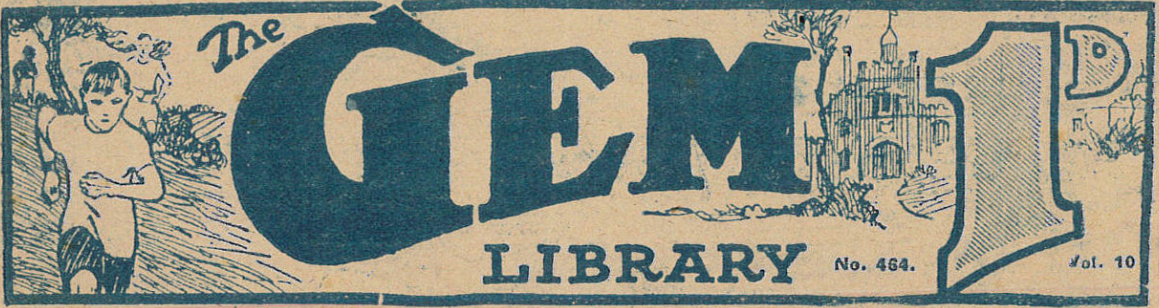


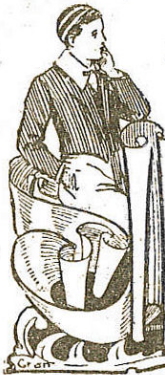
FOR HIS BROTHER'S SAKE.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

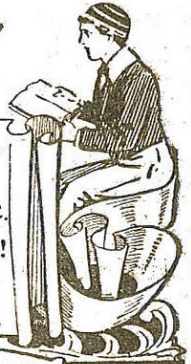


IS LEVISON DEAD?

(A Dramatic Scene in the Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.)



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to — — — — —
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON, E.C.
 OUR .. THREE .. COMPANION .. PAPERS!
 "THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY" CHUCKLES.
 — LIBRARY — ; — POPULAR — ; — 1/2"
 EVERY MONDAY ; EVERY FRIDAY ; EVERY SATURDAY.

For Next Wednesday :

"GRUNDY'S GUILT!"

By Martin Clifford.

The great George Alfred is most unfairly suspected of a mean trick that he would be incapable of playing. One says unfairly, yet it must be confessed that the behaviour of Grundy himself has its effect in throwing suspicion upon him. The trouble is an anonymous letter written to Mr. Linton, the Form-master of the Shell. Grundy does the Herlock Sholmes business again, blunders on to the corns of one fellow after another; proclaims openly whom he believes guilty—first one, and then another; and fairly puts the lid on the whole thing by going to the Head and asking for the letter itself! Grundy has no other idea than to use it for his defective investigations; but the Head suspects him of quite another motive, and the upshot is that Grundy is found guilty! He is not guilty—I do not in the least mind giving away that fact, for no sensible reader would think him so. Yet he is made to appear so, and is sentenced to punishment before the whole school. Whether he is punished in this way you must wait till next week to learn, as also who it was that was responsible for the base trick that was not really

"GRUNDY'S GUILT!"

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER.

The trick wrongly imputed to Grundy in Mr. Clifford's fine story was played by a reader the other day. Here is his letter:

"Somewhere in London:

"Dear Sir,—Until just lately I have been a firm reader of the companion papers. Now, however, I very rarely read the GEM, for the simple reason that I feel convinced that the Weekly-Prize Page is a swindle. My reasons for stating this are as follows:

- "1.—The stories are often absolutely ridiculous.
- "2.—Some of them are as old as the hills, and the average boy must have known them when he was in his cradle.
- "3.—The majority of storyettes printed are much too long to go on a postcard.

"I must say that I am greatly surprised to think that the staff of the companion papers lower themselves to swindle their readers out of the comparatively (sic) small some (sic) to them of £1 a week. If such is the case, they have led me to swindle also, but only 2d., if you happen to pay the 2d. on the letter, which I am forwarding minus a stamp.

"As, however, I do not believe in swindling, I make the following proposal: Should I find somewhere in the next few numbers of the GEM some mention of this letter, in which you state I accuse you of swindling, I am ready to forward on to you the 2d. you pay on this letter. Also, if you can show some conclusive proof that there is no swindle, I am also prepared to write an apology for publication in any or all of your books. Please think this over, and oblige.—Your one-time reader.

'ACCUSER.'

What do my readers think of this poor, miserable worm, who makes baseless charges of swindling, practises himself a paltry swindle, and has the amazing impudence to promise to make amends if his cheeky demands are complied with? His charges need no refutation. The Amalgamated Press stands above such silly suspicions as these. A firm that pays out every week many hundreds of pounds to authors, artists, and competitors does not want protection against a charge involving a few shillings. "Accuser" has the sort of mind that needs disinfection before he is fit to associate with decent people. I know that he has not the courage to come up here and face me; but if he can screw up enough, he had better come—I will guarantee not to touch him. I should not care to shake hands with a creature of his type; and for anything else, he is probably far below my fighting weight. But I will also guarantee that if he has a spark of decency in him, he shall leave the Fleetway House a sadder and a wiser specimen!

AN IMPUDENT LETTEP.

"Sir,—We, the undersigned, think it very unfair that only one of the characters in each of your stories is Scotch. You know quite well that some of your most loyal readers are Scots. The way to lose those readers is to continue in your present course—i.e., slighting them whenever you can, for if there is a mean joke going, you would sooner pass it off on a Scotchman or an Irishman than a Hun.

"What we want is: (1) Another Scotch boy in each of your papers; (2) The instant cessation of your caddish jokes on Scotch meanness and Irish ignorance; (3) The mention of a Scotch regiment once at least in 100 years; (4) Your word of honour never to use the word 'England' instead of 'Britain.'

"Failing your agreement to this, would you please insert a notice to the effect that R. G. Hunter and J. E. Ritchie are starting an Anti-Gemite Combine League, and want members and supporters, home and abroad, for same? Address (sic), 36A, Airbles Road, Motherwell.

"In closing, I may say that we admire J. S.'s spirit. Good luck to him! Cordially hoping that you will publish this letter in full, we are Englishman, Scotch, and Irish (thank Heaven)!

(Signed) R. G. HUNTER, MACSNEDDON (pro R. G. H.), J. E. RITCHIE, FRANCIS SCANLAN, ROBERT CURRIE, JAMES MCGREGOR."

Well, well! And I had always thought the Scots a particularly level-headed and reasonable race! I wonder whether other Scots and Irish readers will thank Heaven for Messrs. Rag, Tag &— Oh, my mistake! I should have said Messrs. Hunter & Co. They have now the happiness of seeing their impudent letter in print, and I hope they are proud of it!

Don't fall over one another in your anxiety to write to 36A and be enrolled in the Combine, you other fellows, please!

But why cannot people who have a complaint to make be civil and reasonable? There is a much better chance of getting it attended to. As things are, the writers of this precious screed may take it from me that I have not the slightest intention of acceding to their, or to anyone's demands. Requests are another matter.

ORDER YOUR COPY AT ONCE!

I wish to draw all my readers' attention to the back page of this issue. There you will find a facsimile of the cover of the issue of the "Penny Popular" for January 6th, containing that famous story,

'THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!'

and also

A GRAND PRESENTATION PLATE

of the Greyfriars chums.

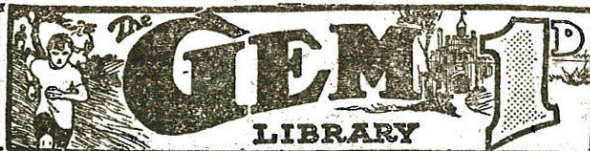
This particular issue of the "Penny Popular" is being well-advertised. There will, therefore, be a greatly increased demand for this number. You should run no risk of being disappointed. Take my advice, and

ORDER YOUR COPY IN ADVANCE!

It is quite an easy matter to pop round to your news-agent and request him to save you a copy of this great issue, but you will find it a very difficult matter to secure a copy if you don't take this really necessary precaution.

Your Editor

PUBLISHED IN TOWN
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COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

FOR HIS BROTHER'S SAKE!

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.
By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



"Trot out the cards, Henry." The seedy old waiter brought the cards, and Racke, who was flush with wealth, tipped him lavishly. (See Chapter 4.)

CHAPTER 1. Levison's Chance.

WHAT about Levison?"
"Levison!" repeated Tom Merry thoughtfully.

The junior captain of St. Jim's was seated on the study table, with a pencil and a slip of paper in his hand.

The paper contained the list of players for the match with Rylcombe Grammar School that afternoon.

There were eleven names on the list; but one name, that of Talbot of the Shell, had been crossed out.

Tom Merry's brows were knitted a little. The responsibilities of a football captain were upon his youthful shoulders, and those responsibilities were very real. The match with the Grammar School was always a hard-fought one, and St. Jim's needed the best players they could put in the field. And the best winger in the team was off the list.

"It's dashed awkward!" growled Tom Merry. "I suppose Talbot can't help it; but it's dashed awkward!"

Next Wednesday:

"A vewy awkward posish, deah boy!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was sitting gracefully in the window-seat polishing his eyeglass. "But Talbot is quite wight to go. I believe there was wathah a misunderstanding between him and his uncle when the old sport came heah to say good-bye to him, and natwally he is glad to see him again befoah he goes to the Fwont!"

"That's all very well, but we want him for the Grammar School match!"

"Wespect to an eldahly welative, Tom Mewwy, comes befoah even footah!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "As Colonel Lyndon is stayin' some days in Southampton befoah goin' off to Flanders, I wegard it as vewy wight and pwopah for Talbot to wun down and see him again this half-holiday!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"You need not wowwy about the match, deah boy! Wemembah, I shall be on the left-wing, you know!"

To Arthur Augustus' surprise this reassuring reminder did not make Tom Merry unknit his brows.

Apparently the fact that D'Arcy was going to play on the left-wing did not seem to him to compensate for Talbot's absence on the right-wing.

"Well, it can't be helped!" said Monty Lowther. "Talbot was bound to go off to Southampton this afternoon, as his uncle asked him!"

"Couldn't be helped!" said Manners.

Tom Merry nodded.

"I know. I'm not grumbling at Talbot, but at things generally. Gordon Gay's lot are in topping form, and we want our best men to beat them. I wonder whether Levison would do. There's Julian——"

"Levison has been comin' on wippinly!" said Arthur Augustus. "He has played in my place, you know, pwactically as well as myself!"

"Better!" remarked Manners, rather unfortunately.

"Weally, Mannahs, if you are goin' to make asinine remarks——"

"After all, Levison ought to have a chance in a School match," said Tom Merry, slipping off the table. "He's been sticking to it, and he's grown into a really reliable man. I'll give him the chance!"

"Heah, heah!"

Having made up his mind on that important point, Tom Merry quitted the council of war in No. 10 Study.

He went along the passage to Levison's study. Levison of the Fourth had lines that afternoon, and was in the study grinding them out. Most of the other fellows were out-of-doors, as it was a half-holiday, and a clear, sunny afternoon.

He looked up quite cheerily as Tom Merry came in.

"Busy?" asked Tom.

"Only another twenty," said Levison. "Deutsch lines for old Schneider, you know! Anything wanted?"

"Yes, you!"

"Well, I sha'n't be long!"

Tom Merry, as he looked at Levison of the Fourth, reflected that, after all, he had made a good choice.

Ernest Levison looked a good deal different from the Levison of the previous term.

His face, which had always been sallow, and almost sickly, was healthier; a ruddy colour showed in his cheeks and a brightness in his eyes that made a very great difference in him.

It was the coming of his minor to St. Jim's that had caused the black sheep of the School House to turn over a new leaf, and he had done it reluctantly and against the grain. But he admitted to himself that he was feeling the benefit of it.

Football with Tom Merry & Co. was rather more conducive to good health and fitness than slacking about and smoking in secret corners with Racke and Crooke and their shady set.

Perhaps Levison felt sometimes a longing for his old reckless ways; but, if so, he did not yield to it.

The influence of Talbot of the Shell helped to keep him steady; and his minor, Frank, was a stumbling-block in the way of a return to his old shady habits.

Indeed, in his worst days, Levison had sometimes wondered whether the game was worth the candle. Now he knew that it was not. He had taken a perverse pride in being a hard case, but that seemed all over now. The difference in him struck Tom Merry more forcibly now than ever before. He looked like a fellow who was quite capable of keeping the St. Jim's colours flying on the footer-field.

"They don't get here till three," said Tom. "You'll have finished your lines before then, Levison?"

"By then, at any rate!" said Levison, glancing at the clock. "But who are 'they'? And what's on?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 464.

"The Grammar School match!" said Tom. "We want you, if you'd care to play."

"My hat!"

Tom Merry smiled.

"You showed up jolly well in the House match!" he said. "It's your first chance to play for the School junior team, Levison!"

"Is somebody standing out?"

"Yes. Talbot's had to go off to Southampton to see his uncle. His place is open to you this afternoon, if you'd like it!"

Levison's brows contracted a little.

"I'd like it," he said slowly. "I've been looking forward to a chance of playing for St. Jim's, though I hardly expected you to offer it. I hadn't any idea I might be wanted this afternoon, of course!"

"Does that mean you don't want to play?"

"I do want to, but I can't!"

Tom Merry's face clouded.

"Another engagement?" he asked gruffly.

"Yes."

"Well, it's your own bizney."

Tom Merry turned to the door, considerably ruffled. There were dozens of juniors in both Houses at St. Jim's who would have jumped at the chance, and Levison knew it.

"Hold on!" said Levison quickly. "It isn't as you think, Tom Merry. I'm not going down to the Green Man, if that's what you suppose!"

"I've heard that Racke has one of his little parties on for this afternoon," said Tom drily. "You needn't tell me any more!"

"I'm not going with Racke."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"You needn't jump to conclusions too fast!" said Levison, with one of his old sneers. "I'll tell you what's on. I'm going to take my minor over to Abbotsford to see the khaki match there. Loamshire are playing an Engineer team. I've booked a trap for the drive over, and I've got to pay for it. And—and Frank wants to go."

Tom's expression changed at once.

"I didn't know that, of course!" he said. "Sorry, Levison! It's all right! I'll ask Julian!"

"He'll jump at it!" said Levison. "So would I, only——"

"Right as rain!" said Tom.

He left the study. His face had cleared. For the moment he had been unable to help suspecting that it was the old game that kept Levison from joining the footballers, and he was glad that he had been mistaken.

Dick Julian of the Fourth met him in the passage.

"I hear you're looking for a man!" he announced. "Chap my size any good?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes. I want you!"

"Good egg! I'm your man!" said Julian, with much satisfaction. "Not quite up to Talbot's form, of course, but I'll do my best!"

And when Tom Merry & Co. went down to Little Side to meet the Grammarians, Julian of the Fourth was in the ranks of the St. Jim's footballers, and Levison, with a somewhat clouded brow, was grinding out the remainder of his German imposition in his study.

CHAPTER 2.

Left in the Lurch.

LEVISON worked on steadily through his lines. It had been with a pang of regret that he had refused Tom Merry's offer of a place in the St. Jim's junior team.

