Nossir." At two in the morning he gave the signal to start. Wings of Gold spun away gently towards the lower peaks.

"This is about the biggest lot of hunters on record," said Fordham.

"Yes; but that doesn't always mean a big lot of game, sonny," said Lance.

"You bet!" laughed Fordham.

Von Haagel smoked hard and fast. He rather hoped the hunt would turn out something of a fiasco, for he did not wish to leave the City of Triangles until he had thoroughly mastered the language. In order to waste no time at all, he pounced on Tarrytop, to the mild surprise of that young gentleman.

"Shaf!" puffed the professor. "Pay to me der attention, you villain, und look oop. What do you call dot?"

Von Haagel pointed to the moon, and Tarrytop grinned from ear to ear.

"It's the parish lantern. Why not?" said the cook.

"Let him alone, and put not in your spoke, please," said Von Haagel. "You haf too much lofe for interference, Crooks. Come, Darrytop, what you call der moon?"

"Nossir," said the native.

"Ach, der thick head of him! I not ask you 'No, sir.' I ask der name."

"Yessir!" grinned Tarrytop.

"Shaf! Oh, der thick head!" snapped Von Haagel.

But Morgan's voice interrupted him.

"There are some of them," he said.

Like a monstrous snake a line of dark bodies was moving across the ground. The line gleamed and flashed as the moonbeams touched the spearheads of the warriors. They were moving towards a great mass of blackness that marked the forest. A few minutes later the aeronef was hovering above a valley. To the right, to the left, and before them the forest showed like tremendous walls of frozen ink. The valley itself was almost bare of verdure. Tarrytop seized Morgan's arm.

"He means stop, Teddy," growled the cook.

"Stop it is."

"Yessir," chuckled the native.

The head of the human snake entered the valley. Slowly the snake itself became swallowed up, as if the earth had opened.

"That's queer!" said Lance. "Where have the beggars got to? We'll look into the matter. Reverse your old iron tank, Teddy, and let us investigate the mystery of the missing reptile!"

Wings of Gold dropped closer to the ground. The warriors

had simply entered a deep cutting that stretched across the valley.

"It's a battle," said Lance. "All those chaps are picked men. What a splendid spot for a big drive of game, if they can only get them out."

"What ho! Why not?" growled the cook. "There was our little Benny. How was things, little boy? Was they all O K?"

The giant put his hands to his mouth as the aeronef slid through the air above him, and bellowed cheerily:

"Haw, haw! Why not?"

"Come aboard!" cried Lance.

Big Ben accepted the invitation. He was carrying a battle-axe that no other man except his brother Hercules could have wielded with such ease. They had all grown fond of the good-natured monarch. He accepted a glass of lemonade.

"Well, old Indian Ink," said Crooks, "when was the fun to start? Haw, haw! You was keeping up late! Why not? It was better than in bed—nightmares come to me in bed. I see Tooter's face! Haw, haw!"

"Go and sell yourself for bootlaces!" said Tooter.

"Why not?" said the king innocently.

And they all laughed.

Wings of Gold sailed along the cutting. There was almost a thousand picked warriors armed with axes, spears, and bows.

Whatever was going to be the result of the hunt, the preparations had been made on a colossal scale. The aeronef was turned, and with a laugh the king vaulted over the rail.

"They've got five thousand beaters out if they've got fifty," said Morgan. "They kept on shifting out all the afternoon and evening. By thunder, they know how to give a good show!"

"Barnum ain't in it!" said Tooter.

"No," grinned Crooks, finding his chance; "but you ought to be in Barnum's, Willie, as the 'Airy 'Otentot from Hafrica! Why not? Ha, ha! You smells of fish. There was a bloater flavour about you. It was the flying fishes that flopped on him. Haw, haw!"

The king waved his great battle-axe. Morgan was learning to read signs and gestures now as cleverly as his one-eyed comrade. With a buzz the aeronef rose higher, and drew back behind the cutting.

"Ach! Is dot wind?"

