

THREE MAGNIFICENT SCHOOL STORIES

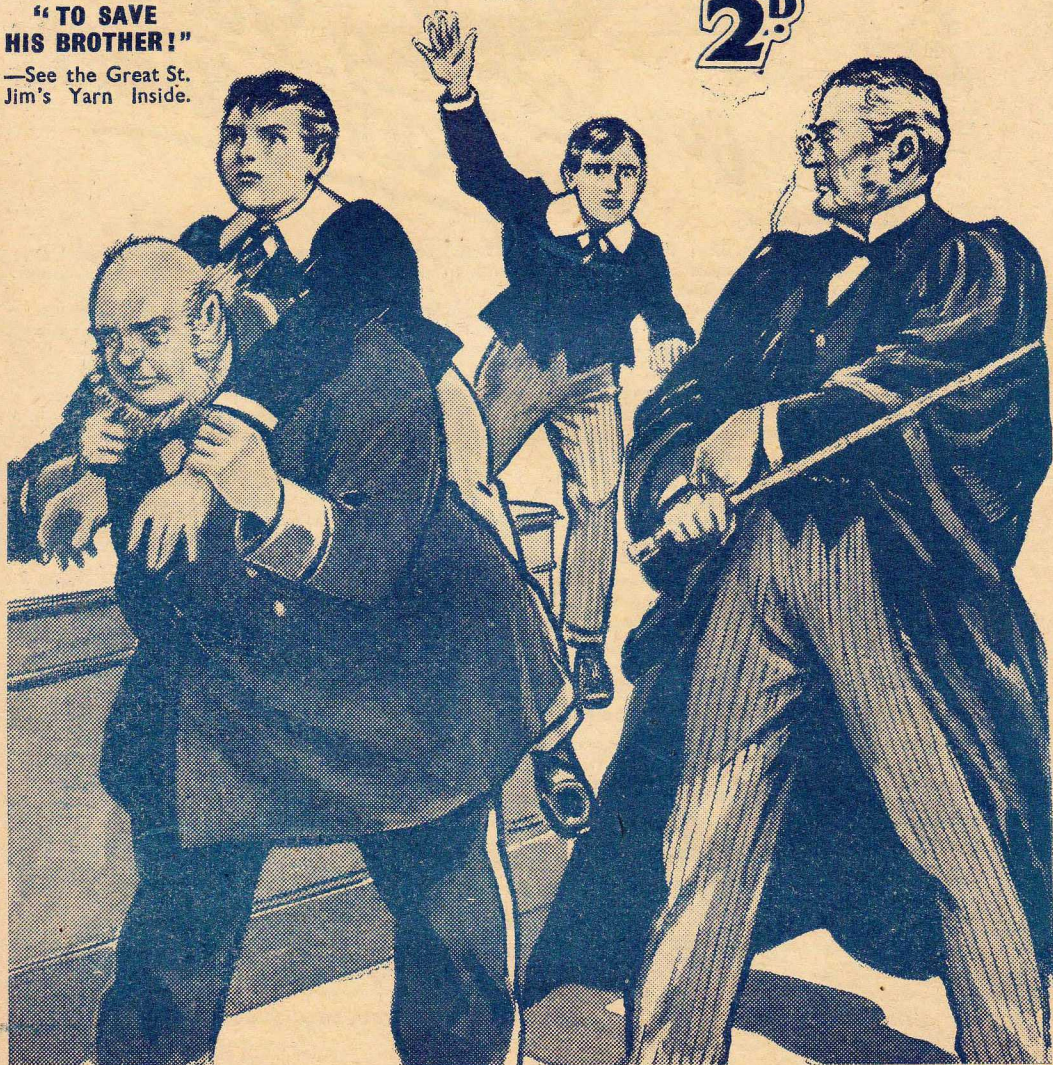
By LEADING BOYS' AUTHORS.

The GEM

2^D

**"TO SAVE
HIS BROTHER!"**

—See the Great St.
Jim's Yarn Inside.



ANOTHER GREAT PRIZE-GIVING COMING SOON!

500 FREE FOOTBALLS



DO you want to win a New Football? *Yes!* Then this way, please—we've FIVE HUNDRED to be won in this month's grand "Footer-Stamps" Competition. So if you haven't already started after one, get busy.

This is the Idea: You simply collect the "Footer-Stamps" appearing every week. As you see below, they're cute little pictures of six different actions on the football field, and the object of this great stamp-game is to score as many "goals" with them as possible by the end of the month.

TO SCORE A "GOAL" you collect a complete set of six stamps (they're numbered 1 to 6), made up of the following movements: KICK-OFF—DRIBBLE—TACKLE—HEADER—SHOT—GOAL. (Note that the "goal" stamp by itself does NOT count as a "goal"; you must get a set of the stamps 1 to 6 each time!)

The more stamps you collect, the more "goals" you can score. Below are another five stamps, and there are five more on page 35. Cut them out at once—there is a complete "goal" amongst them, while the odd stamps may fit in with other stamps left over from previous weeks (or even previous contests) to make up still further "goals." Collect from your pals, too, or swap with them. Remember, a little extra effort may well put a grand football right into your grasp.

★ If you want to score some other quick "goals," too, note that "Footer-Stamps" are also appearing in such other first-rate papers as "Modern Boy" and "Magnet." There are more "goals" waiting in these papers this very week.

Keep all your stamps by you carefully. The 500 Footballs in the October competition are going to be awarded to the readers scoring the most "goals" with "Footer-Stamps" by the closing date. So don't send any stamps yet; wait until we tell you how and where at the end of the month.

FIVE "FOOTER-STAMPS" HERE—FIVE MORE ON PAGE 35!



WITH RECKLESS ABANDON, LEVISON, THE BLACK SHEEP OF THE FOURTH, GOES THE PACE—AND IT'S LEFT TO HIS BROTHER TO COUNT THE COST!



To Save His BROTHER!

Peering down into the dimly-lit hall, the youngster caught his breath. Kildare was speaking to his Housemaster—and listening, the fag caught the words: "There's no doubt, sir. Some junior has gone out!"

CHAPTER 1.

Levison's Chance!

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

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

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

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

Tom Merry's brows were knitted a little. The responsibilities of a football captain were upon his youthful shoulders, and those responsibilities were very real.