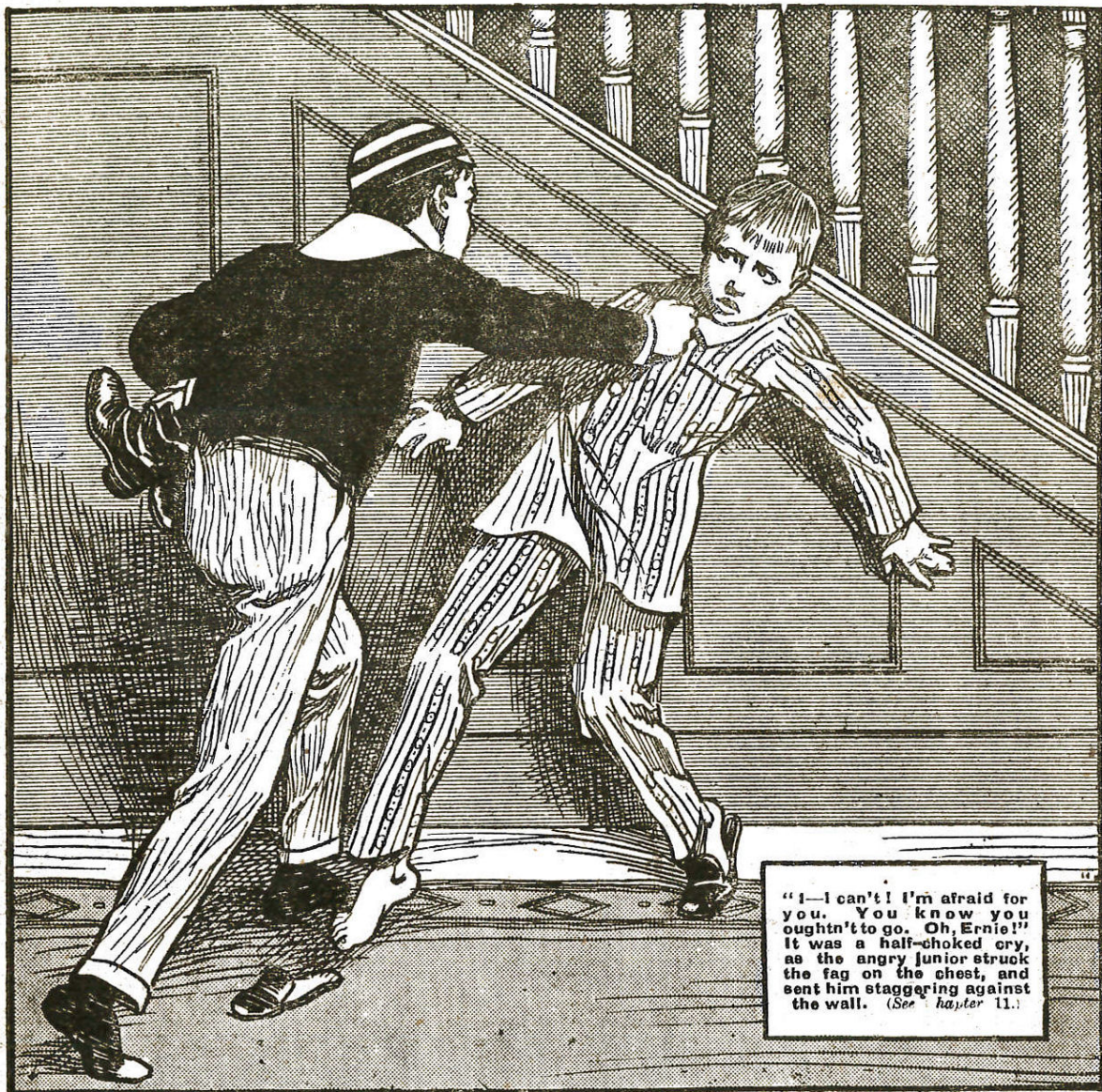
Since he had taken up footer, Levison had become keen on the game, and he had shown unusual abilities as a forward. He had distinguished himself in a House match, and he had looked forward to a chance of playing for the School. Had he had the least idea of such a request being made that afternoon, he would have been careful not to miss the chance. And the fact that he was willing to give up such a chance in order to take his minor out for the afternoon showed that there was more good in Levison than most of the St. Jim's fellows had ever believed.

He did not regret his decision; but he regretted the lost chance very much. But he dismissed the matter from his mind, and finished his lines.

He rose from the table, and glanced from the window towards the playing-fields.

There was a senior match on Big Side, where Kildare and the First Eleven were facing Wayland Ramblers. But it was towards the junior side that Levison's eyes turned.

Tom Merry had kicked off, and the St. Jim's forwards



"I—I can't! I'm afraid for you. You know you oughtn't to go. Oh, Ernie!" It was a half-choked cry, as the angry junior struck the fag on the chest, and sent him staggering against the wall. (See chapter 11.)

were away, the Grammarian players gallantly stemming the attack. Julian was on the right wing—where Levison might have been, but for his engagement that afternoon.

"Well, it can't be helped," muttered Levison; and he turned from the window. "Hallo, Racke!"

Racke of the Shell stood in the doorway.

Levison looked at him rather grimly. Racke, the heir of the huge war-profits of Messrs. Racke and Hacke, contractors, was a fellow who simply reeked with money, and his moral tone was about on a level with that of his worthy parent, the war-profiteer. Racke had been a valuable acquaintance to the needy Levison, till the change had come over Levison, and Levison still missed the little sums he had been accustomed to extract from the Shell fellow at the game of nap or banker. Of late they had been on far from good terms.

But Racke's manner now was quite agreeable.

"Finished your impot?" he asked.

"Just finished."

"Good! Like to come with us?"

"You're very good," said Levison, laughing. "Not so long ago you told me you wouldn't have my company at any price."

"Well, you were rather a rotter," said Racke. "But let bygones be bygones. I'd like you to come, and it will be a good show, too. Crooke and Mellish are coming, and you can make a fourth, if you like."

Levison shook his head.

"Look here, you can give this goody-goody rot the go-by," said Racke. "Never mind your blessed minor. Look here, it's worth your while. We're going to Wayland."

"Not much catch in that!"

"I've got seats at the Frivolity," said Racke, lowering his voice.

Levison whistled.

"You giddy chump!" he said. "That low music-hall in Wayland?"

"Yes; a bit livelier than the Wayland Empire," grinned Racke. "The Empire's a place any chap could take his father to; but the Friv is awfully goey. There's a ripping matinee there this afternoon, a regular corker! And we're going to have a feed in the restaurant at the Friv. A toppin' feed; champagne, and all that. I know a man there, you know!"

"Asking for the sack?" said Levison.

"Not much chance of getting spotted there," grinned Racke. "Railton or Linton isn't likely to drop in at the Friv."

"Ha, ha! No."

"You'll come?" said Racke. "Look here, I want you. You can be an entertaining chap when you like. A bit different from Crooke and Mellish. They bore me to death, and you don't!"

"Thanks!"

"Well, will you come?"

Levison shook his head again.

The expression upon his face showed that the invitation appealed to him, in spite of his new resolves.

The rascally expedition was exactly what he would have enjoyed a few weeks before. He would have enjoyed it now probably. But he put the temptation aside.

"I can't come," he said. "I've chucked that up, all that kind of thing. And I've got another engagement, too."

"Playing footer?" sneered Racke.

"I've been asked to play for the Junior Eleven," said Levison coolly; "but it isn't that. I'm taking my minor out this afternoon."

"Confound your minor! Bring him too."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Can't you put off a walk with your silly minor?"

"I'm taking him to see a military footer match at Abbotsford."

"Well, you silly chump!"

Levison laughed.

"But I couldn't come, anyway," he said. "I've chucked that kind of thing. You won't believe it, but I have."

"Oh, rot!"

"Well, that's how it stands," said Levison.

Racke gave an angry sniff, and strode away, greatly chagrined. The wealthy cid of the Shell did not like being refused; and he really wanted Levison's company that afternoon. As he had said, Levison could be an entertaining companion when he liked; a contrast to the vicious dullness of Crooke and Mellish. And the recklessness and daring of Levison were quite in accord with Racke's own reckless nature.

But there was evidently nothing doing.

Levison grinned as Racke stalked away; perhaps it was not quite disagreeable to him to rebuff the swanking heir of unlimited war-profits.

He left the study after Racke, and went downstairs.

Most of the fellows were out-of-doors. Levison proceeded first to the Third Form room in search of his minor.

The Form-room was empty.

Levison came out again, and called to Piggott of the Third, in the passage.

"Seen my minor?"

"Not since class," said Piggott.

"Oh, hang it!"

The Fourth Former went out into the quadrangle. A good many of the fags of the Third were in sight, but Levison's minor was not among them.

D'Arcy's minor and Frayne and Reggie Manners were on Little Side, watching the junior match. They were the three with whom Frank chiefly consorted; but the fag was not with them.

Levison had known that Wally & Co. intended to stay in and watch the match, and it had not occurred to him that his minor might have gone out without his friends.

His brows contracted a little as he came along to the group of fags.

"Do you know where my minor is?" he asked.

Wally D'Arcy looked round.

"Your minor?" Somewhere between here and Southampton, I suppose."

Levison started.

"What do you mean? Has he gone out?"

"Didn't you know? Talbot's taken him with him."

"Talbot?"

"Yes; he's gone to Southampton to see an uncle or something, and he asked Frank if he'd like a run, Frank said he would, you bet! We'd have gone, too," said Wally, in rather an aggrieved tone. "But it didn't seem to occur to Talbot to ask us. Only your blessed minor!"

"Frank's gone to Southampton with Talbot!" repeated Levison, hardly able to believe his ears.

"Yes."

"But—but I was going to take him to Abbotsford this afternoon!"

"Well, I'd rather go to Southampton than to Abbotsford," said Joe Frayne. "You can go to Abbotsford any day."

Levison did not reply.

He turned on his heel and walked away, his brow black, and his eyes glittering.

Levison had a somewhat uncertain temper; and this unexpected rebuff was more than sufficient to rouse it in all its bitterness.

He had been glad to see the growing regard between his minor and Talbot of the Shell. Perhaps once or twice there had been a glimmering of jealousy.

But to be thrown over in this cavalier way, after he had refused a place in the junior team for his minor's sake, was too bitter.

He did not reflect that Frank did not know anything about Tom Merry's offer; and that, with his usual carelessness, he

had not mentioned to the fag that the khaki match at Abbotsford took place that afternoon.

Frank had been delighted when his major offered to take him there, driving in a trap, and Levison had been pleased at his evident pleasure. But he had not told the fag it was to be that special afternoon.

But he was not thinking of that. He was thinking, with bitter exasperation, of the place in the football team he had refused—for the sake of the fag who had already gone off with Talbot of the Shell.

Frank had not even mentioned to him that he was going. He had not taken the trouble to come to his study and say so, Levison reflected bitterly.

"Hallo! What a cheery face!"

It was the mocking voice of Crooke of the Shell. Levison started and looked up.

Racke & Co. were starting. They came out of the School House as Levison reached it. The expression on his face caused a grin to pass round among the black sheep of St. Jim's.

Levison halted.

"You fellows off?" he asked.

"Yes. Silly ass not to come!" said Racke.

"I'll come if you like."

"My hat! That's a sudden change, isn't it?" grinned Mellish.

Levison did not heed him. He looked at Racke, who gave a very cordial nod.

"Come on, then," he said. "You're welcome."

"Will you wait a minute? I've got a trap ordered. I shall have to ask Latham to let me 'phone and stop it."

"Right you are!"

Levison hurried into the house. Racke & Co. grinned at one another.

"The merry minor is going to be left on the beach this afternoon, after all," Racke remarked. "Levison ordered that trap to take him out, he told me."

Mellish burst into a chuckle.

"Did he? Why, I saw Levison's minor start off with Talbot an hour ago."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Racke. "His minor's left him in the lurch. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Serve him right!" said Crooke. "Why can't he leave the little beast on his own, as any other fellow would? Catch me bothering about a minor! I dare say the kid got fed-up with the kind-elder-brother bizney."

"I dare say he did. Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke & Co. were still chuckling when Levison came out of the house again. Levison glanced at them sourly, but he made no remark, and he was very silent as he went out of gates with the shady trio.

The die was cast now.

CHAPTER 3.

A Shock for Gussy!

"**B**AI Jove! You will have to pull up your socks, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark at half-time.

Gordon Gay & Co. of the Grammar School, had played up remarkably well in the first half. The St. Jim's team missed Talbot on the wing. The Grammarians had scored the only goal that had been taken; hence Arthur Augustus' remark to his comrades.

Jack Blake left off sucking a lemon, to glare at his aristocratic chum.

"You'll have to pull up your socks, you mean!" he growled. "You bumped me twice."

"Wats! You bumped into me, you mean."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You bumped into one another, at all events," said Tom Merry; "and Carboy got the ball away, and they got through."

"Yaas, it was wathah clumsy of Blake."

"You silly ass!" roared Blake. "You were fooling about with your eyeglass, and you fairly bumped me off the ball!"

"I was not foolin' about with my eyeglass, Blake! I neatly dropped it, and just caught it in time. That is all. I suppose you did not expect me to drop my eyeglass to be twodden on?"

"Let me catch you wearing an eyeglass on the field, you frabjous ass!" said Tom Merry.

"I was not weavin' it on the field, Tom Mewwy. It was attached to the stwing, and the stwing broke."

"Your neck will be broken next, if you bump into me again!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I wegard that wemark—"
 "We've got to pull up," said Figgins, of the New House.
 "I was afraid it would be a bit doubtful, with so many School House chaps in the team—"

"Fathead!" said half a dozen voices in unison.
 "Lukily, there's a New House chap in goal," said Figgins. "That's where we've got the pull over them."
 "Fatty Wynn's let the ball through once," said Kangaroo of the Shell.

"That was owing to Blake and D'Arcy doing a country dance on the field," explained Figgins.

"Weally, Figrins—"
 "Pity old Talbot isn't here," said Redfern. "He's a good man, though he's a School House duffer. Julian isn't half so good."

"Thanks!" said Julian, laughing.
 "Well, it's a fact, you know."
 "Julian is quite a weliabie playah," remarked D'Arcy.
 "He does not bump into a chap when he is feelin' for his eyeglass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You frabjous ass!" said Blake wrathfully.
 "I wofuse to be called a fwabjous ass, Blake! And I weally hope and trust that you will not bump into me any more. Wemembah, the Gwammawians are one up!"
 "Oh, kill him, somebody!" said Blake.

"Wats!"
 "Time," said Tom Merry. "Leave off grousing, you Fourth Form kids, and get going. And, mind, we've got to beat them!"

"Whom are you calling kids, you Shell duffer?"
 "Bow-wow! Get a move on!"

The players went back into the field. Gordon Gay & Co. lined up with smiling faces. They looked on the match as their own now.

But Tom Merry & Co. had their own ideas about that. The Grammarians began with a rush, which brought them up to the St. Jim's goal; but Fatty Wynn, between the posts, was not to be caught napping a second time.

The fat Fourth-Former was equal to the test, and he drove out the ball twice, and Herries cleared to midfield.

Then came Tom Merry's chance.
 The St. Jim's forwards were on the ball, and the Grammarians were, for the moment, scattered. The front line went forward, passing the ball like clockwork. They swept down the field. Figgins was robbed of the ball by a Grammarian back; but Julian, the outside-right, took it fairly away from his foot, and sent it in to Tom Merry at centre. Tom drove it home before the goalkeeper knew that it was coming.

There was a roar from the crowd round the ropes.
 "Goal!"
 "Hurrah!"

St. Jim's had equalised, in the first ten minutes of the second half.

The Grammarian goalie tossed out the ball, and the players went back to the centre of the field. Outside-left tapped inside-left on the shoulder.

"That was bettah, Blake! You did not bump into me that time."

Inside-left looked Hunnish.
 "There'll be a dead idiot picked up on this ground before this match is over!" he said, in tones of conviction.

"Weally, Blake—"
 "Line up!"

The game restarted, and there was hard play for some time, neither side succeeding in getting fairly away.

Both sides were making great efforts, but the minutes ticked off, and nothing came of it. Lefevre of the Fifth, the referee, looked at his watch.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "You will weally have to pull up your socks, you know. Blake, deah boy—"

But Blake did not hear.

He was after the ball. It was close on time now, and the match looked like being a draw. The St. Jim's players were making a final effort. The forwards closed in on goal, and Arthur Augustus dashed in to take a hoped-for pass.

"This way, Blake!" he ejaculated, forgetting for the moment that he was not skipper of the team.

Again Blake was deaf; he sent the ball in to centre. Tom Merry secured it, but he went over under a charge; but before the enemy could nail the ball, Figgins had it, and he drove it out to Julian as he was tackled.

Julian rushed the ball in, on the right wing.

He glanced round hurriedly. Tom Merry and Blake and Figgins were all rolling on the ground at the same moment. Arthur Augustus swerved in and took the pass from Julian—a long pass that was not easy to take, but which Arthur

Augustus took with graceful precision—and almost with the same movement he sent the ball whizzing in.

The goalkeeper clutched at it a second too late.
 Tom Merry sat up.

"My hat!"
 "Goal!"

"All sewone, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.
 "Goal! Goal!"

The whistle went.
 "Well, my only chapeau," said Blake, staggering to his feet. "Did you do that, Gussy, or is it a dream?"

"It is not a dream, you ass! It was weally quite simple, as you were to fah off to bump into me—"

"You ass!" shrieked Blake.
 "You should be vewy careful about bumpin' into a chap on a football-field, Blake," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

And he walked off cheerily, leaving Blake undecided whether to test the weight of his football boots upon the elegant person of outside-left.

"A close thing, old fellow!" Tom Merry said to Gordon Gay as they came off. "It was touch-and-go!"

"It was, by Jove!" agreed Gordon Gay. "Gussy is a prize-packet!" He slapped the swell of St. Jim's upon the shoulder. "Good old Gustavus! How did you do it?"

"Quite simple, deah boy! Under the cires, as inside-left was wollin' on the ground, he was unable to bump into me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus suddenly. "What beastly beast thwe that howwid mudday footah at me?"

The footer—which had seen service—rolled down D'Arcy's chest, leaving a track of mud upon his noble feature. There was a howl of merriment from the footballers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Gwooh! I am feahfully mudday! Gwooh! What lowwid beast—"

Blake chuckled, and walked off, leaving Arthur Augustus to discover the identity of the "howwid beast" at his leisure.

