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No. 941.
Vol. XXIX.
February 20th,
1926.



SURPRISED BY THE FAGS OF THE SECOND FORM!

(A startling incident from the long complete school story—"A SPECTRE OF THE PAST!"—inside.)

DOUBTED BY HIS FORM-FELLOWS! Like a bolt from the blue comes news of an old associate. Ernest Levison, now a reformed character, had thought to have left behind him with the dark old days. And faith in Levison and his reform begins to wane when fellows at St. Jim's see him and his old crony together again.



A SPECTRE OF THE PAST!

A Magnificent New Long
Complete Tale of the Chums
of St. Jim's, featuring Ernest
Levison.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

A Bumping for Gussy!

WE weally ought to sheltah—
"Blow shelter!"
"But weally, this wain—"
"Blow the rain!"

"The wind's doing plenty of that!" grinned Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, lowering his head before a sudden gust of hissing rain. "My hat! We were asses to start to walk back from Wayland with the sky looking like it did."

"It was that ass Gussy's idea to walk across the dashed moor back," grunted Herries of the Fourth Form. "I vote we stop a moment to bump the fathead!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"We'll bump him when we get in, then," grinned Tom Merry, whose cheerfulness under dismal circumstances was really commendable. "We'll be late for lock-up if we stop now. Anyway, don't grouse."

"Who's grouching?" snorted Blake. "It's all that burbling duffer, Gussy's fault—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Bai Jove, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly, "you are in a vevy bad tempah. I must say! I only wish I could dwy up, deah boy. My clobbah is dwenched through and through, and I vevy much feah it will be uttably wuined. I suggest—"

"Don't suggest anything," said Blake, quite crossly. "We're already suffering through your blessed suggestion to walk when we might have taken a taxi and been home now."

"I do not considah that it is my fault at all, Blake!" was the warm reply. "I considah it is all the fault of Mannahs—"

"Eh? Why the thump is it my fault?" snorted Manners, who was hugging a bulky article under his drenched rain-coat.

"It was entirely owin' to you that we missed the twain," said Arthur Augustus. "You insisted upon wushin' us to the photogwaphers for some fwesh films for your wotten camewah—"

"Well, wasn't that what we went to Wayland mainly for—"

"Wubbish! It was because I wequired a few more neckties—"

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"Blow you and your neckties! It was your thumping neckties that caused us to lose the train!" hooted Manners. "If you hadn't spent an hour in that shop selecting neckties we should have had heaps of time to call for my camera."

"Wubbish, Mannahs! I wepeat that it was your wotten camewah—"

"It was your blithering neckties—"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Oh, for goodness' sake stop ragging!" said Tom Merry. "Aren't things bad enough without squabbling?"

"But I insist upon Mannahs—"

"Dry up, you fathead!" roared Blake. "Give your chin a rest!"

"I uttably wefuse to dwy up, Blake, until Mannahs has withdwawn his charge against me, and accepted responsibility for havin' missed that wotten twain," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I wefuse to go a step furthah until Mannahs has apologised and admitted responsibility."

And with that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stopped in his tracks, despite the drenching downpour of rain. He was the only one of the St. Jim's party that did stop: Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners, Blake, Herries, and Digby tramped on across the gloomy and soaked moorland without him.

Arthur Augustus stared after them wrathfully through the misty rain. The fact that his chums did not appear to view the question as to who was responsible for the missed train with such seriousness as he did made Arthur Augustus very indignant.

After blinking after them through a very misty monocle, Arthur Augustus dashed after his chums, and grabbed Harry Manners by the arm.

"Mannahs, you wottah, I insist—"

Crash!

The unexpected wrench tore Manners' coat open, and the article Manners had been hugging fell to the ground and rolled and bumped over in the mud.

Manners gave a howl—a howl of mingled wrath and alarm.

"My camera! Gussy, you awful idiot!"

For an instant Manners stared at his rolling camera, and then he gave a roar and went for Arthur Augustus. That camera rolling in the mud was a very expensive camera, and was the apple of Manners' eye. But even his apprehension and fear for the safety of his camera was not so

strong as his wrath and desire for vengeance against Arthur Augustus.

"You howling idiot!" he bawled ferociously. "I'll—I'll smash you for that! Look what you've done!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

Biff!

"Yoooooop!"

Manners' fist thumped home on the nose of Arthur Augustus, and that noble youth sat down in the mud with a yelp.

He was up again the next instant, however, breathing hard, and with a warlike gleam in his aristocratic eye, and muddy wetness dripping from the tail of his natty coat. "Bai Jove!" he gasped. "You—you wottah, Mannahs! Put your fists up!"

"Here, hold on, you footling asses—"

But Tom Merry's wrathful remark was disregarded. Arthur Augustus made a wild rush at Manners, and the next moment the two were waltzing about on the desolate moorland in a deadly embrace.

In the pelting rain the others glared at them, and then Tom Merry gave a snort.

"Stop the footling idiots!" he snapped. "Come on, Blake!"

He was about to rush to separate the combatants when quite suddenly Manners' feet slipped from under him on the squelchy ground, and he went flat on his back with Arthur Augustus on top of him.

As he went down he gave a cry—a stifled cry of pain.

Arthur Augustus heard it, and jumped up in alarm.

"Bai Jove, Mannahs—"

"Ow! Oh, hang it!" gasped Manners, his face twisted into a rueful grimace. "It's my knee again—I gave it a twist at footer last Saturday, you remember. I've wrenched it again."

"Manners, old chap—"

Tom Merry jumped to the aid of his chum as he staggered to his feet. Manners stood with his weight on one foot as he hugged the injured knee.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom Merry. "This is a go! Can't you walk on it, Manners?"

"I think so—it isn't so bad, but—"

Manners stopped speaking, and started to hobble backwards and forwards, wincing painfully as he did so.

"Good job you can do that, anyway," said Tom Merry.

"Sure you can manage all the way back like that, old chap?"

"Yes, I think so. Oh, blow it! Let's get on, anyhow. It'll be dark before very long."

"Oh, my hat!" said Lowther. "Yes, rather. Look here, never mind your camera—one of the others can see to that. We'll help you along a bit. And when we get back we'll give that awful ass, Gussy, the bumping of his giddy career!"

"We won't wait until we get back!" snorted Jack Blake, glowering at the dismayed Arthur Augustus. "Collar him, chaps!"

"Yes, rather."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Blake, I shall wefuse emphatically to be bumped. I am sowwy that Mannahs— Bai Jove! Keep off, you wottahs! I— Whooop!"

Splash!

Despite his emphatic refusal, Arthur Augustus was bumped—soundly. He was grasped by Herries and Digby and Blake, and he sat down with a squelching splash into a muddy puddle. Muddy water splashed up around him and over the trousers of his executioners.

"Yawoooooh!" wailed Arthur Augustus.

Leaving him seated there gasping and wailing, the three rejoined the Terrible Three. With Lowther carrying the camera, and with Tom Merry and Blake helping the injured Manners, along, they tramped away across the misty, dusky moor. A brief examination had shown Manners that his camera had not suffered seriously, and he had lost all desire for vengeance against Arthur Augustus.

That hapless youth blinked ferociously after them as they tramped away into the dusk. Then suddenly beginning to feel the wet through his clothes, the swell of the Fourth leaped to his feet quickly.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he wailed. "Come back, you awful wottahs! Come back and take a feahful thwashin', you wotten funks!"

The voice of Arthur Augustus ended in a wrathful roar, but he received no answer. Tom Merry & Co. were "fed-up" with Arthur Augustus, and they refused to accept his invitation to come back for a fearful thrashing. They vanished in the gathering gloom of the wide moorland.

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "The awful, cheekay wottahs! I am weally vewwy sowwy wegardin' the accident to Mannahs, but I cannot put up with such wotten, gwoss diswepsect and wufianism. I shall administah a thwashin' to all but Mannahs."

With that intention firm in his mind, Arthur Augustus set

off at a run after his chums, his beautiful coat-tails flapping dismally, and dripping muddy water as he ran.

But he did not run far. The well-worn path was extremely slippery and boggy—anything but pleasant for running. Moreover, at almost every step the swell of the Fourth splashed into a puddle, and after braving the muddy spurts for a few yards, Arthur Augustus gave it up and dropped to a trudging walk.

With head bent before the torrential gusts of hissing rain, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy trudged on dismally.

"Oh, bai Jove! This is weally too awful!" he groaned to himself. "My toppah and my clobbah will be uttably wuined! Gwooooooh! I must postpone the thwashin' of those wuffians until we reach St. Jim's. Aftah all, I shall only wisk furthah damage to my clobbah by— Bai Jove! Here's the wuined cottah already! Thank goodness!"

Arthur Augustus turned off the track and made for a low building that had just loomed up in the gloom a few yards away. It was a shepherd's cottah—or had been at one time, long ago. But it was ruined now—great gaping holes in the thatched roof, broken, paneless casements, and the general tumbledown and dilapidated condition of the place testifying that it had long ago ceased to be used as a habitation. And like most ruined houses, it had the reputation of being haunted.

But Arthur Augustus, being a stout-hearted youth, cared nothing for that last fact. It had been the shepherd's cottah that Gussy had been about to suggest as a shelter when Blake had interrupted him, and though his chums had now gone on, Gussy himself saw no reason why he should not avail himself of the shelter the cottah afforded.

"Let the wottahs get drowned if they want to," remarked Arthur Augustus, looking up at the darkening sky. "It cannot keep on like this much longah. If I am late for call-ovah, I can vewwy easily explain the mattah to Mr. Wailton, as one gentleman to another. Yaas, watah!"

With that, Arthur Augustus passed through the broken gateway in the overgrown garden of the cottah, and stepped into the shelter of the tumbledown porch. The early winter dusk was already settling down on the desolate moorland, and his chums had vanished in the misty gloom ahead. In the broken porch of the ruined cottah it was dark and shadowy, and Arthur Augustus shivered a little at the eerie stillness and the desolate loneliness of the place. He had, however, made up his noble mind to shelter there, and he was determined to shelter there—ghosts or no ghosts. Not that he intended to shelter long; there would be no necessity for that. Being a very optimistic youth, Arthur Augustus was convinced that the storm could not last much longer.

At all events, it was certainly at its height now. A fierce gust sent sheets of rain against the front of the cottah, and finding the little porch scarcely any shelter at all, Arthur Augustus hesitated a brief moment, and then he pressed the rusty latch of the rickety door, and pushing it open, stepped inside the cottah.

CHAPTER 2.

The Tramp!

"**B**AI JOVE!"

The force of the gusty wind almost sent Arthur Augustus sprawling into the cottah, and it was only after a brief struggle that he managed to close the rickety door after him, and fasten the latch.

He found himself almost in darkness, the small window of the cottah living-room being almost closed up with broken lengths of boarding. And as he stood panting in the deep gloom, to the ears of Arthur Augustus there came sounds of movement, and then a voice, husky and unpleasant:

"Who—who is that?"

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus.

For the moment his heart almost missed a beat as he remembered the country folks' talks of a ghost in the ruined cottah. Then his eyes beheld a dark bundle in one corner just under the window—a bundle that moved. The next moment he saw a white, pinched face—the face of a youth.

It was no ghost, then. Arthur Augustus had scarcely expected it to be that, indeed. But it was not pleasant, to say the least of it, to be thus startled in that lonely, desolate place that had such an evil, eerie reputation.

But he was reassured now, and he hurriedly fumbled for a match in his wet clothes. He found the box, and striking one, he held it up. As he did so the unknown scrambled up to his feet.

The flickering light from the match showed him to be a youth of D'Arcy's own age, ragged and ill-kempt. His face was white and thin, with hollow eyes and clear signs of want and suffering on it. His clothes were ragged and torn, showing plenty of traces of rough camping in all weathers. His boots were down-at-heel, and obviously leaky.

He was a tramp, D'Arcy concluded; and Arthur Augustus did not like the look of him, either. His eyes were crafty and shifty, and he looked hard and callous.

Yet, as he noted the wretched, drenched clothes, the miserable couch of old sacks he had been lying upon, and the obvious signs of deep suffering in the pinched features, a thrill of pity went through the good-hearted Arthur Augustus.

The match went out, and he hurriedly struck another.

"Hold on!" said the tramp.

He dived among the rags in the corner, and produced a stub of candle. Arthur Augustus lit it from the dying match.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, as the candle shed a dim light on the sordid surroundings. "I twust I did not startle you, my friend. I dashed in out of the wain, you know."

"You woke me up," said the youth coolly, grinning a trifle as he looked Arthur Augustus up and down from the top of his glistening "topper" to his natty, but sadly muddled spats. "My hat! Your giddy, nutty clobber has fairly got it in the neck."

"Weally—"

Arthur Augustus paused, eyeing the ragged youth curiously. He did not at all like the reference to his "nutty" clothes, nor did he like the cool, insolent stare and the grin. Yet he was more curious than "nettled." Somehow the youth's speech did not go well with his general appearance, whatever could have been said about his manners. And that schoolboy expression, "My hat!" came very oddly from a ragged tramp.

"My clobber has certainly suffahed wathah badly," said Arthur Augustus a trifle stiffly. "Howevah, I am sowwy I woke you up so startlingly, and I twust you will not object to my sheltewin' here frowm the wain."

"As this hovel doesn't belong to me, I suppose it's no use my doing that," said the stranger, his face becoming curiously bitter and hard as he glanced down at his own clothes after that prolonged look at D'Arcy. "Anyhow, if you'll take my tip you'll shove on, and not bother about sheltering. It's going to be a rotten night; and it'll soon be dark."

"Bai Jove! What—what about you, deah boy?"

"I'm staying here. It's better than outside, isn't it?" said the youth, with a bitter sneer. "I suppose you've got a good home to go to, and a good comfortable bed to lie on, too. You're lucky! You'd better clear!"

"Then—then you have no home?" said Arthur Augustus gently.

"No; I'm unlucky."

"I'm sowwy, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, eyeing the pinched features with compassion. "It must be feahfully wotten to be in such a posish. If—if I could help you at all—"

"You can—by closing the door after you as you go," said the youth coolly. "I've been tramping all day, and I'm tired. Hold on, though; I'm making for a place called St. Jim's—a public school somewhere about here. If you can tell me how far I am from it—"

"Bai Jove, I certainly can do that!" said Arthur Augustus, looking curiously at the youth again. "I myself am frowm St. Jim's, deah boy. It is less than two miles frowm here across the moor; it can be seen in daylight frowm here."

"Oh," said the youth, his eyes gleaming strangely. "So you are from St. Jim's?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then—then you'll most likely know a fellow there named Levison—Ernest Levison?"

Arthur Augustus gave a start. That this wretched outcast should know Ernest Levison was amazing.

"Bai Jove! I know old Levison vewy well indeed," he ejaculated. "He is in my Form—the Fourth."

"I see you fairly jump at the idea that a tramp like I am should know Levison," said the youth, with a harsh bitterness. "Well, I do know him—very well indeed; too well, in fact! It's the same Levison, I suppose—he was once at Greyfriars?"

"Yaas; Levison was once at Greyfriars. But—"

"That's the fellow, then!" snapped the stranger, his eyes glinting queerly. "Well, you can help me by telling Levison I am here. Tell him Snelson wants him—that he must come—to-night if possible—to this hovel to see me. Tell him if he refuses he'll be sorry for it. That's all."

Arthur Augustus frowned uneasily. He did not like the crafty-faced youth's glinting eyes, nor did he like the threat in his words. Yet he could scarcely refuse such a request.

"Vewy well, I will do as you wish," he said coldly. "And as you desire to be left alone I will wotire without delay."

And Arthur Augustus moved towards the door. He had taken an instinctive dislike to the strange tramp, and he was feeling more anxious now to get out into the storm, than

he had been to shelier from it. His hand was on the latch, when the youth called him back.

"Hold on," he said. "I suppose you don't happen to have a cig, old top?"

"A—a what?"

"A cigarette, of course," said the youth impatiently. "I haven't had a dashed smoke for nearly a week."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, frowning. "No, I have not got a cigarette, my friend. I do not approve of smokin' at all, Wathah not! But—but—"

Arthur Augustus came back into the room, fumbling in his breast-pocket. From the pinched, haggard face of the outcast it was clear that he needed food before smokes. And Arthur Augustus took out from his pocket a packet of chocolate, and handed it to the youth.

"You look as if you need food more than cigawettes," he said, trying to speak kindly. "Eat that, deah boy."

The fellow hesitated a brief second, and then he fairly snatched the packet of chocolate. Tearing open the wrapper, he devoured the contents with a desperate hunger that made Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyes soften.

"Bai Jove, deah boy," he said quietly, "you've had a vewy wuff time, I can see. I'm vewy, vewy sowwy to see a fellow up against it like this. You—you must allow me to help you a twifle. I shall not take any wefusal, bai Jove!"

With sudden impulsiveness D'Arcy took out his pocket-wallet, and opened it. The wallet had several Treasury notes in it—Arthur Augustus was always well supplied with cash—and at sight of the notes the outcast's eyes glittered. From his look it was plain that Arthur Augustus would not have to take a refusal.

"I do not wish to hurt your feelin's, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus kindly; "but I twust you will not mind if I offer you a twifle to help you on your way, deah boy. Pwavy accept this with—"

Arthur Augustus got no further than that. He was just about to take one of the notes from the wallet, when without warning the strange youth lashed out with his fist.

It was not a powerful blow at all—the youth was weak from lack of food to begin with—but the sheer unexpectedness of the blow sent the innocent Arthur Augustus spinning across the room to collapse with a cry on the rotten boards.

In a flash the youth was upon him, and had snatched the wallet from his hand. Then he leaped for the door, dragged it open, and vanished.

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet, breathless and gasping. The savage, dastardly blow had taken him under the chin, but he scarcely felt the blow; it was the base ingratitude, the treacherous action of the tramp he had befriended, that had been the biggest blow to the swell of the Fourth.

"Gweat Scott!" he gasped. "Well, the wotten, feahful outsiders! Bai Jove! I am not standin' that!"

With that grim reflection Arthur Augustus dashed for the doorway. The sudden inrush of wind, as the youth had opened the door, had extinguished the candle, but it was light enough with the door open, and in a moment the junior was out in the wind and rain, striving to pierce the curtain of mist.

CHAPTER 3.

Captured!

THE wintry evening was closing in rapidly now, and the dusk was deepening into darkness over the desolate moorland.

But almost at once the keen eyes of Arthur Augustus glimpsed a running figure just topping a knoll fifty yards away, and he went in pursuit, careless now of puddles and resultant splashes.

With no little satisfaction the Fourth-Former noted that the treacherous fugitive had taken—doubtless unknowingly—the direction of St. Jim's, and the thought that his chums could not be very far ahead was comforting to Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's was no mean runner, and he ran now as if he were on the cinder-path. Arthur Augustus was grimly determined to get his wallet and its contents back. He was a very generous youth—far too generous as a rule—but though he never minded giving money away, he objected strongly to having money stolen from him—naturally enough. Moreover, he was burning with indignation at the base ingratitude of the unknown tramp—if tramp he was.

It was not a long, or a stern chase. The fugitive was obviously weak, and he was soon swaying drunkenly as he ran, while Gussy, always in the best of condition, was as fresh as paint after five minutes' hard pelting through the driving rain and over the rough, boggy ground.

But it was a gruelling run to the wretched thief. Stumbling over lumpy patches of gorse, and into rabbit-



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dashed after his chums and grabbed Manners by the arm. "Mannahs, you wottah, I insist—" Crash! The unexpected wrench made the Shell junior drop the camera he had been hugging. It dropped in the mud. Manners gave a howl—a howl of mingled wrath and alarm. (See chapter 1.)

holes, slipping and sliding on muddy patches of clay, panting and gasping hoarsely, he staggered on.

But he changed his direction suddenly as six dark figures showed on the skyline ahead, moving slowly and awkwardly for the most part. It was the Terrible Three and Blake & Co., as Arthur knew as he glimpsed at the same moment.

"Bai Jove! Wescue, St. Jim's!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "Stop that wascal, deah boys! Stop thief! Blake, Hewwies, Tom Mewwy, stop the wascal!"

The sudden yell, coming from the gloom behind them, made the juniors stop and look round in amazement. As a matter of fact, they had had to stop many times since Arthur Augustus had left—chiefly to allow Manners to rest his knee. Moreover, they had lagged for Gussy's sake, feeling certain he would overtake them, and little dreaming he would risk sheltering in the ruined cottage on his own.

They got quite a shock as they sighted the fugitive, with Arthur Augustus running in pursuit, yelling and waving his arms frantically.

"Great Scott!" gasped Tom Merry. "What the thump— Better stop that chap, Blake!"

"Yes, rather!"

Leaving Digby to stay with Manners, the rest set off full-pelt in chase of the fugitive, who was now running at right angles to them, with Arthur Augustus dashing across to cut him off.

His chance of escape was hopeless from the first. Tom Merry and the others were fresh enough, and they easily overtook the staggering, panting youth, and grasped him. And the next second Arthur Augustus came dashing up, plastered from head to foot almost in mud.

"Bai Jove!" he panted. "Hold the wascal, deah boys! He's got my wallet! Hold him!"

"Hang you! Let me go!"

The ragged youth struggled furiously and desperately in the grasp of the juniors, but he might just as well have saved his energy.

"Not much, 'ay merry merchant!" grinned Blake. "What's that, Gussy? Got your wallet?"

"Yaas! The fwightful wottah!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I was sowwy for the fellow, and I took out my wallet in ordah to help him with a twifle. He returned my offah to help with the basest ingwatitide, bai Jove! He stwuck me down and wan away with the wallet."

"Phew! Here, what about it?" demanded Tom Merry, tightening his grasp on the trembling young ruffian. "Out with that wallet, my young footpad—smartly, now!"

The youth gritted his teeth. Then he took out the wallet hidden somewhere in his ragged garments, and handed it sullenly to Arthur Augustus.

"Hang you!" he hissed, his eyes glinting at the juniors. "But for you I should have got away! Hang you!"

"You can go on hanging, my lad," said Tom Merry, grimly, though he was staring curiously now at the boy.

"Are we to hand the rotter over to the police, or—?" The youth gave a start, and a look of dread came over his thin features.

"Look—look here, you fellows," he said, a note of terror in his voice now, "don't do that, for Heaven's sake! I—I've never done anything like this before, I swear it! It— it was just a moment's temptation, and I lost my head. I've scarcely seen food for days—have lived on raw vegetables mostly that I've stolen from the fields. The sight of all that money made me lose my head. I swear I'm not an ordinary footpad, or thief! I—I was just mad at sight of all that money, and I was starving—desperate!"