The match with the Grammar School was always a hard-fought one, and St. Jim's needed the best players they could put in the field. And the best winger in the team was off the list.

"I suppose Talbot can't

help it; but it's dashed awkward!" growled Tom Merry.

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

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

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

"Ernie's not really a bounder—but it's his friends lead him on." Young Frank Levison clings to his belief in his major, and proves himself ready to sacrifice his own honour, if need be, to save his brother from disgrace.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD

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

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

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

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"Couldn't be helped!" said Manners.

Tom Merry nodded.

"I know. I'm not grumbling at Talbot, but at things generally. Gordon Gay's lot are in topping form, and we want our best men to beat them. I wonder whether Levison would do? He's been sticking to footer practice, and he's grown into a really reliable man. I'll give him the chance!"

"Heah, heah!" said Arthur Augustus.

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

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

He looked up quite cheerily as Tom Merry came in.

"Busy?" asked Tom.

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

"Yes, you!"

"Well, I shan't be long!"

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

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

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

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

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

Perhaps Levison felt sometimes a longing for his old reckless ways; but, if so, he did not yield to it. The influence of Talbot of the Shell helped to keep him steady; and his minor, Frank, was a stumbling-block in the way of a return to his old shady habits.

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

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

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

"Is somebody standing out?"

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

Levison's brows contracted a little.

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

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

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

Tom Merry's face clouded.

"Another engagement?" he asked gruffly.

"Yes."

"Well, it's your own bisney."

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

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

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

"Don't jump to conclusions too fast!" said Levison, with one of his old sneers. "I'm not going with Racke. I am going to take my minor over to Abbotsford to see the League match there. I've hired a car for the drive over, and I've got to pay for it. And—and Frank wants to go."

Tom Merry's expression changed at once.

"I didn't know that, of course!" he said.

"Sorry, Levison! It's all right! I'll ask Julian."

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

"Right as rain!" said Tom.

He left the study.

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

Dick Julian of the Fourth met him in the passage.

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

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes. I want you."

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

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

CHAPTER 2.

Left in the Lurch!

LEVISON worked on steadily through his lines.

It had been with a pang of regret that he had refused Tom Merry's offer of a place in the St. Jim's junior team.

Since he had taken up footer, Levison had become keen on the game, and he had shown unusual abilities as a forward. He had looked forward to a chance of playing for the school, and he regretted the lost chance very much. But he dismissed the matter from his mind, and finished his lines.

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

Tom Merry had kicked off, and the St. Jim's forwards were away, the Grammarian players gallantly stemming the attack.

Julian was on the right wing, where Levison might have been but for his engagement that afternoon.

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

Racke of the Shell stood in the doorway.

Levison looked at him rather grimly. Racke, the heir to the huge profits of Messrs. Racke & Hacke, contractors, was a fellow who simply reeked with money.

The cad of the Shell had been a valuable acquaintance to the needy Levison till the change had come over Levison. And the latter still missed the little sums he had been accustomed to extract from the Shell fellow at nap or banker. Of late they had been on far from good terms.

But Racke's manner now was quite agreeable.

"Finished your impot?" he asked.

"Just finished."

"Good! Like to come with us?"

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

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

Levison shook his head.

"Look here, you can give this goody-goody rot the go-by," said Racke. "Never mind your blessed minor. Look here, it's worth your while. I've got seats at the Frivolity."

Levison whistled.

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

"Yes; a bit livelier than the Wayland Empire," grinned Racke. "There's a ripping matinee there this afternoon—a regular corker! And we're going to have a feed in the restaurant at the Friv. A topping feed—champagne, and all that. I know a man there, you know."

"Asking for the sack?" said Levison.

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

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

"You'll come?" said Racke.

Levison shook his head again.

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

"I can't come," he said. "I've chucked up all that kind of thing. And I've got another engagement, too. I'm taking my minor to see a League match at Abbotsford."

"Well, you silly chump!"

Levison laughed.

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

"Oh, rot!"

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

Racke gave an angry sniff, and strode away, greatly chagrined. The wealthy cad of the Shell did not like being refused; and he really wanted Levison's company that afternoon. The recklessness and daring of Levison were quite in accord with Racke's own reckless nature.

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

He left the study after Racke, and went downstairs.

Most of the fellows were out of doors.

Levison proceeded first to the Third Form Room in search of his minor. The Form-room was empty.

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

D'Arcy minor, Frayne, and Reggie Manners were on Little Side watching the junior match.

They were the three with whom Frank chiefly consorted; but the fag was not with them.

Levison's brows contracted a little as he came along to the group of fags.

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

Wally D'Arcy looked around.

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

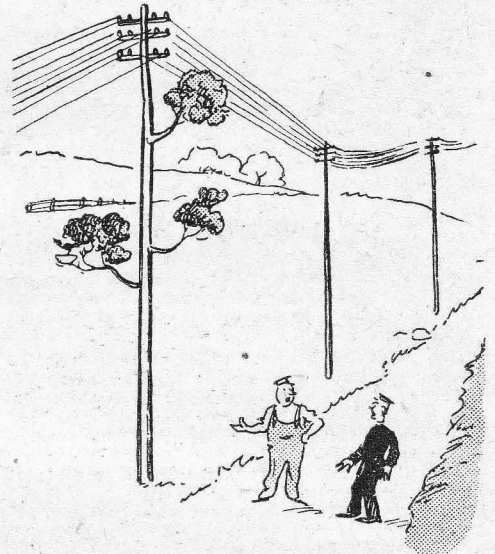
Levison started.

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

"Didn't you know? Talbot's taken him with him. He's gone to Southampton to see an uncle or something, and he asked Frank if he'd like a run. Frank said he would, you bet! We'd have gone, too," said Wally, in rather an aggrieved tone. "But it didn't seem to occur to Talbot to ask us."

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

"Yes."



"It was the rainy weather did it, chief?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Jeffrey Graham, "Breezy Bit," Dymchurch, Kent.

Levison did not reply. He turned on his heel and walked away, his brow black and his eyes glittering.

He did not reflect that Frank did not know anything about Tom Merry's offer, and that, with his usual carelessness, he had not mentioned to the fag that the League match at Abbotsford took place that afternoon.

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

"Hallo! What a cheery face!"

It was the mocking voice of Crooke of the Shell.

Levison started and looked up.

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

Levison halted.