St. Jim's had won, after all, and the Grammarian team was licked. But the licked team took it quite cheerfully, and they stayed to tea at St. Jim's. The early winter darkness had fallen when they started for home, some of the St. Jim's fellows walking part of the way with them. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, and D'Arcy and Blake, fresh as paint even after that gruelling match, walked half-way to the Grammar School with the footballers on their return. They parted at the cross-road, and sauntered back towards St. Jim's, discussing the match.

"We've had good luck!" Tom Merry remarked. "We didn't miss old Talbot as much as I expected!"

"Wathah not, Tom Mewwy! You wemembah I wemarked to you that it would be all wight, as I should be there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I do not see anythin' to cackle at in that wemark, deah boys! As a mattah of fact, I came vewy neah stoppin' their goal in the first half!"

"And why didn't you?" demanded Lowther.

"Blake bumped into me, you know!"

"What?" said Blake.
 "You wemembah bumpin' into me, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"I don't!" said Blake. "I remember you bumping into me! But I'm going to bump into you now, and then perhaps we shall hear the end of it!"

"Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus, as Blake did bump into him with surprising suddenness.

The swell of St. Jim's staggered, and collapsed into the damp grass by the roadside.

"You uttah ass!" he shrieked, as he rolled on the grass.

"You feahful, burblin', fwabjous ass! I shall give you a feahful thwashin'! Oh!" Arthur Augustus broke off suddenly. "Oh! Oh, cwumbs!"

He leaped up as if he had been shot.

"Gweat Scott! Look!"
 "What is it?" asked Tom Merry in astonishment.

"There's somethin' in the gwass—"

"What?"
 "It's—it's a body!"

CHAPTER 4.

A "Good ime?"

"WHAT PACE A little game?"
 Racke of the Shell spoke very jovially.
 Racke & Co. were enjoying themselves, after their fashion. They had arrived at that delectable place, the Frivolity, in Wayland. They had seen the matinee through—a low, coarse entertainment that appealed to the taste of Crooke and Mellish and Racke. Levison had sat through it rather grimly. Blackguard as he
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was, Levison was sensitive, and the stupid vulgarity of the Friv. rather got on his nerves. Although he would not have confessed it to his companions, he would much rather have gone to the Wayland Empire, a modern music-hall where the entertainment was as reputable as could be desired. But Racke's taste led him to the Friv., a den where no St. Jim's fellow was allowed to go. If the young rascals had been found there, dire consequences would have been visited on their heads by the school authorities. But there was little risk—certainly nobody else connected with St. Jim's was likely to drop in at such a place.

The entertainment was over, and the four pleasure-seekers had left the hall, from which the audience were streaming. But they did not go out with the audience. Racke, with a great air of knowledge, led the way. The heir of the war-profits of Racke & Hacke had friends at the Friv., and he took his comrades behind the scenes. After a chat with Racke's delectable acquaintances there, Racke & Co. turned their attention to the feed. There was a restaurant attached to the building, but even Racke's nerve was not equal to sitting there in the full glare of light. He had engaged a private room for his spread, and thither the party were led by a side passage.

The lavishness of the feed made Racke's companions open their eyes, used as they were to the extravagance and swank of the heir of Racke & Hacke.

Aubrey Racke was a person of consequence here. A considerable amount of the elder Racke's war-profits had been expended at the Friv., and the seedy old waiter's eyes brightened at the sight of him. Mellish of the Fourth was awed when he found that the feed was costing Racke ten-and-six a head, apart from any extras. And after the solid portion of the feed had been disposed of, wine, cigars, and cigarettes were placed on the table, which certainly ran into a much larger cost than the meal.

Crooke and Mellish enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

Levison had expected to enjoy himself, but, somehow or other, it did not come off. Perhaps his reform had gone deeper than he himself had supposed. At all events, the low entertainment had bored him, and he was now restless and dissatisfied, and hardly spoke a word.

Racke had said that he could be an entertaining companion, but certainly he was not very entertaining now.

"By gad, you do do things in style, Racke!" said Mellish, with great admiration. "Cheero, Levison! What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing!" growled Levison.

"Rather be watchin' a footer match?" grinned Crooke.

"He wants a drink!" said Racke, with a chuckle. "Fill up your glass, Levison, my boy! All safe here, you know!"

Racke had already been drinking. Young as he was, he was accustomed to strong liquors. But Crooke and Mellish, though they considered it awfully doggish to drink champagne, were very careful with it. They knew what to expect if they turned up at the school showing the effects of it.

The waiter, at a sign from Racke, filled Levison's glass to overflowing.

Levison made a gesture of repugnance.

"Oh, don't be a goat!" said Racke. "Drink up! We're on the war-path now, you know; a chap can only live once!"

"What about the no-treating order?" grinned Mellish.

Racke laughed.

Levison sipped the creaming liquid in the shallow glass; and then, as if making up his mind suddenly, tossed it off.

His face flushed at once, and his eyes sparkled.

"That's better!" said Racke, laughing. "Now, what price a little game?"

"I'm your man!"

"Trot out the cards, Henry!"

The seedy old waiter brought the cards. Henry had seen a good deal of the shady side of life, but he blinked rather curiously at Racke & Co. He was thinking that he had never seen such a precious set of young rascals in all his career. But Henry did not allow that thought to appear on his

leathery old face. Racke was quite liberal with half-sovereigns, and half-sovereigns did not often come in Henry's way.

"Bridge?" asked Crooke.

"Oh! Blow bridge! Nap!" said Mellish.

The four young rascals began to play.

The thought of his minor came into Levison's mind, but it was only to harden his heart. Frank was at Southampton all that time. He had left his brother in the lurch, and Levison was his own master.

If Frank could have seen him now!

The thought of that only brought a reckless grin to Levison's face, and he filled his glass again.

Racke, who had a vein of malicious humour in him, urged the champagne upon Levison, wondering whether the newly-reformed Fourth-Former would finish squiffy. Racke would have regarded that as very entertaining. Levison, in his present reckless mood, was an easy victim.

The potent liquor was telling upon him. Even if he had been accustomed to it, he had drunk enough to make him dizzy.

His face was flushed, his eyes unnaturally bright, and his hands shook as he handled the cards.

But, as sometimes happens, the liquor in his reeling brain only brought out more clearly the cunning and astuteness of his nature, and he was a winner all the time.

Crooke and Mellish and Racke paid out again and again, and two of them, at least, began to look very ill-humoured.

Mellish was not rash, by any means; and Crooke, though he was wealthy, was extremely close. Levison's luck brought dark looks to their faces, and Racke, careless as he was with money, began to look less cordial.

"I'm done!" growled Mellish at last.

"Same here!" muttered Crooke. "You've got the dicken's own luck, Levison!"

Levison laughed excitedly. He had five or six pounds before him that did not belong to him, unless winning it by gambling made it belong to him.

"What about you, Racke?"

"Oh, I'll see you out!" said Racke.

The two went on playing. The smoke and the fumes of the wine had given Crooke and Mellish a headache, and they felt that they had had enough of Racke's party. They slipped out of the room, left the building by a side door, and started for home.

Racke and Levison hardly noticed them go.

They went on playing, smoking the while, and occasionally taking a sup at the glasses the obsequious Henry filled for them.

Racke threw down the cards at last with a curse.

"Had enough?" grinned Levison.

"Yes. Confound the cards! Your luck is a little too good for me!" said Racke, with a bitter sneer.

Levison's flushed face became redder. There was no misunderstanding Racke's meaning.

"If you mean—" began Levison savagely.

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

Under the influence of wine and the close atmosphere of the room and his losses, Racke was feeling extremely seedy and disagreeable, and the heir of the Racke war-profits had never been trained to self-control. At such moments his sullen and suspicious nature had full play.

"I've had enough of you and your luck!" he sneered. "Go and eat coke!"

Levison rose unsteadily to his feet.

"You rotten cad!" he said thickly.

"Gentlemen!" murmured Henry.

Levison made a movement towards Racke, and, to his surprise, his legs failed him, and he had to catch at the table for support. Racke burst into a sardonic laugh.

"Tipsy, by gad! Ha, ha!"

"It's a lie!" muttered Levison, holding on to the table, and glaring dizzily across it at Racke.

"Pull yourself together, you fool!" said Racke contemptuously. "I've got a taxi waitin' outside. It's time we were off!"

"I'm not coming with you, you cad!"

"You'd better," grinned Racke. "You can't walk!"

"Liar!"

"Gentlemen!" protested Henry again. He helped Racke on with his coat, Levison gazing on stupidly the while.

"Are you coming?" asked Racke, when he was ready to go.

"Hang you!"

"Look here, you fool—"

"Go and eat coke!"

Racke shrugged his shoulders and quitted the room.

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ANSWERS

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Tom Merry, Blake, and Figgins were all rolling on the ground, when Arthur Augustus sent the ball whizzing in. The goal-keeper clutched at it a second too late. "Goal!" (See Chapter 3.)

Levison was in a disagreeable temper, and ready to quarrel. He blinked after Racke, and blinked at Henry, who was busying himself about the table. With quick suspicion, Levison snatched up his money—not before a currency-note or two had disappeared.

"Your coat, sir," said Henry. "Shall I call a taxi, sir?"
 "Yes!" muttered Levison.

He was hardly conscious of what followed. He felt himself being piloted along a dark passage; fresh air blew on his face—he realised that he was sitting in a taxicab, and that it was buzzing away with him. The astute Henry was only anxious to get him safely off the premises now.

Levison came to himself with a start. The taxi had stopped in a dark road, and the driver was looking in at the door, speaking.

"Eh? What?" stuttered Levison, trying to pull himself together. He felt as if a floodtide were roaring in his head.

"Where to, sir?" the driver was saying.

"St. Jim's—the school!"

"Yes, sir."

"Hold on!" gasped Levison. Dizzy as he was, he realised that it would not do to arrive at the school in his present state in a taxi-cab. There would be short shift for him if he did. "Stop in Rylcombe Lane. I'll walk the last bit. Stop a quarter of a mile from the school!"

"Right, sir!"

The taxi buzzed on again, and Levison fell into a doze. He

started out of it as the cab stopped once more and the door opened.

"Hallo!" he mumbled drowsily.

"Here you are, sir!"

"Oh, all right!"

Levison staggered up, and lurched blindly out of the cab. The fresh wind blowing on his face revived him a little. The taxi-driver looked at him curiously. He could see very well what was the matter with Levison, and he reflected that if the young rascal had belonged to him he would have given him a thrashing which would have cured him of any desire to get into such a condition again.

"How much?" mumbled Levison.

"Six-and-six, sir."

Levison fumbled in his pocket, and handed him a red currency-note.

The taxi buzzed away.

Levison stood in the dark road, looking dizzily about him. He knew where he was—in Rylcombe Lane, between the cross-roads and the school. He started towards St. Jim's, but his legs wavered under him. He paused.

"I can't go in in this state!" he muttered thickly. "Oh, what a silly fool I was! It was Racke, the hound! He wanted to make me drunk! Good heavens, what am I going to do?"

The fresh air had revived him momentarily; but now it seemed to have the reverse effect. The trees by the lane were swimming round him. It seemed to the wretched boy that

the ground was moving under his feet. He found himself on his knees in the road, stupidly wondering how he had got there.

With a last glimpse of sense he knew that the liquor was having its way, that his consciousness was going. With a last effort he crawled out of the road into the grass, out of the way of any passing vehicle. He sank down in the damp grass. His dull eyes turned upward—the stars were dancing to his sight, his head was racked—till consciousness went, and he lay like a log in the damp grass, breathing stertorously.

CHAPTER 5.
Good Samaritans.

A BODY!" Tom Merry & Co. uttered that exclamation in startled chorus as Arthur Augustus scrambled hastily out of the grass.

D'Arcy's face was white. "Yaas!" he gasped. "What rot!" said Manners. "I—I felt it there!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "It thwew me into a howwid fluttah! It's a body!"

Tom Merry felt in his pockets for a match-box. It was intensely dark in the lane. A match flared out, and Tom, with a set face, stepped into the grass, holding down the light.

A form in an overcoat was stretched there at his feet. "Can you see it, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, with chattering teeth.

"Yes," said Tom, in strained tones. "Good heavens!" muttered Blake. "Is—is he dead?" stammered D'Arcy. "No. It's not a body. It's somebody asleep!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus greatly relieved. "It—it's awfully still, Tom Mewwy!"

The match went out. "A tramp?" asked Manners. "A St. Jim's chap!" said Tom, in low tones. "Great Scott!"

"Well, wake him up!" said Monty Lowther. "The silly ass, to go to sleep there! An hour of it would give him enough rheumatism to last him a whole term. Why don't you shake him?"

"I am shaking him." "Then why doesn't he wake? Who is it?" "Levison."

"Why doesn't the silly ass wake?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in startled tones. "Is he hurt, atiah all?"

Tom Merry was bending over the silent form. He had shaken Levison of the Fourth vigorously, but only a low grunt had come from the junior. He could not wake. And the fume-laden breath of the sleeper was quite sufficient to tell Tom Merry what was the matter with him, and why he could not wake. Almost sick with disgust, the captain of the Shell rose from the side of the sleeper.

"He's not hurt," he said. "Then what's the mattah with him?" "He's been drinking!" "Great Scott!"

The juniors looked at one another, their faces pale. Tom Merry's reply came as a stunning shock to them.

"Dwinkin'!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as if he could hardly believe his ears. "A St. Jim's chap dwinkin'! Tom Mewwy!"

"You mean to say he's—he's—he's drunk!" stammered Blake. "Yes."

"Oh, great Scott!" Monty Lowther struck a match, and all the juniors looked at Levison. He lay like a log in the grass, his eyes closed, his mouth open, breathing like a pig. Something like compassion mingled with the horror and disgust they felt.

"What a go!" muttered Blake. "We—we can't leave him here, you fellows!"

"We can't take him to the school in that state," said Tom quickly. "He would be seen at once, and—and—" "And kicked out to-morrow!" said Manners grimly. "All the better! We don't want boozy beasts at St. Jim's!"

"We don't want to be the ones to give him away!" said Tom Merry quietly. "Well, no. But—" "He couldn't have meant to get into that state, of course. He's not used to the rotten stuff, and he didn't foresee the effect it would have."

"It's wotten that they're allowed to sell it." "They wouldn't sell it to Levison, fathead! He's been to some den where such things are done—some low hole—with Racke & Co., I suppose."

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"So that was why he couldn't play in the footer match, to-day," growled Blake.

"He said he was going to take his minor out," said Tom. "I believed him at the time. He looked as if he were telling the truth."

"I don't believe he could tell the truth if he tried. But if he was with Racke, what the dickens did Racke desert him in this state for?"

"Blessed if I know! What are we going to do?" "There was a pause.

To leave Levison lying there in the damp grass with a thick dew falling was impossible. In a few hours he would have been booked for a serious illness.

To take him to the school was still more impossible.

If ever a fellow deserved to be kicked out of St. Jim's in disgrace, it was the wretched blackguard who lay in heavy slumber at their feet. But, very naturally, the juniors did not want to be the cause of it. They could not betray Levison to the school authorities.

But a middle course was difficult to find.

"The gates will be locked soon," said Manners at last. "If we don't buck up we will be locked out."

"We can't desert that rotter!" "No. But what—" "We can't take him in. He would be spotted at once. We've got to look after him somehow."

"Yaas, wathah! It's howwid, but it's up to us, deah boys." "It means getting into a row," growled Blake.

"Well, we needn't all stay—" "Oh, rats! We'll all stay if anybody does."

"Yaas, wathah!" "Get him out of the grass, anyway," said Tom.

It was not pleasant to touch a fellow in Levison's state. But the juniors overcame their repugnance, and grasped him and lifted him up. Levison's eyes did not open. He lay like a log in their arms.

"Bai Jove! What a disgustin' wottah!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "He smells like a howwid tap-room."

"Smoke and booze!" said Lowther grimly. "How ripping for St. Jim's, if it got out!"

"It mustn't get out," said Tom Merry hastily. "We've got to look after him somehow. I shouldn't wonder if it's Racke's fault. Levison wasn't such a rotten beast as this before Racke came, anyway. Racke ought to be in a reformatory."

"I dare say he'll get there some day," grinned Lowther. "But the question before the meeting is, what are we going to do with this rotter?"

"Blessed if I know!" "Somebody might pass and see us any minute," said Manners. "I believe Railton's in Rylcombe. He might—" "Let's get out of the road. There's the barn across the field. Get him there. There's no one there."

"It's wathah mudday in the field, Tom Mewwy." "Oh, rats!"

"But I wathah feah I should make my boots feahfully mudday—" "You could walk on your head," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—" "Come on," said Tom. "Bear a hand with the cad!"

"Upon the whole, I will wisk the mud, as we are bound to be good Samawitans undah the circs."

"Yes. Don't jaw!" "Weally, Blake—" "Are we looking after Levison, or are we listening to a jawbone solo by Gussy?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—" "Oh, come on!" said Tom. "Somebody may pass."

Levison was lifted, and carried through the nearest gap in the hedge. With the insensible junior in their grasp, the chums of St. Jim's stumbled across the dark field. They wattered in mud as they went, and the state of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's elegant boots was soon hopeless.