They listened. A dull murmur trembled upward like the noise of swaying branches.

"It's the beaters," said Lance. "They've made a start!"

"Rats, old chap!" said Maurice Fordham. "That's a breeze, and here it comes!"

It was a breeze, and it fanned their cheeks. But the next moment it brought another sound with it—a far-away roar of human voices, a rattle of native drums, and a shrill squeaking of native flutes. The drive had commenced.

"Oh, listen to the band!" sang little Jackson. "I hopes there was rabbits—not 'alf I don't! I'm fond of rabbits!"

"There was no rabbits, but there was plenty of 'airs."

"Hare! You do not say dot, Crooks?" said Von Haagel eagerly. "You haf not seen der hares, surely. It cannot be! Dere hares are not here. They not lif yet. You choke."

"I have seen thousands of 'em. Why not, sir?" said Mr. Crooks.

"Und you do not show dem to me! Ach! Tell me where you see der hares?"

"On our Willie's features! Why not?" giggled the cook.

"Ha, ha! There was 'airs!"

The way Von Haagel looked at Crooks caused a general roar. Then the breeze swept over the aeronef once more, bringing with it a louder burst of sound. It was wonderful that even five thousand strong the warriors had dared to enter these terrible forests.

"Oh, hang it all!" said Maurice. "I'm getting tired of being a spectator. I'd like to go down."

"So would I, Maurice."

"Get your little gun, then," said Fordham, "and down we'll go."

For once Teddy Morgan raised no objection. Taking their rifles, Lance and Maurice sprang into the cutting. Morgan gave them a last warning to be careful. Before the aeronef could rise again, Von Haagel, with his big telescope under his arm, was after them. Mr. Crooks sighed deeply. He wanted to go, but he had not been asked.

"You can join the picnic if you like, cooky," said Morgan.

"You're a brick!" grinned the cook. "Where was my little shooter? Has Willie hidden it in his whiskers? No; it was here, all right! Ha, ha! I will shoot you two ikky—what-is-'ems for supper."

(Another exciting instalment of this story next Thursday.)



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Next Thursday:

**"THE
BROKEN
MESSAGE."**

CHAPTER 1.

The Late Visitor—Lord Hyndick's Story—Kingston's Ruse.

"BY Jove, what a wretched night!"

Frank Kingston murmured the words to himself as he stood looking out of the window of his consulting-room at No. 100, Charing Cross. The time was just upon eleven, and Trafalgar Square, beaten by heavy rain, was unusually deserted. The bright electric lights reflected themselves on the glistening pavements. Motor-buses and taxis passed to and fro, the former packed with damp travellers, who made various uncomplimentary remarks at the expense of the weather.

"Well, I don't think I will venture out to-night," thought Kingston, as he stood at the window, hands in pockets. "I—Hallo! That fellow will get considerably wet if he doesn't open his umbrella!"

A young man had just hove in sight. He was striding along hurriedly, and his carelessly-buttoned overcoat revealed the fact that he was attired in evening-dress. His opera-hat was streaming with wet, yet, although he carried an umbrella, he made no attempt to open it.

He was looking at the numbers of the buildings, and suddenly headed straight for No. 100. Kingston smiled rather ruefully. He had almost expected the young man's destination to be his rooms.

"Ten to one it means a journey in this weather," thought the detective. "Still, I've been slack to-day, and an interesting case would be welcome. I wonder if Tim has gone to bed? If he has, I had better open the door—"

But Tim Curtis, Kingston's young assistant, had not gone to bed, for even as the thought was passing through his master's mind he opened the door and escorted the visitor into the room.

"Couldn't make him wait, sir," he said. "Said he wanted to see—"

"I apologise for this abrupt entry, Mr. Kingston," exclaimed the new-comer breathlessly; "but I was afraid if my card was sent up you would refuse to see me, considering the lateness of the hour."

"I should not have refused to see you," remarked Kingston quietly. "Please take a seat, and remove that dripping overcoat. Tim!"