"You fellows off?" he asked.

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

"I'll come, if you like."

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

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

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

"Will you wait a minute? I've got a car ordered. I shall have to ask Lathom to let me phone and cancel it."

"Right you are!"

Levison hurried into the House.

Racke & Co. grinned at one another.

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

Mellish burst into a chuckle.

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

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

Racke & Co. were still chuckling when Levison came out of the House again.

Levison glanced at them sourly, but he made no remark, and he was very silent as he went out of the gates with the shady trio.

The die was cast now.

CHAPTER 3.

A Shock for Gussy!

"**B**AI Jove! You will have to pull your socks up, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark at half-time.

Gordon Gay & Co. of the Grammar School had played up remarkably well in the first half.

The St. Jim's team missed Talbot on the wing. The Grammarians had scored the only goal that had been taken—hence Arthur Augustus' remark to his comrades.

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

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

"Weally, Blake——"

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

"Fathead!" said half a dozen voices in unison.

"Luckily, there's a New House chap in goal," said Figgins.

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

"Thanks!" said Julian, laughing.

"Well, it's a fact, you know."

"Julian is quite a reliable playah," remarked D'Arcy.

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

"Who are you calling kids, you Shell duffer?"

"Bow-wow! Get a move on!"

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

But Tom Merry & Co. had their own ideas about that.

The Grammarians began with an attack which

brought them up to the St. Jim's goal; but Fatty Wynn, between the posts, was not to be caught napping a second time.

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

Then came Tom Merry's chance.

The St. Jim's forwards were on the ball, and the Grammarian half-backs were for the moment scattered. The front line went forward, passing the ball like clockwork. They swept down the field. Figgins was robbed of the ball by a Grammarian back; but Julian, the outside-right, took it fairly away from his foot and sent it to Tom Merry at centre.

Tom drove it home before the goalkeeper knew that it was coming.

There was a roar from the crowd round the ropes:

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

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

The Grammarian goalie tossed out the ball, and the players went back to the centre of the field.

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

Both sides were making great efforts, but the minutes ticked off, and nothing came of them.

Lefevre of the Fifth, the referee, looked at his watch. It was close on time now, and the match looked like being a draw.

The St. Jim's players, however, made a final effort. The forwards closed in on goal, and Arthur Augustus dashed in to take a hoped-for pass from Blake.

"This way, Blake!" he ejaculated.

But Blake was deaf; he sent the ball into the centre.

Tom Merry secured it, but he went over under a charge. Before the enemy could nail the ball Figgins had it, and he drove it out to Julian as he was tackled.

Julian rushed the ball along the right wing, and passed just as he was tackled by a back. Arthur Augustus swerved in and took the pass from Julian—a long pass that was not easy to take, but which Arthur Augustus took with graceful precision—and almost with the same movement he sent the ball whizzing in.

The goalkeeper clutched at it a second too late.

Tom Merry sat up.

"My hat!"

"Goal!"

"All sewene, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

The whistle went for time, and the players trooped off the field.

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

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

St. Jim's had won, after all, and the Grammarians' team was beaten. But the beaten team took it quite cheerfully, and they stayed to tea at St. Jim's.

Darkness had fallen when they started for home, some of the St. Jim's fellows walking part of the way with them.

Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther, and D'Arcy and Blake walked half-way to the Grammar



The match flared up and the juniors crowded round the inert form D'Arcy had tripped over in the lane. "It's a tramp——" began Manners. "No, it's not, it's a St. Jim's fellow," gasped Tom Merry in surprise. "Great Scott—it's Levison!"

School with the footballers on their return. They parted at the cross-roads and sauntered back towards St. Jim's, discussing the match.

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

"Wathah not, Tom Mewwy! As a mattah of fact, I came very neah gettin' a goal in the first half!"

"And why didn't you?" demanded Lowther. "Blake bumped into me, you know!"

"What?" said Blake.

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

"I don't!" said Blake. "I remember you bumping into me! But I'm going to bump into you now."

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

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

"You-uttah ass!" he shrieked. "Oh!"

Arthur Augustus broke off suddenly.

"What is it?" asked Tom Merry, in astonishment.

"There's somethin' in the gwass——"

"What?"

"It's—it's a body!"

CHAPTER 4.

A "Good Time"!"

"WHAT price a little game?" Racke of the Shell spoke very jovially. Racke & Co. were enjoying themselves, after their fashion. They had arrived at that delectable place, the Frivolity, in Wayland. They had seen the matinee through—a low, coarse entertainment, that appealed to the taste of Crooke and Mellish and Racke.

Levison had sat through it rather grimly. Blackguard as he was, Levison was sensitive, and the stupid vulgarity of the Friv got on his nerves.

The entertainment was over, and the four pleasure-seekers had left the hall, from which the audience were streaming. But they did not go out with the audience. There was a restaurant attached to the building, but even Racke's nerve was not equal to sitting there in the full glare of light. He had engaged a private room for his spread, and thither the party were led by a side passage.

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

Aubrey Racke was a person of consequence here. A considerable amount of the elder Racke's

fortune had been expended at the Friv, and the seedy old waiter's eyes brightened at the sight of him.

Mellish of the Fourth was awed when he found that the feed was costing Racke ten-and-six a head, apart from any extras. And after the solid portion of the feed had been disposed of, wine, cigars, and cigarettes were placed on the table, which certainly ran into a much larger cost than the meal.

Mellish and Crooke enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

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

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

"Nothing," growled Levison.

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

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

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

Levison made a gesture of repugnance.

"Oh, don't be a goat!" said Racke. "Drink it up!"

Levison sipped the creamy liquid in the shallow

glass; and then, as if making up his mind suddenly, gulped it down.

His eyes sparkled and his face flushed.

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

"I'm your man!"

"Trot out the cards, Henry!"

The seedy old waiter brought the cards.

"Bridge?" asked Crooke.

"Oh, blow bridge! Nap!" said Mellish.

The four young rascals began to play.

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

If Frank could have seen him now!

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

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

Levison, in his reckless mood, was an easy victim.

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

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

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

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

Mellish was not rash, by any means; and Crooke, though he was wealthy, was extremely close.

Levison's luck brought dark looks to their faces, and Racke, careless as he was with money, began to look less cordial.

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

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

Levison laughed excitedly. He had five or six pounds before him.