"Here's the barn!" They found their way into the barn, and Manners struck a match. Levison was laid on a heap of dry straw.

"And now, O king, what's the merry programme?" asked Lowther.

"We can't leave him alone," said Tom. "One of us ought to stay. I'll stay, if you like, and you fellows can get back."

"Wats!" "He mayn't come to for an hour or more," said Tom.

"Nice job for us, looking after a boozy cad!" growled Blake. "But we'll all see it through."

And the juniors waited, with what patience they could muster, for Levison to come to his senses.

CHAPTER 6.

Levison is Lucky!

ERNEST LEVISON'S eyes opened. He blinked round wildly in the darkness. His head was racked with pain, his eyes seemed heavy as lead. He wondered what had happened and where he was.

As he moved, a throb of pain went through his aching head, and he groaned aloud. Then a voice was heard in the gloom. "Bai Jove! The wottah's comin' to, deah boys!"

"D'Arcy!" muttered Levison in bewilderment.

"Yaas, you weptile!"

"Where am I?" muttered the wretched junior, pressing his hand to his throbbing brow.

"You're in the barn by Rylcombe Lane," said Tom Merry.

"I remember now. I went to sleep," muttered Levison confusedly. "How did I get here?"

"We carried you here."

"You found me?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" mumbled Levison. "My head! My head!"

"Got that afterish sort of feeling?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Oh, oh!"

"The way of the twangswossah is hard, Levison. I twust that you have a weally feahful headache."

"It's splitting!" groaned Levison. "Oh, my hat! What a thundering fool I've been!"

"Right on the wicket!" agreed Blake.

Levison sat up. The fumes of wine were still in his head, and he was dizzy, but he was recovering himself. But the ache was terrible.

"I fell down in the lane!" he muttered.

"We found you there."

"What did you bring me here for?"

"To get you out of sight, and to get you out of the wet."

"Thank you!"

"You needn't thank us," said Tom Merry coldly. "It would have served you right if we'd left you there, or taken you to St. Jim's as you were. I don't know whether we're doing right in keeping this dark."

"You can sneak to the Housemaster if you like," sneered Levison.

"Bai Jove! Do you think Levison is in a fit condition for me to give him a feahful thwashin', Tom Mewwy?"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" grunted Levison. "What's the time?"

Tom Merry scratched a match and looked at his watch.

"Half-past eight."

Levison scrambled to his feet, sick and dizzy.

"Half-past eight! There'll be a row over this. You fellows needn't have stayed here."

"Well, we did," said Tom Merry curtly. "Can you walk alone now?"

"I—I think so."

"I'd rather not touch you, but you can lean on my arm if you like."

"You needn't touch me," sneered Levison. "You can keep your arm to yourself."

"Let's get off," said Blake.

The juniors left the barn. Levison followed them unsteadily, suppressing a groan of pain. Nobody was anxious to touch the wretched waster; but Tom Merry's heart smote him a little as he heard Levison stumbling, and he turned back.

"You'd better take my arm," he said.

"I can do without it," snarled Levison.

Tom Merry took his arm without replying, and led him out of the barn. Levison was feeling weak and flabby enough now, and he was glad of the assistance. The captain of the Shell piloted him across the dark field to the road.

"You think you've recovered enough to show up at St. Jim's, Levison?" Tom Merry asked.

"Yes. I've only got a headache. Have you seen anything of the others—Racke and Crooko and Mellish?"

"Nothing."

"I suppose they're home long ago. Hang them!"

"Did they leave you in that state?" asked Blake.

"I came home alone; I had a bit of a row with Racke. Oh, my head!"

"Might have been a bit better to play in the match," said Blake drily.

"I wish I had. Only I couldn't you see; I had to take my minor out."

"You had your minor with you with Racke?" exclaimed Tom.

Levison laughed harshly.

"No; I didn't take him out after all, as it happened. Never mind why. But—but I thought I was going to, when you offered me the place in the team. It was too late afterwards.

I'd have played, only you'd started the game. How did it go?"

"We beat the Grammar School."

"Good! I wish I'd been there; and so I should have been, but for—but never mind. Oh, how my head aches!"

Levison did not speak again as the juniors tramped home to the school.

Tom Merry helped him all the way.

Tom was puzzled. Levison's disjointed words were curious enough. Tom wondered whether a quarrel with his minor had been the reason of this blackguardly outbreak. Levison's reform had certainly come to a very sudden end, and it had ended in a far grosser blackguardism than he had ever been guilty of before. The juniors were agreed that, so far as they were concerned, the shameful incident was not to be mentioned; yet they could not help wondering whether they were doing right in keeping it secret. Certainly Levison of the Fourth was not a fit fellow to remain at St. Jim's.

They reached the school gates at last, and Manners rang the bell. Taggles came grunting down to the gates.

He eyed the juniors grimly as he admitted them.

"Which you're to report to Mr. Railton in his study," he grunted.

"Thank you vewy much, Taggles! I am suah you are sowwy we are in a scwape."

Whereat Taggles grunted again. He did not look very sorry, as a matter of fact.

"I'm going up to the dorm before I see Railton," muttered Levison. "There's smoke still clinging to me, and—and I want to wash my mouth out—there's a niff of booze. You fellows might wait. If we all go in to Railton together, it will look better."

"Bai Jove, I hope you are not goin' to tell him any lies, Levison! I should wefuse to be dwawn into any lyin'."

"Oh, rats!"

Tom Merry & Co. entered the School House, and Levison out upstairs at once. He was anxious to remove all signs of the late orgy before he interviewed the Housemaster. Even Levison's nerve failed him at the thought of what would follow if Mr. Railton guessed the truth.

"Hallo! You've got back?" said Herries, coming down the passage with Digby. "Where on earth have you been?"

"You're late for prep," remarked Dig.

"We have been playin' the Good Samawitan, deah boys. Pway don't ask any questions, as we are keepin' it dark."

"Shurrup, you ass!" murmured Blake. Half a dozen fellows had heard Arthur Augustus' remark, and they stared, as well they might.

"Weally, Blake, I was not goin' to say anythin' about Levison."

"Levison!" exclaimed Gore. "What's Levison been doin'?"

"Pway don't ask any questions, Goah!"

"What on earth has happened?" asked Kangaroo of the Shell.

"Gussy wants suffocating!" said Monty Lowther. "Merely that, and nothing more."

"I should wefuse to be suffocated, Lowthah! And I twust you fellahs are goin' to be discweet. Levison would get into an awful wov if—Yawwooh! What feahful beast stamped on my foot?"

"I did!" said Blake, in sulphurous tones. "And I'll stamp on your silly head next, if you don't keep it closed!"

"You uttah ass—"

"You are to report yourselves to Mr. Railton, you young rascals!" said Kildare of the Sixth, coming into the hall.

"Wight-ho, Kildare! We're waitin' for Levison."

"Eh? Where's Levison, then?" asked the captain of St. Jim's.

"Gone up to the dorm, deah boy."

"He—he's rather muddy," stammered Tom Merry.

Kildare nodded, and passed on. Levison came downstairs at last. He had brushed his clothes, washed his face, brushed his hair, and rinsed his mouth out with eau-de-Cologne. Save for his deadly paleness, he had few traces to show of what he had been through.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry abruptly.

The delinquents proceeded to Mr. Railton's study, and Tom knocked at the door. The Housemaster's deep voice bade them enter.

They entered, in an uneasy mood. They knew Levison well, and they could not help feeling that he had falsehoods on the tip of his tongue. It was possible that, as he came in with Tom Merry & Co., the Housemaster would conclude that they had all been together, and would ask no questions. But if he did, Levison would lie, and Tom Merry & Co. had no intention whatever of being involved in falsehoods. Yet to give Levison away was not agreeable. They had an impatient and angry feeling that they had allowed the cunning Fourth.

Former to make use of them to their disadvantage—a feeling fellows very often had who had dealings with Levison of the Fourth.

Mr. Railton eyed them with severe inquiry as they came into his study.

"Ah! You are all here?" he said. "You missed calling-over! Have you only just returned?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"We went home with the Grammar School chaps, sir," said Tom, speaking for himself and his companions. Levison could speak for himself, if he chose.

"You should not have stayed so late," said Mr. Railton. "However, there is no great harm done. You will take fifty lines each."

"Very well, sir."

The juniors retired from the study, glad that the House-master had asked nothing further. Tom had an uneasy feeling that, as Mr. Railton had evidently taken his statement to include Levison, he had been guilty of something like a deception; but he did not see how else he could have answered. He had not spoken for Levison, and Levison had not chosen to speak.

Levison grinned as they came out of the study.

"Thank you!" he said. "You got me clear."

"I wasn't speaking for you," said Tom hotly. "If you chose to leave Railton under a mistake, that was your bizney, not mine."

"It's all the same to me. I'm clear, anyway."

"Weally, Levison, as Waitton is undah a misapprehension, that amounts to falsehood on your part," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"Go hon!"

"Yaas, it appeahs so to me, and I should wecommend you to go in again and make a clean bweast of it to Waitton."

"And I should recommend you to apply for the first vacant cell at Colney Hatch," said Levison coolly; and he walked away before the indignant Gussy could think of anything sufficiently crushing to say in reply.

CHAPTER 7.
In the Sulks.

"HALLO, Talbot!"

"You're jolly late!"

Talbot of the Shell had come in. The Terrible Three had gone up, to get on with their belated preparation, and they met him in the Shell passage.

Talbot was looking a little tired, but very cheerful.

"Yes, it's rather a run from Southampton," he said. "Of course, I had leave from Railton. I couldn't have got back for calling-over."

"Seen your uncle off?"

Talbot nodded.

"Yes. How did the match go?"

"Topping! Two to one for us, and Gussy got the winning goal."

"I was wondering whom you'd decide to play in my place," said Talbot. "I was thinking of suggesting Levison."

"I asked Levison," said Tom rather drily. "He told me he was booked to take his minor over to Abbotsford."

Talbot started.

"Levison was?" he exclaimed. "I didn't know that. I don't see how that could have been. Frank didn't tell me so. He came to Southampton with me."

"Levison minor did?"

"Yes. You know the colonel met him here, and he seemed rather to take a fancy to the kid," said Talbot. "I thought it would be a good idea to give him a run down to Southampton; he's never been there. I—I thought it would rather please Levison, as a matter of fact."

"Oh, I dare say he was only telling whoppers to me, in his usual way!" said Tom.

"Oh, no! There seems to be some mistake," said Talbot. "I

suppose he hadn't mentioned to Frank what he intended. But as Frank was gone, he could have played in the match all the same. Why didn't he, if you asked him?"

"He found something else to do, I suppose," said Tom. "He told me that he would have played, only we'd started by the time he found he wasn't going with his minor. So he fell back on Racke for company."

"Racke!" repeated Talbot.

Tom Merry nodded, and the Terrible Three went into their study. Talbot remained in thought for some moments, and then went to see Levison.

He found Levison in his study at prep, with his study-mates—Lumley-Lumley, Mellish, and Trimble. They were finishing, and Levison was beginning, with a white face, an aching head, and a vile temper. Mellish was looking morose, but Lumley-Lumley had a grin on his face. Lumley-Lumley seemed to be amused at the outcome of the good time the black sheep had had that afternoon. To judge by Levison's and Mellish's looks, it was not wholly a pleasure to be a bold, bad blade.

Levison looked up as Talbot stepped in at the doorway. Usually Levison had a very cordial look for Talbot—the only fellow at St. Jim's he had ever really liked. But his expression was sullen now. Talbot noted it, and his own face clouded a little. He noted, too, the pallor of Levison's face and the dark circles under his eyes. It was not difficult to guess that Levison had been "going it," with more than his former recklessness.

"Hallo! You've got back?" said Levison.

"Yes; just in."

"Hope you had a pleasant afternoon out."

"Very pleasant," said Talbot. "I saw my uncle before he went on the transport. Your minor was with me."

"Yes, I heard so."

Levison resumed his work.

"I thought it would be rather a treat for the kid to come down to Southampton," said Talbot.

"Yes, I dare say it was," assented Levison, without looking up.

"He seemed to enjoy the run."

"Yes, I suppose he would."

Levison was evidently in a sulky temper, and the quiet, reserved Shell fellow was not much given to bothering about anybody's sulky temper.

"There seems to have been a misunderstanding, Levison," he said very quietly. "I had no idea you intended to take Frank to Abbotsford. You had not mentioned it to me, and he seems to have been unaware of it himself. I should have spoken to you, but I had no time to lose after getting my uncle's telegram, and you were not to be seen. I had every reason to suppose that you would be glad he had been taken on a pleasant excursion."

"Yes. I was glad when I heard it," said Levison. "It was very kind of you—very kind and thoughtful. Besides, it left me free for the afternoon, and I was glad not to be bothered with a fag, as it happened."

There was no fault to be found with Levison's words, but his tone made his study-mates glance at him.

Talbot knitted his brows for a moment.

He seemed about to speak again, but he closed his lips and quitted the study. Levison's eyes were still upon his work.

"He, he, he!" came from Trimble.

Levison looked up.

"What are you cackling about, Trimble?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing!" said Baggy Trimble hastily.

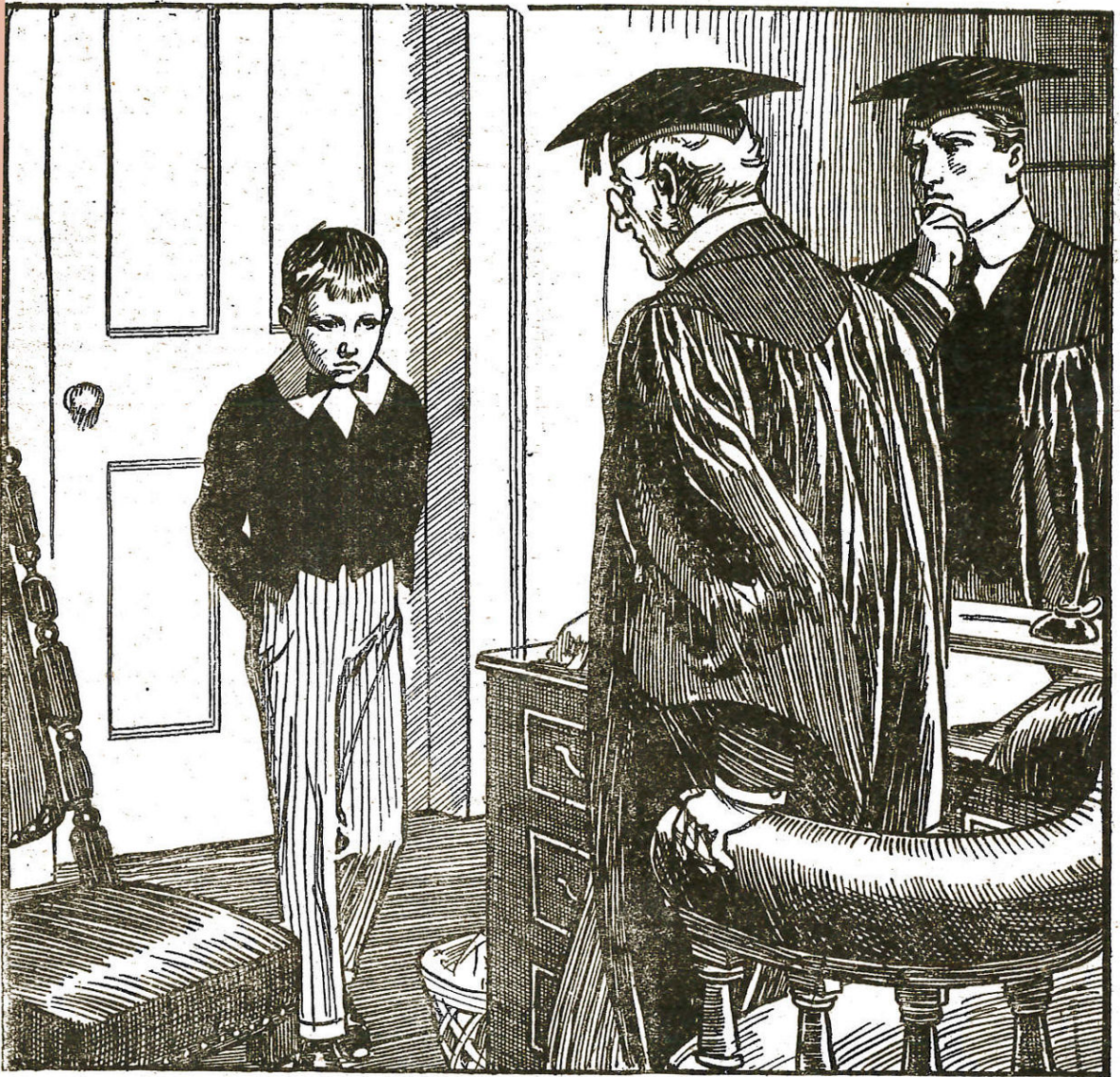
He did not like the glitter in Levison's eyes.