The youngster came forward and assisted the visitor to remove his coat. But the young man evidently did not seem inclined to sit down, for he paced to and fro restlessly. For a moment there was silence, and Kingston saw that his com-

panion was of about six-and-twenty years of age, refined looking, and very pale. A light almost of terror shone in his eyes.

"My name is Hyndick," he began abruptly—"Lord Hyndick—only a courtesy title, of course. Mr. Kingston, I've come to you on a very strange errand, and I'm hanged if I know how to begin!"

"At the beginning, I should suggest," murmured Kingston. A flickering smile flitted across the visitor's face. The wonderful personality of the great detective seemed to calm him, and enable him to collect his thoughts.

"Perhaps that would be best," he said, more composedly. "Well, just four months ago I was staying at Cannes, having gone south after a long illness. While I was there I made the acquaintance of a Russian girl named Olga Turgenoff, the daughter of an influential count. I'll confess straightaway that I fell madly in love with her, and made a fool of myself."

"Hardly—"
"Yes, a fool!" interjected Lord Hyndick. "In this way—I consented to practically every request she asked of me. One of these was to join a society of which she was a member. I never thought of refusing, and accompanied her to some meeting, where I was duly made a new member of the society."

"Did you not inquire what the objects of the society were?"

"No," replied the other. "I was so infatuated that I didn't care!" Hyndick rose to his feet with an exclamation. "What a mad idiot I was, Mr. Kingston! I realised a week or two ago that I didn't really love Olga at all. I thought I did at first, but now I've come to my senses, and can see that she is merely after my money. But the terrible part of my story hasn't been told yet. Good heavens, I can see nothing but death before me—nothing—"

"Steady!" commanded Kingston sternly. "Don't lose control of yourself."

"All right!" muttered Lord Hyndick between his teeth. "I'll tell you the rest quickly. This society—they call themselves the Red Hand—has absolutely got me in its power, and it has fallen to my lot to blow up the house of the Duke of Edgware to-night! The duke is sleeping there to-night before starting for America in the morning, and the society means to snatch its opportunity and commit a foul murder. And I, Kingston, have been allotted to—to— Great heavens, I shall go crazy!"

Kingston looked at his visitor thoughtfully. "You won't do anything of the sort," he said quietly, and his tone brought Hyndick to himself. "Go on."

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NEXT THURSDAY: "FIGGY'S FOLLY." A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"I received my orders two days ago," continued the young nobleman in a low voice; "and I was told that if I failed, or if I gave any information to the police, I should be punished by death. All yesterday and to-day I have gone about like a man insane, wondering what to do, but at last I came to a decision—to let the society go to the dickens and risk the consequences—"

"That was sensible of you."

"But it will mean death!" cried Lord Hyndick feverishly.

"When they find I have failed to carry out my orders, they will track me down and kill me. They will, Kingston—they will! But I'd better die than the Duke of Edgware—I deserve it for being such a fool!"

He gave Kingston a host of details, and the detective listened attentively. Finally, the latter glanced at the clock and saw that the time was half-past eleven.

"What are your instructions?" he inquired.

"I am to meet Olga Turgenoff in the first-class waiting-room at Charing-cross Station at twelve-thirty precisely," answered the other bitterly. "Then we are to go to the society's meeting-place in Chelsea, and the bomb which I am to use will be handed into my charge—"

He broke off abruptly. "But I'm not going, Kingston!" he vowed passionately. "The Red Hand can do their worst, but I'm not going to commit murder for anybody! By gad, I'm not!"

"Of course not!" agreed Kingston. "And I don't think you will lose your life, Lord Hyndick. You seem to forget that there are police in this country, and—"

"I don't forget it," cried the other. "I know what an awful society this Red Hand is. They'll hunt me down, no matter where I hide!"

"Nonsense! Don't get such ideas into your head," said the detective. "I have no doubt that this society is a very small concern indeed, and that in reality you have nothing whatever to fear. Had the organisation been of any proportions I should surely have heard of it. But tell me, suppose you do not go to-night—will the plans to kill the duke still be carried out?"