The juniors looked hard at him, and then they looked at each other. They had noticed very quickly what Arthur Augustus had already noticed—that his speech and accent was not those of a tramp. Far from it.

"Well, it's pretty clear you're not an ordinary footpad, right enough," said Tom, eyeing him steadily. "You've been used to something better than this—this game. But

that makes no difference to what you've done. Many a footpad would never have turned on the fellow who was trying to aid you like that. It was a dirty, treacherous trick—a caddish trick!"

"Yaas, watah! But let the wottah go, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "I am quite satisfied to get my wallet back, deah boys. Let the wottah go."

"You'd better do that," sneered the youth. He was eyeing the juniors craftily now, and it was clear his courage was returning rapidly. "I bet your dashed headmaster wouldn't thank you for bringing a police-court matter up like this. You'd better let me go, hang you!"

"You ungrateful rotter——"

"Cheese it!" sneered the stranger, glaring round insolently at the St. Jim's juniors. "I was a public school chap myself once, though I may not look like it now," he added with bitter fierceness. "I know how these dashed headmasters look at things. And there's another thing I might tell you."

He paused, and his face grew dark with hatred and malice.

"If you bring trouble on me you'll be bringing trouble on a fellow at St. Jim's—serious trouble. You'll be bringing disgrace on St. Jim's, too. There's a fellow at your school I could get sacked just by opening my mouth. His name's Levison—Ernest Levison."

"Levison!"

The juniors started.

"I see you know him," said the fellow who called himself Snelson.

"Yes, we know him," said Tom fiercely, "and a jolly good sort he is!"

"Is he?" Snelson laughed derisively. "He isn't like he used to be, then. When I knew him he was a goer—an out and out rotter! I've good reason to know what Levison was at Grey——"

He paused, as if he could not bring himself to finish the name.

"At Greyfriars, you mean?" asked Tom Merry, staring hard at the ragged youth. "Levison was at Greyfriars before he came here. He—he was certainly a bit of a rotter there, I believe. But that's ages ago. Levison's altered a great deal since those days. He's a jolly good sort now, I can tell you!"

"Is he?" sneered Snelson. "We'll see if he remains so long. It sounds to me as if he's a pal of yours?"

"He is."

"Right! Then your fellows will let me go, or your pal will suffer the unpleasant experience of being sacked from St. Jim's just as he was sacked from Greyfriars long ago. You didn't know that, did you?"

"Yes, we knew it," said Tom quietly. "We knew Levison was sacked from Greyfriars."

"Oh!" Snelson seemed quite taken aback. His eyes glinted, and he went on savagely: "Well, that doesn't matter. I can get him sacked from St. Jim's if I want to. Now you can let me go, and you can tell your precious pal, Levison, that I want to see him at the ruined cottage over the moor there. Tell him Snelson wants him, and tell him he'll be sorry for it if he fails to come."

With that, Snelson wrenched his arm free, and after an insolent, grinning stare at the juniors, he tramped away back over the moor. None of the juniors tried to stop him.

"Well, my hat!" remarked Tom Merry. "If that doesn't beat the band! I wonder—— Never mind, though," he added, with a grunt. "Let's get on, for goodness' sake. We'll be like drowned rats soon, if we're not already."

And with that, as if anxious to change the unpleasant subject, Tom Merry led the way back to where Digby and Manners awaited them. Arthur Augustus accompanied them, his ruffled dignity quite smoothed out now; indeed, the unpleasant and startling happening had quite taken the recent unfortunate squabble from his mind—as it had done with the others. It also completely took something else from the mind of Monty Lowther—the fact that he had dropped Manners' camera a few yards away before making that wild rush to intercept the runaway. Nor did Manners remind him of it when the juniors joined the other two—he was too eager to know what had happened to remember even his precious camera.

But the camera did not remain long disregarded on the ground.

As he tramped away, the ragged youth stumbled over it, and then he snatched it up, and after glancing at the canvas-covered camera, he looked back quickly at his late assailants.

They were already trudging away, however, without a single backward glance, and with a grin Snelson tramped on, holding the camera before him lest one of the St. Jim's party should take it into his head to look round.

But they did not do so, and the next moment they were

swallowed up in the gathering darkness and the sweeping rain.

With the camera clutched in one hand, Snelson pulled his rags about him with the other, and with a shiver set off back to the ruined cottage.

"It may be useful," he mused, his eyes glittering. "Yes, it may come in useful yet. So Levison's turned goody-goody, has he? I might have guessed it from what I learned at Greyfriars some days ago. Well, we'll see. If the hound won't toe the line, perhaps I can make him with the help of this camera—or ruin him. I think I'd rather ruin him, though."

The look on the face of the wretched outcast was not good to see as he tramped on towards the deserted ruin in the rain and wind that swept with cruel force across the moorland wastes. Certainly it boded ill for Ernest Levison, of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4.

A Warning!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW lounged into Study No. 9 on the Fourth Form passage at St. Jim's, and dropped into the easy-chair with a weary sigh.

"Call-over is a fag—a jolly old fag!" he remarked, yawning. "I wonder some bright Johnny doesn't start a merry old clocking-in system in schools, like they have in the giddy factories and works. It would save no end of time and worry. Don't you fellows think so?"

Levison, who was seated at the table with a gloomy look on his face, mumbled something without looking up. Sidney Clive grinned.

"Good wheeze, Cardew!" he chuckled. "It would save no end of trouble, as you say. It would fairly put the kybosh on the old wheeze of bawling 'Adsum!' for a pal, when a pal happens to be out of gates, though."

"Ha, ha! Myes," admitted Cardew, rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "It certainly has that drawback, Sidney, old top. What d'you think about it, Ernest?"

Levison grunted something unintelligible, and Cardew shook his head and sighed.

"No good a fellow tryin' to be clever and bright in this study!" he groaned. "One chap squashes my ripping suggestions with an unlooked-for drawback, and the other doesn't answer at all. I was trying to rouse you from your state of lethargy and depression, like David and Saul of old, y'know, Ernest. Why this gloom and sadness?"

Grunt!

"Not a smile or a word even," groaned Cardew. "Can't you confide in your worryin' pals, Ernest? Since you had that merry old letter at tea-time, you've been worse than a moulting owl. What's the trouble, old nut?"

"Yes, what is the trouble, Levison, old chap?" asked Clive, eyeing his chum and study-mate curiously. "Was there any bad news in the letter?"

Levison looked up at that, and his face reddened.

"In a way it was bad news," he admitted, in a low voice. "It—it was nothing that would interest you chaps, though."

"If it's nothing private, let's hear it, any old how," remarked Cardew encouragingly. "Share your joys and sorrows with your dear, loving pals, Ernest."

Levison smiled, though his face was still clouded.

"It's nothing much," he said. "The letter was from Wharton."

"Wharton—you mean the skipper of the Remove at Greyfriars?"

"Yes. The letter is rather private, though. It—it's about a chap who was at Greyfriars when I was there—a chap who was sacked some time before I—I left."

"Oh!"

"You fellows wouldn't know him. He wasn't a chap who played footer or cricket," went on Levison hesitatingly. "He was a rotter, but—but I was rather friendly with him at one time. His name was Snelson, and he was sacked for pub-haunting and being a general blackguard. That was long ago. Now Wharton's writing to tell me he's turned up suddenly at Greyfriars."

"Well, that needn't worry you, surely?" said Clive, eyeing his chum wonderingly.

"You—you don't understand," said Levison, his voice unsteady. "Wharton says Snelson was down and out—almost in rags, and that he was absolutely on his beam ends. He was sneaking and prowling round Greyfriars, and several fellows there have spoken to him. It was me he wanted, though—me he was after. That fellow Skinner—you know what a rotter he is—told him that I was at St. Jim's. And Wharton's written to warn me that he might possibly turn up here to see me."

"Well, what if he does? He can't harm you."

"I know that," said Levison, his voice lower still. "But it's rotten—rotten! I'm sorry for that poor brute—more sorry than I can say. You fellows can't understand how

this hits me. You know what I was at Greyfriars—an out-and-out rotter?"

Clive and Cardew nodded silently. They knew what an out-and-out rotter Levison had been when first he had come to St. Jim's. But he was changed now.

"That's all done with, Ernest," said Clive quietly, after an awkward pause. "All buried and done with."

"But it isn't all buried with me," said Levison bitterly. "I'm not to be allowed to forget it, either. This chap, Snelson, evidently means to remind me of it if he can. I—I can't blame him, either," he added, almost in a whisper.

"But—but why, Levison, old chap?"

"I'll tell you why," said Ernest, his face suddenly flushing with bitter shame. "I don't blame him, and I feel this deeply because—because that poor brute has me to thank chiefly for his present plight."

"Levison—"

"It's true, and he knows it," groaned Levison. "I was the chap who taught him to play cards and to act like a blackguard when he first came to Greyfriars—an innocent duffer. I used to laugh and think it funny to lead him on. I'd nothing to do with his getting sacked, though; that came afterwards. But it was my influence that ruined him from the beginning. Oh, what a fool I was—what a rotter! I see it now."

"You—you're too harsh with yourself, Ernest," said Sidney Clive gently. "Forget it, old chap. What's done cannot be undone now, and I don't suppose your influence had much to do with it. He must have been a weak sort of rotter."

"He was, and that's why I blame myself so much," said Levison thickly. "I wish I could do something—something to make amends. I really hope he does come here—I hope he does. Wharton warns me that he means mischief, that he's bitter and vengeful. He says he's dangerous. But I don't care. If I can only make amends by helping him—"

He broke off and jumped to his feet.

"I'd rather not talk about it, though," he said. "But you fellows can understand how I feel like about it, though. You—you fellows won't mention this, of course?"

With that Levison walked slowly from the study, conscious that his face was crimson with shame, and that his chums were eyeing him uncomfortably. He walked along the Fourth passage until he reached an alcove where a light was burning, and then he stopped and took a letter from his pocket and started to read it again.

It was the letter from Harry Wharton, of Greyfriars, and it ran as follows:

"Dear Levison,—I'm just dropping you a note to tell you about a rather unpleasant thing that happened to me this afternoon. You remember that chap Snelson—the fellow who was sacked from here some time ago? Well, I met him in Friardale Lane to-day, and he stopped me. I scarcely recognised him until he spoke, he was so changed. He was in rags—fairly down-and-out—and he looks as if he'd been through the mill in more ways than one. Anyway, it seems he visited Greyfriars again solely to see you. I saw how bitter he seemed against you, and, not liking the look of things, I refused to tell him where you were. But I've learned since that he met Skinner, and that Skinner told him you were now at St. Jim's, and also that you had changed a great deal since the old days. You can guess how that rotter Skinner sneered about it, and I believe Snelson made some threats against you, vowing he was out to ruin you. That's why I'm writing this letter—I feel I ought to warn you to keep a good look-out for the chap. I'm sorry he's in such a wretched plight, but, at the same time, I could see he's a thoroughly bad egg, and that he's out to injure you. Anyhow, he knows where you are, so be on your guard. Forewarned is forearmed!

"Hoping all is well with you, and that we shall see you at Greyfriars for the match in a fortnight's time,

Your sincere friend,

"HARRY WHARTON."

"Good old Wharton!" breathed Levison. "It was jolly good of him to write and warn me. But—but poor old Snelson! How I hate myself for those—those beastly days! No wonder he feels bitter and vengeful against me!"

Levison folded the letter slowly and placed it in his pocket, his face downcast and his eyes burning strangely. Once again the shadow of the past was black over Ernest Levison, and from the bottom of his heart he repented bitterly his folly of long ago—folly that he had hoped was buried and done with.

But it was not done with. The grim spectre of the past had risen to remind him that he had not yet finished reaping what he had sown.

Levison groaned.

For himself he cared nothing. He did not fear anything from the hands of Snelson should he turn up. He knew—or

believed—that Snelson could never harm him now. It was not of himself that Levison was thinking. He was thinking of the ragged youth who had turned up again at Greyfriars secretly—the fellow who, but for his evil influence in the past, might still have been a respected and decent member of Greyfriars. It was all his fault, he told himself wretchedly—all his work when he had been the rascally, unscrupulous Levison of old. Snelson—how he remembered him!—had been a weedy, innocent sort of duffer, weak as ditch-water, and with a certain sort of crafty look about him that had made him generally disliked, thus falling an easy victim for the hard, cynical Levison, as he was then.

He had gone from bad to worse, and, not having Levison's keen, sharp wits, he had fallen at last, and had been expelled in deep disgrace.

Now he had come to this—a wandering vagabond, a ragged, homeless outcast, according to what was hinted in Wharton's letter.

And it was all his fault—so Levison, in his deep and bitter remorse, told himself again and again.

He was still standing staring unseeingly before him when six juniors came along the passage. They were Merry and Lowther and Blake & Co., and they stopped, all of them looking at Levison rather uncomfortably.

"Levison, old chap," said Tom Merry hesitatingly. "we've got a message for you. We've just come back from Wayland—at least we've just changed after getting back and answering call-over. We met a chap on the moor who seems to know you, Levison—rather a ragged, down-at-heel chap he was. But he spoke—"

Tom Merry stopped short, struck by the look of alarm on Levison's face. He had given a violent start, but he recovered himself in a moment. Levison had iron nerves.

"Go on," he said, forcing a smile. "You met a tramp, you say—a merchant who knows me, what?"

"Yes," Tom Merry eyed him keenly; he was not deceived by Levison's apparent carelessness. "He looked like a tramp, but he spoke—well, as well as any of us chaps speak, I suppose. He was a queer sort of merchant altogether. He was about our age, and he spoke of having been to a public school. And as he mentioned Greyfriars, we think he must have been there. He said his name was Snelson. Do you happen to know him, Levison?"

"Yes, I know him," said Levison.

"Right! He—he seemed rather up against you, Levison," said Tom Merry. "He said you were to meet him as soon as possible at that ruined cottage on the moor—you know it, the old shepherd's cottage—"

"Yes, yes! Go on!"

"He said you must meet him there, and if you failed you would be sorry, Levison."

"He said that, did he?"

"Yes," assented Tom, eyeing Levison curiously. "But—but if you care to take a tip from me, Levison, you'll do nothing of the sort. He's a rascal—an out-and-out rotter!"

"You've found that out already, then?" said Levison, forcing a grim smile.

"Yaas, wathah!" interrupted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy warmly. "The wretched wotiah wan away with my wallet, bai Jove!"

"Wha-at?"

Tom Merry nodded grimly, and then he proceeded to relate what had happened on the moor. Levison listened with growing dismay and distress. So Snelson had not only fallen to the depths of becoming a tramp—an outcast—he was already a common thief—a footpad!

"He means mischief," ceded Tom Merry steadily. "He seems to think he can get you sacked, Levison. Can he do that?"

Levison shook his head.

"No. The Head already knows all there is to know about

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my past," he said thickly. "This chap Snelson doesn't know what, evidently. He thinks he's got me. But look here, you fellows," he went on, in a low tone. "I'm certain the chap is not as bad as you think—I'm certain it was just a moment's temptation, as he said. He was hungry—starving! The sight of the money in Gussy's wallet must have turned his head. You—you don't propose to spout this about?"

The juniors stared at the desperate pleading in Levison's voice.

"Well, no," said Tom Merry; "we did not intend to say a word about it. We could not help pitying the chap, rascal as he is, for one thing. But you won't go to see the rotter, Levison?"

Levison nodded.

"I shall go to see him," he said. "You fellows have guessed right—Snelson was at Greyfriars. He was a pal of mine—or, rather, a toady of mine—at one time. He's down-and-out now, and I mean to help him if I can. You fellows can't understand why, and I'd rather you didn't ask. But I shall see him—I must! You—you'll keep this business to yourselves?"

"If you wish it, Levison—yes," said Tom. "But—but I should watch that fellow, Levison, old chap."

"I'll watch him," said Levison. "And—thanks, you fellows! I know I can rely on you to keep mum about this."

He nodded and walked slowly away towards his own study. "Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, eyeing his chums blankly. "This is a weally remarkable affair, deah boys. Poor old Levison appears to be quite cut up about it!"

"Well, it's his own business, after all, I suppose," said Blake gruffly. "Let's drop it, and leave it to him."

"Yes, rather!"

And having decided upon that, the chums separated, Blake & Co. to go to their own study and Tom Merry and Lowther to join Manners, who was reclining on the couch in Study No. 10, with his leg up on a cushion. Manners' leg was much better now, but, as yet, he had not remembered his camera; that shock was to come yet for Manners. Neither had Lowther remembered about it. The Terrible Three were soon deep in prep. Meanwhile, Ernest Levison had reached his own study again, and there his actions were strange, to say the least of it.

Watched by his staring chums, he took several articles from the cupboard—a tin of pressed beef, a packet of biscuits, a chunk of cake wrapped in paper, and several other articles, all of which he hastily wrapped in a parcel. Then he took from his locker a pocket-torch, and grabbed his cap, stuffing both in his pocket. Next he made for the door, and it was only when he was on the outside of it that his amazed chums recovered sufficiently to shout questions after him.

But Levison was gone then. In a few seconds he was out into the dark quad, and a few seconds later still he was dropping from the school wall into the lane beyond, the parcel buttoned tightly under his coat. Then he started out at a trot for Wayland Moor.

Levison had stated to Tom Merry that he intended to go to see Snelson, and he meant to keep his word—though Tom Merry & Co. had little dreamed that he intended to do so that same night. But they did not know the feelings that were working in the breast of Ernest Levison—feelings of bitter remorse and deep compassion for the hapless outcast, hungry, hopeless, and destitute in that lonely, miserable ruin on the desolate, wind-swept moor.

CHAPTER 5.

Face to Face!

LEVISON trotted doggedly on, his raincoat buttoned tightly over the parcel, his scarf wrapped tightly round his throat, and he very soon reached the outskirts of Wayland Moor.

It was higher here, and much more exposed, but the wind had died down somewhat—the storm was abating, though rain was still falling. Through rifts in thinning clouds a wan moon shone, and stars showed here and there. All was silent save for the patter of the ceaselessly falling raindrops, and the darkness was thick.

But Levison knew every inch of that part of the wide moorland. He was soon on the well-worn path, and it was an easy matter to follow it with the aid of his electric torch.

Levison knew he was running a big risk in breaking bounds after call-over, but he never gave the risk a thought. All his thoughts were of the hapless outcast, and they were very grim and bitter. Sidney Clive had suggested that he was too harsh on himself, but Levison did not think so. As he hurried on through the mud and rain, he reflected grimly how like Mellish of his own Form at St. Jim's Snelson had been—weak as ditch-water and easily led, a

erring toady with a sneaky, crafty manner that made him disliked by all decent fellows.

Yet it was he, Ernest Levison, who had first set Snelson's feet on the downward path—he who had grinned at his innocence, and had taken a delight in making a "gay dog" of him.

Yes, Ernest Levison knew that only too well.

If he could undo what he had done—if only he could make amends.

He could, at least, help the outcast by all the material means in his power. And he was determined to do that.

A shadow loomed up ahead of him at last—the low, thatched roof of the ruined cottage. As he tramped through the broken gateway, Levison fancied he saw a faint flicker of light through a hole in the shuttered window; but the light vanished as his steps sounded on the moss-grown flags of the garden path.

He rapped on the closed door, and tried the latch. The door did not move—it was wedged from inside, and Levison smiled grimly.

"Snelson!" he called clearly. "It is I—Ernest Levison!"

There sounded a muttered exclamation of satisfaction from within the ruin, and the next moment the door was wrenched open from inside. Levison stepped inside, and flashed his light round. He started violently as the light settled on the white, pinched features of the outcast.

"Snelson!" he breathed, his voice catching. "Poor old chap!"

There was a grim, sneering laugh from Snelson as he blinked in the white light.

"Chuck it, Levison!" he said derisively. "That sort of talk sounds funny coming from you. Hold on. I'll light up."

He moved away into the darkness, and Levison sent the beam of light after him as he picked up a lantern from a box, and put a match flame to the still smouldering wick.

"I thought it might be a bobby, or a dashed farmer!" explained Snelson, grinning. "I knew you'd come, but I scarcely expected you quite so soon as this."

Levison watched him silently as he lit and closed the lamp. He was deeply moved—shocked by the wretched, haggard features of the outcast. The signs of suffering were only too plain.

Yet the face of Snelson showed something else—something that Levison had never seen there before. It was not only pale and thin, not only weak and dissipated; but it showed a certain cruel callousness that made Levison's heart sink as he read the signs.

"You—you've been through the mill, Snelson," he said in a low voice. "I—I'm sorry, old chap—more sorry than I can say to find you like this."

Snelson's eyes glittered as he regarded Ernest Levison.

"You can drop that, Levison," he sneered. "I know what your dashed sorrow's worth of old; and I don't need it. I've been through the mill—yes; but my hard times are ended, I fancy, now I've found you."

There was meaning behind the words that Levison could not mistake. His heart sank lower. He had not expected this.

"What do you mean, Snelson?" he asked, setting his lips.

Snelson chuckled. He felt inside the broken packing-case, and drew from within a box of cigarettes. At a glance Levison saw that it was an expensive brand of cigarettes, and he started.

"Have one, Levison?" said Snelson, with a grin.

"Thanks—no. I don't smoke now," said Levison, flushing.

Snelson took one himself and lit up, an amused expression on his thin, crafty features. He seated himself on a box, and blew out a cloud of smoke.

"I heard from Skinner, at Greyfriars, that you'd changed a bit—or were pretending to have changed," he remarked, with a chuckle. "I knew it was all humbug, of course."

"It is not humbug, Snelson," said Levison quietly. "I gave up smoking some time ago; I have changed."

"That's rather funny!" grinned Snelson. "Still, you can easily pick it up again. I suppose you've given up the cards, too—and the gee-gees, what?"

"Yes."

"You can easily pick it all up again," said Snelson, his eyes glinting curiously. "It's rather funny, isn't it? You taught me these little games long ago; it was your giddy influence and example that started me on the giddy downward path. Now you've turned over a new leaf—or pretend to have done—and I'm the chap who is going to set your foot on the giddy path to ruin again."

"What—what do you mean?" asked Levison.

"Have a smoke, and we'll talk things over," suggested Snelson, smiling as he held up the box. "Have a smoke now to please me. It will pay you to please me, Levison. If you don't, you may have cause to regret it."

"I—I see," said Levison.