"You silly chump, Levison!" said Lumley-Lumley, in measured tones. "What are you getting your back up with old Talbot for? It was jolly decent of him to take a blessed fag with him for the afternoon. I don't know any other chap who'd have done it. I know I wouldn't."

Levison worked on.

"Why, you've always been planting your blessed minor on Talbot,"

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Mr. Railton was with the Head, and both masters were looking very grave, Frank stood before them with downcast eyes, and the colour burning in red spots in his cheeks. (See Chapter 12.)

went on Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. "If he wasn't the best-tempered fellow in the House; he wouldn't have stood it."

"So kind of you to give me your opinion," remarked Levison. "It would be kinder still to keep it till I ask for it!"

"Oh, I guess you're welcome to it!" said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "I think you're a burbling ass!"

"Thanks!"

"Talbot's the only chap who will stand you, anyway. And if you had any sense you'd know that he's not a chap to put up with airs and graces from you!"

"Would you mind shutting up while I get on with my prep?" asked Levison politely. "I'm rather late with it."

Lumley-Lumley grunted, and shut up as requested. Levison worked on with a grim face. His companions finished their work, and left the study, Mellish going last. The latter lingered to speak to Levison when Trimble and Lumley-Lumley were gone.

"You had a row with Racke, I suppose, at the Friv?" he asked.

"A bit of a tiff," said Levison. "Racke was— Well, you know what Racke is like when he shows his real manners."

Mellish laughed.

"He came in for calling-over," he said. "He said he'd left you squiffy at the Friv. How did you get home?"

"I got home," said Levison. "That's enough for you to know!"

"Were you really squiffy?"

"Find out!"

"I saw you come in with Tom Merry and the rest. You looked a picture," said Mellish, with a chuckle. "Lucky Railton didn't see you just then."

"Yes; wasn't it?"

"Well, it was like old times this afternoon," remarked Mellish. "It was a ripping time! I've got a headache, though."

"I've got more than a bit; and jawing doesn't improve it." Mellish shrugged his shoulders and strolled out of the study. Levison settled down to grind at his work, with a heavy, dull ache in his head, and a seedy feeling all over him. He was feeling savage and discontented with himself, with everybody, and with everything. Mellish had said that it was a ripping time that afternoon, but Levison did not exactly feel ripping.

He finished his work, and lighted a cigarette, by way of solace. As he sat in the armchair, blowing out smoke, the door opened, and his minor entered.

CHAPTER 8.
Bitter Blood!

FRANK LEVISON came into the study with a ruddy, cheerful face.

It was evident that Levison's minor had enjoyed himself that afternoon.

He had come there to tell his brother all about the excursion to Southampton, full of cheery confidence, and evidently quite unconscious of the state of his major's temper.

He started at the sight of the cigarette. Levison looked at him, enjoying the expression that came over the fag's face.

Frank made no remark upon it, however. It was not his business to preach to his elder brother.

"I've been to Southampton," he said.

"Yes, I've heard so," said Levison, with a nod.

"Talbot took me with him. Ripping of him, wasn't it?"

"Very ripping!"

Levison's manner seemed to have the effect of a cold douche upon Frank. The bright confidence faded a little from his face.

"I've seen the place, and the ships," he said. "I was with Talbot to see Colonel Lyndon before he went on the transport. Then he took me round the place to show it to me. It's a jolly place. But you've been there?"

"Yes."

"There's a jolly old bar-gate in the High Street," said Frank. "They call the street 'Above Bar'—past the gate, you know. It used to be the city gate; built in the eleventh century, Talbot told me. Southampton must have been much smaller then. I say, I've had a ripping afternoon, Ernie!"

"Good!"

Frank hesitated. Levison blew out a cloud of smoke, and stared at the fire.

"Anything wrong, Ernie?" asked Frank, after a pause.

"No. Why?"

"You—you seem different, somehow. I—I thought you'd be pleased," said Frank. "You like Talbot to take me out, don't you?"

"Of course."

"You told me so," said Frank. "Are you seedy to-day, Ernie? You look rather white."

"No."

Frank looked considerably discouraged.

"I looked for you before I went, Ernie. I couldn't speak to you. You were in Herr Schneider's study."

"Yes; he was jawing me," assented Levison.

"But I know you'd be glad for me to go."

"Oh, yes!"

Another pause.

Levison did not break the silence. All the cheeriness had gone out of the fag's face now, and he looked uncomfortable and miserable.

"I—I say, Ernie," he ventured at last, "you're not waxy, are you?"

"Why should I be?" said Levison, unmoved.

"I—I don't know; but you look—I haven't done anything, have I?"

"Not that I'm aware of."

"I—I thought you'd like me to tell you about where I've been, and what I've seen," said Frank, in a rather aggrieved tone.

"My dear kid, I've seen Southampton, and know the place from end to end," said Levison. "No need to give me any information about it."

"I don't mean that. I mean—"

Frank broke off, and moved to the door. The atmosphere of his brother's study gave him a chill just then.

He paused at the door, and turned back, however.

"I—I say, Ernie—"

"Well?"

"You didn't want me this afternoon, did you?"

"No. Why should I?"

The fag's lip trembled.

"I suppose you're waxy about something," he said. "You might tell me what it is."

"Quite a mistake," said Levison, his tone belying his words, as he intended it should. "I'm feeling a bit seedy, that's all!"

"Do you want me to clear off?" broke out Frank abruptly.

"Please yourself."

"I—I thought you'd like me to go with Talbot," said Frank, in a low voice. "It was jolly kind of him. He paid my fare, too."

"No need for him to do that. You can give him the money."

"I couldn't, Ernie. It was his treat."

"What rot!"

"I—I wouldn't have gone if I'd known you were going to be rusty about it. I don't see why you should."

"Oh, rot!"

"Do—do—do you want me to come with you to see the match at Abbotsford, when it comes off?" asked Frank, who looked very near tears now.

"It's rather late for that," said Levison satirically.

"When is it?"

"This afternoon."

"Oh!" said Frank. He began to understand now. He came back eagerly towards his brother.

"I didn't know it was to-day, Ernie. Did you look for me?"

"Oh, I just looked round," said Levison carelessly.

"I didn't know. You didn't tell me it was to-day," said Frank, much distressed. "You told me last week you'd take me, when it came off; but I didn't know it was this Wednesday. You didn't say."

"The date was in the local paper."

"I never look at the local paper," said Frank. "If I'd known, of course, I shouldn't have gone to Southampton to-day."

"What rot!" said Levison. "You can see a football match any time."

"Well I should have asked you first," said Frank. "I didn't know."

"Then there's no harm done!"

"I—I'm sorry!"

"Nothing to be sorry about, that I can see," said Levison airily. "I had a good time this afternoon; much better than taking a fag to a football match. It was rather a relief, in fact."

Frank looked at his brother. Levison puffed at the cigarette, and stared into the fire. Frank went slowly to the door again. This time he did not turn back. He left the study, and closed the door behind him.

Levison shrugged his shoulders, and lighted a fresh cigarette.

Frank was very nearly in tears as he went down the passage. All the happiness of that afternoon was blotted out now. He had unwittingly offended his major, and Levison, in his sulky temper, was evidently determined to make the most of the offence. A cheery voice hailed the fag as he passed Study No. 6.

"What's the twouble, deah boy?"

"Eh! Nothing!" said Frank quickly.

"Has that howwid boundah Gunday been cuffin' you again?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, if he

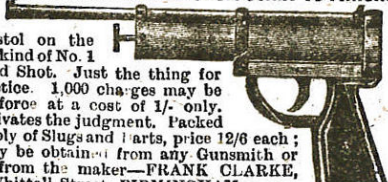
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has, I will go along to his study and give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh, no! It's nothing! All serene," said Frank. And he hurried on before the goodnatured swell of St. Jim's could ask any further questions.

His little face was clouded as he came back into the Third Form-room. The fags' evening prep was over, and Mr. Selby was gone.

"Hallo, you're not looking very cheery for a kid who's been on a holiday," said Wally. "Fagged out—what?"

"I'm a bit tired," said Frank.

"Seen your major?" grinned Hobbs. "Was he rusty? He came looking for you after he'd done his impot, and you should have seen his face when we told him you'd gone off with Talbot! He was going to take you somewhere."

"He looked like a regular Hun," grinned Joe Frayne. "Has he been lickin' you, young Levison?"

"Of course he hasn't," said Frank indignantly.

"Well, he looked as if he would," said Hobbs. "Jolly savage, I can tell you. Your major is a sulky beast, Levison minor!"

"He's nothing of the sort!" snapped Frank. "And if you say that again, I'll punch your head, Hobby!"

"Will you, by gum?" said Hobbs.

"Yes, I will."

"Your major's a sulky beast!" roared Hobbs defiantly.

And the next moment there was a terrific combat raging in the Third Form-room. And when the Third went up to their dormitory, both Levison minor and Hobbs showed traces of war, and exchanged glares of mutual defiance.

CHAPTER 9.

The Downward Path!

LEVISON'S reform had caused a considerable amount of surprise among the fellows who knew him. Most of them had wondered how long it would last; and the general opinion was that it would not last long.

The fellows who had opined that it would not last long had a right now to rank themselves among the prophets.

It had not lasted long.

Levison's outbreak on that half-holiday had opened the eyes of Tom Merry & Co., and showed them that it was still the old Levison they had to deal with.

Levison's new keenness on footer, and his improvement generally, had caused Tom Merry & Co. to come round, and they had been quite prepared to welcome Levison. At his best, he was a valuable player for the House, and Tom Merry was ready to let bygones be bygones, and give Levison his fair share in the games. That outbreak, however, chilled Tom; and from that time he let the black sheep of the Fourth severely alone. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had been quite cordial to Levison since the surprising new leaf had been turned over, did not take the trouble to conceal his utter scorn and disgust, and he never spoke to the cad of the Fourth if he could help it.

Levison had slipped back into his old ways, and worse than his old ways, and the decent fellows in the House wanted to have nothing to do with him.

It had been like that before; but, then, Talbot of the Shell, at least, had always been friendly, if not chummy. At his worst times, Talbot's influence had done Levison good, and had a restraining effect upon him.

But Talbot had also done with him now it seemed.

Talbot's temper was kind and patient; but sulky resentment where no real offence had been given was a little too much for the best temper to stand. The Shell fellow could hardly be expected to take the trouble to conciliate an unreasonable and sulky temper. He simply left Levison to his own devices, quite prepared to be friendly if Levison showed a desire that way, and leaving him alone till that time should come.

Even with his minor Levison was not on good terms.

He had surprised everybody by his regard for his minor, and by the change he had made in his manners and customs since Frank's arrival at St. Jim's. That also had not been expected to last long.

It was over now.

Frank had been accustomed to come into his major's study for help with his lessons, and to tell him all his little troubles, and get his advice. But he never came into Levison major's study now.

He waited for a sign of encouragement, and he did not receive it.

Levison, in his sulky and resentful mood, felt that every-

body was down on him, and he looked for friends where he was certain of finding them.

Racke and Crooke, Clampe and Mellish, and their set welcomed him back with open arms.

Levison had been a deserter from their honourable society; and they felt that it was one up against Tom Merry & Co. for him to rejoin them.

Frank Levison could not fail to be aware of his brother's downward progress, but the few remarks he made were so sharply snubbed that he said no more.

The brothers met seldom, and hardly spoke when they met.

Neither did Frank see much of Talbot of the Shell. His excursion to Southampton with Talbot seemed to be the cause of all the trouble, unreasonable as it was. But Frank could not help suspecting that his major had chosen to be ratty about that as an excuse for his own conscience. He was tired of the path of reform, and he wanted a pretext for throwing it up. Certainly spotless conduct for several weeks must have been a strain on Levison.

In his sulky mood, Levison persuaded himself that his minor did not care anything about him, that Talbot had deserted him, that the football crowd were glad to be rid of him.

He told himself that he had been a fool, and that he would make up for lost time now. And he did!

Levison had always been the most reckless of the black sheep, but his recklessness now rather alarmed his cronies. Racke & Co. wanted to have what they called a good time, but they did not want to run too much risk of being turned out of the school is disgrace. Levison seemed to delight in risks. He made the juniors stare by walking down the passage with a cigarette in his mouth; though when Lowther humorously called out "Prefect!" from the stairs, the cigarette disappeared fast enough. He would disappear after lessons, and return barely in time for calling-over; and several times he missed calling-over, and told some story of a puncture to account for his absence.

Levison was in funds in these days, owing to the little game in the room at the "Friv"; Racke had had the pleasure of supplying him with funds. He was making the money fly, too; but he frequently joined in another little game in Racke's study which replenished his exchequer.

He seemed to be, as Blake remarked, asking for the sack; and when he was called into Mr. Railton's study one evening some of the fellows thought that the hour had come. Trimble brought the message to Levison, with a grinning face.

"Railton wants you, and he's awfully ratty," he remarked. "You've been bowled out, old chap!"

Then Trimble yelled as Levison hurled a dictionary at him before quitting the study.

"Yow-ow!" roared Trimble. "I hope it's the sack, you rotter!"

Levison went jauntily downstairs.

He wondered which of his many delinquencies had come to the Housemaster's knowledge, but he relied upon his nerve and his remarkable powers of lying to pull him through.

Trimble confided to a good many fellows that Levison had gone to the Housemaster to be sacked, and there was quite a general interest in the interview.

Levison's manner was quite cool and unconcerned as he entered Mr. Railton's study. His coolness had a tincture of impertinence which Mr. Railton did not fail to note.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Levison.

"Yes. I have to speak to you very seriously, Levison," said the School House master. "On more than one occasion my attention has been directed to you. You have been punished very frequently for breaking the House rules."

"I am sorry you are not satisfied with me, sir," said Levison, as insolently as he dared.

"I am very far from satisfied with you, Levison! I have been keeping an eye on you for some time."

"You are very kind, sir."

"I intend to be kind, Levison; and also as severe as may be needed. You have been punished for smoking. If I am not mistaken, there are now stains of tobacco on your fingers."

"It is ink, sir."

"Show me your hands."

Levison held out his hands for inspection. The tell-tale brown stains on the finger-tips could scarcely be mistaken.

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Turn out your pockets, Levison!" he commanded.

Levison hesitated. The summons to the Housemaster's study had come suddenly, and he had not had time to prepare for it.

"You hear me?" said Mr. Railton sharply.

Levison obeyed slowly.

"Turn the lining out," said Mr. Railton, when the junior had deposited several quite harmless objects on the table.

There was no help for it. Levison had to turn out the packet of cigarettes and a folded sporting paper that he had hoped to keep concealed.

Mr. Railton's eyes gleamed at the sight of "Racing Tips."

"So that is the kind of literature you read, Levison?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Levison calmly. "I don't read that paper. I picked it up to wrap a parcel in. War economy, you know, sir!"

"You can scarcely expect me to credit such a statement, Levison. This shows to what pursuits you are addicted."

"I hope you do not think so, sir," said Levison, the insolence disappearing from his manner. He was beginning to get alarmed.

"I hope," said Mr. Railton, "that you have gone no further than reading this rascally paper. If I had good reason to believe you guilty of betting, Levison, I should take you to Dr. Holmes at once to be dealt with."

"Of course, I never do anything of the sort, sir!"

"I trust not. You had better remember that you are under observation, Levison," said the Housemaster sternly. "I do not wish to misjudge you, but I cannot trust you. Several reports have reached me lately of boys belonging to this school being seen about a certain low resort in Rylcombe. I would gladly believe that such reports are mere gossip, and that no St. Jim's boy would act in so disgraceful a manner. But it is my duty to make quite sure upon that point."

"Yes, sir."

"You have been late for calling-over many times of late, and several times you have given excuses that could hardly be believed," said the Housemaster. "Last time you told me you had been delayed by a puncture."

"Yes, sir; that was the case."

"As I felt that I could not trust you, Levison, I made some inquiries, and found that you were not out on your bicycle at the time."

"Oh!" muttered Levison.

"As you were not cycling, you can scarcely have been delayed by a puncture last evening," said Mr. Railton. "You spoke falsely."

"I—I—"

"I must now ask you, Levison, where you were on that occasion."

"I—I'd been for a long walk, sir."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing."

"Then why did you give a false excuse for being late?"

"I—I said the first thing that came into my head, sir."

"If you have so little regard for the truth, Levison, you can hardly expect your word to be taken on any occasion."

"I am sorry, sir. I will be more careful."

"I advise you to be more careful. I need hardly say that if you should prove to be guilty of the disgraceful conduct I cannot help suspecting, you would be expelled from the school at once. You may reflect upon the blow that would be to your parents, Levison; also upon your own future prospects if you were turned out of the school in disgrace." Mr. Railton swept the cigarettes and "Racing Tips" into the fire. "On this occasion, Levison, I shall not punish you. I give you an opportunity for reflection. You may go!"