Lord Hyndick came to a halt in his pacing.

"Yes," he exclaimed. "That's why I'm in such a state. I've come to you and told you this so that you can take steps to prevent the crime."

"Very well; I will do my best for you," declared the great detective. "Do you happen to have a photograph of Olga Turgenoff with you?"

"By Jove, yes, although I determined to throw it into the fire this morning!"

Hyndick produced a photograph from an inner pocket, and Kingston examined it for a few moments in silence. Finally he placed it in his pocket.

"It will do nicely," he remarked.

"For what?"

"This," returned Kingston. And he outlined to his visitor a plan of action which at first caused the young lord to open his eyes in amazement. Then the audacity of it was brought home to him, and he rapidly recovered his composure.

"It'll work, Mr. Kingston," he cried enthusiastically—"it'll work!"

"I hope so," was the detective's calm reply.

CHAPTER 2.

The House at Chelsea—On the River's Bed.

LORD HYNDICK stepped into a taxi outside No. 100, Charing Cross, and was swiftly being whirled up the Strand.

At least, to all intents and purposes the man was Lord Hyndick. As a matter of fact, it was Frank Kingston, disguised with his usual wonderful accuracy. The great detective had used old Professor Polgrave's system, the result being an absolutely perfect disguise—Hyndick's most intimate friends would have been deceived.

In a few minutes Kingston was talking to Miss Dolores O'Brien, his fiancée, in the big hall at the Hotel Cyril. Before the detective had commenced disguising himself he had despatched Tim post-haste to the Hotel Cyril with the photograph of Olga Turgenoff, and a note requesting Dolores to disguise herself as near as possible to the original of the likeness.

"Splendid!" he murmured, as he shook hands. "By Jove, Dolores, you've succeeded wonderfully!"

"I shouldn't have known you but for your voice, Frank," smiled Dolores.

Kingston rapidly put his fiancée into possession of the facts. They were seated on a lounge in a quiet corner, and no one could overhear.

"Hyndick has been extremely rash," said Kingston, "but I think he is a decent fellow enough, and it was plucky of him to come to me to-night. The Duke of Edgware must be saved somehow, and considering how short the time is, the

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only way to accomplish it is for you and me to go to this secret meeting-place in Chelsea in the personalities of Mlle. Turgenoff and Lord Hyndick. You will not find it necessary to speak at all, and the very instant I have received my orders I shall depart with the bomb, hand it over to the police, and return with a posse and arrest the whole crowd. It will be risky while it lasts, little girl, but I think our disguises will see us through."

So, soon after, the pair were journeying to Chelsea. The young nobleman had told Kingston exactly where the house lay and exactly what to do to gain admittance. The house, to all intents and purposes, was occupied by an Italian gentleman; but he was, in reality, the leader of the Red Hand Society. As Kingston had surmised, the organisation was small, and consisted of but twenty members, all of whom met at the Italian's house. They were Revolutionaries, and had got hold of Lord Hyndick for the express purpose of making him undertake to blow up the Duke of Edgware. The task was an extremely risky one, capture being almost certain, and Hyndick might as well be sacrificed as one of their own members.

Others had been treated the same previously, and although they had given all the information they could, the society had never been brought to book. Gianotta, the Italian, had evaded the police on every occasion.

"This is the house, Dolores," murmured Kingston, as they walked up the steps of a smart-looking house near the river.

Three or four windows were brilliantly illuminated, and the place certainly did not look like a resort of Anarchists.

Their knock was answered by a manservant, who immediately asked them to step inside. Without a word, he escorted them to a room at the back of the house, and they found themselves facing Gianotta.

"Ah, I am glad you have come!" exclaimed the Italian, in excellent English. "I expected you shortly before this, so we shall have to hasten. You, mademoiselle, will accompany us, I presume?"

Dolores nodded.

The Italian had not the slightest suspicion that anything was wrong, for Kingston's disguise was perfect, while Dolores wore a veil which half hid her features.