"You ought to see, too!" snarled Snelson, his face suddenly becoming dark with bitter hate and malice. "It is you, Levison, who's to blame for what I am now—you and you alone. Hang you for the heartless, sneering rotter you are and always, were! I'm down and out—cast out by my own people. I've you to thank for it all, you cad! You egged me on—you taught me to do the things that brought me to this, hang you! Do you think I'm going to let you throw me over now? Not likely! I've got you now, and I'm going to make use of you—just as you made use of me in the old days. You used to be a hard case, Levison; you'll find I'm a dashed hard case now."

Levison eyed him steadily. His voice was quite calm and composed when he answered.

"Listen to me, Snelson," he said. "You evidently think you have me in your power—that you can do as you like with me. You are mistaken—very much mistaken. You cannot harm me. The past is dead and done with as far as my own past is concerned."

CHAPTER 6.

Levison Gives Way!

LEVISON stood motionless. His hands were tightly clenched and his face was hard. It took all his will-power to keep him from striking the sneering, crafty face of the boy before him.

He understood all now. It was not revenge Snelson was after—not unless he could get his own way, at all events. But that way was one Ernest Levison could never agree to—far from it. It was all clear to him now. Snelson had come for his help—help in a rascally scheme to earn a living out of the folly of the black sheep at St. Jim's. He wanted him to introduce him to the dingy "bad eggs" at St. Jim's—to entice them to the cottage for cards and such-like dingy pursuits.

And the reason was plain enough. Doubtless Snelson had learned a great deal since Levison had known him—a great deal that was far from being good for him to learn. Doubtless he knew ways and means of manipulating the cards for



St. Jim's Jingles!



No. 24. RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW.

THE character of Cardew shows
A maze of contradictions;
And, honestly, one never
knows

What are his real convictions,
His nature shows two separate sides
To those who know him nearest;
Of all the Jekylls and the Hydes
Old Cardew is the queerest!

When Cardew's higher self is seen,
We cannot but admire him;
He is a sportsman, keen and clean,
No effort seems to tire him,
He plays the game with eager zest
Like Figgins or Tom Merry;
And gives ungrudgingly his best,
A splendid fellow—very!

But when the other Cardew comes,
His ways we cannot relish;
He's the despair of all his chums,
He acts like Racke or Mellish,
Cardew the cynic shocks us all,
Cardew the blade we're scorning;
We fear he's riding for a fall,
But he ignores our warning.



CARDEW,

a prominent member of the School House Fourth.

Ralph Reckness has two stalwart
friends,

Well used to his caprices;
A helping hand each comrade lends,
Their loyalty increases.
Both Ernest Levison and Clive
Support him—though not blindly;
And Cardew's very much alive
To actions warm and kindly.

He's well endowed with worldly
goods,

His purse seems quite unbounded;
Many a feed, in dorm or woods,
He has financed and founded.
Many a jolly motor ride
Or charabanc excursion,
His pocket-money will provide;
And many a gay diversion!

Ralph Reckness, you're a curious
guy,

A riddle, a conundrum;
But it is safe to prophesy
Your life will ne'er be humdrum.
For daring thrills you have a thirst,
Boredom would drive you frantic;
Your future will be interspersed
By many a startling antic!

NEXT WEEK:—Mr. SELBY,

The Master of
the Third.

"Liar!" hissed Snelson, a sudden look of fear coming over his face. "I don't believe it. Would you be at St. Jim's now if the authorities knew what I know about you? Not likely! Now, listen I'm down and out—desperate. I'm ready to do desperate things. But I've thought of a way to get my living—a dashed good way. I've tried to earn a living honestly, and I've failed. I can't get any sort of a job. But the things you taught me in the old days are going to come in useful now, Levison. I'm staying here for a bit, and I'm staying in this district for a long while, my pippin. There are gay dogs at St. Jim's—I have reason to know there are—gay dogs with money to burn. I want you to help me to get a living out of them at the little games you yourself taught me long ago. You can introduce me to them—get them to come here for a little game, and then—well, you can guess the rest. If you like you can have a hand in the pickings yourself, Levison. If you refuse to help me—well, I shall go straight to the Head of St. Jim's, and I shall show you up for the rascal you are."

his own blackguardly ends, and doubtless he had learned a great deal about "gee-gees," too, that would stand him in good—or bad—stead, when dealing with more innocent St. Jim's fellows.

It was only too clear to Ernest Levison.

But if that was Snelson's scheme, then he was doomed to disappointment. Levison gritted his teeth.

Had it been any other fellow Levison would have dashed his fist into the fellow's face for making such a suggestion to him.

Yet he could not do that. He was only reaping what he had sown. Snelson was only what he himself had made him—that, at least, was Levison's own view. Moreover, how could he show violence to the pitifully weak and half-starved outcast?

He must keep calm at all costs.

"Look here, Snelson," he said, speaking with an effort. "You are offside altogether. I have changed—I shall never go back to the old ways. You can please yourself whether

you believe it or not. You think you have me in your power also; you are very much mistaken there. You cannot harm me. My past is known at St. Jim's; it is known why I left Greyfriars. The Head has forgiven me long ago. It is all past and done with."

Snelson leaned forward and searched Levison's face as if trying to read the truth there. He could not fail to read his answer in Levison's steady glance. He staggered back, his face livid with fury and bitter disappointment.

"You—you mean that?" he breathed. "They—they know all at St. Jim's, and the truth cannot harm you?"

"Yes."

Snelson stared at him wildly; it seemed for a moment as if he would fling himself at the St. Jim's fellow in his bitter rage and disappointment. Even in that moment Levison felt a thrill of pity for the wretched vagabond.

"And your father?" hissed Snelson, after a pause. "Does he know all?"

"Yes. He knows all, and has forgiven me."

"Hang you—hang you!" snarled Snelson. "Then—then you refuse to help me, you hound?"

"Not at all," said Levison quietly. "I mean to help you all I can, but not in that way. I will do my best to get you decent clothes and food and shelter. And I will ask my father to try to get some sort of a decent job for you. Listen to me, Snelson." Levison's voice became low. "I'm sorry—bitterly sorry to find you like this. I mean to make what amends I can. I will do all in my power to help you back to a decent life."

Snelson's lip curled in a sneer.

"You can keep your sorrow, and you can keep that sort of dashed help!" he snarled. "I don't want it. I've got other plans, my pippin! Then you refuse to do what I demand?"

"Yes. I do not fear you, Snelson."

The outcast's face became suddenly convulsed. His thin features were twisted with helpless rage, and his eyes glittered.

"I don't believe it!" he hissed. "I don't believe what you say. You've tricked them into taking you into St. Jim's; you always were a clever brute, Levison! But I'll show you up; I'm out to ruin you, you cad! That is, if you won't toe the line! Now listen. You'll come here to-morrow, and you'll smoke and you'll have a game with the cards as in the old days, Levison. And you'll toe the line in general. If you don't you'll regret it."

Levison remained quite calm. He undid his coat, and laid the parcel on the upturned box.

"There's food in there," he said quietly; "enough to last you for a while. There's a pump with good water in it in the yard at the back of the cottage; I expect you've found it, though. You'll be all right here until I come to-morrow evening. But I shall not come to do as you suggest. I shall come to bring you more food and clothes and other things to make you more comfortable; nothing else."

"You'll come to-morrow afternoon!" hissed Snelson. "It's Wednesday—a half-day. You'll come in the afternoon. If you don't, I shall know what to do in the evening."

Levison disregarded the threat.

"I'm sorry, but I can't come in the afternoon," he said.

"Footer, I suppose?" sneered Snelson. "Skinner told me you'd taken that footing game up."

"No; it isn't footer," said Levison calmly. "My sister happens to be visiting St. Jim's; she is staying with her friend Ethel Cleveland with the Head's wife for a few days. I'm going to meet them both at the station. It will have to be evening. I'm sorry, Snelson."

"Your sister, eh?" said Snelson, with a bitter sneer. "I remember her well. Doris her name was, what? I remember how terrified you used to be that she should ever find any of your little games out. We used to grin when you used to play the Good Little Georgie game when she visited Greyfriars. You were always in a blue funk lest she should discover what a beauty you really was. My hat! What did she think when she heard the truth—when it all came out? I bet she's not been the same sister since?"

And Snelson grinned—a cruel grin.

For once the sharp wits of Ernest Levison failed him. When he answered he answered unguardedly, thoughtlessly.

"Kindly keep my sister's name out of it, Snelson," he said curtly. "My sister knows nothing, so you needn't grin. It was kept from her; she never learned the truth, and, thank Heaven, she never will know it! It would have—"

Levison broke off and caught his breath sharp; the sudden gleam in the outcast's eyes told him at once that he had blundered—blundered badly.

He went suddenly white.

Snelson laughed—a harsh, gloating laugh. His eyes were glittering with sudden triumph.

"So dear Doris knows nothing, eh?" he grinned. "She still thinks you the fine good little boy she always thought you? My hat! This is news—good news! I wonder what

she will think when I tell her all to-morrow? I think I'll go and meet her at the station, Levison. You don't mind, I know. What?"

Levison was white to the lips now. Bitterly he regretted his rash, thoughtless words, now—too late! He saw in a blinding flash that by his thoughtlessness he had placed in the rascally outcast's hands a deadly weapon that he could use at his will to wound him to the heart.

"I see that hits you where you live," grinned Snelson. "Well, will you come to-morrow afternoon—just for a little flutter?"

No answer.

"If you refuse you know just what to expect," said the crafty rascal smoothly. "I shall meet your sister. If you try to stop me I shall find a way of making her acquaintance anew—be sure of that. I shall parade my rags before her, and before her friend. I shall tell them that it is you, Ernest Levison, who has brought me to this plight; you who are responsible for my rags, for my ruined life. I shall tell them what a blackguard you were, and just why you left Greyfriars. I can just see their pretty chivvies when I tell them all that. I think you'd better toe the line, Levison."

Levison licked his suddenly dry lips.

He had never bargained for such a situation as this—a terrible situation to Ernest Levison.

If there was one person above all others whom he had dreaded ever learning the story of his shady past it was his sister Doris.

The thought of her pretty face as she listened to the story from the lips of the ragged rascal before him made a shudder of dread go through him.

It must never be. She would recognise Snelson at once, despite his rags. She would know there must be truth in it. If she taxed him with it he could not deny it.

What could he say—what could he do?

"Look here," he stammered hoarsely. "You can't do what you say, Snelson, you hound! You can't face my sister like that; you can't kill her faith and trust in me. It would upset her terribly—terribly!"

Snelson grinned—a cruel, gloating grin.

"Can't I? You'll see if I can't if you don't toe the line, my pippin! Can you expect me to feel kindly disposed to you, Levison?" he said. "I'm desperate, and I'm out to smash you—if you refuse to help me as I wish! Will you come to-morrow afternoon, or not?"

Levison was silent, his brain working fast. His wits had returned to him now, and he strove to find a way out of his terrible position. But he could find none.

He would have to give way to the rascal's demands—for a time, at least. After all, Doris would only be staying a few days. When she had gone the danger would be past. He would "toe the line" until then; there was nothing else for it.

He nodded at last. His face was haggard, but his mind was made up.

"I'll come, Snelson," he said, in a low voice. "I'll come, and I'll do what you ask me personally to do. But I refuse to bring any other fellows here; I draw the line at that. I'll do it myself, and I'll do all in my power to aid you in other ways."

Snelson grinned again.

"That's good," he said. "I knew you'd come round, Levison. A leopard can't change his spots so easily, y'know. But you've no need to bring any gay blades here, as it happens; they'll come on their giddy own, I fancy. Look here!"

He crossed the room to the shattered cupboard in the corner. Levison crossed after him, and watched as he removed the broken door away, and, kneeling on the floor, prised up a couple of rotten boards. From the deep cavity revealed he dragged up a large long tin box.

He opened the lid, and exposed to Levison's astonished view a strange collection of articles. A box of cigarettes was there—like the box Snelson already had. There was also a well-fingered pack of playing-cards, a small, compact spirit-stove, and a small saucepan, and several tins containing tea and coffee and sugar, with several boxes of matches.

"I found this little lot about an hour ago," grinned Snelson. "From what I could see of the place I could see it had been used recently. I hunted about and found this. I fancy the chaps who use this place are bold, bad blades from St. Jim's. What do you think?"

"Racke, Crooke, and that lot!" breathed Levison.

He remembered in a flash having seen those shady juniors on the moor not far from the cottage twice lately, and he had wondered what they were up to. He knew now, just as he knew where Snelson had got his cigarettes from.

"You know whom these belong to, then?" grinned Snelson. "I guessed what it meant at once. We used to play these little games at Greyfriars, didn't we? Well, we'll make their acquaintance to-morrow afternoon. Levison,

They'll be here then, I fancy."

Levison fancied that also, and he gritted his teeth. But he could do nothing yet—nothing to stop the rascally Snelson's schemes until his sister had gone. He vowed he would stop it quickly enough then.

"And now that's settled," went on Snelson, gloating over the miserable look on his enemy's face, "what about a little game and a smoke now, Levison?"

"I've got to go now, or I shall be missed," muttered Levison. "You'll see me here to-morrow afternoon, and I'll get someone else to meet my—my sister."

"My dear man, why not go the whole hog?" said Snelson. "And I might change my mind before to-morrow—I might remember what I've got up against you, Levison, and change my mind. You've heaps of time for a quiet game and a smoke before bed-time. You're not likely to be missed before then."

"I must get back—"

"Rot! Just one game and a smoke. It's thundering lonely here, I can tell you," said Snelson in a different tone, and glancing, with a shiver, about him. "You don't know what it's like to be homeless and friendless, Levison. I—I want someone to talk to, I can tell you. Stop a bit longer."

Levison hesitated. There was something more than the mere desire to get Levison to "toe the line" that prompted the outcast to say that. Levison saw it in his eager, haggard look. He was hungering for companionship—the companionship of his kind. Levison felt a deep thfill of pity for him once again.

He hesitated another moment, and then he threw off his drenched raincoat and his cap. Then he seated himself on one of the boxes scattered about. Snelson handed him the cigarette-box; and, after another brief hesitation, Levison took one, and accepted the light from the match which Snelson handed him. The next moment he was dealing out the playing cards with a hand that had not lost its cunning with long disuse at that game. He was the old Levison again—for the time being.

His face was hard and set as he played, Snelson did not mention money. He knew that Levison might easily "kick" if he did mention it, as Levison certainly would have done. They played steadily, and as they played Snelson talked, his bitter animosity hidden now. He told Levison how he had run away from home after being expelled from his last school, and how he had tramped the countryside, living the life of a tramp, unable to get work, starving, cold, and destitute.

It was a story that brought a lump to Levison's throat.

Yet he said nothing. He knew how Snelson would treat his words of sympathy.

"That's the story, anyhow," ended the outcast, looking up at Levison. "I suppose I was a dashed fool for running away. But I wasn't going to go to the rotten school they meant sending me to. It was a reformatory, a prison—nothing less. I bolted. And here I am, Levison, in clover again, at last. What?"

His eyes glinted as he watched Levison's face, but Levison ignored his last words. Levison was doing something that went against the grain—that made him almost hate himself. The cigarette smoke almost choked him and the sight of the cards sickened him. But there was no help for it. And,



"I trust you will not mind if I offer you a twife to help you on your way, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus kindly. "Pway accept this with—" The swell of St. Jim's got no further, for without warning a fist shot out and sent him spinning across the room to collapse with a cry on the rotten boards. In a flash the youth had snatched the wallet from his hand. (See chapter 2.)

after all, it was only for a few days, until Doris was gone. He could defy the rascal then—could put away the cards and smokes once again, for good.

"Your deal, Snelson," he said, breaking the silence at last. He had scarcely spoken when footsteps rang on the flags outside, and a knock sounded on the door; then the latch clicked.

Levison leaped to his feet, the cigarette in his mouth, the cards in his hands. And before he could move the door swung open with a creak, and two fellows stood blinking in on the threshold.

CHAPTER 7.

The Lost Camera!

"MY camera!"

Harry Manners of the Shell made that ejaculation suddenly and unexpectedly, and as he did so he leaped up from the study table, forgetting about his injured knee. But as he placed his weight on his foot he yelped and sat down again just as quickly.

He was not the only one to yelp, however. Tom Merry and Lowther were doing their prep at the table, and Manners' sudden jump sent the ink from the inkpot spattering over their exercise books.

"You burbling dummy!" howled Tom Merry ferociously. "What did you want to jump up like that for? Are you potty?"

"My camera!"

"What?"

"My camera!" gasped Manners, turning in great alarm to Monty Lowther, who had just given a jump. "Where is it, Monty? Is it safe? Did you bring it in? Where did you place it? I'm blessed if I haven't forgotten all about it since I handed it to you on the moor, Lowther."

"Oh, my hat!" said Lowther.

He remembered now.

"You—you put it safe somewhere?" demanded Manners in sudden fear and apprehension. "My camera—my twelve-guinea camera!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Lowther. "I'm—I'm awfully sorry, old chap."

"What?" hooted Manners. "You don't mean to say it isn't somewhere safe?"

"Well, I shouldn't think it would be very safe out on the moor on a night like this," said Lowther, shaking his head. "It would get frightfully muddy and wet, I should think. Of course, it's in a canvas case, but—"

He was interrupted by a shriek from the enthusiastic amateur photographer.

"You—you stark, staring madman!" shrieked Manners in horror. "You don't mean to say—you don't mean to tell me that you've left it out on Wayland Moor, Lowther?"

Lowther looked remorseful.

"I'm afraid I did," he said. "I'm so sorry, old chap. It was when that ass Gussy shouted, and we went to cut off the escape of that dashed thief. I dropped the camera—I didn't drop it hard, mind you—on the ground, and jumped to stop the rotter. Then—well, I've forgotten all about it until now. So sorry, old chap!"

Manners almost had an apoplectic fit.

"You—you raving lunatic! You slab-sided, idiotic, careless, raving dummy!" he howled. "My camera! It'll be ruined, even if it is ever found again. Oh, you—you—"

Words failed Manners. He subsided on the couch, gasping incoherently.

"Steady, Manners, old chap!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "After all, it may be all right, you know. Perhaps the rain won't harm it much, and we can easily find it to-morrow afternoon."

"To-morrow afternoon!" yelled Manners. "D'you think I'm going to wait until then? Not likely! Oh, you—you fathead! You—you careless, slack, criminal fathead!"

He jumped up again from the couch, heedless of his gammy knee now and the twinges from it. He grabbed his cap and stuffed it in his pocket.

"Here!" gasped Tom Merry in alarm. "You silly ass! Where are you off to, Manners?"

"Wayland Moor, of course," snapped Manners ferociously. "Oh, that idiot Lowther ought to be boiled in oil! I'm going to find my camera if it dashed well kills me! Out of the way, ass!"

But Tom Merry did not get out of the way.

"Hold on, you raving duffer!" he gasped. "You can't break bounds like this, and on a night like this. Don't act the goat. Beside, your gammy leg won't stand it. And that's not all. I'm not letting you make your knee worse for any thumping camera, Manners. We want you for the Greyfriars match in a fortnight's time, you ass. Chuck it! We'll all go and get it to-morrow."

"It'll be too late then, if it isn't already!" hooted Manners. "Let me go, you ass! I tell you I'm going. If you don't let me, I'll not speak to you again, Merry. I mean it."

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry and Lowther blinked at their chum. They saw only too clearly that he was in deadly earnest—for the time being, at all events. And a split in the Terrible Three would not do at all—was not to be thought of.

"Oh, you ass!" breathed Tom, in great exasperation. "Well, if you mean it, then we must go. But you're staying here, Manners. If anyone must go, I'll go, and perhaps Lowther will come with me. He'll know exactly where he dropped the dashed thing."

"It isn't a dashed thing—"

"Sorry, old chap," said Tom Merry hastily. "There, just you lie down, Manners, old chap, and leave this to us. Get your cap and things ready, Lowther. We'll have to smuggle 'em out."

Lowther nodded. He was only too eager to go now he saw how badly his chum Manners was taking the loss of the camera. And, after all, he had been thoughtless in letting go of such a valuable article. Lowther admitted that. Tom rooted out a pocket-torch, and soon they were ready. They left the House easily enough without being seen, most of the fellows being at prep, and the seniors in their studies or the Senior Common-room. Five minutes after that they were speeding across Wayland Moor towards the spot where Lowther remembered having dropped the camera.

They found the place easily enough: it was not far from the path, and the light from the torch soon picked up the tracks on the muddy ground.

They found the spot where the brief struggle had taken

place with the fugitive, and then they started to search round in ever-widening circles.

But they did not find the camera—which was not surprising had they only known the truth. And after a long search, they gave it up.

"No good!" said Lowther dismally. "Oh, my hat! Old Manners will never forgive me for this!"

"We're not done yet," said Tom Merry. "More likely than not that ragged chap picked it up."

"Phew! That's it, Tommy! I remember he did have to pass the spot where I dropped it. But how—"

"The ruined cottage," said Tom promptly. "Gussy said he was camping out there—poor brute! We'll try it, anyhow!"

They hurriedly left the spot and made tracks for the cottage. It loomed up in the darkness at last, and they tramped up to the door—having already seen the light through the crack in the shutter.

Tom knocked on the door, and then he lifted the latch and flung the door open. Then both he and Monty Lowther staggered back in sheer amazement at what they saw.

Levison was there—Levison of the Fourth—and he had obviously just jumped up from the box before the packing-case. On the top of the case were scattered playing cards and cigarettes.

The ragged outcast was there also, cards in hand and cigarette in mouth. He glared savagely at the intruders.

But the two Shell fellows had no eyes for Snelson.

They were staring with almost unbelieving eyes at Ernest Levison. The cigarette was still between his lips, and his hand clutched the playing-cards tensely.

His face flushed red as he met the staring eyes of Tom Merry and Lowther. There was a tense silence. Tom Merry closed the door quietly.

"Levison!" he exclaimed. "You here—at this game? This is something new."

"Something old, if you ask me!" jeered Snelson, grinning as he glanced at Levison's scarlet face. "Anyhow, what the thump business is it of yours, hang you?"

"Hold your tongue, you cad!" snapped Tom Merry fiercely. "Let Levison answer for himself. I fancy you are at the bottom of this business. I can't forget what you said to us on the moor there early on this evening. Levison—"

Tom paused and faced Levison, his own features angry. Curiously enough, the startled and somewhat disgusted looks of the two Shell fellows angered Levison also—angered him furiously. That he should have been caught like this—by Tom Merry of all fellows, was the rottenest luck imaginable.

But he was caught, and Levison was never the fellow to make excuses, or to attempt to shield himself behind another—certainly not behind a cringing, rascally fellow like Snelson.