"What about you, Racke?"

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

The two went on playing. The smoke and the fumes of the wine had given Crooke and Mellish a headache, and they felt that they had had enough of Racke's party.

They slipped out of the room, left the building by a side door, and started for home.

Racke and Levison hardly noticed them go.

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

Racke threw down the cards at last, with a curse.

"Had enough?" grinned Levison.

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

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

"If you mean—" began Levison savagely.

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

Under the influence of wine and the close atmosphere of the room and his losses, Racke was feeling extremely seedy and disagreeable. At such

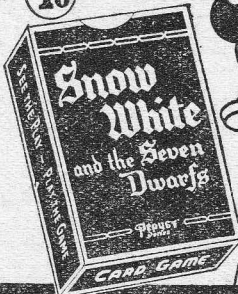
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SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

moments his sullen and suspicious nature had full play.

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

Levison rose unsteadily to his feet.

"You rotten cad!" he said thickly.

"Gentlemen!" murmured Henry.

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

Racke burst into a sardonic laugh.

"Topsy, by gad! Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

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

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

"Liar!"

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

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

"Go and eat coke!"

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

"Your coat, sir," said Henry. "Shall I call a taxi, sir?"

"Yes!" muttered Levison.

He was hardly conscious of what followed. He felt himself being piloted along a dark passage; fresh air blew on his face—he realised that he was sitting in a taxicab and that it was buzzing away with him.

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

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

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

"St. Jim's—the school."

"Yes, sir."

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

"Right, sir."

The taxi buzzed on again, and Levison fell into a doze. He started out of it as the cab stopped once more and the door opened.

"Here you are, sir!"

"Oh, all right!"

Levison staggered up and lurched blindly out of the cab. The fresh wind blowing on his face revived him a little.

"How much?" he mumbled.

"Six-and-six, sir."

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

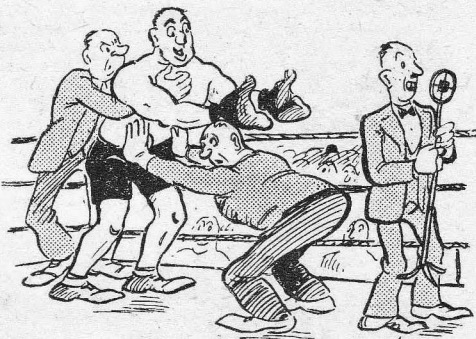
The taxi buzzed away.

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

"I can't go in in this state," he muttered

thickly. "Oh, what a silly fool I was! It was Racke, the hound! He wanted to make me drunk!"

He knew that the liquor was having its way, that his consciousness was going. With a last effort he crawled out of the road into the grass, out of the way of any passing vehicle. He sank down in the damp grass. His dull eyes turned upward—the stars were dancing to his sight, his



"One moment, listeners, while I try to persuade the champion to speak to you."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Philips, 104, St. George's Square, London.

head was racked—till consciousness went, and he lay like a log in the damp grass, breathing stertorously.

CHAPTER 5. Good Samaritans!

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

D'Arcy's face was white.

"Yaas!" he gasped.

"What rot!" said Manners.

"I—I felt it there!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "It threw me into a howwid fluttah! It's a body!"

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

A form in an overcoat was stretched there at his feet.

"Can you see it, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Yes," said Tom in strained tones. "It's some-body asleep!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, greatly relieved.

The match went out.

"A tramp?" asked Manners.

"A St. Jim's chap!" said Tom in low tones.

"It's Levison!"

"Great Scott!"

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

"I am shaking him."

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

"What's the mattah with him?" asked Gussy.

"He's been drinking!"

"Dwinkin'!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as if he could hardly believe his ears.

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

"Yes."

"Oh, great Scott!"

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

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

"We can't take him to the school in that state," said Tom quickly. "He would be seen at once, and—"

"And kicked out to-morrow!" said Manners grimly. "All the better! We don't want boozy beasts at St. Jim's!"

"We don't want to be the ones to give him away," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Well, no. But—"

"He couldn't have meant to get into that state, of course. He's been to some low den with Racke & Co., I suppose."

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

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

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

"Blessed if I know! What are we going to do?"

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

"We can't desert the rotter!" said Tom Merry.

"No. But what—"

"We can't take him in. He would be spotted at once. We've got to look after him somehow."

"Yaas, wathah! It's howwid, but it's up to us, deah boys."

"Get him out of the grass, anyway!" said Tom. The juniors grasped Levison and lifted him up. Levison's eyes did not open. He lay like a log in their arms.

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

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

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

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

"Blessed if I know!"

"Somebody might pass and see us any minute," said Manners. "I believe Railton's in Rylcombe."

"The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,600.

"Get him away from the road. There's a barn across the field. Get him there!"

"It's wathah muddy in the field, Tom Mewwy."

"Oh rats!"

"But I wathah feah I should make my boots feahfully muddy—"

"You could walk on your hands," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Come on!" said Tom. "Bear a hand with the cad!"

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

"Yes. Don't jaw!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Are we looking after Levison, or are we listening to a jawbone solo by Gussy?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

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

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

"Here's the barn!"

They found their way into the barn, and Manners struck a match.

Levison was laid on a heap of dry straw.

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

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

"Wats!"

"He mayn't come to for an houf or more," said Tom.

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

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

CHAPTER 6.

Levison is Lucky!

ERNEST LEVISON'S eyes opened. He blinked round wildly in the darkness.

His head was racked with pain, his eyes heavy as lead. He wondered what had happened and where he was.

As he moved, a throb of pain went through his aching head, and he groaned aloud. Then a voice was heard in the gloom.

"Bai Jove! The wottah's comin' to, deah boys!"

"D'Arcy!" muttered Levison, in bewilderment.

"Yaas, you weptile!"

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

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

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

"We carried you here."

"You found me?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" mumbled Levison. "My head! What a thundering fool I've been!"

"Right on the wicket!" agreed Blake.

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

"I fell down in the lane," he muttered. "What did you bring me here for?"

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty
Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

"Number of Foreign Tourists Falling," runs a headline. Well, why don't they look where they are going?

Story: "You will suffer from poverty until you are forty," said the seaside fortune teller to Crocke of the Shell. "And after that?" queried Crocke hopefully. "You'll get used to it," said the fortune teller.