Quite as a matter of course, Gianotta suddenly switched the light out, so that they were in utter darkness. Then, with a curt "Follow me!" he grasped Kingston's hand and led him across the room. A click sounded, and after a few minutes' walk, a brilliant electric light blazed out, and Kingston and Dolores saw that they were in a small room, absolutely bare of furniture, and on either side there was a thick oak door.

Through one of these the Italian led the way, and after a long walk down a steep passage, the trio found themselves in a large, dome-shaped apartment, which appeared to be made of metal, the door itself being of extreme thickness. This place was also bare, except, up one corner, stood a huge cupboard and a desk in front of it. Round this were collected a group of men, some of them excited and gesticulating vehemently.

A cry went up in many tongues as Dolores and Kingston appeared, and the two found many pairs of eyes turned in their direction. Kingston, of course, was the object of their interest, for was he not, that night, to end the life of a tyrant?

"Comrades," cried Gianotta enthusiastically, "this is our dear friend who has consented, this night, to perform a noble act of justice—an act which any of us would be proud to do were it not for the fact that Lord Hyndick has been chosen for the work by ballot."

A murmur rose from the crowd of revolutionary aliens.

"I have here the bomb especially prepared for this great occasion," went on Gianotta. Then his jaw dropped, and a hoarse cry escaped his lips. His eyes were fixed on the door, and Kingston twirled round to see who had just entered.

The detective had been congratulating himself that his scheme would work out satisfactorily—that he would gain possession of the deadly bomb, prevent the murder of the duke, and succeed in capturing the villainous society.

Now he almost uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

For the reason for Gianotta's amazement was the fact that Olga Turgenoff—the real woman—had at that moment entered the peculiar apartment. Kingston set his teeth hard. He knew trouble was coming—big trouble—and he almost wished he had not brought Dolores into that trap. For they were trapped.

"The police failed to make the capture," he thought bitterly. He had telephoned to Scotland Yard and instructed the officials to arrest the Russian woman. Evidently there had been some hitch.

In a moment confusion reigned, the men uttering excited sentences in many different languages. Kingston grasped Dolores, and endeavoured to back against the wall; but it

was useless. Dolores was snatched away from him and held secure. And Kingston's revolver was wrested from his pocket before he could get a chance to use it. The detective had marvellous strength, but he could not hope to hold his own against a score.

"Who is that woman?" cried Mlle. Olga angrily. "She is an impostor! There is a plot afoot to ruin our plans!"

"Caramba!" snarled Gianotta. "We are tricked! This man, while pretending to fall in with our plans, has been scheming to trap us! The police are, perhaps, outside, waiting for us. Yet to-night's work must be done! The tyrant leaves London to-morrow!"

A dozen revolvers were out, turned menacingly on the two impostors, and Kingston knew quite well they would not hesitate to shoot. Then a hurried consultation was held, the Anarchists becoming more excited every minute. It almost looked as though some would use their weapons.

But Gianotta brought them to their senses.

"Fools!" he shouted. "There is no need to create an uproar by firing! They shall pay for their rashness by death! But in a manner that will make them realise that to interfere with the Red Hand is to sign their own death-warrants!"

CHAPTER 3.

Left to Their Fate.—The Struggle in the Cellar.

FRANK KINGSTON leaned towards Dolores.

"Don't you worry, dear!" he whispered calmly.

"These fellows are very fond of talk. We're in a tight corner, all on account of the police not making a capture; but we shall come out unharmed."

"They are awfully determined, Frank!"

"So am I, little girl!" declared Kingston grimly.

"The traitor and his companion must pay the penalty immediately!" cried Gianotta. "The time has come, comrades, for us to leave this apartment. It has been our meeting-place for years; but the police have been getting too suspicious lately, and we must move to the new quarters. And this place will make a good prison—a good trap."

He laughed harshly, and said something swiftly in Italian. Instantly there were shouts of approval, and the ill-kempt crowd glared at Kingston and Dolores with exultation.