"Hold on, Merry," he said thickly. "This is my own affair. You can leave Snelson out of it. I'm responsible for my own actions, I suppose. What dashed business is it of yours, anyhow?"

Tom Merry's face darkened. He had been ready enough to accept any excuse or explanation Levison made—angry as he felt. But Levison's manner put his back up at once.

"In one way it isn't my business, Levison; but in another it is. I'm the skipper of the junior footer team. It's my job to see my men are fit, and keep themselves fit. The match with Greyfriars is in a fortnight's time—a jolly stiff fixture. You're not likely to do yourself or the team justice by smoking and playing these dingy games, Levison."

"I suppose it's no good my telling you that this is the first time I've touched the cards or a cigarette for ages and ages?" said Levison, with one of his old, bitter sneers.

"If you tell me that, I shall believe you—in fact, I do believe you," said Tom quietly. "But let it be the last time, Levison. If it isn't—"

"Well, what if it isn't the last time?"

"I shall drop you from the team," said Tom grimly.

"You can drop me and be hanged to you!"

Even as he spoke, Levison regretted the words. He knew he was in the wrong—hopelessly in the wrong—yet his anger, his mortification and humiliation at being discovered, made him lose his usual cool level-headedness.

Tom Merry eyed him steadily.

"You're not yourself to-night, Levison," he said quietly. "I think that when you've had time to reflect you'll see that you are in the wrong, and will drop this silly, dingy conduct. I don't quite see what this business means," he added, turning a sharp glance on Snelson, "but I don't intend to inquire. We came here to see this—this merchant here."

"I'm hanged if I want to see you, any old how," said the ragged youth insolently. "Clear out! You came spying here—spying on Levison, I suppose?"

"We haven't come spying. We hadn't the faintest idea that Levison was out to-night," said Monty Lowther warmly. "We came after a camera—a camera Manners lost on the

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moor. We've searched for it and can't find it. We wondered if this—this merchant had found it?"

Snelson eyed them with a sneering grin. The mention of the camera had brought a sudden gleam to his eyes, but it quickly vanished.

"Camera—what a yarn!" he jeered. "You came here spying, of course. Sure it wasn't a dashed butterfly-net?"

"It was a camera—a valuable one," said Tom Merry, eyeing the youth keenly. "It was dropped when we collared you. You must have passed it on the ground when you walked away, after we let you go. We want to know if you saw anything of it?"

"If I had I'm dashed if I would tell you!" said Snelson coolly. "But I haven't, and in any case I don't believe there was a camera. It's a yarn to cover your dashed, confounded spying!"

Tom Merry took a step towards the insolent youth, but he stepped back just as quickly, mindful of the hapless wretch's physical condition. It was as well he did so, for, even as he stepped forward, Levison also stepped forward, his eyes gleaming strangely.

"You'd better not, Merry!" said Levison, in a voice he scarcely recognised as his own. "Snelson is under my protection, I might tell you. Touch him, or attempt to do so, and you'll have me to deal with. I don't want to quarrel with you, but—"

He broke off and pointed to the door. Tom Merry bit his lip and nodded. He saw—or believed he saw—that Snelson knew nothing of the missing camera, and like Levison himself, he did not want to quarrel. Things were bad enough as they were.

"Come on, Lowther," he snapped. "Let's get out of this!"

He opened the door, and Lowther, grunting wrathfully, followed him. They passed out, and the door closed upon them. Levison stood as if turned to stone. A chuckle from Snelson made him wheel furiously.

"You rank outsider, Snelson!" he hissed. "You see what this is going to lead to—it's going to lose me all my friends—to ruin me if it goes on."

"You're forgetting what you've lost me—you're forgetting what your influence and example has led me to," said Snelson coolly. "Look at me, and it will remind you."

Levison bit his lip, and the fist he had raised in his fury fell to his side. All the anger suddenly left his face.

"You're right, Snelson," he said thickly. "You've suffered, and it's only right that I should suffer. It's my punishment, I suppose. I'm going now."

He tossed away the half-smoked cigarette with a grunt of disgust, and reached for his cap and coat.

"Hold on!" said Snelson, his small eyes glinting nastily. "You're not going yet, Levison?"

"I am!" said Levison. "I've had enough for to-night. But I'll be here to-morrow afternoon, Snelson. I won't fail you. You'll have to be satisfied with that."

He spoke in a tense tone of finality, and Snelson nodded. He was a crafty youth, and he saw that Levison was thoroughly upset, and he realised that it would not be policy to push his advantage too strongly to begin with. In a few moments Levison had his cap and scarf and coat on, and then, with a gruff good-night to the outcast, he left the cottage, and started the tramp back.

Levison glanced back once, and his heart throbbed as he saw the faint gleam of light showing through the broken shutters of the wretched hovel. The thought of the miserable outcast having to spend the night—and many such nights—in that dismal, horrible place, filled him with pity for the miserable youth, and with self-loathing and deep, bitter remorse. Rascal and utterly unscrupulous as Snelson had become, Levison could only feel pity and compassion for him. But by the time he reached the school, something else had entered Levison's mind—a sudden fear and doubt.

Did Snelson intend to play the game—did he intend to wait for him the next afternoon, or would he—

Levison stopped as the thought struck him. He knew only too well what a treacherous rascal he was dealing with. Suppose the wretch was tricking him to go to the cottage so that he could go to meet Doris—to do what he had threatened to do? Supposing his desire for vengeance proved stronger than his greed and personal comfort?

He must make sure that that did not happen at all costs. With this determination in his mind, Levison hid his drenched coat in the woodshed, and entered the House, with his cap in his pocket, and hurried to his own study. As he reached the door his two chums, Cardew and Clive came out.

They looked at him strangely. Clive started back as he caught a whiff of Levison's breath and smelt tobacco. But Levison did not notice it.

"Has anyone been inquiring for me?" he gasped.

"No. My dear man, what's this game—" Cardew was beginning, when Levison stopped him hurriedly.

"Don't ask me if you fellows don't mind," he said

hurriedly. "I've been out, and I must get my wet boots changed. But—but before I forget. Will you fellows do something for me to-morrow afternoon? I want you to meet my sister at the station. Tell her I have another—another engagement, an important one."

"Great pip!" remarked Cardew, eyeing his chum's red face queerly. "Levison, old top, why this mystery—why this thushness?"

"I'd rather not say—"

"All serene," yawned Cardew, nodding. "We'll do it and ask no questions. Good gad, though! There'll be ten of us to meet the dear girls. Dear old Gussy is also meeting them—don't forget he is Miss Ethel's cousin, you know. And merry old Figgins is going, and so are Blake's lot, and Merry and Lowther. What a merry old party it will be! All serene, though."

"There's something else," said Levison hesitatingly. "Look here, you fellows, there's a chap may want to stop the girls to-morrow—may try to speak to Doris. He's a ragged chap—a fellow I know—who wants to injure me. He will possibly try to tell her things about me—about my past. I want to know, should he happen to turn up, if you chaps will find a way of stopping his game—keep him away from the girls?"

"Phew!"

"I can't tell you what it means—yet," said Levison, conscientiously that his chums were staring blankly at him. "But—will you do it?"

"Like a shot, old nut!" said Cardew carelessly, though his eyes were searching Levison's face. "My dear man, leave it to me. I'll put the merry old kybosh on this merchant's little game! I'll be on the spot, and so will dear old Sidney—what?"

Clive nodded. His face was clouded.

"Thanks," said Levison gratefully. "You—you shall hear what it means later on. I don't say anything like that will happen, but it may; and if it does, it means a rotten blow to Doris—and me also. I'll leave it to you fellows, then."

Levison turned on his heel and hurried away, making for the dormitory. His chums stared after him, both of them very uneasy indeed. But Sidney Clive especially felt suddenly sick and dismayed. Levison had been smoking—had been breaking bounds also. What did it mean? Had he broken out into his old dingy ways again?

Levison was not the only fellow who went to bed in a very worried state of mind that evening.

CHAPTER 8.

A Surprise for Racke & Co.!

HERE we are! Shut the dashed door after you, Mellish!"

Racke was the speaker, and he uttered the words as he opened the old shepherd's cottage on Wayland Moor, and his chums and toadies followed him in. Mellish obediently closed the door after them.

It was the following afternoon. Dinner was over at St. Jim's, and Racke, Croke, Mellish, and Scrope were out to enjoy themselves in their usual dingy manner—at least, they called it enjoyment. Other fellows at St. Jim's had made for playing-fields, river, or the open road, to get what healthy enjoyment they could out of the Wednesday half-holiday.

But Racke & Co's idea of enjoyment was different.

The ruined living-room of the cottage was empty save for the packing-case and the boxes scattered about the floor. It looked to Racke & Co. just the same as it had done on the previous Saturday—their last visit to the cottage.

Racke looked round and grinned.

"We must make this place a bit more comfortable, you chaps," he remarked, looking about him. "My idea is to get a heating-stove in here—one of those oil-lamps, y'know."

"Good wheeze!" assented Croke. "We might manage to smuggle a lot of things down here and hide them. Let's get down to the job, anyway. Out with that box, Mellish!"

Mellish, who was the general handyman of the party, went to the cupboard and prised up the two loose floor-boards. Then dragging out the box, he returned to the packing-case. Racke opened the box and took out a packet of cigarettes.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed suddenly. "What about the other box? There was another box nearly full in there! Sure it's not under the boards, Mellish?"

Mellish shook his head.

"Nothing else there," he said. "Why—"

"You rotters!" said Racke, his eyes blazing. "Some of you chaps have been pinching them, then! I—Great Scott! It looks to me as if several things here have been interfered with! That's queer!"

(Continued on page 16.)



THE St. Jim's News



HOW TO MAKE MONEY!

By A Thrifty Fag:

I AM not going to put my name to this article, partly bekwase my speling is a bit shaky, and partly bekwase some of the critical chaps might consider I am a mean little miser. But if any of my fellow-fags happen to be on the rox, and want to know how they can make money, they will find this artikle jolly usefuf.

My people are not very well off. They allow me a tanner a week pocket-money. Now, a tanner duzzent go very far in these eggspensive times. One visit to the tuck-shop or the cinema, and bang goes sixpence!

During my first term at St. Jim's I was a mizzerable pawper. I had my tanner a week, and not a penny more. Sometimes I used to mortgage my pocket-money—that is to say, I would persuade my pater to send me a month's supply in advance. Then I would blue the whole lump, and find myself in Queer Street for a month.

When my second term at St. Jim's began I looked out for ways and means of increasing my exchequer. First of all, I went to Kildare of the Sixth and offered my servisses as a fag

"What wages would you be prepared to pay, Kildare?" I asked.

"Threepence a week," said Kildare, "and a free tea every day."

"I'll think it over," I said, "and let you know later."

I then interviewed Knox, who wanted me to work for nothing; Langton, who offered me a penny a week; Rnshden, who didn't offer me a fixed wage, but said he'd pay me whenever he happened to think of it; and old Darrell, who offered me a tanner a week. So I fixed up with Darrell, and have served him faithfully ever since. This brought my weekly money up to a shilling.

But I was not content with this. I still had plenty of lezzure, for Darrell is not an eggstracting fag-master; so I went up to Mr. Raitlon, and offered my servisses as a caddy. Not a tea-caddy, but a golf caddy. Mr. Raitlon consented to let me trot round the links with him on half-holidays, and when the game was over he tipped me a tanner and stood me a tea at the clubhouse. Raitlon plays golf once a week, so my money had risen from a humble tanner to one-and-sixpence.

Now, if you want to make money, you must be prepared to turn your hand to anything, and not be too sooperior. Some fellows look upon window-cleaning as an undignified occupation for a publick school-boy; but when I saw that Taggles, the porter, was funky about cleaning some of the high windows, I volunteered to do them for him. I ran up the ladder like a munky, and cleaned the windows on the outside while Taggles did them inside. Rezult—another tanner a week added to my income!

There are heaps more ways of earning an honest penny. Running errands is a profitable bizness, and Cutts of the Fifth pays a bob to have his motor-bike cleaned after

a muddy ride. And when the spring-cleaning season comes along, and studies have to be overhauled and scoured, it is possible for an industrious fag to make as much as five bob a week.

What do I do with my earnings? Tuck them away in a Post Office Savings Bank account, of course! My capital is gradually growing; and if I keep on at this rate I shall be a millionaire by the time I reach the Sixth Form! And instead of having to follow some profession when I leave St. Jim's, I shall retire to a mansion in the country!

.....



IF!

By Dick Brooke.

"If I had a hundred pounds," said Blake.

"To spend all on my own.

I'd buy myself a wireless set.

A handsome pug-dog for a pet.

A fishing-rod, a butterfly net,

And a lively gramophone!"

"If I had a hundwed pounds," said Gus.

"Fwom my illustwious fathah."

I'd spend it down to the final coppah

On purchasin' many a suit an' toppah;

For I considah it's only pwopah

To look well dwessed—yaas, wubah!"

"If I had a hundred pounds," said Wynn.

"I'd live in a realm of tuck!

I'd dance and prance in my delight,

I'd feast and feed from morn till night,

And invite my pals to have a bite

Of roasted goose or duck!"

"If I had a hundred pounds," said Racke—

"Why, what would it mean to me?

A drop in the ocean—nothing more—

For I have quids and quids galore;

So I'd hand the hundred pounds to Gore,

Who is stranded and up a tree!"

"If I had a hundred pounds," said Glyn.

"I'd patent an invention

Of a plane to fly from here to Mars

(Better than all your earth-bound cars!).

And Jupiter, Venus, and other stars

Too numerous to mention!"

"If I had a hundred pounds," said Knox.

"I'd place it on a horse;

And thus make several hundreds more.

Unless the animal failed to score,

And floundered on the grassy floor—

Then bitter 'my remorse!"

"If I had a hundred pounds," said Brooke

(The writer of these rhymes),

"In a savings bank I'd tuck it away,

Whatever the spendthrift folks might say;

A nest-egg stored for that rainy day

Which comes to us all at times!"



EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

THAT very useful commodity, which is called "money" by the masters, "cash" by the seniors, "tin" by the juniors, "spondulies" by the fags, and "earthly dross" by the poets, forms the subject of this week's special number.

There are people who profess that money is quite an unimportant thing, but I have always noticed that they take good care to have their pockets well lined! It is sufficiently important for them to avoid being without it!

Of course, money is not the most important thing in the world. Cash is a pretty poor substitute for good health and other blessings. At the same time, money has a certain amount of importance, especially in the eyes of a schoolboy. We all know the misery of being "broke," and not being able to have tea in the study, or go to the cinema, or pay our footer sub, or get our bicycle repaired. When there is a famine in the land, and we wait with growing impatience for the postman to bring us a welcome remittance from home, we cannot honestly put our hands on our hearts and declare that money is unimportant! Not only is it important; it is a vital necessity.

Some fellows have more pocket-money than others. The amount they receive depends upon the means—or the meanness!—of the various parents and guardians.

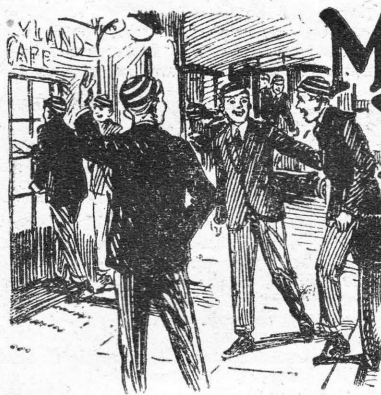
Aubrey Racke is the Midas of St. Jim's. He is allowed an almost unlimited amount of pocket-money, which is a pity, for Racke spends his money on doubtful pleasures and vulgar ostentation. Of course, it is his own money, and he can spend it as he chooses; but it's a pity he does not spend it more wisely.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is not exactly a Midas or a Ceresus, but he enjoys a liberal allowance of pocket-money—much more, probably, than his noble parent used to receive when he was a schoolboy. A good deal of Gussy's money goes on self-adornment; but it is only fair to say that he is one of the most generous-hearted fellows at St. Jim's, and seldom "turns down" a genuine appeal for financial help.

My own supply of pocket-money is fairly plentiful, and Manners and Lowther have nothing to grumble at; so that Study No. 10 in the Shell passage is generally a land flowing with milk and honey. However, we spend our money almost as fast as we get it, and when the term is drawing to a close we often find ourselves in "Queer Street."

In proof of the theory that money cannot buy happiness, I may mention that some of the happiest fellows at St. Jim's are also the poorest. Dick Redfern & Co., of the New House, came to St. Jim's on scholarships, and their supply of pocket-money is very modest; but they jog along merrily in spite of this handicap.

The "money question" is being dealt with from all angles in this issue. I hope you will agree that none of the features are "poor," but that some of them are "rather rich"! TOM MERRY.



MAKING the MONEY GO!

Some Historic and Costly Celebrations at St. Jim's.

By ERIC KILDARE.

IT seems to be quite a mania with some fellows, when they receive an unexpected windfall in the shape of a big remittance, to get rid of the money as quickly as possible, and they "blue" it all on one bumper celebration.

Of course, this sort of thing is very foolish and extravagant, and sometimes leads to bitter regrets; but this article is not a sermon on thrift. I am simply going to recount a few instances where money has been spent like water.

A FORTY-POUND FEED!

No, this didn't occur at St. Jim's, but at Eton, when the poet Shelley was a senior there. During his schooldays he wrote his first novel. As a work of fiction it was a failure—but not a financial failure, for Shelley received the munificent sum of forty pounds for it. And forty pounds, in those days, was not to be sneezed at. And what

did Shelley do when the cash came to hand? Why, he stood his schoolfellows "the greatest feed ever"—a study spread, the like of which has seldom been known before or since. Shelley's biographers do not give minute details of the feed. We do not know if the feasters kicked off with rabbit-pie or with cold chicken, and we are not told whether the Eton sanny was crowded out next day with fellows suffering from billious attacks! Trimble of the Fourth says that he was born about a hundred years too late. He would have loved to have been present at that forty-pound feed!

A FAREWELL CELEBRATION!

Coming to modern times, and to St. Jim's, I can well remember the occasion when Rayleigh of the Sixth, a very wealthy senior, feted the whole of the Sixth Form. Rayleigh left St. Jim's in mid-term, and the evening before his departure he invited his fellow seniors—with the Head's consent—to a farewell celebration at the Cafe Royal, in Wayland. Taxicabs were chartered to take

us over, and Rayleigh, who was a very popular fellow, gave orders on a lavish scale. We had the time of our lives that evening, and after a first-rate banquet we adjourned to the Wayland Theatre. I believe "Charley's Aunt" was being played at the time. I know I laughed so heartily that I was in danger of bursting, what with the banquet and the comedy! We taxied back to St. Jim's after locking-up time, singing as happily as care-free fags. But I shouldn't care to have had to foot the bill that was presented to Rayleigh!

FREE FEEDS FOR ALL!

One of the most amazing incidents in the money-spending line occurred when I was a junior in the Fourth. A wealthy Old Boy, who had been out to Australia in search of a fortune—and found it—returned to the Old Country, and paid a visit to St. Jim's. After looking round the old place he interviewed Dame Taggles at the school shop and made arrangements to stand a feed of unlimited tuck to every fellow in the school. The tuckshop was promptly invaded by seniors and juniors and fags, and Dame Taggles was fairly run off her feet. The majority of the fellows, not wishing to take undue advantage of the Old Boy's kindness, contented themselves with a snack; but the gluttons made a regular orgy of it, and fresh supplies had to be procured from the village. At the end of the day the Old Boy footed the bill, which must have been truly colossal! He lectured to us in the evening on his adventures in the Bush, and we passed a hearty vote of thanks to him for his princely generosity. The gluttons were not present at the lecture. They were groaning on their study sofas, under the influence of food!



A TRAGEDY for TRIMBLE!

By Sidney Clive.

"BROKE!" said Trimble.

There was despair in his tone. As usual, Baggy was on the rocks; and, as usual, all efforts to "raise the wind" had ended in dismal failure. Baggy had just made a tour of all the Fourth Form studies, asking for a small loan, to be repaid the moment, his next remittance arrived.

But the hearts of the Fourth-Formers had been hardened, like Pharaoh's of old, and Baggy Trimble's exit from the various studies had been swifter than his entry.

And now Baggy was back in his own study, mournfully brooding upon the old saying that in the midst of life we are in debt.

Funds were urgently required. There was a little bill of ten shillings owing to the proprietor of the Cafe Royal in Wayland. Baggy had dined at that establishment, and when the bill had been presented he had discovered that he had left his wallet at St. Jim's. The proprietor, who more than suspected that it was a case of "bilking," had given Baggy forty-eight hours to settle up. Failing the payment of the bill within

that time-limit, he intended to report Baggy Trimble to the Head.

Baggy was in a desperate plight, but an idea came into his head at last.

He borrowed a pen—it was Wildrake's pen—and a writing-pad—it was Mellish's writing-pad—and proceeded to send an urgent S.O.S. to his Uncle Peter and his Aunt Bertha. It was nearly post-time, and Baggy had to scribble furiously against the clock. It was touch and go whether he would get the letters written and despatched in time; but the pen fairly raced over the paper, and Trimble hurried down into the quad with the letters just as the postman was clearing the box.

II.

But, alas!

In his desperate hurry to get the letters despatched, Baggy had mixed up the two missives, putting Uncle Peter's in Aunt Bertha's envelope, and vice versa!

Next morning Uncle Peter had the surprise of his life—and not at all an agreeable surprise at that. Among his correspondence was an unstamped letter, addressed in the familiar spider-like scrawl of his nephew Baggy.

The letter ran as follows:

"Dear Aunt Bertha,—I happen to be on the rocks, and I wondered if you would be decent enuff to push the boat out. I want ten shillings badly by return. I did think of writing to Uncle Peter for it, but he's such a mean old skinflint, such a miserly old

munny-grubber, that it would be a waist of time to approach him. But you have always been kind and jennerus, and I feel sure you will come to my reskew.—Your affekshunate nevew,
BAGLEY."

When Uncle Peter read that caustic description of himself he very nearly choked. Stamping off to his study, he sat down and wrote a stinging letter to his "affekshunate nevew"—a letter which, needless to state, contained no enclosure!

As for Aunt Bertha, that good lady was very shocked and surprised to receive the following:

"Dear Uncle Peter,—If you would let me have ten bob by return of post I should be internally grateful. I did think of asking Aunt Bertha for the munny, but you know what Aunt Bertha is—the most miserly old lady that ever lived! I spent a holiday with her once, and she fed me so froogally that I nearly waisted away through lack of nurrishment. But I know that you, dear uncle, are as open-barted as Aunt Bertha is mean. I rely on you.—Your luvving nevew,
"BAGLEY."