As the fifteen-stone specimen said on entering the library: "I like to come here and lose myself in a book!"

Story (again): "I wish you wouldn't whistle while you work, Joggs," said the employer. "It's all right, sir," replied the office boy. "I wasn't working."

The Head's gardener tells me it is a problem to know what to plant just now. Sow what?

Animals have a sense of humour, says Mr. Linton. Anyway, we know horses are fond of chaff.

Remember, thin men may be honest, but fat men always find it difficult to stoop to anything low.

"To get you out of sight."

"Thank you!"

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

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

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

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

Tom Merry scratched a match and looked at his watch.

"Half-past eight."

Levison scrambled to his feet, sick and dizzy.

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

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

"I—I think so."

"Let's get off, then!" said Blake.

The juniors left the barn. Levison followed them unsteadily, suppressing a groan of pain.

Quick one: "I buy dirt cheap and sell in the highest markets," said the big business man. "Do you agree with my policy?" "I can't say," replied the quiet little man. "You see, I never buy dirt."

Overheard in Rylcombe: "And is the chin strap to keep your helmet on?" asked the American visitor of P.-c. Crump. "No, sir," replied Crump patiently. "It's to rest my jaw after answering questions."

"What will a two-pound jar of strawberry jam fetch?" asks Digby. No end of wasps.

A foreigner says our English weather doesn't agree with him. Never mind—it often doesn't agree with our weather forecasters, either.

Always bear in mind that the hotter the argument becomes the cooler it leaves some friendships.

Must tell you this: I hear a burglar caught in Rylcombe was described in court as a very handsome young man. A thing of booty?

"I want a hat that will suit my head," said Grundy, entering a hatter's in Wayland. "Certainly, sir," replied the hatter. "A soft one?"

One for the "Professor": "Skimpole is very systematic, isn't he?" asked Kangaroo of Talbot. "Yes, very," agreed Talbot, "he works on the theory that you can find whatever you want when you don't want it by looking where it wouldn't be if you did want it."

Did you hear about the chap who learned to be a circus acrobat in ten trapeasy lessons?

Then there was the efficiency expert who walked in his sleep so that he could get his exercise and his rest at the same time.

Tom Merry took his arm and led him along. Levison was feeling weak and flabby enough now, and he was glad of the assistance.

The captain of the Shell piloted him across the dark fields to the road.

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

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

"Nothing!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

Levison laughed harshly.

"No; I didn't take him out, after all, as it

happened. Never mind why. But—but I thought I was going to, when you offered me the place in the team. It was too late afterwards. I'd have played, only you'd started the game. How did it go?"

"We beat the Grammar School."

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

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

Tom Merry helped him all the way.

Tom was puzzled. Levison's disjointed words were curious enough. Tom wondered whether a quarrel with his minor had been the reason of this blackguardly outbreak. Levison's reform had certainly come to a very sudden end, and it had ended in a far grosser blackguardism than he had ever been guilty of before.

The juniors reached the school gates at last, and Manners rang the bell.

Taggles came grunting down to the gates.

He eyed the juniors grimly as he admitted them.

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh rats!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Gussy wants suffocating!" said Monty Lowther.

"I should wefuse to be suffocated, Lowthah; and I twust you fellows are goin' to be disweet. Levison would get into an awful wow if—yawwooh! What fearful beast stamped on my foot?"

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

"You uttah ass—"

"You are to report yourselves to Mr. Railton, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,600.

you young rascals!" said Kildare of the Sixth, coming into the Hall.

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

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

"Gone up to the dorm, deah boy."

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

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

"Come on!" said Tom Merry abruptly.

The delinquents proceeded to Mr. Railton's study, and Tom knocked at the door.

The Housemaster's deep voice bade them enter. He eyed them with severe inquiry as they came into his study.

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

"Yes, sir."

"Where have you been?"

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

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

"Very well, sir."

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

Levison grinned as they came out of the study.

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

"I wasn't speaking for you," said Tom hotly.

"If you choose to leave Railton under a mistake, that is your business, not mine."

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

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

"Go hon!"

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

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

CHAPTER 7.

Bitter Blood!

FRANK LEVISON came into his brother's study with a ruddy, cheerful face. It was evident that Levison minor had enjoyed himself that afternoon with Talbot.

He had come there to tell his brother all about the excursion to Southampton, full of cheery confidence. Only Levison major was in the room, and he was smoking a cigarette. Frank started. Levison looked at him, enjoying the expression that came over the fag's face.

Frank made no remark upon it, however. It

was not his business to preach to his elder brother.

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

"Yes, I've heard so," said Levison, with a nod. "Talbot took me with him. Ripping of him, wasn't it?"

"Very ripping!"

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

"I've seen the place, and the ships," he said. "I went with Talbot to see Colonel Lyndon before he went on the boat. Then he took me round the place to show it to me. It's a jolly place. I've had a ripping afternoon, Ernie!"

"Good!"

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

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

"No. Why?"

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

"Of course."

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

"No."

Frank looked considerably discouraged.

That something was wrong with his major he could sense, and evidently it concerned himself and his trip as Talbot's guest to Southampton. But what it was he had no idea. Ernie could hardly take exception to Talbot. Hadn't he said that he admired the Toff, and considered him a decent fellow? What was it, then?

Anxiously the fag searched his brother's face for an answer, but Ernest Levison's expression was inscrutable. He had a far-away look in his eyes, as though the fag's presence was a matter of very little interest to him.

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

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

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

"Oh, yes."

Another pause.

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

"I—I say, Ernie—"

"Well?"

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

"No. Why should I?"

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

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

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

"Please yourself."

"I—I thought you'd like me to go with Talbot," said Frank, in a low voice. "It was jolly kind of him. I—I wouldn't have gone if I'd known you were going to be rusty about it. I don't see why you should."

"Oh, rot!"

"Do—do—do you want me to come with you to



Levison gave a violent start as a dark shadow loomed before him in the gloom. "Ernie!" whispered a voice. The Fourth Former gasped with relief as he recognised his brother's voice. "You little cad!" he snarled. "Are you spying on me?"

see the match at Abbotsford, when it comes off?" said Frank.

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

"When is it?"

"This afternoon."

"Oh!" said Frank. He began to understand now. "I didn't know it was to-day, Ernie. Did you look for me?"

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

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

"The date was in the local paper."