"Thank you, sir!" muttered Levison.

He left the study, his face a little pale, and breathing hard. He had had a narrow escape, and he knew it. He was suspected—more than suspected—but his Housemaster was willing to give him every chance.

Frank Levison, with a scared face, was waiting for him at the end of the passage. He had heard Trimble's tattle, and was almost white with anxiety.

"Ernie!" he panted.

Levison looked at him with a sardonic grin.

"Well?" he said.

"Have you—have you—"

"Have I been found out?" grimed Levison. "No; only suspected. The chopper has not come down."

"Oh, Ernie," faltered Frank, "if you'd only—"

"For goodness' sake don't give me any blether!" snapped Levison irritably. And he walked on, leaving his minor dumb.

CHAPTER 10.

The Last Appeal.

RACKE was waiting for Levison in his study when he came back, with Crooke. The two Shell fellows looked anxious.

Levison grinned as he saw their long faces. They evidently feared that something had come out with regard to Levison, and that they might be dragged into it.

"It's all serene!" said Levison, lighting a cigarette. "Railton is suspicious, that's all."

"I think it's about time we drew in our horns a bit," said Crooke uneasily. "What did Railton have to say?"

"He's heard that St. Jim's chaps have been seen hanging round Joliffe's place, and he thinks I know something about it."

"He didn't mention us?"

"Not at all. I fancy he's got an eye in your direction, though—Racke especially. He fairly caught Racke once, and he hasn't forgotten it."

"I know that," said Racke. "The fact is, some of those rotters at the Green Man may have been talking. Griggs will say anything when he's been drinking, and Lodgey isn't exactly reliable. It's best to be a bit careful."

Levison sneered.

"Does that mean that you're scared for to-night?" he asked.

"You can call it that if you like," said Racke; "but I'm certainly not going to break bounds to-night, with Railton on the qui vive."

"What rot! He never comes spying into the dormitory."

"He might, now he's suspicious."

"You can leave a dummy in your bed."

"Suppose he found it there?"

"Oh, if you're nervous, you'd better stay in!" said Levison scornfully. "What about you, Crooke?"

"I'm jolly well giving it a miss—for a week at least!" said Crooke emphatically. "No good running into trouble, that I can see. Better lie low for a bit, that's my opinion. You'd better do the same."

"Oh, rats!"

"I'll bet you won't go!" sneered Racke. "You can gas to us now, but you jolly well won't go, all the same! Anyway, I'm not going! It's not good enough!"

"I'd go, if only to show you I'm not afraid of Railton!" said Levison. "Only last week you were worrying me to go with you."

"Last week isn't this week. I don't want to be sacked—and the beaks are getting a bit suspicious. Too many fellows know about us," said Racke. "It's only sense to let things blow over for a bit."

"Funk!" said Levison.

Racke shrugged his shoulders, and quitted the room with Crooke. Racke was a good deal bigger rascal than Levison of the Fourth, but he was cautious. He had come very near being expelled once, and he did not mean to run the risk again if he could help it. Racke senior, the dealer in war-profits, had sent his son to St. Jim's to get a footing with the nob's, as he termed it, and certainly that object would not have been effected by the cheery Aubrey being kicked out of the school.

Piggott looked into the study a little later.

"I suppose you're not going to-night?" he remarked.

"Yes."

"More fool you!" said Piggott. "I'm not! I shouldn't wonder if old Railton keeps a very special eye open for a night or two. Trimble says—"

"Hang Trimble!"

"Hang him as high as Haman, if you like," said Piggott, "but I'm sticking in bed to-night, I can tell you."

Piggott walked away whistling. There was an extremely obstinate expression on Levison's face. To his peculiar nature there was a certain pleasure in showing that he dared do things others feared to do. Yet, as the evening grew older, Levison began to reflect a little. He wanted to go. He wanted to show his precious pals that he was not afraid to go. But—there was a "but."

His study-mates came in to do their prep. Levison was finished first, and he left the study. He found his minor in the window-seat in the passage. Frank jumped up as the Fourth-Former came by.

"Ernie, I want to speak to you."

"You can save your breath," said Levison coolly.

"I've been talking to Piggott, of my Form—"

"I've told you a lot of times not to talk to that little cad!" said Levison, with a sneer. "But I suppose that doesn't matter much. Of course, you can do as you like." Frank's lip trembled.

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YOU MUST NOT FAIL TO TURN TO THE BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE.

"I didn't want to talk to him," he said. "I don't like Piggott. But—but he told me you were going out to-night, and suggested my speaking to you. He says you're simply going to look for trouble."

"He couldn't mind his own business, of course!" said Levison.

"Well, he meant it good-naturedly enough for once," said Frank. "He doesn't want you to get into trouble, and he thought I might get you to—"

"You mean, he's afraid I should give him away if I got nailed!" said Levison contemptuously. "Well, I shouldn't."

"Perhaps that was it," said Frank. "But—but anyway, what he says is true, Ernie. I—I don't want to say anything about what you've been doing—"

"You'd better not!"
 "But think of the risk, Ernie! It isn't only that it's wrong, but—but suppose Mr. Railton finds that you've gone out, after—"

"He won't."
 "But he might. Piggott thinks he's got his eye on you and all your friends."

"Piggott's a sneaking little funk! And I don't care anyway! I'm going to chance it!"

"Then—then you are really going to that rotten place, Ernie?" said Frank, his eyes filling with tears.

"A lot you care whether I do or not!" sneered Levison. "Still, if you're awfully shocked you can go and speak to Railton!"

"Ernie!"
 "Oh, don't Ernie me!" said Levison savagely, and he strode on.

Frank choked back a sob. He was getting a clearer understanding of his brother's character than he had ever had before. The discovery of Levison's ways in the first place had been a painful shock to him. But then Levison had been, at least, ashamed that his minor should know him as he was—he had tried to do better. Now he seemed to be lost to all sense of shame—rather to glory in his wrong-doing. It was as if the evil in him was coming out with redoubled force after being kept down so long.

But it was not only the reckless rascality of it that troubled Frank. There was the danger. Levison either could not or

would not see the danger; but the fag realised it only too clearly.

Suspicious had been aroused, and all Levison's companions in rascality had taken a scare, and meant to let things blow over for a time. Levison only persisted in his reckless course, and the punishment he had braved so often was very likely to find him out this time. If ever a fellow deserved punishment, it was Ernest Levison. But Frank did not look at it in that light. He was miserably anxious for a reconciliation with his brother, and terrified at the thought of the peril he was recklessly plunging into. His only thought was to save Levison somehow from what he appeared to be determined to bring upon himself.

Levison of the Fourth left his minor, determined to carry out his project for that night. If he had wavered, he was obstinate again now. Frank knew it, and his heart was heavy. There was no sleep for Levison minor that night.

CHAPTER 11.

To Save His Brother.

"Bai Jove! Is that a beastly Zepp?"
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked that question drowsily as he raised himself on his elbow in bed.

It was very dark in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House. Half-past ten had struck.

Somebody was moving in the dormitory, and Arthur Augustus sat up and blinked through the darkness.

"Who's that?"
 "Don't jaw, you ass!"

"Bai Jove! Levison!"
 A grunt was the only response.

"You uttah wottah!" said Arthur Augustus, in measured tones. "Are you bweakin' bounds at this time of night?"

"Mind your own business!"
 "If I were not too sleepy, Levison, I would get up and give you a feahful thwashin'!"

There was no reply, but the door closed softly. Levison had left the dormitory. And Arthur Augustus, with a sniff of contempt and disgust, laid his head upon the pillow again, and was back in the land of dreams in a couple of minutes.

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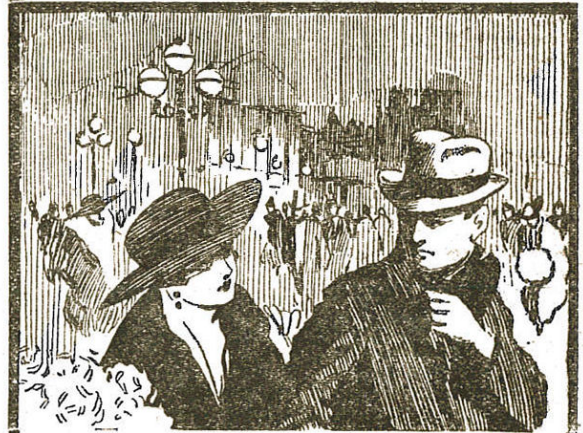
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NEXT WEDNESDAY! "GRUNDY'S GUILT!"

Levison, with his boots in his hand, stole into the dark passage.

Downstairs there were still lights in the masters' rooms, and in some of the Sixth Form studies. But all the junior portion of the House had long been in bed, and was supposed to be fast asleep.

Levison crept silently down the passage towards the box-room. He gave a violent start as a dark shadow loomed up before him in the gloom.

He backed away hastily.

"Ernie!"

Levison's heart gave a throb of relief. It was his minor's voice. For a moment he had feared that he had run into some watchful prefect. But his relief changed into savage anger in a moment.

"Are you spying on me, you little cad?" he said between his teeth.

"Ernie, I—I couldn't sleep! I'm anxious—"

"Go back to your dormitory, you young fool!"

"I—I can't! I'm anxious about you, Ernie!" Frank's voice was half-sobbing. "I—I can't help thinking that you'll be found out if you go to-night. I—I saw Mr. Railton talking to Kildare and Darrel. I think very likely—"

"So you think you can frighten me, you funky little fool?" sneered Levison. "Let me pass, hang you! Let go my arm!"

"Ernie, if you'd only give it up for to-night—"

"Will you let me go?" hissed Levison furiously.

"I—I can't! I'm afraid for you. You know you oughtn't to go! Oh, Ernie!"

It was a half-choked cry, as the angry junior struck the bag on the chest and sent him staggering against the wall.

Frank reeled there, breathless, choking back a sob, and Levison disappeared in the darkness. There was a faint sound of a closing door. Levison had gone into the box-room, from the window of which he could reach the ground.

The bag remained in the dark passage, his heart throbbing wildly. That angry blow from his brother had struck him to the very heart. The tears were running down his cheeks.

"Oh, Ernie!" he whispered into the darkness.

He did not return to his dormitory. His anxiety for his brother amounted almost to terror. He had seen the Housemaster in consultation with the prefects, and his anxious heart had led him to connect that grave consultation with his brother. What if a watch were being kept? The vision of a crowded Hall, of the severe face of the Head, of pitying or contemptuous looks from a crowd of fellows, with his brother as the central shame-stricken figure in the scene, danced before the bag's eyes. That was what Levison was risking in his perverse obstinacy, and that was what his minor would have saved him from if he could, in spite of all.

"Oh, Ernie!" he muttered, again, in tones of utter misery.

There was the sound of a movement below, and Frank's heart throbbed again. Levison was gone—long gone. Frank heard the great door on the quadrangle open. Who was out of the School House at that hour? His terror for his brother revived in redoubled force.

He crept on tiptoe to the stairs, and, keeping out of sight, peered down into the dimly-lighted hall. It was Kildare of the Sixth who had come in, and his face was very grave. Mr. Railton met him in the passage, Frank, peering through the banisters, could see the top of the Housemaster's head. Kildare was speaking.

"There is no doubt of it, sir. Some boy—certainly a junior—has gone out."

"You are certain of that, Kildare?"

"I saw him get down from the box-room window, sir."

Levison minor trembled.

"Who was it?" asked the Housemaster quietly.

"I could not make out in the dark; but I am sure it was a junior. From where I stood I could not get near enough to stop him; he was gone when I ran forward."

"Thank you, Kildare! My suspicions have been confirmed," said Mr. Railton. "As to the boy's identity, that will soon be established. I shall visit the junior dormitories. I cannot help thinking that I shall not need to look further than the Fourth Form dormitory."

"Frank's heart had almost ceased to beat.

There was no doubt that the Housemaster suspected Levison; but, in any case, a visit to the Fourth Form dormitory would reveal the fact that Levison's bed was empty.

The blow had fallen!

Levison, outside the walls of St. Jim's, could not return without being discovered, even if he knew his danger. Had he seen the prefect on the watch? Possibly he had caught sight of Kildare, but then it was too late to climb back into

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the box-room. He was out off from return; when he returned, he would find the Housemaster waiting for him.

Frank pressed his hand to his brow, which was wet with perspiration.

A strange, stambling thought had come into his mind—a last, desperate device which might yet save his brother.

He turned and hurried to the Fourth Form dormitory. The Housemaster would be on the scene in a few minutes; he had gone for a lamp. Levison minor had a few minutes. Was it enough?

He opened the dormitory door silently, passed in, and closed it behind him.

There was deep breathing to be heard in the long, dark room, the deep breathing of the juniors sleeping soundly.

Frank knew his brother's bed.

He groped his way to it in the darkness, his heart beating almost to suffocation, but in dead silence.

He felt over the bed. A dummy was arranged there, to deceive a careless glance into the dormitory; but it was not a careless glance that was to be expected now. On a chair beside the bed, Levison's clothes were folded, just as he had left them when he turned in. The black sheep did not take unnecessary risks. He had taken other clothes from his box for his excursion. It was always possible that a master or prefect might glance in. In that case, the folded clothes beside the bed, the apparent form of a sleeper in the bed, would have been enough. But it would not be enough now that suspicions were turned into certainties.

Frank turned back the clothes, and rearranged the bolster and pillows which formed the dummy. He replaced them where they belonged, and hurriedly drew on Levison's pyjamas over his clothes; for he was almost fully dressed. Then he slipped into the bed, and drew the bedclothes over him.

Levison minor was very like his brother in features, only his face was younger, clearer, healthier. But he drew the loose collar of the pyjama-jacket well up over his chin, and a corner of the sheet over the back of his head, as if to keep off a draught. His hair was the same colour as Ernest's. It needed a very close look to see that it was Levison minor, and not Levison major, in the bed.

Mr. Railton would have only a lamp; and he would see that there was someone in the bed, which would disarm his suspicions at once. It was quite probable that the deception would pass muster.

As to what would happen to him if he was discovered playing such a part, Frank did not think for a moment. He was only thinking of hiding the absence of his brother.

His heart was beating violently, though he tried to calm its pulsation. He closed his eyes, and waited in terrible anxiety.

The door swung.

The lamplight struck upon Frank's closed lids; he did not open them.

Mr. Railton advanced into the dormitory, carrying a lamp, his face very grave and stern. He glanced along the row of white beds, and noted the fact that each of them appeared to contain the form of a sleeper. But that was not quite enough for the Housemaster; he was quite prepared to find a dummy in the bed of the absentee. There was a startled ejaculation from Blake as he woke up.

"Do not be alarmed," said Mr. Railton quietly. "It is only I."

"Mr. Railton!" ejaculated Blake.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, raising his head. He remembered that Levison had gone out.

"I have reason to believe that one boy is absent from this dormitory," said Mr. Railton.

He came towards Levison's bed, and gave a start.

There was a sleeper there. The dark head was like Levison's. The coverlet rose and fell to the steady breathing beneath. Only the upper part of the face could be seen, and that was half buried in the softness of the pillow. The eyes were steadily closed.

Mr. Railton's face was a study for a moment. He had taken it for granted that it was Levison of the Fourth who was absent.

He gazed at the sleeper for a moment or two, and then passed along the row of beds, looking at each. There was a junior in every bed, and the Housemaster went back to the door.

"No one is missing from this dormitory!" he said, apparently to Kildare in the passage. "I must look further."

The door closed, and the dormitory was in darkness again.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus drowsily. "I

thought that wottah Levison had gone out. Good-night, deah boys!"

The Fourth Form dormitory slept again. But there was one who did not sleep. Mr. Railton's last words had struck a chill to Frank Levison's heart.

The School House master was going to make a round of the junior dormitories. He would come to the Third, and he would find Levison minor's bed vacant. Frank Levison had saved his brother; but it was at the price of taking his fault upon his own shoulders.

CHAPTER 12.

Levison Plays Up!

THERE was a cautious sound of an opening door—a cautious footfall. An hour had passed. Levison of the Fourth had returned.

The black sheep of St. Jim's threw off his clothes silently in the dark, and crept to his bed.

"Ernie!"

Levison started back.

"Frank! You here! You confounded little fool—"

"Quiet!" breathed Frank. "Ernie, Railton's been here!"

"Railton!"

"Yes. Kildare saw somebody get down from the box-room, and Railton came to look for you."

"And he found—"

"No. He took me for you."

"Good heavens!" muttered Levison.

"It's all right," whispered Frank. "Kildare couldn't recognise you. Railton thinks you were in bed all the time." He slipped from the bed. "Get in, Ernie, for goodness' sake! They—they might come back."

Levison stood motionless.

"Then—then they were on the watch!" he muttered. "I thought I saw somebody—I was sure of it—and I hung about till I thought it was safe to come in. I haven't been anywhere, after all, Frank; only looking for a chance to get back. But Railton knows there was somebody out, then?"