Aunt Bertha's wrath and annoyance on reading that epistle can be better imagined than described. She, too, wrote a stinging reply to her nephew, and by some strange oversight she forgot to enclose the ter shillings!

III.

Scene: The Head's study. Persons present: The Head, the proprietor of the Cafe Royal in Wayland, and Baggy Trimble.

A brief dialogue ensues, followed by powerful "action," in which the Head seems to be under-standing the village blacksmith swinging his sledge. Six hefty strokes are administered, accompanied by wild yells of anguish.

Exit Baggy Trimble, feeling that life is not worth living.

Curtain!

Supplement II.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 941.



A SPECTRE OF THE PAST!

(Continued

from

page 13.)

"Rot!" said Crooke, though his voice was uneasy. "Who could have found them there?"

"Some tramp—"

"A tramp would have boned the lot, you ass!" said Crooke, grinning. "It looks to me just the same as when we left it. We must have smoked the cigarettes ourselves. Blessed if I remember if there was one box or two when we left last Saturday!"

"There were two—" began Racke furiously.

"Let the other rip, then," said Crooke impatiently. "I expect Mellish has boned it."

"I haven't, I tell you!" vowed Mellish. "I know—"

"Oh, don't wrangle!" sniffed Scrope. "Let's get down to business. Mellish can be brewing some tea while we start. Got the cards?"

The boxes were dragged round the packing-case, and Racke, with an uneasy, scowling face, dealt out the cards. Mellish, looking indignant, went out with the little saucepan for water from the pump at the back, and very soon the spirit-stove was lighted. Very soon, also, the room was thick with smoke, and rang with the chink of money on the packing-case, and the remarks of the dingy, black sheep.

None of the juniors dreamed that from a hole in the shattered plaster of the ceiling a pair of crafty eyes viewed the scene gloatingly. And the first idea they got that they were not alone in the ruined cottage was when, quite suddenly, one of the broken stairs creaked.

The sound rang out like a pistol-shot in the ruined cottage, and as one man Racke & Co. leaped to their feet, scattering cards and coins across the packing-case top.

They stared at the alcove leading to the stairs, and then they eyed each other with blanched faces.

To their minds flashed the stories they had heard of the old shepherd's cottage being haunted—haunted by the shepherd who had died by his own hand there.

With hearts beating fast the dingy four stood as if rooted to the floor. At the best of times Racke & Co. were not very brave. They had removed one of the boards from the window, but even so the room was gloomy and shadowy.

"Wha-what's that?" quavered Mellish.

None of the others answered, and the next moment again came that loud creak from the stairs. Then, before any of them could think of bolting, a figure stepped into the room from the stairway.

It was a ragged youth of their own age—it was Snelson.

Racke & Co. stared at him, and then they breathed freely and thankfully.

"Great pip!" grunted Racke in deep disgust. "A rotten, dirty tramp, by gad! Here, you, what are you doing here, fellow?"

Racke spoke as if he was addressing a dog. But Snelson only grinned.

"I've come to join you fellows," he said coolly. "You won't mind me joining in a little game, I'm sure."

"You—your cheeky hound!" hissed Racke, his lip curling. "We're likely to have anything to do with a dirty, ragged tramp! Get out of this, or we'll throw you out—sharp!"

Snelson laughed.

"Look here," said Crooke, who was eyeing the ragged youth uneasily. "Who are you? You don't speak like a tramp."

"Don't I? Fancy that, now!" remarked Snelson blandly. "Well, now you mention it, I'll admit that I haven't always been like this. In fact, it's not so very long since I was at a school like St. Jim's, and I used to enjoy myself just as you are doing. I'd like to renew my acquaintance with the cards."

"Get out!" sneered Racke. "A likely yarn—I don't think! Out of this, you rascal!"

"If I do go, my friend," replied Snelson calmly. "I shall go straight along to St. Jim's. I fancy the Head there

will be interested to learn how four of his bright youths spend their half-holiday."

"You can prove nothing, you ragged ruffian!"

"Oh, yes, I can!" said the outcast. "I happened to be here outside this window last Saturday, and being a camera enthusiast—"

"Look here, you fool—"

"Let me finish!" smiled Snelson. "Being a keen photographer, I thought this happy little party in here would make a dashed fine photo. So I took a photograph of you all while you were engrossed in your game."

There was a sudden silence.

"You—you liar!" hissed Racke. "How could a beastly ragamuffin like you get hold of a camera, anyway? If you don't clear out we'll set about you—sharp!"

Snelson grinned, and walked to the staircase. He took something from one of the stairs, and brought it back to the room. It was Manners' camera.

The startled four stared blankly at it.

"That looks like Manners' camera!" gasped Crooke. "How did you get hold of that, you rotten thief?"

"That doesn't concern you or the matter in hand," grinned Snelson. "Now will you believe me? The photograph was taken with this—see?"

It was a lie, of course. Snelson had been miles away on the previous Saturday. It was a clever yarn concocted on the spur of the moment in order to get the alarmed Racke & Co. under his thumb.

And it succeeded. Racke and his friends stared at the camera, and then they stared at the hard, cruel eyes of the rascally outcast. He eyed them smilingly, unblinkingly. They dared not risk refusing to accept the story.

"You—you rotter!" breathed Racke. "I—I suppose you mean to blackmail us with the—the photo?"

"Not at all. I merely wish to join the merry little party," said Snelson easily. "You've nothing to fear from me—if you toe the line and be sensible."

Racke eyed his friends meaningfully—giving them a swift glance.

"Collar the brute!" he snarled. "We'll thunder—soon have that photo from him. Go for him!"

Crooke and the others hung back for a moment, and as they did so Snelson chuckled.

"It's useless doing that," he said. "You don't suppose I've got the new film with me, do you? It's hidden where you'll never find it. Now be sensible, and let me join you. A pal of mine from St. Jim's will be here presently, and he'll join us."

"A—a pal of yours?"

"Yes, I expect you know him. His name's Levison—Ernest Levison."

"Levison!" ejaculated Racke. "Levison a—a pal of yours—a tramp like you. Rot!"

"Not at all. We were at Greyfriars together in the old days. We've had many jolly times together with the giddy cards before to-day. We're going to renew our acquaintance with them this afternoon."

Snelson coolly helped himself to one of Racke's cigarettes and lit up. Then he went outside with the camera, closing the door after him. He was only absent a few seconds, and when he returned the camera was not in his hand.

"Levison's coming now," he announced to the staring St. Jim's juniors. "I spotted him coming up the path."

"Levison coming here?" panted Racke in great alarm.

He stared at the strange youth blankly. Yet it must be true—how could the ragged rascal know Levison's name? How could he know he had once been at Greyfriars? Moreover, even Racke could not fail to note the significance of the strange contrast between the outcast's appearance and his speech.

"You mean that?" he went on.

"Yes. He's joining us this afternoon. I fancy—Hallo! Here he is. Good!"

Footsteps sounded outside, and then the door swung open and a junior stepped in. It was Ernest Levison right enough. He came inside, closing the door after him. He did not seem at all startled or surprised to find Racke & Co. there. He had guessed who the frequenters of that cottage were.

"Good man Levison," said Snelson approvingly. "Now you've turned up we can have a game or two. These chaps have already accepted me as one of themselves, Levison old chap, though I fancy you thought they wouldn't. But they have, haven't you?" he added, grinning at Racke.

Racke looked at Levison strangely. Levison's features were calm and composed, but his eyes were gleaming. Not for one moment did Racke really think that Levison—the changed Levison—would join in a game. But he stared blankly as Levison silently accepted a cigarette Snelson handed to him and lit up.

"Levison!" stammered Racke. "You—you really know this—this chap?"

"Yes."
 "You mean to join in with this?" muttered Racke, indicating the card-littered table.
 Levison nodded, his face strangely white.
 Snelson chuckled.
 "Yes, he's a good reason to know me—haven't you, Levison?" he remarked in a bantering tone. "But let's get on with the washing. You deal, Levison—you always were slippery with the cards."
 Levison silently seated himself on one of the boxes, and Snelson did likewise. In silence, and with wondering glances at each other Racke, Crooke, and Scrope also sat down. They were staggered; they could not make head nor tail of it. But Levison was smoking, and he had picked up the cards and was shuffling them with a practised hand.
 It seemed like old days to Racke & Co., and they were satisfied to let matters rest there.

The game was soon in full progress, and Racke & Co. forgot their wonderment in the feverish and unhealthy excitement of the games. Snelson's eyes were bright and glittering—he won game after game from the first, and more than once Levison gave him keen, suspicious glances. But at last Snelson rose with a yawn.

"Let this other chap have a turn now," he remarked, nodding to Mellish, who was watching eagerly. "I'll take a turn outside—I'm not feeling up to much of this yet."

Mellish dropped into his place, and Racke & Co., at least, were more than glad at the change. Snelson stepped to the window, smoking a cigarette, and stood looking out. When the game had started Snelson had torn down the remaining boards from the window, laughing and sneering at Racke's alarmed protests. After standing there a moment he strolled carelessly to the door and slipped out, closing the door after him quietly.

But none of the players noticed that he had gone. Even Levison's eyes were shining feverishly as the excitement of the dingy pastime gripped him despite himself. The young gamblers had no eyes for anything but the cards before them. So engrossed indeed in the game were they that not one of them saw the shadow that passed the window, blotting out for a brief instant the bright wintry sunlight that shone in on the cards and the strained, eager faces of the players.

The shadow vanished, and then there appeared just above the window-sill a square, box-like object. It was a camera, and it was pointed directly at the group round the table.

Not one of the players noticed it.

It remained silent for some little time, and then a face, tense and watchful, showed above it. It was Snelson's thin, crafty face.

The next instant a faint click sounded from the open, unboarded window.

None of the players heard it. At the moment Levison was dealing out the cards, and Racke and Crooke were squabbling excitedly and noisily over the last game. The next instant face and camera vanished abruptly from the window.

A minute later the door opened creakily, and Snelson lounged in. Levison and Racke glanced up quickly, but they went on with the game without noticing the strange, triumphant glitter in the eyes of Snelson.

He strolled in with his hands in the pockets of his ragged trousers, the cigarette drooping from his thin lips. Then fixing up temporarily two of the boards over the window, he came towards the players.

"I think I'll have another go now, chaps," he remarked. "I thought someone was making some dashed tea!"

"Yes, you carry on with the tea, Mellish," grunted Racke. "Phew! I could do with—What's that?"

There was a sudden silence in the dingy room. From outside had come sounds—footsteps and voices. Then sounded a cheery, youthful yell, shrill and piercing.

"Come on, Pongo, you four-legged slacker! Your job's to chase rats, and not your giddy tail!"

The St. Jim's juniors leaped up from their seats, sudden alarm in their faces. Levison's own face went white.

"Those Third Form kids!" breathed Racke. "That was young Wally D'Arcy's voice."

"And Frankie, my brother, is bound to be with him!" said Levison, in a tone of alarm. "Quick, you fools, get that third board up again and stick a wedge under the door! For Heaven's sake, be quick!"

CHAPTER 9.

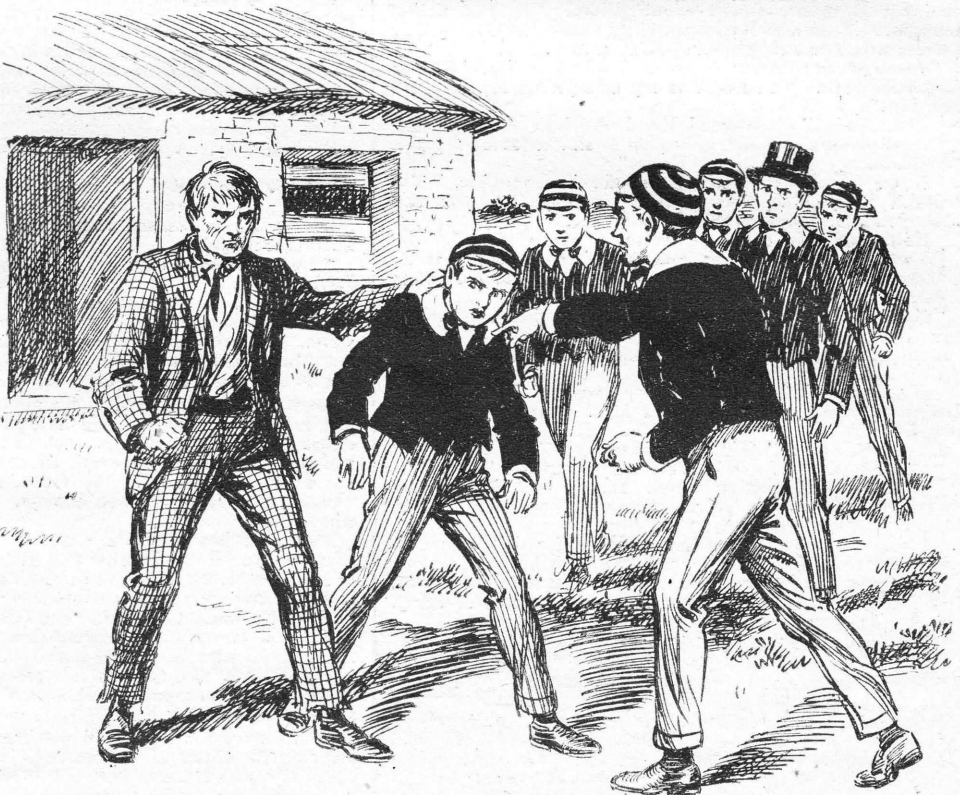
For His Brother's Sake!

BUT it was too late! The guilty juniors knew who was outside only too well. It was Wally D'Arcy & Co. of the Third Form at St. Jim's. Evidently they had Wally's dog, Pongo, with them, and it was apparent from Wally's shrill cry that they were on a ratting expedition to the ruined cottage. It was just the sort of pastime that appealed strongly to the young heroes of the Third.

All the St. Jim's juniors were alarmed, but none was so alarmed as Ernest Levison. He knew quite well that his brother, Frankie, was with Wally D'Arcy, and the thought of his young brother finding him thus engaged made his heart thump with sudden dread.

But he was too late—all of them were too late. Levison had scarcely made a step towards the window when a face appeared there—the face of Wally D'Arcy.

Levison stopped, forgetting in his sudden fear that his fingers still clutched a glowing cigarette. The next moment



"I'm determined this kid shall join us, and that's flat, my pippin!" said Snelson fiercely. "I'm going to make him what you used to tell me you'd make me—a giddy man!" Ernest Levison's face grew suddenly dark with fury as Snelson's hand fell upon his minor's shoulder. (See chapter 9.)

two more cheery, cheeky faces appeared alongside Wally's—the faces of Frank Levison and Curly Gibson.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Wally D'Arcy. "My hat! This is a giddy cop, and no mistake! Phew! Your giddy brother, too, young Levison!"

Frank Levison said nothing; he couldn't. He was stunned at what he saw. He staggered back with face as white as chalk. The sight of the cards, the feverish faces of the players, obviously disturbed at their game, the smoke of the cigarettes danced before his eyes. But through the haze he only saw clearly his brother's face, white as his own, and full of alarm and sudden shame.

"Ernie!" he faltered. "You?"

"Well, the giddy blades!" grinned Wally D'Arcy. "The smoky, dingy rotters! This is a nice how-d'ye-do, and no mistake! Here, out of the way, young Levison! Let's give the giddy bad eggs what for! It's up to the Third to teach 'em a lesson."

As he spoke, Wally D'Arcy stooped and grabbed a hefty turf from the ground. It was a wet turf, and it whizzed through the window, and, striking the top of the packing-case, sent a shower of cards and coins flying over the floor. Then it hit the spirit-stove, knocking it flying, and sending the water from the spinning saucepan over Crooke and Mellish in a shower.

It was boiling water almost, and Crooke and Mellish howled fiendishly.

Their howls were followed by a howl from Racke, as another wet turf whizzed through the window and caught Racke under the chin. He went down like a poleaxed ox.

But he was up again in a moment, his face convulsed with rage and smothered in mud. He jumped for the door and tore it open, followed next instant by the furious Crooke and Mellish.

As he ran out with his chums at his heels, Wally and Curly Gibson, with Jameson and Manners minor, took to their heels, yelling with laughter, and with the excited Pongo barking at their heels.

"You little fiends!" hooped Racke. "I'll make you sit up for that, young D'Arcy, you little sweep!"

Quite suddenly he caught sight of Levison minor, who had not stirred, and he made a blind rush at him, and caught him by the collar savagely.

"Got you!" he hissed. "Come on! If your brother won't liek—"

He broke off abruptly, and yelped as a savage grip closed on his own collar, almost choking him. It was Ernest Levison, and he sent Racke spinning across the weed-grown garden with one swing of his powerful arm.

"You crawling worm!" hissed Levison major, his face dark with rage. "You dare to lay a finger on my brother! Frankie!"

"Yes, Ernie!" stammered Frank Levison shakily. His eyes fell before his elder brother's almost savage glare. "I—I'm sorry I butted in, Ernie."

"Never mind that!" said Ernest Levison roughly. "You couldn't help doing that. I'm only sorry that you saw what you did. Now clear—sharp!"

"Hold on!" said a smooth voice.

It was Snelson, and he was grinning curiously as he glanced from Ernest's dark, humiliated face to his young brother's, sad and utterly dismayed.

"Hold on!" he repeated. "My hat! I didn't know you had a young brother, Levison, though I knew, of course, you had a sister. Gad! This is interesting. Don't let him go."

"Hold your dashed tongue, you sweep!" hissed Ernest Levison, turning on Snelson in a fury. "You keep out of this, hang you!"

He turned again to Frank Levison.

"You heard what I said, kid!" he snapped. "Clear!"

Frank Levison's lip quivered. Rarely had his brother spoken to him so savagely, bitterly. But he eyed him steadily, almost defiantly, for all that.

"I won't go, Ernie," he muttered. "I won't go unless you come with me. You—you oughtn't to be here, Ernie, you know you ought not. I hate to see you with these cads. I—I thought you'd never go back to—to this sort of thing. I wish you—you—"

His voice faltered at the look on his brother's face.

"Look here, kid," said Levison, taking in a deep breath.

"Will you oblige me by clearing out now? I—I'll explain what this means some other time—perhaps. Cut!"

Frank Levison set his teeth. He could see clearly enough that Ernest was furious with him—furious that he had blundered on the scene in the cottage, innocent as his appearance had been of any intention to spy. He could see also that the little scene was causing no little amusement to the crafty-faced fellow who looked like a tramp, but who spoke like a gentleman.

He wondered whom he could be. He saw he knew his brother only too well, and that Ernest was not proud to

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know him, nor pleased to know him. He also saw that the fellow's evident amusement was making Ernest more angry.

Yet Frankie stood his ground stoutly. "Ernie, come along," he pleaded. "I wish you would. I won't go unless you do."

"Let the kid stay, Levison," said Snelson mockingly. "Why kick him out? Let him join the merry party. I'm blessed if I know what all this dashed commotion means, but I vote we go back and carry on with the games. Come on, kid, never mind dear old Ernest. We'll make a giddy man of you."

Frank turned his back on the fellow, and Snelson's eyes glinted evilly.

He grabbed the fag by the coat-collar, and tried to drag him towards the cottage, grinning as Frank struggled furiously.

Ernest Levison started forward, his face red with rage. "Snelson, you hound!" he shouted. "Let that kid alone, or it will be the worse for you! Take your hand off him, or I'll knock you down, you cad!"

"Will you?" jeered the ragged rascal. "You'll pay dearly for it if you do! You silly fool, Levison! What does it matter? The kid can join us. I'm determined he shall join us, and that's flat, my pippin. I'm going to make of him what you used to tell me you'd make of me—a giddy man!"

"You villain!"

"Talk about the pan calling the kettle black!" grinned Snelson spitefully. "You forget what you did for me, Levison. Don't forget either that you've got to toe the line; I've got you tight. You'll do as I want you to do, or you'll regret it. Don't forget your sister. Don't put my back up too much!"

He grabbed hold of Levison minor again. Levison's own face had gone white again at the rascal's threat. But he knew now why Snelson wanted young Frank to stay. His evil desire was to drag the youngster down, as he was trying to drag him down.

Ernest Levison's face grew suddenly dark with fury as Snelson's hand fell on Frank Levison's shoulder. He jumped forward in a fury, and his flat hand smacked against Snelson's face with a sound like a pistol-shot.

Snelson reeled away, with a snarl, and, staggering backwards, he measured his length on the muddy garden.

"That's my answer, you brute!" hissed Ernest Levison. "You've gone too far, Snelson, this time. You frightened me into joining in your game, but I was a fool—a cowardly fool—to give way to you. I hate myself for doing it. But you've ended it by trying to ruin my brother also, you fiend! I'm not standing that. I ought never to have listened to you. I was sorry for you, and I meant to help you all I could. But I wash my hands of you now. You can do your worst, you villain!"

Snelson glared up at him, his face dark with rage and malice.

"Right!" he panted. "You've done it now, Levison. You know what to expect. You—you—"

Ernest Levison turned away abruptly, his lip curling. He nodded to Frank.

"Cut!" he snapped curtly.

"You—you'll follow me if I do?" faltered Frank.

"Yes, yes! Go, you young ass!"

Frank turned away. He knew he could take his brother's word. Without a glance at the staring Racke & Co.—without a backward glance at the grovelling rascal on the ground, Ernest Levison walked away after him slowly.