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

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

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

"Then there's no harm done!"

"I—I'm sorry!"

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

Frank looked at his brother. Levison puffed away at the cigarette, and stared into the fire.

Frank went slowly to the door again. This time he did not turn back. He left the study, and closed the door behind him.

Levison shrugged his shoulders, and lighted a fresh cigarette.

Frank felt miserable as he went down the passage. All the happiness of that afternoon was blotted out now. He had unwittingly offended his major, and Levison, in his sulky temper, was evidently determined to make the most of the offence.

A cheery voice hailed the fag as he passed Study No. 6.

"What's the twouble, deah boy?"

"Eh? Nothing!" said Frank quickly. And he hurried on before the good-natured swell of St. Jim's could ask any further questions.

His little face was clouded as he came back into the Third Form Room.

The fags' evening prep was over, and Mr. Selby was gone.

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

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

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

"He looked very ratty," grinned Joe Frayne. "As 'e been lickin' you, young Levison?"

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

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

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

"Will you, by gum?" said Hobbs.

"Yes, I will."

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

And the next moment there was a terrific combat raging in the Third Form Room. And when

the Third went up to their dormitory, both Levison minor and Hobbs showed traces of war, and exchanged glances of mutual defiance.

CHAPTER 8.

The Downward Path!

LEVISON'S reform had caused a considerable amount of surprise among the fellows who knew him.

Most of them had wondered how long it would last; and the general opinion was that it would not last long.

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

It had not lasted long.

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

Levison's new keenness on footer, and his improvement generally, had caused Tom Merry & Co. to come round, and they had been quite prepared to welcome Levison. At his best, he was a valuable player for the House, and Tom Merry was ready to let bygones be bygones, and give Levison his fair share in the games.

That outbreak, however, chilled Tom; and from that time he let the black sheep of the Fourth severely alone.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had been quite cordial to Levison since the surprising new leaf had been turned over, did not take the trouble to conceal his utter scorn and disgust, and he never spoke to the cad of the Fourth if he could help it.

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

Even with his minor, Levison was not on good terms.

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

It was over now.

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

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

Levison, in his sulky and resentful mood, felt that everybody was down on him, and he looked for friends where he was certain of finding them.

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

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

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

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

Neither did Frank see much of Talbot of the Shell. His excursion to Southampton with Talbot seemed to be the cause of all the trouble, unreasonable as it was. But Frank could not help suspecting that his major had chosen to be ratty about that as an excuse for his own conscience. He was tired of the path of reform, and he wanted



Detective Kerr Investigates

No. 13.

Who Took D'Arcy's Wallet?

ONE half-holiday, seeing two big cabin planes on Wayland Aerodrome, Blake, D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby suddenly resolved to go up. They were loaded with footer gear, a match arranged at Wayland having been put off at the last moment; but, seeing Baggy Trimble, Blake & Co. dumped their gear for Trimble to look after and ran for one of the planes, both of which were doing five-bob flips. After an enjoyable flight, the juniors collected their belongings—but Gussy discovered his pocket wallet had gone. Trimble hastily disclaimed all responsibility, and at that moment "Detective" Kerr, with Figgins and Wynn, strolled on the scene.

TRIMBLE: I say, Kerr, here's a fine chance for you to investigate!

KERR: Why, what's the matter, Trimble?

TRIMBLE: This rotter D'Arcy accuses me of pinching his wallet.

D'ARCY: Bai Jove, I have done nothin' of the kind. I was merely askin' you, Twimble, if you had seen any suspicious chawactahs around whilst we were flyin'—

TRIMBLE: No, I didn't. And I think you were a careless idiot to leave money in your sports blazer, anyway! Anybody might have seen the wallet sticking out of the breast pocket and hooked it out.

KERR: Likely enough. Where were you whilst these fellows were up in the air, Trimble?

TRIMBLE: In the buffet most of the time, after I'd watched that other plane taxi over to the hangar. Blake just dumped their kit at my feet, and told me to guard it, as though I were Herries' bulldog, or something! Like your cheek, Blake, if you ask me!

BLAKE: Shall I wring his neck now, Gussy, or wait till Kerr has finished questioning him?

KERR: Actually, I shouldn't think Trimble is a thief.

TRIMBLE: Of course I'm not!

BLAKE: Well, no. Trimble is every kind of a sneaking, spying toad; but I agree with you, Kerr, he isn't a thief.

a pretext for throwing it up. Certainly, spotless conduct for several weeks must have been a strain on Levison.

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

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

Levison had always been the most reckless of the black sheep, but his recklessness now rather

KERR: Think hard, Trimble! Did you see anybody whatsoever near the coats and bags you were asked to watch?

TRIMBLE: Yes, I did. I looked out of the buffet once, and saw an aerodrome official looking at the stuff—that chap over there with the sandy moustache. Then I saw a village chap about our own age snooping around, but he disappeared. Oh, there he is—the fellow with the pumple!

KERR: Excuse me, but you saw these fellows dump their gear just now before they went up?

OFFICIAL: Yes. I wondered why they didn't leave it with the baggage clerk. But I suppose they were in a hurry, as that was the last trip of the afternoon.

KERR: You didn't see anybody go near?

OFFICIAL: No. But I was busy elsewhere. Didn't I hear them tell your fat friend to keep an eye on it?

KERR: I believe we've met you before, when we played Grimes and his men at Rylcombe. Isn't your name Perkins?

PERKINS: Yes. What of it?

KERR: Nothing, except that Trimble here says he saw you near our baggage.

PERKINS: Me? I jolly well ain't pinched nothing, if that's what you mean!

KERR: Well, we should hardly like to accuse anybody without evidence. But we thought you might have seen if anybody touched it?

PERKINS: No, I didn't see nothing. I tell you I couldn't have. I went up in that other plane, so I was up in the air at the same time as they were.

KERR: If that's so, Trimble was mistaken in saying he saw you.

PERKINS: Must have been. I saved up specially for that five-bob trip—and I enjoyed it, every minute!

KERR: It's certainly very nice—flying. Quite a thrill, if it's your first flight?

PERKINS: Yes. I'd never been up before. Don't the engines make a noise? Nearly deafened me, they did. Then when she taxied along and suddenly lifted—felt as though my head was going to hit the roof, it did! Thought my head would have burst, too, when the pilot put on a bit of speed. Could hardly get my breath. Still, it was a fine trip. Sorry I didn't see anything of your stuff. Have you missed anything valuable?