Inwardly, the detective was fuming with impotence, but to outward appearances he seemed resigned to his fate. Dolores did not feel in the least bit frightened. She had been in too many tight corners to be afraid now. Besides, Kingston was with her, and she had unbounded faith in her famous lover's marvellous abilities.

In response to a sharp order from Gianotta, the members of the Red Hand Society filed out through the iron door. The Italian and Olga Turgenoff were last. Both held revolvers, and at the slightest movement from the prisoners would, doubtless, have fired. Kingston realised this, and made no effort to escape.

"I will bid you good-night!"

The harsh laugh which followed the words were drowned by the slam of the door. Kingston stepped forward quickly, and looked round him. He and Dolores were alone in the strange apartment.

"Now is the— Good heavens!"

Kingston uttered the last words as the whole place shook with the force of an explosion. Next second, a rush of water sounded, and a huge stream roared into the apartment, entering from a jagged hole half-way up one of the dome-like sides.

"The fiends!" cried Kingston, above the roar of the water, which was already swirling about their feet. "This place is under the river, and they've fired an infernal machine of some sort in order to let the water rush in upon us. They think they've caught us like rats in a trap!"

"They have done so, Frank!" cried Dolores.

"Not yet. We'll have a good try to escape before we give up."

Kingston looked round him quickly, then darted towards the cupboard at the far end. Then he uttered an exclamation of hope, and swung a heavy sledge-hammer into view. With this in his hands he crossed over to the door.

"We'll see what effect this has!" he cried, the water now reaching to his ankles. Dolores watched him helplessly. She had torn off her hat and veil, and now stood in the centre of the apartment watching her lover.

Crash!

The hammer came down with terrible force on the steel door, and it shivered ominously. The force with which Kingston swung it was terrific; he knew how desperate their situation was, and exerted every ounce of his abnormal strength. Again and again the hammer fell, the water now rising with appalling rapidity. Then, at last, the wooden handle of the hammer snapped, rendering the implement useless. But the door was loose, and two charges from Kingston's massive shoulders sent it flying open.

The water rushed and swirled out, and Frank Kingston and Dolores hurried up the passage which led towards the house. The passage was in pitch darkness, and Kingston suddenly flattened himself against the wall, and whispered to Dolores to do the same. He had heard someone approaching.

Two seconds later there was a cry of terror, and Kingston and Gianotta rolled on the floor of the sloping passage. The struggle was short, and the Italian soon lay senseless. He was not badly hurt, but the detective could not afford to deal lightly with such a scoundrel.

"Let us hope he has left the door open at the top!" he exclaimed, producing his electric lamp. They left Gianotta where he was. There was no fear of his being drowned, as the passage rose up sharply from the submerged meeting chamber, and was, at this point, above the river's surface.

To Kingston's joy, the Italian had left the door open, and he and Dolores found themselves in the hall of the house. Not a soul was about, but in a very few minutes Kingston had a taxi at the front door.

"You get straight home, Dolores," he said gently. "You've had enough excitement for one night, I should imagine. I'll attend to this matter now."

"You won't run into danger, Frank?" asked the girl anxiously.

"I'll try not to, dear. Good-bye."

The taxi moved off, and Kingston blew his police-whistle sharply. Two constables soon put in an appearance, and a search of the house revealed nothing. Gianotta was the only prisoner for the policemen to take. Kingston did not accompany them to the station, but boarded a taxi himself, and told the driver to go at full speed West.

The time was just upon two, and the streets were, consequently, deserted. The taxi simply flew.

Click!

The catch of one of the windows of the Duke of Edware's London residence slipped back, and Kingston stepped into the room. Lord Hyndick had told him that the bomb had to be placed in the cellar, and the detective realised that if he awakened the house and went to the cellar in the ordinary way, the assassin, if he was there, might explode the bomb and sacrifice his own life rather than fail.

Therefore, Kingston had decided to enter secretly. He was practically certain someone else had been sent to do the foul work, and, so far, nothing unusual had occurred. The man was at his work!