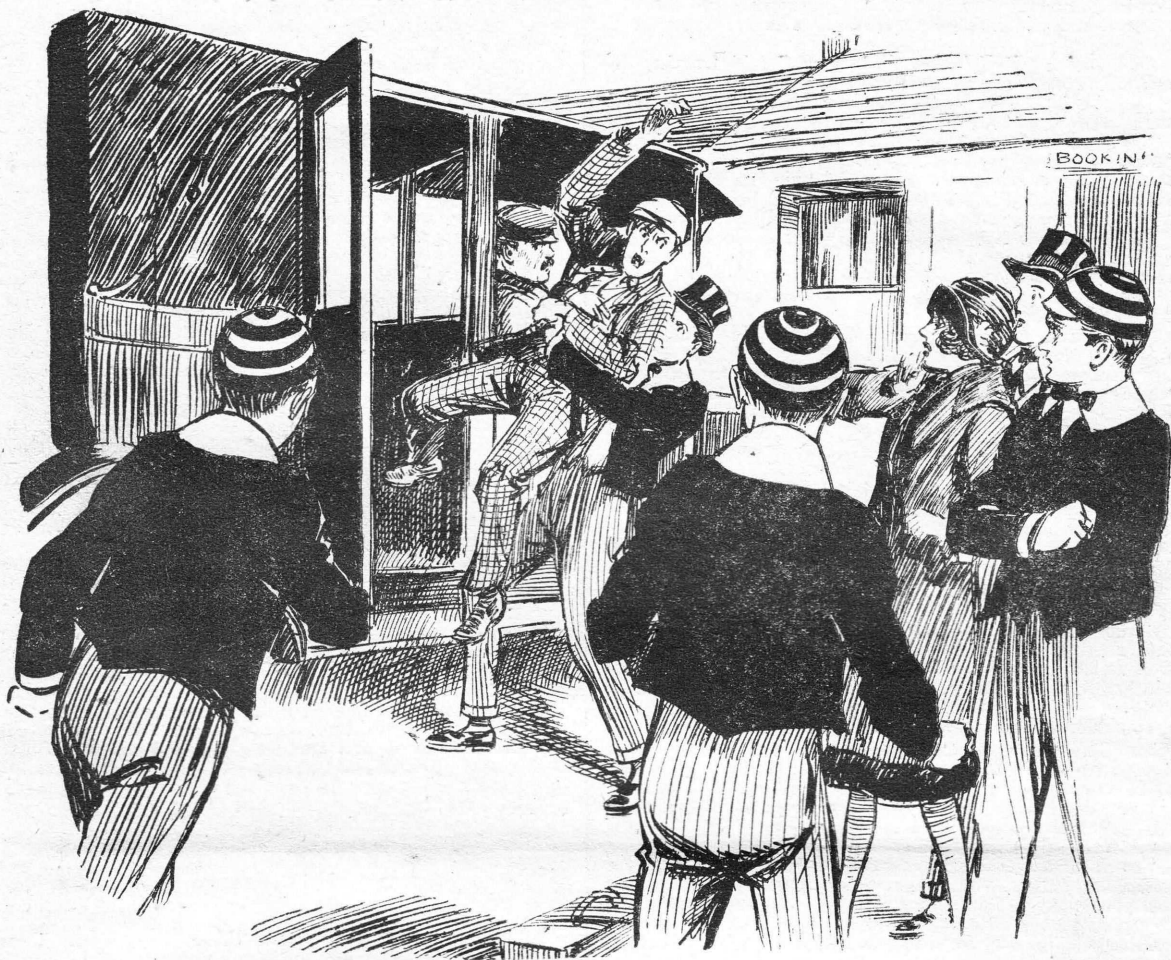
He was feeling relieved in his mind now—relieved that he had taken the plunge. He hated himself, and had hated himself, for ever having listened to the rascal's temptations and threats. He felt he cared little what Snelson would do. He knew he would do his worst, he knew the outcast's vicious, spiteful nature well enough. He would have to face what came.

That was how Levison was feeling as he started back schoolwards. But before he had gone far he began to think of Doris and what the revelation of his dark past would mean to her. And even now she would be on her way from Wayland. The thought made Levison falter in his determination to defy the rascal. He stopped several times in his walk, as if he would turn back, but each time he walked on quickly again. But by the time he had reached the outskirts of the moor, Frank was out of sight, and he had forgotten his promise to him.

It was no good. He could not bear the thought of Doris learning the truth. For himself he cared little. It was the shock it would mean to her he was thinking of.

He must see Snelson again, and try to compromise with him somehow—if it was not too late for that. Perhaps even now the cad was making for the station, full of bitter hatred and desire for revenge for that hasty blow.

Levison stopped again. He pondered feverishly whether he should make straight for the station, or go back. He



Ernest Levison gave a half-startled cry as Snelson approached the party. His mind was stunned for the moment at the sudden danger. Then something happened—something that astounded all who saw it. Like a panther, Cardew leaped upon the rascal, lifted him in his strong arms, and swung him headlong into the waiting taxi. (See chapter 11.)

decided swiftly on the latter course, and he turned abruptly, and started back at a run for the ruined cottage.

Half-way there he came upon Racke, Crooke, Mellish, and Scrope, slouching along, with hands driven in coat-pockets, their faces scowling. Racke & Co. were frightened. They were wondering whether Wally & Co. would "peach"—would spread the yarn of what they had seen far and wide.

They stared at Levison as he ran up.

"Is that brute still at the cottage, Racke?" demanded Levison hoarsely.

Racke stared at Levison's white face.

"No!" he grunted. "He went just after you'd gone, Levison. He was in a fine temper, too, vowing he'd fix you up all right. He means mischief, Levison!"

"Where has he gone?"

"He asked me where Rylcombe Station was, and I pointed out the direction," said Racke sullenly. "But, look here, Levison, what if this all comes out—"

But Levison was gone, running harder now. And this time he turned off at right angles from the direction of the ruined cottage. Snelson was gone to Rylcombe Station, and Levison knew only too well why he had gone there. He must be overtaken at all costs. Levison could not afford to risk Cardew failing him. Snelson was gone to carry out his threat. He meant mischief, as Racke had said.

Ernest Levison ran harder than he had ever run before. Would he be in time?

CHAPTER 10.

Wally D'Arcy Speaks His Mind!

"IS my toppah on stwaight, Blake, deah boy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked the question anxiously,

It was a very important question to Arthur Augustus.

It was not quite so important to Jack Blake, however.

He squinted critically at the topper on the noble head of Arthur Augustus with his own head on one side.

"Well, it's straight enough sideways, Gussy," he remarked doubtfully. "But it's just about a sixteenth of an inch too far over your chivvy, I fancy. Here, let me put the matter right."

Stepping forward, Blake gave the shining topper a hearty biff on its shimmering top, sending it down over Gussy's aristocratic nose.

Arthur Augustus gave a roar.

"You—you fwithful wottah! You have ruined my hat!" he wailed. "You have wumpled my hair, too, and I spent nearly ten minutes gettin' it quite wight. Oh, you—you—"

Having got the hat back into something like position again, Arthur Augustus made a rush at Blake. Blake side-stepped swiftly, and Gussy would have gone headlong down the School House steps but for Tom Merry.

"Peace, my children," he said chidingly. "Gussy, I am surprised at you! Are you forgetting that we are to meet ladies this afternoon? How you can risk getting your clobber mucked up by scrapping beats me. Chuck it!"

Arthur Augustus glowered at Blake, and breathed hard. But he saw the force of Tom Merry's remarks, and he did not attempt to attack Blake again.

"You are a wottah, Blake!" he said indignantly. "You did that with no intention of helpin' me, but as a w'etched joke, you fwithful wottah!"

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"I shall insist upon you puttin' your fists up this evenin' immediately the gals have gone, aftah tea!" said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "You are almost as bad as that practical jokin' wottah, Lowthah, Blake!"

"Oh, for goodness' sake don't start ragging me!" groaned Lowther. "I've been getting it from old Manners, without you starting, Gussy!"

"Well, and don't you deserve it?" snorted Manners, who

was looking very glum indeed. "My camera gone—a twelve guinea camera! You jolly well deserve to be ragged about it, Monty!"

"I'll pay for it if it doesn't turn up," said Lowther dismally. "I can't say fairer than that, can I?"

"Yes! As if I would let you pay for it! If it is gone for good it can't be helped, I suppose."

"It may turn up yet, Manners, old chap," said Tom Merry. "I can't help feeling that that ragged merchant knows something about it, after all. But we'll advertise for it. I—Hallo, here's old Figgy! Cheerio, Figgy! Isn't he a beauty and joy for ever, you chaps? Almost beats Gussy, even."

Figgins of the New House came up, and his face flushed scarlet as he heard Tom's words and saw the grins. He certainly had taken more care over his toilet than he usually did—much more. George Figgins was unusually careful when Cousin Ethel visited St. Jim's.

"You chaps ready to start?" he said. "My hat, there will be a crowd!"

"Manners isn't coming!" said Tom Merry emphatically. "His leg won't allow a tramp to Rylcombe—at least, I won't allow his leg to try it! But Levison and Clive are to come yet, Figgy!"

"Oh, my hat! What about Levison? Great pip! It will be a giddy procession!"

"We might leave old Gussy at home," remarked Lowther seriously. "After all, he's neither use nor ornament, is he?"

"Bai Jove, Lowthab, you wottah—"

"Hallo, here come Clive and Cardew!" grinned Tom Merry. "Now we can get off!"

"Plenty of time," said Blake. "Levison not coming, then?"

Cardew shook his head, as did Clive. Tom Merry's face went rather grim. He could only think of one reason likely to stop Levison meeting his sister. He wondered if it was another visit to the ruined hovel on the moor? If it was—

Tom Merry set his lips hard.

He joined Clive as the party started out for the gates, Arthur Augustus's shining topper leading the way, with Tom and Clive at the rear. Tom had purposely drawn Clive back.

"You don't know why Levison's staying away?" he asked.

"It—it's rather queer, isn't it?"

"A bit," said Clive briefly.

"Look here!" said Tom quietly. "I want to tell you something, Clive. You're Levison's best pal, perhaps, and I feel you ought to know for Levison's own sake. I'm afraid he's starting his old games again, Clive."

Clive said nothing for a moment. He feared the same, as a matter of fact.

"Go on," he said at length.

"Last night," said Tom, "we went to search for Manners' camera on the moor. During a scrap with a stranger some little time before, Lowther had dropped it on the ground and left it there. We went to search for it, but it had gone. So— But I'm starting the yarn at the end, more or less. You haven't heard about that ragged chap yet, I suppose?"

He started to tell of their adventure with the ragged rascal on the moor, and of the loss of Manners' camera—not forgetting the fugitive's remarks regarding Levison.

Clive's face grew grave as he listened.

He was keen, and he very soon guessed who the fellow was.

But his face grew graver still as he heard of that later visit to the cottage, and what they had seen there.

"You—you're sure he was playing cards?" said Clive in a low tone. "I—I can scarcely believe it, Tom. I certainly did notice that Zevison had been smoking."

"There was no doubt about that," said Tom emphatically.

"It's that fellow's doing," said Clive thickly. "He's forcing old Ernest to do it—must be."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Tom Merry. "I'm sorry, Clive, but I can't forget how Levison took it. He didn't seem to care a hang whether we saw him or not. He said he didn't care if I did drop him from the team."

"Phew!" breathed Clive.

"Anyway, I don't like the look of things," said Tom Merry. "I decided to speak to you about it, Clive. You've a great deal of influence over Levison. You'd better keep an eye on him."

"I will," said Clive.

He wondered whether he ought to tell the junior captain of St. Jim's what Levison had told them—how he had asked them to guard Doris from a ragged youth, obviously the same youth Tom had spoken of. He decided he had better not, without Levison's permission. And just then Lowther, who was just ahead of them, gave a chuckle.

"Look out, Gussy!" he called.

"Bai Jove! What is the mattah, Lowthab?"

"Look down the lane," grinned Lowther. "Here comes

Wally and his giddy pals, and they've got old Pongo with 'em. You'd better mind your spotless bags, Gussy."

"Oh, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, as he recognised the group of fags coming towards them. Pongo was with them right enough, and he was making the afternoon air hideous with his excited yelps as he frisked round Wally & Co. "Bai Jove, you fellows, wally wound me, you know! Keep that w'etched mongwel from my twousahs."

There was a chuckle. Arthur Augustus blinked rather anxiously at Pongo as the two parties met.

"Hallo!" bawled young Wally D'Arcy derisively. "You old fogies going to a meeting, or what? Oh, I remember now, you're going to meet Cousin Ethel. What a giddy crowd!"

"Silly asses!" commented Manners minor, keeping out of reach. "Fancy going to meet two blessed girls! Yah!"

"Bai Jove! The cheeky young wottahs!"

"You cheese it, Gus," said Wally. "I see Levison isn't with you chaps."

"Your giddy eyesight's improving, young man," remarked Lowther dryly.

"Yah! And a jolly good reason why he isn't with you, too," jeered Wally. "And the rotter's a pal of yours, eh? We mean to tell young Levison just what we think about his silly ass of a brother when we see him again."

"Look here," said Tom Merry with a sudden start. "What do you mean, Wally?"

"I'll jolly soon tell you that!" snorted Wally. "Fellows in the Third don't play games like that, I can tell you. Yah! Ask Levison what we saw this afternoon in that ruined shepherd's hut on the moor, Clive. He'll tell you, I don't think!"

"Bai Jove, Wally—"

"You dry up, Gus. You wag your chin too much. Yes, a rotten disgrace to St. Jim's, Levison major is! So are Racke and his lot," went on Wally witheringly. "We copped them at it nicely. We'd taken old Pongo there after rats. We happened to look through the window of the cottage, and what d'you think we saw there? We saw Levison, and Racke's crowd, and another chap—a down-at-heel merchant—playing cards and smoking. Playing cards for money, mind you!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You—you saw Levison doing that, Wally?"

"I've told you, haven't I? Ask him. He can't deny it. It was a fair cop. Racke chased us away, after I'd slung a couple of whacking turfs through the window, and upset their show."

"My hat!"

"I wouldn't allow that sort of thing in my Form. I can tell you," remarked Wally loftily. "You'd better keep your giddy optics peeled, and not be so sleepy, Tom Merry. Take my tip, and watch Levison major."

And with that parting bit of advice the cheeky Third-Former trotted after his chums, whistling shrilly to Pongo, who was busily chasing a wily sparrow.

There was silence for some minutes as the juniors tramped on.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, looking round at Clive. "That is wathah wotten news, you fellows. I must say I am more surprised than evah at Levison, bai Jove!"

"So that's why he hasn't come to meet his sister?" said Herries, his lip curling. "My hat! What a cad he is, after all. So that's his important appointment—smoking and playing cards with shady blackguards!"

"Look here, Herries—" called out Clive hotly, but Tom Merry nudged him.

"Better say nothing, Clive," he said quietly. "I mean to have it out with Levison, though. I told him what to expect last night. He's gone his own stupid, reckless way. Well, we'll see!"

He tramped on, his face set hard. Clive said nothing; he felt too sick at heart even to attempt to defend his chum. Cardew broke the silence.

"Dear old Ernest seems to be making himself unpopular, by gad!" he remarked. "I must say I don't like it myself, old beans. I shall have to give the wayward lad a bit of fatherly advice. Pluck him like a brand from the burning, you know."

"It's nothing to rot about, Cardew," snapped Tom Merry warmly. "It's like you to make light of it, though."

"My dear man, am I making light of it? Not at all. I'm deeply grieved—shocked, believe me," said Cardew seriously. "Ernest has shocked me, and I mean to—Hallo, here he is!"

There sounded a sudden crashing in the thickets bordering the lane, and a panting figure came struggling through, dropping down into the lane.

It was Ernest Levison. He was just about to dash away in the direction of Rylcombe when he suddenly sighted the juniors.

"Hold on, Levison!" called out Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 11.

Cardew Saves the Situation!

LEIVISON halted. He was panting and breathless, but he looked relieved as he sighted the juniors.

He ran back to them.

"What time is it?" he gasped. "Will the train be in yet?"

"Bai Jove, not yet, Levison," said Arthur Augustus, eyeing Levison strangely. "We are early, deah boy."

"Oh, good!"

Levison joined the group, and they started on together. He did not fail to see the looks on the faces of them all. For the most part, at all events, they were not friendly looks.

"So you've come, after all, Levison?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, I'm here."

"Money run short, or what?" asked Tom Merry, unable to resist the shaft.

"What—what do you mean?"

"I think you can guess what I mean," said Tom Merry, his lip curling. "We've just met young Wally D'Arcy. He told us what he saw in the shepherd's cottage this afternoon."

"Oh!" gasped Levison. He understood the looks of his companions now. "He—he told you, did he?"

"Yes. You're a fool, Levison—a bigger fool than I dreamed you were."

"We can go into that matter later on," said Levison quietly. "I don't want to row just before meeting the girls, if you do, Merry."

"I've no intention of rowing, Levison," said Tom Merry. "I'm thundering sorry about this, I can tell you. I think you ought to be ashamed of yourself, anyway. Why you've apparently changed your mind, I don't know. But you got your chums to come instead of you—you said you had an important appointment, I believe?"

"That's so. I asked them to say that, anyway," said Levison in a low voice. "But can't you leave it alone for a bit?"

"I'm just saying this, and then I've finished, Levison. I won't mention the matter again," replied Tom Merry. "You know what I said last night. I said that if you played the blackguard again I should drop you from the team. I meant it. I shall cross your name from the team, Levison. That's all."

"Right!" said Levison steadily. "I asked for it, and I've got it."

He said it quite calmly. He felt no resentment or anger against Tom. He knew the junior skipper was only doing his duty. Yet it was a bitter blow. He had looked forward more than anyone knew to the forthcoming match with Greyfriars—his old school.

But he had lost his place now—lost it by his own folly. He felt he deserved it. It was hard, very hard. Yet he did not give it much thought at that moment. He was thinking of Doris—of the rascally Snelson's threat. The loss of his place in the team was a very small matter compared with that. He was almost trembling with excitement and dread now. What would happen if Snelson did turn up? Would he dare to carry out his threat, despite the fact that Levison was there—that a crowd of St. Jim's fellows was there?

The party reached the station entrance at last. On the cobbles outside the little booking-office stood a dilapidated taxi, its driver, seated at the wheel, watching the entrance doors, apparently hopeful of a fare by the London train.

The juniors filed through the booking-office on to the platform, but neither Tom Merry nor any of the others noticed the significant fact that Ralph Reckness Cardew was not among them.

For while approaching the station Cardew had seen something—a ragged, slinking figure standing behind a farmer's cart just opposite the taxi.

At a glance Cardew had noted the thin, crafty features, and the fact that the youth was watching the St. Jim's party closely, with glittering eyes.

It was quite enough for Cardew.

As they passed the taxi Cardew had edged to the rear, and dropped behind, unnoticed by his chums, and screened from the view of the waiting ragamuffin by the bulk of the taxi.

Cardew stepped quietly up to the driver of the taxi and spoke to him. The driver nodded and grinned. Cardew waited.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. were on the station, waiting for the train. It steamed in presently, and a sprinkling of passengers alighted—among them two girls.

They were Doris Levison and Ethel Cleveland, and the juniors raised their caps with welcoming smiles. They were old friends of both girls.

"Here we are!" laughed Cousin Ethel, as she shook hands with each of the juniors in turn, while Doris also did like-

wise. "Why, we are honoured this time! What an escort!"

"We're very lucky!" laughed Doris Levison. "Why, you are looking quite ill, Ernest!" she added, with sudden alarm, as she noted her brother's white, strained face. "What is the matter? Is—is anything wrong?"

"All serene, sis!" said Levison, laughing with an effort. "Hallo, Blake's seeing to your baggage! Good man!"

"You'll walk, of course!" stammered Figgins, his eyes on Cousin Ethel.

"Bai Jove, there is a taxi outside if you would wathah not!" remarked Arthur Augustus innocently. "If you like— Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy, what are you glarin' at me like that for, deah boy?"

Tom Merry coloured up. He mentally promised to slaughter the innocent Arthur Augustus afterwards. It was not likely they wanted the girls to take a taxi, if the noble Gussy did, for the old bus would only take five at a pinch.

"No taxi for us, Arthur!" laughed Cousin Ethel. "We'd enjoy the walk, of course."

"Where's Cardew?" asked Doris, looking at her brother and Clive.

"My hat, yes! Where is the dummy?" said Clive. "He was with us a moment ago. Must be outside!"

The juniors took charge of the girls' lighter luggage, and crowded out of the station. They were surprised to see Cardew standing by the taxi, his eyes fixed across the half-circle of the station yard. Then quite suddenly Ernest Levison gave a half-stifled cry as a figure emerged from behind the farmer's cart and came hurrying towards them as they stood in the entrance.

It was Snelson. Levison recognised him with a thrill of hopeless fear. The rascal's eyes were glinting, and there was a cruel determined expression on his hard features.

Levison watched him approaching as if fascinated, his mind stunned for the moment at the sudden danger.

And in that moment something happened—something that astounded all who saw it.

A figure ran round from the inner side of the taxi. It was Cardew. What came next was done and over in a flash.

Like a panther, Cardew leapt upon the slinking rascal.

His arms went round him, and he was lifted up like a child, and swung headlong, with sprawling arms and legs, into the interior of the taxi, through the opened door.

Cardew leaped in after him, and the door slammed. His voice called to the driver.

"Yessir!" was the ready response.

The engine was already humming, and the driver let in the clutch, and twisted the wheel round swiftly.

The taxi spun round in a half-circle, past the staring, astounded St. Jim's party and their girl friends.

They caught a swift glimpse of struggling figures in the dim interior of the taxi—two figures fighting like wild-cats, and then the taxi hummed away and vanished down the street.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

That was all he could say at the moment. He was absolutely dumbfounded. Gussy knew Cardew as well as anyone, but he was more than surprised at his latest astonishing exhibition.

"What—what does it mean?" gasped Cousin Ethel. "Why did Cardew do that to that poor fellow?"

"Goodness knows!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Weally, you know, Cardew must be pottay—off his wocker, bai Jove! It is vewy alarmin'!"

"But just like Cardew!" said Clive, in a desperate attempt to allay alarm. He saw at once what the meaning of it was—as did Levison. "It's just Cardew!" he laughed. "Don't be alarmed—not a little bit. Cardew loves to create a sensation. He's just giving us a free exhibition of a cinema performance of his own making. He's a chump at times. Isn't he, Merry?"

And Clive looked meaningfully at Tom Merry. That junior—bewildered as he was—was quick to see that Clive wished to be backed up in that statement.

"Yes, he is!" he laughed. "Cardew loves the spectacular—loves to create astonishment and puzzle people. I shouldn't be much surprised if that wasn't just got up for our special benefit. Don't you worry about Cardew, Cousin Ethel. He'll turn up soon with the yarn all ready for us. But bother him!"

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "I must confess that Cardew has weally astonished me this time, bai Jove! I weally cannot undastand the duffah. He is wathah a thoughtless youngstah, deah gals. I must wemonstwate with him, you know."

There was a chuckle, and their fears allayed, the girls smiled again, and the start for St. Jim's was made. In the cheery chatter of questions and answers Cardew and his queer behaviour was soon forgotten.

(Continued on page 27.)