KERR: Yes; and, as a matter of fact, I believe we're on the point of finding it!

(Can you spot the thief? The solution is on page 35.)

alarmed his cronies. Racke & Co. wanted to have what they called a good time, but they did not want to run too much risk of being turned out of the school in disgrace.

Levison seemed to delight in risks. He made the juniors stare by walking down the passage with a cigarette in his mouth; though when Lowther humorously called out "Perfect!" from the stairs, the cigarette disappeared fast enough. He would disappear after lessons, and return barely in time for calling-over, and several times

he missed calling-over, and told some story of a puncture to account for his absence.

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

He seemed to be, as Blake remarked, asking for the sack, and when he was called into Mr. Railton's study one evening some of the fellows thought that the hour had come.

Trimble brought the message to Levison with a grinning face.

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

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

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

Levison went jauntily downstairs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You are very kind, sir."

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

"It is ink, sir."

"Show me your hands."

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

Mr. Railton frowned.

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

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

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

Levison obeyed slowly.

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

There was no help for it.

Levison had to turn out the packet of cigarettes and folded sporting paper that he had hoped to keep concealed.

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

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

"Oh, no, sir!" said Levison calmly. "I don't

read that paper. I picked it up to wrap a parcel in."

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, sir."

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

"Yes, sir; that was the case."

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

"Oh!" muttered Levison.

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

"I—I—"

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

"I—I'd been for a long walk, sir."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing."

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

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

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

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

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

"Thank you, sir!" muttered Levison.

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

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

"Ernie!" he panted.

Levison looked at him with a sardonic grin.

"Well?" he said.

"Have you—have you—"
 "Have I been found out?" grinned Levison.
 "No; only suspected. The chopper has not come down."
 "Oh, Ernie," faltered Frank, "if you'd only—"
 "For goodness' sake don't give me any blether!" snapped Levison irritably. And he walked on, leaving his minor dumb.

CHAPTER 9.

The Last Appeal!

RACKE and Crooke were waiting for Levison in their study when he came back.

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

"It's all serene!" said Levison, lighting a cigarette. "Railton is suspicious, that's all."
 "I think it's time we drew in our horns a bit," said Crooke uneasily. "What did Railton have to say?"

"He's heard that St. Jim's chaps have been seen hanging round Joliffe's place, and he thinks I know something about it."
 "He didn't mention us?"

"Not at all. I fancy he's got an eye in your direction though."

"We'd better be a bit careful, then," said Racke.

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

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

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

"He might now he's suspicious."
 "You can leave a dummy in your bed."

"Suppose he found it there?"

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

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

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

"Funk!" said Levison.
 Racke shrugged his shoulders, and quitted the room with Crooke.

Racke was a good deal bigger rascal than Levison of the Fourth, but he was cautious.

Piggott of the Third looked into the study a little later.

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

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

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



PROFESSOR SKIMPOLE'S HOROSCOPE

This Week:

DICK REDFERN.

LEADER of the New House trio known as the New Firm, second only in renown to Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, Dick Redfern struck me as having interesting potentialities. He asked me to go and see him in the New House at any time, but warned me to inform any fellow who intercepted me that I was there as a visitor, by special invitation, and not as a School House man intent on a "rag." Pratt, French, and Digges each challenged me before I reached "Reddy's" study, but I was permitted to pass.

I learned from Redfern that his birthday falls in the period from April 21st to May 20th, making him a Taurian, and placing him under Mars, of fiery portent. The horoscope points to one who is brave as can be, restless, challenging, an energetic seeker after the truth. Frequent changes seem to be indicated, though success appears certain. I can imagine Redfern as a free-lance journalist achieving much fame.

"I'm glad you mentioned free-lancing, Skimpole," admitted Redfern. "As a matter of fact, it is one of my dearest ambitions to win fame through the medium of the Press. I really feel I've a gift in that direction. I have actually had one or two small successes with the local papers already." "I was unaware of it, Redfern," I replied, "but it certainly bears out what I have been saying. May I wish you the best of luck in the future?"

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

His studymates came in to do their prep. Levison was finished first, and he left the study. He found his minor in the window-seat in the passage.

Frank jumped up as the Fourth Former came by.

"Ernie, I want to speak to you."
 "You can save your breath," said Levison coolly.

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

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

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

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

"You mean, he's afraid I should give him away if I got nailed!" said Levison contemptuously.

"Well, I shouldn't."
 "Perhaps that was it," said Frank. "But—but anyway, what he says is true, Ernie. I—I don't

want to say anything about what you've been doing—"

"You'd better not!"

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

"He won't."

"But he might. Piggott thinks he's got his eye on you and all your friends."

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

"Then—then you are really going to that rotten place, Ernie?" said Frank.

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

"Ernie!"

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

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

But it was not only the reckless rascality of it that shocked Frank. There was the danger.

Levison either could not or would not see the danger, but the fag realised it only too clearly. He was determined to carry out his project for that night. Frank knew it, and his heart was heavy. There was no sleep for Levison minor when the Third went to bed.

CHAPTER 10.

Forewarned!

"**B**AI Jove! Is that a burglah?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked that question drowsily as he raised himself on his elbow in bed.

It was very dark in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House.

Half-past ten had struck.

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

"Who's that?"

"Don't jaw, you ass!"

"Bai Jove!"

A grunt was the only response.

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

"Mind your own business!"

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

There was no reply, but the door closed softly. Levison had left the dormitory.

Arthur Augustus, with a sniff of contempt and disgust, laid his head upon the pillow again, and was back in the land of dreams in a couple of minutes.

Levison, with his boots in his hand, stole into the dark passage. Downstairs there were still lights in the masters' rooms and in some of the Sixth Form studies. But all the junior portion of the House had long been in bed, and were supposed to be fast asleep.

Levison crept silently down the passage towards

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the box-room. He gave a violent start as a dark shadow loomed up before him in the gloom.

He backed away hastily.

"Ernie!"

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

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

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

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

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

"So you think you can frighten me, you funky



Railton gave a start as the light from the lamp fell on dark hair visible above the coverlet. It s

little fool!" sneered Levison. "Let me pass, hang you! Let go my arm!"