Kingston crept in, and found the cellars easily. Yes, the man was there, and he heard the detective just as the latter was upon him. With a snarl, the man flung himself at Kingston, and the two staggered about in the dim cellar. The light of a flickering candle revealed the bomb on the floor, with the fuse spluttering impatiently.

The Anarchist was possessed with a madman's strength, and even Kingston had all his work cut out to overpower him; but overpower him he did, and only just in the nick of time. It had been the revolutionary's object to keep Kingston engaged until the bomb exploded. But the ruse did not work. A terrific blow of Kingston's sent the scoundrel staggering to the floor.

With feverish haste Kingston bent down and pinched out the fuse, burning his fingers in the action. The next moment there was a clatter, and several figures in various stages of undress hastened into the cellar. They had heard the commotion, and had come down to investigate. But the danger was past.

Frank Kingston had been in time to save dozens of lives. For the next two or three days the police were busy, and the result was that nearly every one of the Red Hand gang were captured, including the adventures, Olga Turgenoff.

"You're safe enough now, Hyndick," smiled Frank Kingston, when the young lord called at his rooms one day.

"Yes, thanks to your efforts," replied Hyndick gratefully. "By Jove, Mr. Kingston, if I hadn't come to you that night I'm hanged if I know what would have happened! I'm a cowardly beggar—"

"No, my dear fellow, not that!" interjected Kingston quickly. "You had pluck enough to decide to do the right thing when you thought it would mean the sacrificing of your own life. There was nothing cowardly in that, Hyndick, and I respect you for proving yourself, at the last moment, to be a man!"

THE END.

NEXT WEEK'S FRANK KINGSTON STORY,
"THE BROKEN MESSAGE!"

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NEXT THURSDAY. "FIGGY'S FOLLY." A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Thursday.

"FIGGY'S FOLLY!"

By Martin Clifford.

Under this title, Martin Clifford has written for next week a story which will appeal irresistibly to every one of the many friends of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. In the course of the grand, interesting, and exciting story, a further chapter is opened in the little romance of the devotion of the rugged Figgins, the leader of the New House juniors, to his charming girl chum, Ethel Cleveland. All my chums—and especially the large contingent of my girl readers—will vote

"FIGGY'S FOLLY!"

a real "top-notcher." Please oblige me, and safeguard yourselves, by ordering next Thursday's GEM Library in advance.

Replies in Brief.

T. T. (Ince).—The matter you mention is scarcely important enough to merit a general vote, but I will consider the suggestion. Thanks for your suggestion for stories. Yes; the characters you name are still at Greyfriars.

James K. (Preston).—The reply to your welcome letter is exactly as above.

John C., Junior (Handsworth).—Thanks for a very sensible letter. I emphatically agree with your remarks.

Josephine W. (Bristol).—Of course, pit ponies exist in practically all coal-mines. No doubt you will have seen pictures and descriptions of these willing little animals during the last few weeks. Your friend, of course, is quite wrong in refusing to believe in their existence.

W. A. J. (Paddington).—I'm not sure that I should comply with your request to inform you "how to be a hypnotist," if I could do so, which I cannot. Hypnotism is a very mysterious power, and should be used with the greatest restraint by those to whom it is given to possess it. It is by no means everyone who could become a hypnotist, even if properly trained.

M. C. C.—If you will send your name and address, I will try to get what you want for you.

Alfred W. P. (Marble Arch).—Many thanks for your letter and suggestion. Of course, I am not in the least bit offended by the letter; I like to receive suggestions from my readers. All the same, I am afraid the idea of yours is one which I hardly feel inclined to carry out.

Charles E. P. (Euston Square).—Thank you very much for your nice letter. Your opinions do you credit, and are, I am sure, shared by a great majority of my readers.

"Amabimini" (Regent's Park).—Thanks for your letter. I am sorry to be unable to insert your request for reasons which you will already be aware of. I am much obliged to you, too, for your kind hints on the Latin tongue, but I feel sure it will surprise you to learn that I have not left school so long that I have forgotten how to conjugate the verb "amo." However, I feel sure you meant well, so I hope you will excuse a little gentle sarcasm.