"Yes."

"Jolly odd that they didn't watch the box-room, then!" muttered Levison. "They must have known. I found the window just as I'd left it; yet they must have known, if Kildare saw me—"

"Get into bed, Ernie!" muttered Frank. He knew very well why the box-room was not watched. He knew that Mr. Railton, at that moment, was in the Third Form dormitory, waiting for the supposed delinquent to return there.

"I—I say, Franky"—Levison's voice was husky—"you're a little brick to do this for me—a real brick! My hat! The game would have been up, and no mistake! Franky, I—I'm sorry I've been such a beast!"

"Oh, Ernie!" muttered Frank miserably. He thought of what awaited him in his dormitory; but he did not speak of it. Ernest was not to know that.

"Suppose Railton had spotted you here?" muttered Levison. "You ran a big risk. He wouldn't have overlooked a thing like that. Get back to your dorm, kid! I—I'm sorry I—I punched you in the passage; I didn't mean to—"

"It's all right, Ernie!"

"It's only my rotten temper," mumbled Levison remorsefully. "I was a sulky beast—a rotten sulky beast! I wonder you bothered your head about me at all. I—I didn't think you'd do this for me. I—I was ratty because you went off with Talbot that afternoon, though I knew he only meant it as a good turn to me, and I knew you wouldn't have left me in the lurch—"

"I wouldn't, Ernie."

"And if you had, there was nothing to make a song about. Only—only I suppose I was fed up with being decent. I'm sorry, Franky!"

"It's all right. I'll go now," whispered Frank.

"Good-night, kid! Mind you're not spotted out of your dorm."

Frank smiled miserably in the darkness. That warning was not much use to him.

"Good-night, Ernie!"

Levison of the Fourth drew the bedclothes over him. His heart almost stood still as he thought of the narrowness of his escape. The black, sulky mood had passed, the hard heart had melted, and there was bitter remorse in his wayward breast for the savage harshness he had shown to the loyal little fellow whose affection had never faltered. And Levison did not yet know that his remorse came too late.

Frank slipped from the dormitory, and stole away on tip-toe. Whatever the Housemaster thought of his absence, he must never know that the fag had been in the Fourth Form dormitory.

The fag reached his own quarters. The door was ajar, and a dim light burned within. Mr. Railton was seated, grimly patient, upon the vacant bed. Most of the fags were awake, looking on with scared faces.

The Housemaster rose as Levison minor came in.

"So you have returned, Levison minor?" His voice was like iron.

"Yes, sir."

"You may go to bed! You will be taken before the Head in the morning!"

Mr. Railton waited while the fag turned in, and then left the dormitory with the lamp.

There was a buzz of voices at once, and questions were rained upon Levison minor by the amazed fags.

Frank did not answer.

Not a word could be elicited from him, and his Form-fellows gave it up at last, and settled down to sleep.

Levison minor did not sleep. The thought of the interview with the Head in the morning was more than enough to banish sleep. What would it mean for him? A flogging—expulsion from the school—or what? Yet he was not sorry for what he had done. He had saved Ernest, and Ernest was reconciled to him; and that, in poor Frank's mind, was worth the price he had to pay.

His eyes were heavy and sleepless when the grey winter dawn crept in at the windows, and the rising-bell clanged out over St. Jim's.

All the fags regarded him curiously.

"So you went out on the tiles, Levison minor?" grinned Piggott. "There'll be an awful row!"

"Where were you?" demanded Wally warmly. "Have you taken to following your blessed major's example, you young rotter?"

"Give it a name," said Joe Frayne. "What were you up to, Frank?"

"Nothing," said Frank. "Don't jaw me, for goodness' sake! I've got enough of that to come from the Head!"

"By gum, you have!" said Hobbs. "I don't envy you!"

Levison minor certainly was not an object for envy that morning. His face was pale at the breakfast-table, from loss of sleep and apprehension of what was to come.

After breakfast, as the St. Jim's fellows streamed out into the quadrangle, Mr. Selby told the fag harshly to go to the Head's study. Levison minor made his way to that dreaded apartment with faltering steps.

Mr. Railton was with the Head. Both the masters were looking very grave.

Frank stood before them with downcast eyes and the colour burning in red spots in his cheeks.

"It seems scarcely possible, Levison minor," said Dr. Holmes, "that you were the boy who broke bounds at a late hour last night. If the proof were not complete, I could scarcely credit it."

Indeed, it seemed hard to believe that the little fag, with his clear, innocent face, was guilty of the fault attributed to him.

"I fear there is no doubt, sir," said Mr. Railton. "A junior was absent, and I found Levison minor's bed empty. I waited more than an hour for his return. Kildare saw the boy leave the House. But—but I cannot think that Levison minor was engaged in anything of a disgraceful nature. In the case of another person, I suspected that; but in the case of this boy—"

The Head almost smiled. Truly, it was not easy to suspect the little fag of breaking school bounds at night for the purpose of going the pace.

"Levison minor, you were absent from your dormitory last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"For what reason did you leave the house?"

Silence.

"You are probably aware, Levison minor, that reports have been received of St. Jim's boys being seen in the vicinity of a low resort in Rylcombe, at late hours. Was that your purpose in breaking bounds?"

"No, sir."

"Where did you go?"

Silence.

"Come, Levison minor! I am not unwilling to believe that you broke bounds for some less harmful reason than would appear at first. I believe juniors have sometimes done such a thing on account of disputes with the other House. Was it some foolish raid, as I think you call it, on the New House?"

"No, sir."

"Then why were you absent?"

"I—I haven't anything to say, sir," faltered Levison minor.

The Head's brows contracted.

"You had some reason for leaving your dormitory, and absenting yourself for more than hour," he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"What was the reason?"

No reply.

"Does your silence mean, Levison minor, that you refuse to explain your conduct to your Headmaster?" The Head's tone was very ominous.

"I—I haven't done anything wrong, sir," muttered Frank.

"I—I haven't done anything to be ashamed of."

"I am quite willing to believe, Levison minor, that your conduct was merely a foolish freak, but you must give me an explanation."

Silence.

"Very well!" said the Head. "Since you cannot or will not explain, I can only place a very serious construction upon your conduct, Levison minor. You have stolen from the school at a late hour at night. Were you in a higher Form, I should consider whether to expel you from the school. As it is, I shall administer a severe flogging, and trust that the lesson will not be lost upon you."

"Yes, sir," said Frank dully.

"My boy," said Mr. Railton not unkindly, "why will you not explain to Dr. Holmes? I am sure you have some explanation to make."

Frank shook his head, and the House-master sighed. There was nothing more to be said.

"Mr. Railton, will you kindly ask Taggles to come here?"

The House-master left the study.

The sight of old Taggles coming to the Head's study was enough for the juniors. The word passed round like wildfire that Levison minor was going to be flogged. A crowd gathered in the passage, discussing the matter with bated breath.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in wonder. "It beats me hollow, deah boys. What can the kid have done to be flogged for, Tom Mewwy?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Tom Merry, in perplexity.

"He was out of bounds last night, and Railton caught him," said Wally, whose face was very glum. "I can't understand it—he's not that sort I know. His major, if you like, but not poor old Frank!"

"What's that about my minor?" It was Levison of the Fourth. He hurried up with a startled face. "Who's going to be flogged?"

"Your minor," said Tom Merry. Wally says he was out of bounds last night, and was spotted. It beats me."

Levison stood rooted to the floor for a moment.

"There must be some mistake," said Talbot of the Shell.

"Hullo, where are you going, Levison?"

Levison did not reply. He sprang towards the door of the Head's study. He threw the door open without knocking, and ran in.

Dr. Holmes had taken up the birch, and Taggles was about to hoist the fag. The Head gave Levison of the Fourth a terrific look as he rushed into the study in that unceremonious manner.

"Levison!" he thundered.

"You—you are going to flog my minor, sir?" stammered Levison.

"Leave this room at once!"

"Get out, Ernie," muttered Frank. "Get out! I can't stand it!"

"You can't and shan't!" said Levison, between his teeth.

"Dr. Holmes! My minor was not out of bounds last night. I can prove it. It was another fellow, and I know who it was."

"Indeed!" The Head laid down the birch. "In that case, Levison, I will listen to you. To whom do you refer?"

"It was I, sir!"

"What?"

"Ernie!" muttered Frank, in misery. "It will be worse for you than for me!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders. He was quite cool again now.

"I broke bounds last night, sir" he said quietly. "Frank got out of his dormitory to stop me, and I wouldn't let him. That's all."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head. "Mr. Railton!"

The House-master entered.

"You have heard Levison's statement, Mr. Railton—"

"Levison was in bed at the time, sir. I saw him there. I

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fear he is speaking falsely to serve his brother," said Mr. Railton.

"I was not in bed," said Levison calmly. "Frank got into the bed to save me, and Mr. Railton took him for me."

"Bless my soul!"

"Is it possible that I was so deceived?" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Then—then it was you, Levison, who were absent, and your brother attempted to screen you?"

"He tried to stop me going out, sir, first."

"Levison minor has been guilty of a serious fault," said the Head. "Under the circumstances, however, as the real culprit is found—"—he paused for a moment—"You may go, Levison minor."

The fag, with a miserable look at his brother, left the study. He was proud of his brother for speaking up to save him; but he wished he had kept silent. For he feared, and with reason, that a more severe punishment was likely to fall upon the Fourth Former.

There was a grim silence in the study when the fag was gone. The Head broke it at last.

"You went out at a late hour last night, Levison?"

"Yes, sir."

"For what purpose?"

"To play the fool, sir."

The Head coughed.

"You know what to expect, Levison?"

Levison drew a deep breath.

"I know you're going to expel me, sir. I know I deserve it, too. I'm ready!"

The Head looked at him fixedly for a moment, and then he glanced at Mr. Railton. He seemed to hesitate.

"Levison," he said at last. "I confess that I hardly know how to deal with you. Had your conduct been discovered, I should have expelled you from the school. But I cannot overlook the fact that you have voluntarily admitted your fault to save your brother from punishment. Levison, I shall flog you for your misconduct, and you will be given another chance—under very careful observation, I may tell you. Take him up, Taggles!"

Levison almost grinned as Taggles hoisted him. The flogging was a severe one—the Head knew when to be severe. But it was not the worst that could have happened. The black sheep of St. Jim's had another chance—if he chose to make the best of it.

Levison was rather pale as he came out of the Head's study, and his lips were tightly set. The juniors looked at him curiously.

"Ernie," said Frank, "what—"

"Flogged!" said Levison. "Gentlemen, I'm sorry—for your sakes—to tell you that I've not been sacked. But live in hope it will come next time."

There was a laugh.

"Well, I'm glad, for one," said Tom Merry. "It was jolly decent of you to own up!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard you as much less of a weptile than I had pveviously wegard you, Levison!"

"Thank you for nothing, fathead!"

"Bai Jove!"

Levison walked away with his minor. Later, when the juniors were going in to lessons, he joined Talbot.

"Would you mind punching my head?" he asked.

Talbot laughed.

"I think you've had enough for one morning," he said. "Why?"

"I've been a silly ass—a rotten, silly, sulky ass," explained Levison. "I suppose you won't want to speak to me again? I don't blame you."

"Well, you have been a silly ass," agreed Talbot. "But if you can see it, there's nothing more to be said. Let bygones be bygones."

"Done!" said Levison. "The Head's given me another chance. I owe it to Franky. And—and I'm going to make the most of it. I wonder how it will turn out?"

"It will turn out as you choose," said Talbot.

Levison gave his old sardonic smile.

"I wonder?" he said.

And he walked away whistling. It was another turning-point in Levison's life, but what would come of it only the future could tell.

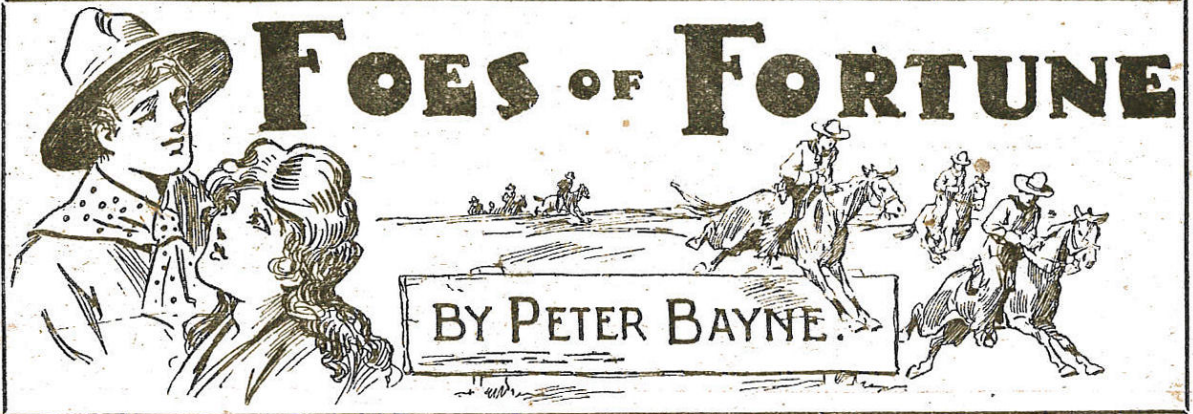
THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"GRUNDY'S GUILT!" by MARTIN CLIFFORD.)

YOU MUST NOT FAIL TO TURN TO THE BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE.

A NEW ADVENTURE SERIAL.

START TO-DAY!



The First Chapters.

CARTON ROSS, a lonely and friendless youth, is attacked while asleep by a party of brigands, led by DIRK RALWIN. He is disarmed, and narrowly escapes with his life by plunging into the roaring waters of the Amazon. He is picked up by a small boat, which is carrying HARVEY MILBURNE and his daughter, LORNA, to their home at San Ramo, a small settlement some miles away.

Carton's father (the son of CYRUS ROSS, a famous money magnate) has just died, and Cyrus Ross, with the rest of his sons and relatives, is drowned by the collision of the financier's yacht with a battleship in the Channel during a fog. Carton Ross is, therefore, the sole surviving member of the Ross family, and heir to millions, though he is unaware of it. Dirk Ralwin, who has stolen Carton's wallet containing papers which reveal his identity, hears of the great calamity which has befallen the family, and at once sets out for San Ramo, where Carton has gone with the Milburnes.

After destroying the house, the outlaws carry Ross away to their encampment. During the night, however, Lorna appears at his tent, aids him in recovering his papers, and together they escape. They succeed in shaking off their pursuers by swimming across the river to an island, where they come upon an old ruined building, occupied by an Englishman, RODDY GARRIN, and a Chinese, AH CHING. They are made welcome, and all lie down to sleep.

They are pursued by a gang of Dirk Ralwin's ruffians and HUNTON FENNER (a Yankee who has deserted his companions, Roddy Garrin and the Chinese), but leave the island by means of a raft.

Later they pick up with a steamer, and have just been taken on board, when a Mexican cruiser appears and forces the captain to hand them over. A mutiny breaks out in the cruiser, and in the tumult they decide to make an attempt to obtain freedom by jumping overboard. Just as Ross and Lorna are about to jump over the rail, a mutineer rushes up and endeavours to stop them.

(Now read on.)

Across the River—The Lost Cruiser—A Friend Found and Lost—The Quest—Garrin was Right.

The man stared in amazement at the lad, uttered a brutal laugh, and, disengaging his right arm, struck a violent blow that would have broken the other's jaw had it got home. Leaping aside, Ross turned and slashed with the sword. The skin of his knuckles cut to the bone, the mutineer, with a shriek of pain, staggered and dropped his living burden.

Catching Lorna as she fell, Ross ran with her to the rail, and a moment later they struck the water with a simultaneous splash. Diving deep, they came up to the surface again a few yards from the cruiser, and swam rapidly away.

The shadowy banks of the river loomed ahead in the gathering darkness, and it was not long before they were on dry land. Here they were quickly joined by Roddy Garrin and Ah Ching, who heard of their narrow escape with surprise and relief.

"The news of our flight will be all over the ship by now," said Garrin. "We'd better be making tracks for another place. This isn't a very healthy spot. They'll most likely send a party of searchers ashore to look for us."

"It would be a useless hunt in the dark," Ross answered. "None the less, the farther off we are from the riverside the safer we shall be. So let us be moving on."

This was not an easy thing to do. The undergrowth grew

thick and dense right down to the edge of the stream. It would have been bad enough in the daytime to force a way through it, but at night, in a darkness that the trees made more profound, it was a task to try the strength and endurance of the bravest.

For some time the comrades struggled along in silence. Their clothes were saturated from their immersion in the water. Every now and then they sank in the mud of a swampy stretch of ground up to their waists, or were badly scratched by coming in contact with the thorny foliage of some bush that barred their path. It was not long before Ah Ching gave way to open lamentations.

"This too muechee bad!" he groaned. "My no likee this one little piecee! What for we leave cruiser? My think we make velly big mistake."