BAT BARSTOW AND YOUNG SMILER GO FISHING. BUT THE FISH THEY MEET ARE OF THE HUMAN SPECIES, FOR THEY RISE TO A BAIT OF A MILLION QUID—AND GET LANDED.

A MILLION AT STAKE!



By
CECIL FANSHAW.

Introducing Bat Barstow, the modern Hercules, and his imp of an assistant, "Smiler" Smith.

CHAPTER 1.

Big Fish!

"**W**HERE are we goin' to-day, guv'nor?"

Smiler asked the question. The cheeky-looking youth stood at the open door of his boss' library, twisting his huge check cap in his grimy hands.

From Jermyn Street there floated up the roar of London traffic. It even penetrated into Bat Barstow's luxurious flat.

And Bat, his enormous frame sprawled in an armchair, an open newspaper on his knee, didn't hear Smiler.

"I said, guv'nor," piped the Cockney lad in a louder key, "where are we motorin' to-day?"

"Eh?" Bat looked up. He had been reading about a huge consignment of gold, due to arrive in England from South Africa. Anything to do with Africa interested the big man. He had himself spent several years elephant-hunting and gold-seeking in the dark continent.

"What's that, Smiler?" he asked, blinking at the kid through his gold-rimmed glasses.

Smiler took a deep breath and repeated his desire for information.

"By George, Smiler!" cried the Bat. "You haven't half got a neck, my lad! Who said we were going anywhere? I don't keep a car just to run you about for joy-rides! Go and clean that car! It's ten o'clock. I want it at half-past!"

Smiler hesitated. "Kyar's clean, guv''," he chirped, in hurt tones. "She allus is! Are you goin' wivout me to-day?"

"Yes, Smiler," grinned Bat. "I want peace and quiet. I'm going fishing down in Surrey. Your ceaseless chatter would scare all the fishes away!"

"Garn, guv'nor!" piped Smiler. "I knows all abaat fishin'. I've corf hundreds of tiddlers in the Thames wiv a pin on a string. Best tyke me along, guv'. You can't do wivout me—"

Swish, swish! Crackle! Bang! Bat leapt up, crunching his paper in his big fists. He hurled it at Smiler.

But Smiler beat it, banging the flat door after him, grinning to himself as he shot down the stairs two at a time.

And Bat, too, was chuckling. For he

really meant to take Smiler, the homeless lad he had rescued from the streets, the kid he had taught to be useful and fairly respectable.

But Smiler must not be allowed to presume on his giant boss' good nature!

"No, by Jove!" laughed Bat, hunting around for his fishing-tackle. "The kid's gettin' too big for his boots—if not for his cap! I must keep him in order. Yes, by George!"

Ten minutes later the huge, tweed-clad Bat emerged from his flat into Jermyn Street. His cased fishing-rods in his hand, he strolled round the corner to his garage.

He looked in, saw his smart little run-about; saw, too, an empty jam-jar, a stick, and a length of string, all piled in the driver's seat.

"Smiler," he thundered, "what the deuce is the meaning of this?"

From behind the car emerged the oily face of Smiler, half hidden by the peak of the check cap.

"You said we wuz goin' fishin', guv'nor," he piped, looking perfectly innocent, "so I jist rustled them fings togetver! You're bound to want me, guv! You can't do—"

"Silence!" roared Bat, half choked with laughter. "You mistook me, Smiler. I said nothing about 'we.' I said— Oh, get in!"

Smiler leapt in. The young ruffian knew he had scored. But he knew better than to make a song and dance about it.

Bat slung his rods into the dicky, then lowered his vast frame into the driver's seat. Smiler had his jam-jar at his feet, his stick between his knees.

A hoot, and they slid from the garage, to go humming through the streets of London.

It was a fine day. The sun blazed down from a blue sky. And soon the little two-seater was racing along the hedged lanes of Surrey.

"Wot d'you catch fish wiv, guv'nor?" chirped Smiler suddenly. "You ain't got no pot for worms!"

"Flies, Smiler," smiled Bat, changing gear to shoot up a long hill. "Different kinds of flies!"

"Caw!" gasped the disbelieving kid to himself. "You won't cop much wiv them. Gimme a juicy worm an' a 'ooked pin!"

But Smiler little dreamt what a fine

fish his boss was going to catch—with Smiler's aid!

Half an hour more, and Bat turned off the main road. He bumped along a leafy lane for a bit, then pulled up near a burbling stream.

It was a jolly spot. All around was a thick shrubbery, with the stream flashing in the sun's rays that filtered through. A little way off, on a small hill, stood the frowning ruins of an ancient castle.

"Top-ole!" decided Smiler, and jumped out, with his gear in his hands.

In a few minutes, having grubbed up enough worms, Smiler was seated on the bank, anxiously watching his home-made line.

Bat stood a few yards down-stream, making casts on the brown, placid surface.

"Gotter bite, guv'nor!" chirped Smiler of a sudden.

"Shut up!" growled Bat, his pipe between his strong teeth.

Smiler's bite was only on old boot. So silence was resumed. Then the pair fished hard for nearly an hour, but without results.

"Hang it all," grunted Bat, who had been hogging the water up stream and down in vain, "fish won't rise to-day! But the foul mosquitoes do! I'm bein' sucked dry! And, great Scott, my baccy's finished! I'll hike back to that village we passed, an' get some more!"

Returning to Smiler, Bat laid his rod beside the kid, telling him to be careful of it.

"Rite-ho, guv'!" breathed Smiler, but was so intent on his angling operations he scarcely saw his boss leave.

A short stroll through the wood, and Bat reached the village. He bought some tobacco, then started back.

"No," he muttered, "I don't think I'll return to the Isaac Newton business yet. Too many bugs by the stream. Smiler seems to like 'em. I'll crawl up to that castle an' have a smoke and a loaf."

So up to the castle strolled Bat. He found what he wanted—a sunny bank, where he could sit with his back against the ivy-clad wall.

Time passed. Bat almost dozed. His pipe fell from his teeth.

But all at once the huge man was wide awake. He had heard voices—

growling voices—sounding from within the ruins.

He caught a name. It was the name of a ship. In a twinkling he was alert.

"The Windsor!" he muttered. "What did I read about a ship called the Windsor? And what funny game are those genits behind the wall up to? Do my ears deceive me, or did I hear that someone means to loot the old Windsor? It sounds interesting, anyway!"

Bat came to his knees. Stealthily he crept along the ruined wall, making towards an old loophole. As he proceeded his brain worked at racing speed.

"Why, of course!" he gasped. "I was reading about the Windsor this morning—when Smiler shoved his face in." She's bringing a million pounds' worth of gold from South Africa, and reaches Southampton to-day!

"Jupiter! Do the lads inside this ruin mean to lift all that dough? It's quite a tall order. Now, how do they think they'll bring it off?"

Grinning to himself, Bat stole on. He gained the shelter of some shrubs, then cautiously peered through the ivy-coloured old arrow-slit.

Bat saw a large grass plot, with the crumbling, mossy walls all round. And, almost just below him, he saw three seated men.

One, wearing horn-rimmed glasses and a slouch hat, was plainly an American. The other two, red-faced and fat, might have been bookmakers.

But the trio weren't making a book on a race; they were hatching a most amazing scheme. And not one glanced up at the loophole, where the stern, bespectacled face of Bat was watching them intently!

"Yes," laughed the American, apparently the gang's leader, "yuh guys have sure got to hand it to Silas K. Ringer when it comes to brain-power! If yuh all play yore parts that li'l lump o' gold off the Windsor'll be ours by nightfall!"

"Jesso," nodded one of the fat men. "But now we're all 'ere, except Smithson, go over the plans again. Gosh, this old castle makes a cute meetin' ground! If we wuz spotted we'd be took for tourists. Fire away, Ringer!"

The American stretched. He glanced at the purple-faced speaker sadly.

"Yo're a real dumb-bell, Fulton!" he drawled. "We fixed all th' plans last time we met. Still, I'll spout 'em again. Here goes:"

"The Windsor's gold will be on the 8.15 express from Southampton to London. Yuh know the short tunnel she runs through—the one we scouted round? Good! We'll be at that tunnel afore she comes out of it!"

"Quite!" beamed Fulton, slapping his fat thigh. "But you're sure the lorry'll be there, Ringer?"

The American's thin face expressed mild contempt.

"I'm seen to thet!" he drawled. "The lorry will be at the tunnel mouth with four strong guys aboard. Those guys will lift th' bullion from th' train. They'll run the lorry-load o' gold to the port we know of, an' put it aboard a snug little tramp bound for U.S.A. Gosh—all-Friday, th' thing's too easy!"

"Hmph!" grunted Fulton. "It's we who have got the dangerous part o' this job! We've gotter stop the train, board the engine, an' out the driver and fireman!"

"Under cover of a smoke-cloud!" flared Ringer, thrusting out his long chin. "Where's th' danger? Smithson will have th' smoke-bombs, an' lay 'em on the rails at the mouth o' the tunnel.

"Out shoots th' train, bang goes th' bombs. Driver stops, thinkin' some-

thin's bust. There's heaps o' smoke about—"

"All right," chuckled Fulton, "I've got it. Ginger Bill and I biff the driver pronto, in order to take the train on. You creeps down th' tunnel an' unhooks the treasure-van. The van's left behind to be emptied into the lorry."

"Sure," nodded the hatchet-faced Ringer. "Yuh've cottoned to it. The van-guard's in my pay, so I'll have no bother. An' yuh two boobs drop off th' express later, hire a car, an' make for port."

All three conspirators chuckled. So, also did Bat Barstow, his face almost invisible at the ivy-clad loophole above.

"Talk of fishing," the huge man grinned to himself, "here's a pretty kettle of fish! These humorous lads intend lifting a million of gold off the London express. This must be stopped. Certainly! But how? If I dash around, guns will be drawn an' lead will fly! A sticky business!"

Bat wondered if he could scale the old castle wall, to drop on the trio like a ten-ton thunderbolt. But he didn't get a chance, for the lanky Ringer rose to his feet.

"Come on, boys!" he drawled. "We'll get back to th' auto. Mum's th' word now. I guess our chauffeur's to be trusted, but we ain't takin' chances. No more about the plans. We'll ditch the chauffeur chap at some village."

"At the Blue Dragon?" suggested Fulton, naming a certain inn.

"After that," replied Ringer, setting his felt hat at a jaunty angle, "we collect Smithson an' th' smoke-bombs at th' Blue Dragon. We'll keep th' shover to within a few mile o' the tunnel, then drop him at some garage."

That was all Bat heard.

But he saw the precious three halt at the old castle gateway, saw them prepare to enter a big blue car in which sat a gigantic chauffeur.

Then Bat was off, legging it back to the stream as hard as possible. In a moment he burst through the bushes, to see Smiler.

On the Cockney lad's face was a wide grin; on his home-made fishing-line a fine rainbow trout! And Bat saw that Smiler was about to give a yell of glee.

"Stoppit, Smiler!" hissed Bat, just in time. "Switch off the noise-tap!"

"Caw, guv'nor," gasped the lad, "wot's appened?"

Rapidly Bat outlined the ingenious plot to rob the bullion train.

"It's our duty to inform the police, I suppose, Smiler," ended Bat, his eyes dancing. "But we don't know at which tunnel the smoke-bombs'll go off—where the vultures will gather for the prey. So we'll spoil the plot ourselves!"

"Hop into my car, Smiler! Quick!"

Trout and all, Smiler sprang into Bat's two-seater. Then Bat himself clambered in.

From a short distance came a hoot. That was probably the big blue car. It must have come to the castle by a different lane. There were two or three leading from the main road.

Some way down the white, dusty highway Bat saw a big blue limousine; it was vanishing fairly fast.

"Behold the gold-lifters, Smiler!" he chuckled.

And the chase was on.

CHAPTER 2.

Full Speed Ahead!

SWINGING from side to side, the blue Rolls-Royce ahead maintained a steady speed. A safe distance in the rear purred Bat's two-seater.

"We daren't get too close, Smiler!" shouted the huge man above the whistling wind. "Those bold bad bandits would guess we're followin'. They're cute, too! Fanny thinking of the old castle as a meeting-place!"

"But wot are you goin' to do, guv'?" yelled Smiler. "If them guys 'as got guns, you can't collar the lot of 'em!"

"It's difficult, I admit, Smiler," grinned Bat, crouching over his steering-wheel. "But doubtless I shall concoct some scheme before we reach the Blue Dragon."

"The Blue Dragon, guv'?" asked Smiler. "That'll be a pub, won't it?"

"An inn, Smiler," corrected Bat. "How often must I remind you not to use low expressions."

Smiler guffawed. Bat drove on, not noticing the impudence.

"Well," he shouted suddenly, "it's at the Blue Dragon that Mr. Smithson, complete with smoke bomb equipment, joins those three stiffs ahead. I think we'll get to the Dragon before them. We'll be spotted trailing."

Smiler nodded. He thought his boss meant to put on a spurt and dash past the blue Rolls. But Bat had a better plan.

Suddenly stopping his fast two-seater, the big man fished a touring map from his pocket.

"We're in Hampshire now," he muttered, unfolding the map rapidly. "heading south-west. Ah!"—jabbing down a finger. "There's the Blue Dragon, near Hilton. We'll take a different road, Smiler, go all out, and beat the bandits."

Smiler whooped. He liked speed. And Bat sent his little runabout darting ahead like a swallow.

From his map Bat had noted several different ways of reaching the inn he wanted. It was marked near a little village called Hilton.

By taking side-roads, Bat hoped to reach Hilton before the gold bandits, and without being spotted.

On and on hummed the little car. Telegraph poles whizzed by like an endless fence. Smiler reversed his check cap to minimise the tug of the wind. Bat leaned over his wheel, blinking rapidly through his gold-rimmed glasses.

Two hours fled by. Gradually black storm clouds obscured the sun. It became dark. Then rain lashed down.

"All the better!" Bat bawled in Smiler's ear. "This downpour'll help my plan—I've just got one!"

"Spit it aht, guv'nor!" invited Smiler excitedly.

"It's this," shouted Bat, "I intend to capture the whole gang—except, of course, the lorry lads. They can wait their turn. But I shall collar the trio in the Rolls, also bomber Smithson! I shall drive them all to a police-station—in their own car!"

"Phew! 'Ow?"

"Easy, Smiler!" replied Bat. "I shall hide this car in Hilton village, then I shall lurk around by the Blue Dragon. The Rolls will stop at the inn. While the stiffs are inside, I shall blot their shover, don his garb. Then, while apparently driving the Rolls on to the railway tunnel, I shall instead pull up at a police-station. Finish!"

"Top-ole, guv'nor!" cried Smiler. "But will the stiffs go into the pub—er—inn?"

"Probably they will, to satisfy themselves that Smithson's bombs are up to sample, to discuss his part in the scheme. They can do that in a private room. And they've lots of time. If they don't go in I must think of something else."

Smiler thought hard a few minutes, while the car purred on through the driving rain. Then he piped:

"Wot abah! me, guv? What do I do?"

"Stay with my two-seater," replied Bat, "till I rejoin you. There may be a rough-house ahead. You're too small to scrap."

"Garn, guv'nor!" yelled Smiler shrilly. "You can't do wivout me!"

But Bat was adamant. He insisted that Smiler was not in on this. So the lad fell silent, but his eyes twinkled in his merry, round face.

Hilton at last. It was growing dusk. And the rain turned the road into mud. But Bat acted quickly.

He put his runabout in a garage, left the indignant Smiler; then, hands in pockets, started off for the Blue Dragon. Soon, in the fading light, Bat sighted the inn.

"I hope to goodness the birds haven't been and gone," muttered the huge man, as he slid round the pub corner. "But it's unlikely. I drove pretty fast."

Followed a miserable wait. Bat was soaked to the skin.

He thought of going into the Dragon, of discovering Smithson, of bagging the fellow with his bag of smoke bombs.

"Too tame!" he muttered, eyes on the inn entrance. "I want to bag the whole outfit."

At last came a warning hoot. Through the driving rain showed the blurred yellow lamps of a big motor. Bat almost gave a whoop. He recognised the blue Rolls, saw the hefty shover at the wheel.

With a grinding of brakes the car stopped. Then the delighted Bat saw all three occupants jump out, to dash into the wayside inn.

"There's Ringer!" he chuckled. "And there's the well-fed Fulton. And I suppose the third gent is Ginger Bilt. Now for it! They won't be long."

Breaking off, Bat emerged from his cover. Slowly he slouched through the storm towards the car. He came abreast, then glanced swiftly up and down.

There was no one in sight. The indoor was closed, the muddy road deserted.

"Excellent!" breathed Bat, and in one bound was on the Rolls running-board.

"Ere!" gasped the burly driver. "Wot the deuce are you at? You're hefty, but so'm I! Hop off before—"

"Shut it!" gritted Bat, his jaw set. "D'you know you're in with crooks? Shall I have to— Ah, you would, would you?"

Bat gave the shover every chance. But the fellow's reply was to drive his fist to Bat's chin and open his mouth to bawl.

Things happened quickly. The huge Bat was mustard in a scrap. He had held his own against odds in many weird parts of the earth.

He ducked, heard the shover's fist whiz past his ear, then jabbed upwards.

It was a short blow. But Bat's mighty muscles were behind it. And his bunched knuckles slugged to the chauffeur's throat with the sound of a mallet hitting beef.

Came a gasp. The shover's cry was cut short. His head snickered back. But he wasn't outed. And the big car rocked as the two giants closed.

They swung from side to side, the big chauffeur trying to shout, Bat gripping his windpipe and stifling his cries.

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But time was flying. In desperation Bat smote the man on the ear. He went limp, to roll with a grunt from his seat to the floor of the car.

All had happened in a few seconds. But Ringer and his pards might return at any moment.

So Bat stooped swiftly, grabbed up the senseless shover in his mighty arms, to sling him out in the muddy road like a sack of coke.

"End of scene one!" gritted Bat, as the fellow landed with a loose thud. "But scene two will find the blue-eyed hero beset by villains if he don't hustle. Here's hustling!"

Then Bat leapt from the car. A heave, and he had the rascal chauffeur on his back, to bear him swiftly to the rear of the inn and dump him in the empty stables.

Followed a quick transformation. Already Bat had the chauffeur's cap. It was the work of an instant to rip off and don the uniform coat, next to bind and gag the man with strips of his own clothing.

Then back to the waiting Rolls dashed Bat. In the deepening dusk and driving rain he might well pass for the rascal whose garb he had pinched. With a laugh he dropped into the driver's seat and awaited developments.

Only just in time. That moment the inn door flew open, emitting a flood of yellow light. It banged again. But Bat dimly saw four figures plunging towards him.

"The American and the two bookies!" he chuckled, pulling down his shiny-peaked cap. "An' I guess the gent with the bag is Bomber Smithson! Hop aboard, my hearties! Then full-speed for jug!"

Bat recognised the hopeful gold-robbers. But they didn't spot him. They only saw a burly chauffeur at the wheel, took him for their own man, and piled into the big car.

"Git movin'!" yelled Cyrus Ringer, thrusting his lean face out of the window. "An' travel fierce! But don't yuh quit this turnpike till I hand yuh the order. Keep right ahead. That's all, bo!"

Bat touched his green cap! Then he started up. With a roar the engine woke to life, and the big car slid forward.

It was still raining. But the car-lights cleaved a brilliant path, revealing the shining roadway, dripping hedges. Chuckling grimly, Bat drove on.

"This," he muttered, "is what Smiler would call a cinch! The lads inside are makin' for the railway. They mean to drop me at some garage, then hike on to the tunnel, where Smithson will plant his funny smoke-bombs. Wrong, my merry train-robbers! I know this district. I'll whip aside in a shake, and tool you all to Eastgate Jug!"

Bat felt happy. His fine scheme was working A L. Doubtless by now the real chauffeur had got free and was raising a dust at the Blue Dragon!

But Bat was no fool. He knew the job was only half done, knew there'd be trouble when he quitted the turnpike and made for Eastgate. He was right! There was!

Even as he swung the Rolls down a side road, the American's thin face popped out of the window.

"Hi, yuh!" he yelled. "Where th' deuce are yuh goin' to? Stop! Yuh son of a wall-eyed Texas mule! Stop, I say!"

But Bat feigned deafness! He stepped

on the gas with his huge foot, and the car shot ahead faster than ever!

"Stop, stop!" bawled the American, and there came sounds from the other lads inside, indicating dismay.

"Th' boob's clean mad!" the American screamed in frenzy. "If he don't stop, I guess I'll plug him!"

Bat heard that. Plainly the deafness stunt was off. He jerked his head round, revealing stern, granite features, grey eyes snapping behind gold-rimmed specs.

"We're sold!" screamed Ringer, his hair rising. "Who's this stiff? He ain't our chauffeur!"

"What?" howled the voice of Fulton from within. "Has a cop nabbed us? Drill him, Ringer! Quick! For Pete's sake!"

Things looked desperate. In the American's thin hand glinted a pistol. But Bat had a trump card. He made haste to show it.

"Shoot," he bawled back, "an' we all go to blazes! I won't stop! I'm going faster! If you plug me, you'll wreck the bus!"

Suiting actions to words, Bat accelerated! The big Rolls roared like an express train. The wind shrieked and howled, flinging the rain into Bat's face. The speed was nearer sixty than fifty!

Came a hideous din from within the car. There were shouts and yells, bumps, thuds, the tinkling sound of breaking glass! The gold-lifters were badly rattled. Heads and fists projected through broken windows.

The racket increased. The racing Rolls might have had a cargo of lunatics. But the more the row, the faster drove Bat!

"Got 'em cold!" he chuckled. "They daren't plug me at this pace! The car would go into the ditch, an' we'd all go to the sky!"

On and on rushed the crazy vehicle. Offers of great rewards had no more effect on Bat than threats. The big man meant to stop at the jug—not before. But he didn't know Ringer!

Came suddenly a bend in the road. Bat had to slow down. He was still making forty, and swooped round on two wheels.

But Ringer, gun in hand, was leaning far out. He daren't shoot the driver. But he could shoot something else!

Bang! The American let fly. Instantly Bat felt the steering-wheel almost jerk from his hands.

With a roar he swung the car straight again. But it behaved madly. It skidded wildly, shot off at an angle, charged the bank, then plunged back to the road.

Vainly Bat tried to hold her straight. He couldn't, for Ringer had plugged the off front tyre!

Followed two hectic minutes. All the occupants were howling at once, but the end came.

Bat, forced to stop, applied his brakes. He meant to leap out and tackle the bandits. But the wildly heaving car charged the left bank and almost turned turtle.