"Poyatt" (Manchester).—I am very sorry indeed to hear of your trouble. If your parents object after reading THE GEM and "The Magnet" for themselves, I am afraid they must be rather unreasonable people. I have had hundreds of letters from parents of ardent readers stating that they had no idea that THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries were such entertaining and wholesome books until they were persuaded to read a copy of each for themselves. Still, different people have different views, and everyone—however unreasonable—has a right to his own opinion. In this case, I beg to differ from your father's opinion, but I am afraid I cannot convince him against his will, so that I can only advise you to bow down to your parent's will, whatever it is, as in duty bound. I will bear in mind your suggestion, but can promise nothing. The only connection between most of the papers you mention is that they are all published by the same firm.

Back Numbers Offered and Wanted.

Readers wanting "Boys' Friend" 3d. Libraries write to W. Stephens, 13, Belmont Terrace, Penbryn, Skewen, Glam., who has 16 numbers to dispose of.

A. G. S., of 50, Struan Villas, East Finchley, N., wishes to obtain Nos. 1, 12, 15, 17, 18, 23, 27, 28, 32, 38, and 44 of the halfpenny issues of THE GEM Library, and also the numbers of "Pluck" relating to the adventures of Jack Blake & Co.

Masters J. Murphy, of 3, Marine Terrace, Kingstown, and B. Vincent, of Post Office House, Kingstown, have all the 1911 numbers of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries, which they are willing to sell at half price.

S. Woolfson, 235, Burdett Road, London, E., wishes to obtain the following numbers of THE GEM Library: 137, 138, 159, 160, 163-175, 177, 179, 180, 183-190, 193-201, 204, and 205.

How to Rear Silkworms.

For the successful rearing of those interesting insects, silkworms, it is first of all necessary to make sure of obtaining an abundant supply of

the only proper food.

that is, mulberry leaves. Lettuce, dandelion, and various other kinds of leaves are sometimes substituted for mulberry leaves, but these make but poor living for the silkworms, which will not do so well as they would on their proper diet. Their silk will not be so good, either. Dry, young, and perfectly fresh leaves should be supplied to the worms as soon as they are hatched, the leaves being distributed evenly in the box, so that each worm is able to get its share. The silkworms grow rapidly, and in five or six days will be approaching

the "casting" stage.

They will refuse food, and remain perfectly still in their box, and soon the skin that has hitherto served the worms as an outer covering will begin to split, more and more, until the worms finally wriggle themselves free of it altogether, and burst forth in all the glory of a new skin. Their appetite now returns with renewed vigour, and they begin to grow apace again, until they are ready to cast their skins for the second time. At intervals of four or five days their process of "casting" is gone through four times before the silkworms become full grown.

The operation of changing their skins is rather a delicate one for the silkworms, which sometimes die off despite every care on the part of their owner. The fourth and last transformation is the most "tricky" of all, but this once safely passed through, the fat, pale yellow silkworms feed enormously, and grow with amazing rapidity until they are about three inches long. The

spinning time

is now close at hand, and as soon as the caterpillars are observed to neglect their food and crawl aimlessly about their box, spinning threads of silk here and there, some small conical paper bags should be manufactured, similar to those in which ha'porths of sweets are usually sold.

A silkworm should be placed in each of the bags, when it will at once commence to spin threads of coarse silk backwards or forwards, leaving only a tiny "nest" for itself in the centre. This coarse silk is of little or no value, and merely forms the outside support to the cocoon proper, which will now be commenced. Swiftly the wonderful insect spins yards and yards of the finest silk, until it has entirely enveloped itself in a pure silken cocoon. This result is usually attained after about three days' spinning, and in a further five days or so the cocoons are ready for gathering up. The description of the interesting process of winding off the silk must be reserved for next week.

THE EDITOR.