"Look here, Ah Ching," said Garrin. "You can go back to the cruiser if you want to, my son, but you'll have to go alone. As for the rest of us, we don't crave for the society of a lot of mutineers, if you do, and prefer to remain where we are and take our chance of getting through all serene."

The little Chinaman gave way to an indignant snort. "My no wantee go back," he protested, "and suppose you think anything else, Mista Garrin, you no savee me. Where you go I go. But that ship was nice and dry. You no likee this way more than I do."

Roddy Garrin laughed heartily.

"You're right there!" he said. "But, at any rate, we're free here, and we were prisoners on board the cruiser. Don't forget that, Ah Ching."

The other did not reply, for secretly he was of the same opinion as Garrin, but his audible complaints continued until better ground was reached and a halt was decided on.

"The moon will be up soon," said Carton Ross. "Then we shall be able to see where we're going to."

Resting in the dry grass, that provided a comfortable couch for their weary limbs, the comrades looked back towards the now distant river.

They could see bright lights flashing from the cruiser, and hear sounds of the struggle that was still proceeding, although the rifle-firing had ceased but for an occasional scattered volley.

Suddenly the warship became visible to the unseen watchers with vivid distinctness. A leaping pillar of flame shot up from her deck seventy feet into the air. Then she parted clean in half, and blew up with a mighty explosion that was terrible to hear.

The comrades sprang to their feet and glared at the spectacle in an awe-stricken silence. It was grand, but terrifying, to see the great ship go up in scorching fire and smoke, and then fall, a riven mass of steel and flaming wreckage, into the deep waters of the river that would bear her on her proudly triumphant course no more.

Immediately before the explosion a long, despairing shout had come from the doomed Imperator. It was the despairing cry of men who knew that death had summoned them. The comrades shuddered as they heard it.

"Poor fellows!" murmured Lorna, tears in her eyes. "What a terrible end to come to!"

"It was soon over," said Carton Ross. "Such a terrific explosion as that would kill every soul on board. It's very likely that the captain, or one of his officers, driven mad by despair, fired the magazine. Well, whatever their faults, they were brave men."

Ah Ching thoughtfully fingered the braided end of his queue.

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale
By TOM MARY & Co. BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"And to think," he said, "that just now I was sorry we had come on shore! My word! What one big fool I was, to be sure!"

The flare of the cruiser's wreckage burning on the water died down after a while, and at last there was not a visible sign remaining of the tragic event that had taken place.

If there were any survivors of it, nothing was heard or seen of them by the comrades, who remained for some time longer in their temporary resting-place.

When the moon had risen, to disperse the darkness with her silvery light, they resumed their toilsome journey. The appearance of the landscape showed them that they were in the outskirts of one of those vast forests that are known to every traveller on the Amazon.

In which direction should they go? Without a compass to guide them, they were worse situated than shipwrecked mariners at sea. They might follow the river, north or south, but in doing so they would be in constant danger of recapture by Dirk Ralwin's followers.

"There must be a settlement of some sort not far away," said Ross, "and the Emperor was on its way there. It's a port of call, no doubt, and in that case would offer us facilities for getting away or communicating with those who might help us."

"We should have to be mighty careful what we were doing," Garrin remarked, "or the outlaws would collar us. But it'll be worth while taking the risk."

So the comrades went north, keeping within sighting distance of the river, and, two hours later, reached a riverside settlement of considerable size. Most of the houses were of the native type, but there was a small foreign quarter on high land overlooking the river, the large, substantially-built villa residences of which, shining white in the moonlight, presented a welcome appearance.

There were two or three wharves along the riverside, with a cluster of shipping near them, but no steam craft of any size. Far out in the stream was a red buoy for big vessels to anchor to.

"The Emperor would have been there by now," said Ross, pointing to the buoy, "if she hadn't been blown up."

Not far from the settlement, standing in a little clearing of forest trees, was a log-built hut that Carton Ross decided was the very place for him and his companions to take shelter in.

There was no other abode near it, and this, in itself was an advantage, for Ross wished to keep as secret as possible the presence of himself and the others in the locality. There was an additional reason that urged him to seek admittance to the house. He judged it to be occupied by natives of mixed blood, and his experience of these descendants of the old Spanish settlers, who had married natives of the country, was that they were ever ready to help and protect strangers who sought their hospitality.

Going to the door, he knocked at it, and a dog inside the hut at once gave tongue, barking violently and rattling its chain. Then a side window was opened, and a man looked out and addressed Ross in a Spanish native dialect.

"What do you want, signor?" he inquired.

"Shelter for myself and my friends," Ross answered. "We have come a long way, and are faint and weary for want of food and rest. But we have no money to offer you, and can only appeal to your sense of kindness and hospitality."

"Your appeal is granted already," said the other courteously. "Never has it been said of me that I refused to aid those in distress."

Reclosing the window, he unbarred and opened the door to the comrades, who entered a large, comfortable room, where the remains of a wood fire were smouldering. Lighting an oil-lamp, the host proceeded to minister to the needs of his guests.

They were given food enough to satisfy the hunger of a dozen people. A hugo fire, that speedily dried their clothes, was built up. Sleeping-rugs were spread out on the floor for their use. These preparations for their comfort were made with a quickness and silence that set them marvelling, for their new-found friend was a patriarch in years, with a long, white beard that gave added dignity to his venerable appearance.

"I will leave you now," he said, when he had done all he could. "You are tired and worn out, and sleep will restore you to energy."

Waving a farewell with his hand, and bowing with all the grace of a Spanish grandee, he withdrew from the room.

"Well," said Roddy Garrin the moment he and his companions were alone, "we've certainly struck it lucky this time. That old fellow is treating us as if we were long-lost children of his come home again. This is what I've been longing for all day."

And, throwing himself full-length on a sleeping-rug, he stretched his limbs preparatory to closing his eyes and forgetting danger and hardship in a sound slumber.

His companions quickly followed his example.

When they opened their eyes again the sun was high in the sky. They had slept the hands of the clock round, and awoke, feeling in the highest spirits. Breakfast was already waiting for them, and they did justice to it in a way that must have delighted the heart of their kindly entertainer.

Knowing that the Spaniard could be trusted, Carton Ross told him of the plight that he and his friends were in, and of the causes that led up to it.

The old man listened to his young guest with grave attention.

"You are surrounded by many perils," he said when the other had finished speaking, "for Dirk Ralwin has spies and agents everywhere, and in this settlement he is feared and obeyed by those who are outwardly loyal to the Government. It would not be safe for you and your companions to venture abroad here, for your appearance would excite the liveliest curiosity, and lead to your instant arrest."

Ross gave a grim, little laugh.

"I can quite believe it," he said. "We certainly look a disreputable little crowd; and as we've no money, we couldn't hope to purchase immunity from danger. But don't the river steamers call here?"

"Occasionally one calls to take on cargo or passengers, but not very often," was the answer. "And the formalities you would be obliged to comply with in booking your passage would lead to your identity being discovered."

"And the next thing to follow that would be our arrest, of course," said Ross. "In these circumstances, what do you think is the best thing for us to do?"

The old man was silent for several moments.

"Stay here under my roof," he said at last, "until you have an opportunity of communicating with your friends. That is bound to come at some time. And in the meanwhile you will honour me by your presence in my humble home. It is not much that I can offer you—shelter, rest, and simple food—but to these things you are doubly welcome."

The proposal was a tempting one, and Carton Ross would have gladly accepted it there and then but for one consideration. He reflected that, in sheltering him and his companions, the Spaniard had already exposed himself to the danger of being found out and denounced by Ralwin's spies in the locality.

To remain where they were a day longer would only intensify this risk that their kind friend had taken upon himself for their sake. Was it right or fair that they should expose him to such a grave peril? No sooner had he asked himself the question than Carton Ross answered it in the negative.

And he knew that his decision would meet with the ready approval of his comrades. Like him, they would refuse to purchase safety at the price of their host's ruin.

In coming to this determination, however, Carton Ross made one exception. There was Lorna. She was a girl, and he had no hesitation in asking the Spaniard to shelter her from harm while he and the others sought to make arrangements for leaving the country.

"We will go," he said, "and leave her here. It may be that she shall not return, but at any rate we shall know that she is safe in your care."

When Lorna heard of the suggestion she earnestly protested against it, but in vain. Carton Ross had made up his mind on the point, and was not to be turned from it.

"It's all for the best," he said to her. "We shall only be away for a day or two, and when we return it will be to take you with us. We are going into unknown danger, Lorna, and it would be wrong and foolish for you to expose yourself unnecessarily to it."

"Danger!" cried the girl, her eyes flashing. "Have I not been through dangers of all sorts with you before?"

"Yes," he answered gently; "and a better, braver comrade no one could have. But up to now we've been unable to help ourselves, Lorna. Circumstances threw us into those dangers, and we could not avoid them. Now it is different, and it is only right and proper that you should remain where you are until we meet with better fortune."

Lorna turned her head so that Ross should not see the look of keen disappointment that shadowed her beautiful face. When she glanced back at him there was a smile on her lips.

"Very well," she said. "Then I will do as you wish me to. But if anything happens to you I shall blame myself for having taken your advice."

Soon afterwards Carton Ross, Roddy Garrin, and Ah Ching took their departure. With him Ross took a letter from the Spaniard to a native boatman, living not a mile away, who often took passengers to distant river ports. He was a man, they were informed, who could be implicitly trusted not to betray them, and he would know at once whether it would be possible for them to leave in safety.

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

FOES OF FORTUNE!

(Continued from page 20.)

The careful directions given them enabled the three comrades to find their way to the boatman's riverside abode without losing their way. It was a sequestered place, well outside the settlement, and the man they wanted was at work in front of his house patching a sail when they approached him.

He was a dark, sturdy fellow, reserved and uncommunicative, and until he had read the letter that Carton Ross handed to him he did not utter a word. Then he looked up, stared at Ross, and slowly nodded his head.

"That means he can assist us, I suppose?" said Garrin. "But I'm anxious to hear his voice. What if he is dumb? That would be a misfortune, wouldn't it, Ah Ching?"

"He no dumb," declared Ah Ching. "My see his lips move, and he swear under his breath just now, when he pricked his finger with the needle!"

Any lingering doubt that Garrin might have had as to whether the boatman was afflicted with dumbness or not was removed by that individual addressing himself to Ross on the subject of the letter sent to him. With admirable brevity he declared that he was leaving for San Ramo that evening, and would be willing to take the comrades with him on his vessel—a small sailing-ship, moored a short distance from the shore, that he pointed to with a look of professional pride in his swarthy face.

"San Ramo!" exclaimed Ross. "That was where we were attacked by the outlaws, Ah Ching, when they first captured us. If Harvey Milburne is still there it won't be long before he sees Lorna again. Nothing could be better than this."

Having made their arrangements for the voyage with the boatman, the comrades set out on their return to the Spaniard's house. They observed the utmost caution in their movements, so as not to be seen by anyone who might turn out to be an enemy in disguise.

"Phew!" said Garrin, sniffing the air. "Can't you smell something burning? I've just got a whiff of it."

"So have I," Ross answered, "and, what's more, I can see a lot of smoke ahead of us."

The smoke was rising above the forest in thick, acid fumes, that the wind drove in the direction of the river. An indefinite fear seized the comrades in a simultaneous clutch. Without naming it, they quickened their footsteps to a run.

Between the trunks of the trees they beheld leaping tongues of red fire. The clearing opened out before them. A horrified cry burst from their lips. The log-built home of the old Spaniard who had befriended them was blazing furiously from floor to roof.

All around it the pleasant, shady garden they had admired was trampled and beaten down. The hoof-marks in the soil, the broken door, and smashed windows, and a score of other signs all told their own tale.

Lorna and her host had been carried off by the outlaws, and the hut given over to destruction. Someone had betrayed the Spaniard to his enemies, and this was the result of the hospitality he had shown the refugees.

The comrades stared at each other in alarmed consternation. The thought of Lorna, and of what fate had befallen her, was uppermost in their minds.

"We must find her!" cried Ross. "We will find her wherever she is! Why didn't I listen to the girl, and allow her to go with us? Then this would never have happened!"

In angry despair and self-reproach he clenched his fists and shook them in the air. But Ross was not one to waste time in useless repining. Quicker than his companions he roused himself to energetic action.

"Listen!" he said. "We can do no good by staying here, and at any moment the outlaws may return and swoop down on us. I should like to be with Lorna and the old Spaniard now, but we can be of more help to them by keeping our liberty. Let us go back to the boatman. He may advise us what to do for the best."

They returned to the river-side as quickly as possible. When he heard of what had happened the boatman showed anger and alarm, but little surprise. In that land of violence and unrest he was all too familiar with such tragic episodes, and this particular one only made a special appeal to him because his friend, the old Spaniard, was the central figure in it.

"It is useless going to San Ramo now," he said. "Nothing can be done there. A more likely place is Quito."

"Quito!" replied Carton Ross. "Why, Quito?"

"Because it is to Quito that the captives will be taken in the first place," the other answered. "The revolutionaries took possession of it a day or two ago, and Dirk Ralwin is there."

"Then you don't imagine that any serious harm has happened to your friend and mine?"

"Not yet," was the significant response. "But where his foes are concerned Ralwin is a tiger in human shape. He shows no mercy to man nor woman, to young nor old. Heaven help those who fall into his power!"

As dusk fell the sailing-barque left her moorings, and passed the settlement without being stopped by the guardship stationed outside the little port. This danger over, the comrades were more at their ease, but, acting on the advice of the boatman, they remained below until it was dark.

Then they came up on deck, and gave the boatman as much help as he asked them for; but it was little that they were called upon to do, for there was not much wind, and the sails required scarcely any attention.

The slow progress made irritated them all, but they restrained their feverish impatience by constantly reminding themselves that they were helpless in the matter. After a four-hours' run Quito appeared in sight.

The first thing that attracted their attention was the wireless-telegraphy station and its towering, aerial poles.

Little did Carton Ross and his companions dream of the important part played by the wireless station they gazed upon for the first time in frustrating their escape down the river.

"What are we going to do now we are here?" inquired Roddy Garrin suddenly. "It's something I've scarcely thought about. Have you?"

Carton Ross shook his head.

"No," he replied, "I haven't; but the first thing we have to do is to go ashore and find out as much as we can of what is going on there. I'm certainly not remaining on board a minute longer than is necessary."

"Same here," said Garrin. "I fancy that our friend the boatman won't be sorry to get rid of us. He's losing heart."

"I've noticed it myself," answered Ross; "and it will be the wisest course for us to be put ashore before we are any nearer to Quito. A nervous man can bring about disaster quicker than anybody."

The suggestion made by Ross to the boatman that he and his two companions should be put ashore was welcomed by the other with visible signs of relief.

A brave enough man in a time of ordinary dangers, he lacked sufficient courage to face a peril that held the menace of ruin and death in it. He had heard of the merciless cruelty of Dirk Ralwin, and he dreaded the prospect of becoming involved in a difference of opinion with the redoubtable outlaw that might end in his downfall.

"Were I a younger man," he said to Carton Ross, "I would gladly go with you. As it is, I have risked much for my friend's sake."

Going ashore the three comrades, staunch and true and dauntless, set out on their quest for Lorna and the old Spaniard, who had lost all in befriending them.

Dirk Ralwin, the outlaw chief, was a proud man.

Things prospered with him as they had seldom done before in the course of his stormy career. The rebel movement he was the leader of was spreading everywhere. Fortune smiled upon him. In imagination he already saw himself seated on the highest pinnacle of power.

On the flower-embowered balcony of a large, upper room of the Customs House at Quito, which had been recently entered and taken possession of by his followers, he leaned against the rail and looked down the broad sweep of the Amazon with an expectant gaze in his dark eyes.

The Emperor was on her way to the port. A wireless message, despatched the previous evening from her commander, had stated that the cruiser would arrive the following morning. Carton Ross and his companions were on board. They had been taken prisoners while attempting to escape on a river steamer that had stopped to pick them up from a seaward-bound raft.

For the moment when Carton Ross should once more appear before him, Ralwin waited with hardly restrained impatience. He was little interested in the recapture of the other fugitives, with the exception of Lorna Milburne, who had so actively assisted Ross to escape from him in the first place, and he had planned a cruel, vindictive revenge on the brave girl.

The revolver shot she fired at him when he had Ross by the throat had inflicted a slight but painful wound, and no one made Dirk Ralwin suffer pain without incurring his lasting hatred and enmity.

He gloated over the thought of having Lorna in his power. She should pay the penalty for her courage and daring, he vowed, in a way that would for ever torture her memory.

The minutes passed, but the Emperor did not appear in sight. Filled with growing impatience, Ralwin paced restlessly up and down the balcony, his roving gaze ever searching for the rising smoke that would tell him of the cruiser's approach.

(There will be another grand instalment of this exciting story in next Wednesday's issue of THE "GEM" LIBRARY. Order your copy in advance.)

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