With a shout, Bat sprang. But he lost his footing as the car heeled sideways. Down he smashed in the road full length.

Before he could rise he heard running feet. Ringer had landed in the road right way up.

Something crashed on the back of Bat's head. It was a pistol-butt. And oblivion descended on Bat like a black blanket!

CHAPTER 3.

Turning the Tables!

"MY hat, what a head I've got!" Bat gasped the words. He tried to press a hand to his aching skull, only to find that he was securely trussed and prone on his back.

Craning his neck, he discovered he was on the floor of a ramshackle hovel. By the feeble light of a hurricane-lantern, he saw the plump Fulton seated on a box.

"Awake now?" leered Fulton.

"Yes," replied Bat slowly, "and bound, which is lucky for you, my fat friend! Where's your American pal—the thug who clipped my dome when I fell in the road?"

"He's far away!" Fulton chuckled thickly. "He had a spare wheel on the back o' the car. He wanted to do you in; but I know this country, an' reckoned it safer to bring you to this 'ere shepherd's 'ut."

"Very thoughtful of you!" murmured Bat, who had quickly discovered his thongs too tough to be burst. "And do you hang around till your pals have lifted the Windsor's gold?"

"I do," replied the red-faced ruffian. "An' I've got a gun, so don't make trouble. When the loot's lifted, my pard's'll fetch me. They can manage without my help, i thank Mike! After that, you can hook off—when you can!"

"But it beats me!" Fulton added angrily, "how you tumbled to our game!"

"That was easy," said Bat, in bored tones. "Next time you converse in a ruin, have a good look at the loop-holes!"

"You were at that old castle?"

"I was," laughed Bat grimly. "And I trailed you in my two-seater, beating you to the Blue Dragon. It was child's play to out your shover and pinch his garb, while you blokes jawed with the bomb gent inside."

Fulton stared pop-eyed. He seemed nervous, and toyed with his pistol.

"Don't do that," reproved Bat. "The thing might go off. It's a habit guns have got."

"It'll go off if you tries to escape!" snarled Fulton, his red face slightly pale. "A cove who can out a rough-neck like that shover was needs watchin'. Gosh! We reckoned you'd bribed him to swap places!"

"I gave him a punch," answered Bat. "Nothing else. He ought really to have come on to jug—as I meant you lads to do. But I needed his kit."

Fulton gasped like a fish out of water. Then he placed his pistol where he could reach it.

"You lie still, mister!" he cautioned. "I ain't sorry to be out o' the hold-up business. It's a bit dangerous. But you bet I'm goin' to play my part 'ere. If you moves I wings you!"

Bat said nothing. He closed his eyes. He seemed to have accepted the inevitable. But, though he had talked inanely, his brain was working at racing speed.

"I must get free somehow," he told himself, "and mighty quick—or that American crook will lift a million of good English gold!"

"Perhaps I can wriggle from these cords. If I do, I don't think this fat toad would have the pluck to use his gun! I'll lie still, then he'll soon get slack."

Silence fell in the little hut, broken only by Bat's steady breathing. Eyes shut, the big man feigned sleep. And Fulton seemed taken in. He slumped back in his corner, puffing at a vile-smelling pipe.

Time passed. Presently Bat judged he had waited as long as he dared. From under his lashes he noted his gaoler was staring at the thatched roof.

"Now or never!" he gritted, and bunched his great muscles, striving to withdraw one wrist.

But on the instant Fulton was alert. With a swift movement he snatched up his gun, to level it at Bat's chest.

"I've warned, yer you big stiff!" he snarled. "Another wriggle, and bang she goes! There ain't no flies on me, mister. I'm keepin' awake on this job. Don't you forget it!"

Bat wasn't likely to forget it. He could have shouted aloud in disappointment.

For his position seemed hopeless. He was trussed like a mummy, guarded by an armed villain who was very much awake.

Struggles were useless. They might even prove fatal. Bat let his head fall back, striving vainly to evolve some plan of escape.

"Ditched!" he growled to himself. "Ditched by a cheap gang of—"

Bat broke off. Did his eyes deceive him? Or had a

shadowy form really appeared at the paneless window behind Fulton's head?

No; it was no delusion! A quick but keen glance showed Bat a face at the open hole. It was a familiar face—oil-stained, and surmounted by a huge cap. It was the face of Smiler!

Bat didn't worry as to how the lad had cast up. It was sufficiently amazing that he had.

And Smiler was pulling fearful grimaces. Bat tumbled to his cue. He was to attract Fulton's attention while the kid acted.

"I say, Fulton," he drawled promptly, "hasn't it occurred to you that you may get a spell in jug for this?"

"You mind your own business!" snarled the fat one.

"Quite," smiled Bat, blinking rapidly. "It is my business—to get free. Now, suppose I offered you fifty quid?"

"Bah!" laughed Fulton. "Fifty quid! I'm 'ave a tenth share in a million!"

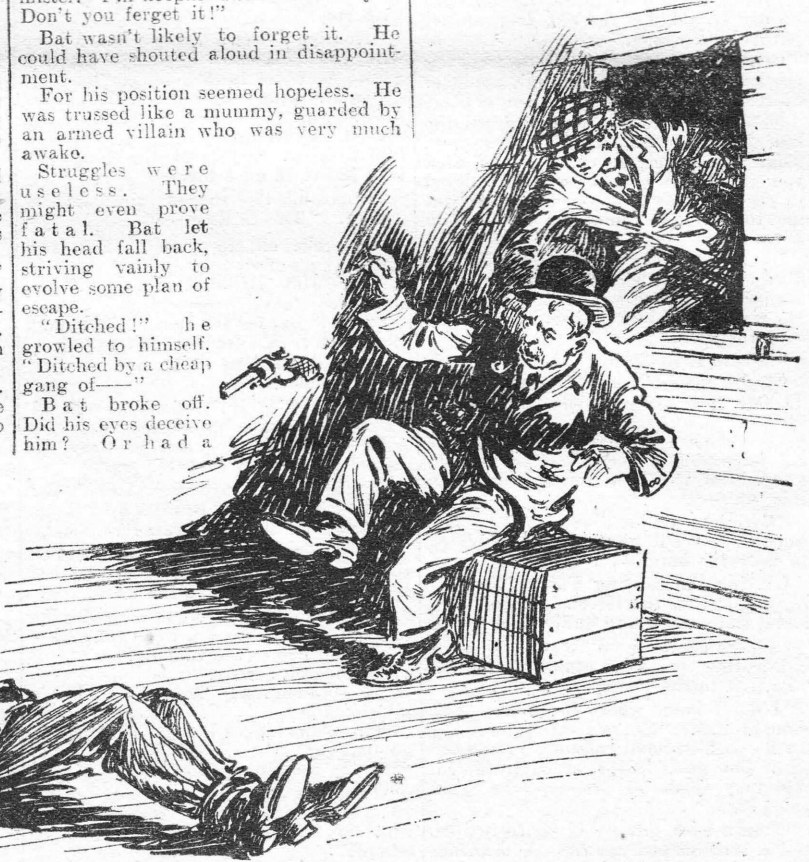
"Nevertheless," Bat went on, not daring to glance at the window, "fifty in the hand is better for that hand than picking oakum in a cell! What? Or shall we say a hundred?"

"I guess you're barny!" said Fulton politely.

"Barny!" roared Bat. "Ha, ha, ha! That's a good joke. I assure you, Mr. Fulton, I was never more sane in my life!"

Fulton only growled. And Bat went on chatting nonsense as quick as he could think of it.

For, all the time, Smiler was creeping through the window! The kid's eyes flashed. His right fist was drawn back to deliver a stunning blow.



Smiler was creeping through the window, his eyes flashing. "Ere, shut it!" Fulton was barking out to Bat. "I ain't takin' no bri—" He broke off suddenly as Smiler's hard fist connected with his ear and felled him to the floor with a heavy thud. (See chapter 3.)

"Ere! Shut it!" Fulton suddenly barked at Bat. "I'm fair sick o' your voice! An' I ain't takin' no bri—"

"Take that, you tough!" broke in the shrill tones of Smiler, and the lad's hard fist connected with Fulton's ear.

Thud, thud! The amazed gaoler slumped down on his face. Even as he fell, Smiler sailed through the window. He landed on his feet, scooped up the dropped pistol, and aimed at Fulton's head.

"What the deuce! 'Elp!" roared the terrified ruffian, staring at his own gun with bulging eyes. "Oo are you? Point that gun away! It's loaded!"

"Less row!" piped Smiler, backing towards his bound boss. "If you don't lie doggo, I'll let daylight froo you! Now, then, wot abaat it?"

Fulton gave in. He lay groaning on the ground, not daring to take his eyes off the weapon in Smiler's hand.

And Smiler got busy. He still covered the scoundrel. But he whipped out a knife with his free hand, opened it with his teeth, and quickly slashed his boss' bonds.

A braver man might have rushed the kid. Ringer would certainly have done. But Fulton was yellow. He lay like a log till Bat scrambled up, stretching his numbed limbs.

"Don't 'urt me, sir!" he whined. "I was only obeyin' orders!"

"You'll obey mine now," said Bat grimly. "That is, you'll remain here till police fetch you. Chuck the cords over, Smiler."

The boy swiftly collected the sliced bonds. In two minutes Fulton was tightly bound, his fat red face almost purple with wrath.

"Good enough!" grunted Bat, testing the knots. "Now, how in the name of marvels did you get here, Smiler?"

"Follered you, guv'nor!" chirped the kid. "I seed you slug the shover guy. That was a coughdrop! Then I seed you go off wiv the big car. I follered in yer two-seater. It's lucky you taught me to drive, I knew you couldn't do wivout me!"

Bat should have reproved the lad for disobedience—although he had only left Smiler behind for safety. But he didn't. He was too bucked at learning his own car was close.

"Where is it, Smiler?" he thundered.

"Dahn the road, guv!" yelled the kid. "I left it when you ran the blue bus into the bank. Phew! Wot a turn I got! Then I switched the lamps out an' follered. I couldn't scrap the 'ole gang. But I've been tryin' to get into this 'ut—"

"Excellent, Smiler!" cried Bat. "But come on! We'll have to go like blazes to beat the bandits!"

Leaving the bawling Fulton, the pair legged it from the hovel. Luckily they found Bat's car where Smiler had left it.

"Where are we goin', guv?" cried the kid, as they scrambled in and started off. "To that tunnel you spoke of?"

"I don't know where the tunnel is!" shouted Bat. "There's only one thing for it—dash to Southampton! The train with the gold leaves at eight-fifteen. We may just do it—stop the gold going!"

"Send a wire, guv'nor!" yelled Smiler, as Bat sent his fast car full speed ahead.

"Wire to the stationmaster bloke at Southampton—"

"No use!" Bat bawled back. "A load of gold wouldn't be stopped on receipt of a wire from a stranger! 'Twould be thought a hoax. But if we get there in time ourselves—"

The rest of Bat's words were drowned by the howl of the wind. Smiler gripped his seat with both hands.

For Bat drove as never before. He hummed along the dark roads like a flash of lightning.

Villages were entered, dropped behind. They roared through the towns, the little engine throbbing as though it would burst.

"Five past eight!" gritted Bat at last. "And there's Southampton!"

Away in the darkness showed the yellow lights of the port. Smiler smelt the tang of the sea, vaguely heard sirens. He saw the flashing water, masts, and funnels, dim in the light of a thin moon. Then they shot down a long hill, got blocked in the traffic, to roar up to the station ten minutes too late!

"She might ha' been delayed!" shouted Bat, leaping out. "Come on, Smiler!"

The huge man and the lad pelted on to the platform. They burst through knots of folk, to crash into the stationmaster's office.

"Has the eight-fifteen left?" roared Bat. "The train with the Windsor's bullion on her?"

"She has!" cried the gold-laced official, staring at the mud-stained Bat, whose face was caked with blood from the blow on his head. "What's it to do with you?"

"Nothing!" cried Bat. "But a heap with you! There's a plot to lift that gold. At some tunnel, smoke bombs'll be on the line. The driver'll pull up, thinkin' he's wrecked. Bandits will unhook the treasure-van—pitch the stuff into a lorry. Others of the gang will take the train on a bit—"

"Impossible!" roared the stationmaster. "This is Eng—"

He broke off, to stare at Bat, surprised.

"Mr. Jim Barstow, isn't it?" he shouted.

"Sure!" bawled the Bat. "And, hang it all, you're MacInnis, aren't you?"

"I am!" was the reply, and the pair gripped hands.

"That settles it!" cried the official. "I wouldn't have swallowed that yarn from anyone else! But you say the scoundrels actually captured you!"

"I didn't biff my own skull!" Bat laughed grimly. "But yarns'll keep. How can we stop the train?"

The stationmaster turned to a chart on the wall. He didn't doubt Bat. He had known the giant well in the war.

"Can't stop her!" he gasped, swinging round. "She'll be on a clear run now—can't stop before the tunnels!"

Bat thought swiftly.

"A pilot-engine!" he cried. "Put a pilot on the line! We'll chase—blot the ruffian unhooking the van. Train will go on, van intact. We'll blow back, with any toughs we can collar!"

"I've got an engine ready—steam up!" cried MacInnis. "But the driver isn't due for half an hour. I've no others!"

"Then, look here, Mac!" roared Bat. "I'll drive the pilot! You know I can! You were with me when I drove that special in France! And Smiler can stoke! No, I'll have no helpers. Some o' your men may be pals o' the gangsters!"

The stationmaster hesitated. He vowed it was highly irregular. But a million of gold was at stake. And he knew Bat could drive. At last he gave in.

"All right!" he shouted. "I'll chance it! And catch that train if you burst your boilers!"

Followed a rush to the noisy, electric-lit yards. MacInnis led. Bat pounded alongside, Smiler dashing in the rear.

In a moment they saw the hissing loco. Bat leapt into the cab. Smiler followed. "I'll signal clear line for you!" roared MacInnis.

Bat nodded. He threw in the throttle. A shrill whistle, and the pilot clanked off. In a minute she was dashing and screaming up the line, Bat at the levers, Smiler shovelling coal into the open red furnace.

It was a wild ride. The pilot rushed through the night, thundering under bridges, swinging round curves.

The wind howled through the cab. But sweat rained down Smiler's face. The lad worked with his shovel like a fiend.

Bat stared through the plate-glass window. He saw the gleaming metals stretching endlessly ahead. He crashed on all steam, and the light engine barely held to the rails.

"Must be in time," gritted the huge man. "Once the gang are at the gold they'll be too many for us!"

Clank, clank! Swish! Clatter! Then—

Zip! They shot into a black tunnel, a roaring in their cars, smoke from the funnel billowing round in clouds.

"Is this the trapped tunnel?" gasped Bat, leaning out.

"Come a yell from Smiler: 'Tail-light ahead, guv'nor! We're catchin' th' express!'"

Smiler was right. Bat, too, saw the red lamp winking at the rear of a van. They had caught the gold-train!

"She's still running!" shouted Bat.

But, that instant, above the clangour of iron, sounded four deafening reports! The sounds came from the far end of the tunnel.

Straining their eyes, Bat and Smiler saw moonlight at the tunnel exit. But the light was blotted instantly by a thick fog of yellow smoke.

"Smithson's smoke-bombs!" roared Bat, applying his brakes. "The gang's there. The express is stopping!"

It was! The driver had pulled up, and straight at his cab leapt dim, shadowy figures.

Pandemonium broke loose. From the long coaches of the stopped express came shrieks and yells of fear.

"Git ready to scrap, guv!" yelled Smiler, swinging up his shovel. "Th' Amerkan'll be at the van in two shakes!"

"No!" bawled Bat, bringing the pilot to a standstill as its buffers touched those of the van. "No scrappin'! I've a better wheeze, Smiler! Stop here!"

(Continued on page 23.)

"A SPECTRE OF THE PAST!"

(Continued from page 21).

But Ernest Levison was not likely to forget so soon. He chatted with forced cheerfulness during that walk to the school. But a deep thankfulness was in his heart. The unexpected relief after the sudden danger had almost been too much for him. Cardew had saved the situation, however. For the time being Levison was safe.

It was a merry party that assembled in Study No. 6 on the Fourth Form passage that evening. The chums of Study No. 6 were there, as were the Terrible Three and Levison and Clive—and, of course, the honoured visitors, cousin Ethel and Doris Levison. Only Ralph Reckness Cardew was absent—he had not shown up yet. But only Levison and Clive knew, while Tom Merry suspected, just why he remained away—in order to avoid being questioned.

Tom Merry and the others, indeed, took good care not to show any signs of their real feelings towards Ernest Levison during tea. Levison himself appeared to be as jolly and happy as any of them. But secretly he was far from being so. His heart was heavy within him. He was safe, but for how long?

Only too well did he know the ruthless and cruel character of his enemy. For the moment Snelson was helpless to harm him; but Doris was staying for a few days, and during classes, at least, the rascal would have ample opportunities to seek her out.

At any time the blow might fall.

That night Ernest Levison went to bed with a heavy heart. He would have had a heavier heart still had he known of the blow Fate was even then preparing for him in the person of Snelson, the ragged outcast.

In the deep cupboard at the ruined cottage Snelson was even then forging a weapon to harm his enemy—a more dangerous weapon, if anything, than the one he already held over Levison's head. Cardew had taken him to Wayland, and left him there to shift for himself. And, realising he was beaten for that night, Snelson had repaired to a chemist's shop. There he had made various purchases of photographic materials—he had won no small sum at the cards that afternoon! And now, with that cupboard rigged up as a dark-room, Snelson was busy developing the film—the photograph he had taken at the window of the ruined cottage that afternoon.

It was done at last, and Snelson eyed it gloatingly. He had feared that the light would be too weak; but he need not have feared. The photograph was not perfect—far from it. But it showed the cards and money-strewn packing-case, with the figures seated round it, their feverish eyes fixed on the cards, the curling smoke rising from the cigarettes. Every face was clear.

And the scheming rascal, as he looked at the photo, knew, with a thrill of evil delight, that he had Levison in his power at last. The Head of St. Jim's might have forgiven Levison once. But if Dr. Holmes saw that photograph he was not likely to forgive or pardon him a second time.

Ernest Levison and his young brother Frank little dreamed what the future held in store for them.

THE END.

(Will this scheming rascal, Snelson, gain his ends? Be sure you read next week's thrilling and dramatic story by Martin Clifford, entitled: "SCORNED BY THE SCHOOL!")

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FOR NEXT WEDNESDAY!

"SCORNED BY THE SCHOOL!"

By Martin Clifford.

That is the sequel to the excellent Levison story you have just read. There's little need for me to urge you to order your GEM early, for I should think that every reader is too keenly interested in the doings of the Levison family to miss a story where one of them is staged as the central figure. By the way, this yarn for next week is extra-long. Loud cheers—I can hear it in advance! This means, alas, that the "St. Jim's News" will have to take a back seat for another week. Can't be helped, you know. But I feel sure you won't object to that.

"JINGLES!"

In next week's Jingle the St. Jim's Rhymester has a "go" at Mr. Selby, the unpopular master of the Third Form. He gets his character to a "T," too!

"BAT BARSTOW'S SPORTING TOUR!"

By Cecil Fanshaw.

As this is the last story of the thrilling "Bat Barstow" series, Gemites will see to it themselves that they don't miss it. It's bang up to standard, anyway. Look forward, then, chums, to a good twopenny-worth for next week. Chin, chin.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

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A man once left home to go to Australia. His mother implored him not to, but he was determined. In the first letter he wrote, he said: "Am doing great. First feather in my cap." His second letter read: "Have bought car. Another feather in cap." His third letter stated: "Have bought farm. Another feather in cap." After a time he wrote again, saying: "Dear mother, send my fare, I'm broke." To which his mother replied: "No. Stick feathers on your back and fly home!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to S. E. Hall, 158, Havelock Road, Wimbledon, S.W.

HARD TO PLEASE!

Grocer: "What was Mrs. Jones complaining about this time?" Assistant: "About the long wait." Grocer: "She must be very hard to please. Yesterday she complained about short weight!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Hermann, 16, Amherst Avenue, Ealing, W. 13.

ONE FOR WILLIE!

Willie: "Pa's been to the races, hasn't he?" Ma: "Yes, Willie. But how did you find out?" Willie: "Well, my money-box won't rattle!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Charlie Palmer, 47, Harriett Street, Cathays, Cardiff.

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A MILLION AT STAKE!

(Continued from page 26.)

Smiler hooted his disappointment. But he didn't dare disobey twice. He saw his big boss leap down on the metals, then vanish forward, into the noise-filled blackness.

Minutes passed, yells increased. All at once Smiler saw Bat dashing back to him.

"Wot's wrong, guv'?" howled the urchin.

"Nothin'!" roared Bat, swinging up into the pilot's cab. "Everything's O.K. The gang's sold!"

Smiler gaped. He was bewildered. To his utter astonishment, Bat threw in the throttle, reversed, and the pilot began to back. In a moment it was dashing back the way it had come!

"Wot?" howled Smiler, then leaned from the cab and yelled in triumph.

"Blowmetite, guv," he shrilled, "you've been an' pinched the treasure-van!"

"Exactly, Smiler!" shouted Bat, above the racket. "I saw Ringer an' three stiff's comin' through the smoke! They meant to unhitch the van—to ransack it.

"I beat 'em by an acid-drop. Unhooked the boodle-car myself, an' hooked it to our pilot. I had to floor the traitor guard. So here we are—runnin' back to Southampton, luggin' a million of gold!"

Smiler gasped, then went into peals of laughter.

"Caw!" he piped. "I wouldn't 'arf liked to 'ave seen them stiff's faces when th' van shoved off under their noses! Talk o' fishin', guv' nor! I guess we've 'ooked the biggest fish wot's ever been landed!"

But Bat wasn't satisfied yet. He and Smiler ran the gold-van back to the de-

lighted MacInnis. By then police-telegrams were sent out to watch every port.

The result was that Ringer and his gang—the lorry lads included—were all nabbed trying to board a tramp steamer bound from London to New York. Fulton was discovered where Bat had left him.

"That was a fine day's fishin', Smiler," laughed Bat, when, twenty-four hours later, he got news of the round-up at his Jermyn Street flat.

"Betcherlife, guv' nor!" piped Smiler; but added, as he shot out of the door: "I told you yer couldn't do wivah't me!"

THE END.

(Look out for another splendid yarn, featuring the sturdy Bat Barstow next week, chums, entitled: "BAT BARSTOW'S SPORTING TOUR!" by Cecil Fanshaw. There's a thrill in every line—just what all "Gemites" like.)

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