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

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

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

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

Frank reeled there, breathless, and Levison disappeared in the darkness.

There was a faint sound of a closing door. Levison had gone into the box-room, from which window he could reach the ground.

The fag remained in the passage, his heart throbbing wildly. His anxiety for his brother amounted almost to terror. He had seen the Housemaster in consultation with the prefects, and his anxious heart had led him to connect that

grave consultation with his brother. What if a watch was being kept?

There was a sound of a movement below, and Frank's heart throbbed again.

Levison was gone—long gone. Frank heard the great door in the quadrangle open. Who was out of the School House at that hour? His terror for his brother revived in double force.

He crept on tiptoe to the stairs, and, keeping out of sight, peered down into the dimly lighted hall. It was Kildare of the Sixth who had come in, and his face was very grave.

Mr. Railton met him in the passage; Frank, peering through the banisters, could see the top of the Housemaster's head. Kildare was speaking.

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

"You are certain of that, Kildare?"



1. He had expected to find it empty, but the junior's black sheep had not broken bounds after all.

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

Levison minor trembled.

"Who was it?" asked the Housemaster quietly.

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

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

Frank's heart had almost ceased to beat.

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

The blow had fallen!

Levison, outside the walls of St. Jim's, could not return without being discovered, even if he knew his danger. Had he seen the prefect on the watch? Possibly he had caught sight of Kildare, but then it was too late to clumb back into the box-room. He was out off from retreat; when he returned, he would find the Housemaster waiting for him.

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

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

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

Levison minor had a few minutes. He opened the dormitory door slightly, passed in, and closed it behind him.

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

Frank knew his brother's bed.

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

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

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

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

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

It was quite probable that the deception would pass muster.

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

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

The door swung open.

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

Mr. Railton advanced into the dormitory carrying a lamp, his face very grave and stern. He glanced along the row of white beds, and noted that each of them appeared to contain

the form of a sleeper. But that was not quite enough for the Housemaster; he was quite prepared to find a dummy in the bed of the absentee. There was a startled ejaculation from Blake when he woke up.

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

"Mr. Railton!" ejaculated Blake.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus drowsily. "I thought that wotah Levison had gone out. Good-night, deah boys!"

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

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

CHAPTER 11. Levison Plays Up!

THERE was a cautious sound of an opening door—a cautious footfall.

An hour had passed. Levison of the Fourth had returned.

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

Levison started back.

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

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

"Railton!"

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

"And he found—"

"No. He took me for you."

"Good heavens!" muttered Levison.

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

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Levison stood motionless.

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

"Yes."

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

"Get into bed, Ernie!" muttered Frank.

He knew very well why the box-room was not watched. He knew that Mr. Railton at that moment was in the Third Form dormitory, waiting for the supposed delinquent to return.

"I—I say, Franky"—Levison's voice was husky—"you're a little brick to do this for me—a real brick! My hat! The game would have been up, and no mistake! I—I'm sorry I—I punched you in the passage; I didn't mean to—"

"It's all right, Ernie!"

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

"I wouldn't, Ernie."

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

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

"Good-night, kid!"

Frank smiled miserably in the darkness.

"Good-night, Ernie!"

Levison of the Fourth drew the bedclothes over him. His heart almost stood still as he thought of the narrowness of his escape.

The black, sulky mood had passed, the hard heart had melted, and he felt bitter remorse for the savage harshness he had shown to the loyal little fellow whose affections had never faltered. And Levison did not yet know that his remorse had come too late.

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

The fag reached his own quarters. The door was ajar, and a dim light burned within.

Mr. Railton was seated, grimly patient, upon the vacant bed. Most of the fags were awake, looking on with scared faces.

The Housemaster rose as Levison minor came in.

"So you have returned, Levison minor?"

His voice was like iron.

"Yes, sir."

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

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

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

Frank did not answer.

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

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

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

"All the fags regarded him curiously.
"So you went out on the tiles, Levison minor?" grinned Piggott. "There'll be an awful row now."

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

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

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

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

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

After breakfast, as the St. Jim's fellows streamed out into the quadrangle, Mr. Selby told the fag harshly to go to the Head's study.

Levison minor made his way to that dreaded apartment with faltering steps.

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, sir."
"For what reason did you leave the House?"

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

"No, sir."
"Where did you go?"

Silence.
"Come, Levison minor, I am not unwilling to believe that you broke bounds for some less harmful reason than would appear at first."

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

The Head's brows contracted.
"Does that mean, Levison minor, that you refuse to explain your conduct to your head-master?" The Head's tone was very ominous.

"I—I haven't done anything wrong, sir," muttered Frank. "I—I haven't done anything to be ashamed of."

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

(Continued on page 22.)

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Silence.

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

"Yes, sir," said Frank dully.

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

Frank shook his head.

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

The Housemaster left the study.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Levison stood rooted to the floor for a moment.

"There must be some mistake," said Talbot of the Shell. "Hallo, where are you going, Levison?"

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

Dr. Holmes had taken up the birch, and Taggles had hoisted the fag on his back.

The Head gave Levison a terrific look as he rushed into the study in that unceremonious manner.

"Levison!" he thundered.

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

"Leave this room at once!"

"Get out, Ernie," muttered Frank. "I can stand it!"

"You can't and shan't!" said Levison, between his teeth. "Dr. Holmes! My minor was not out of bounds last night. I can prove it. It was another fellow, and I know who it was."

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

"It was I, sir."

"What?"

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

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

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

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

The Housemaster blinked.

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

"Levison was in bed at the time, sir. I saw him there. I fear he is speaking falsely to save his brother," said Mr. Railton.

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

"Bless my soul!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, sir."

"For what reason?"

"To play the fool, sir."

The Head coughed.

"You know what to expect, Levison?"

Levison drew a deep breath.

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

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

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

Levison was rather pale as he came out of the Head's study, and his lips were tightly set.

The juniors looked at him curiously.

"Ernie," said Frank, "what——"

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

There was a laugh.

"Well, I'm glad, for one," said Tom Merry.

"It was jolly decent of you to own up!"

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

"Thank you for nothing, fathead!"

"Bai Jove!"

Levison walked away with his minor. He was lucky to get another chance—and he knew that he had only his brother to thank for it.

It was a turning point in Levison's life, but what would come of it only the future could tell.

(Next Wednesday: "SHERLOCK GRUNDY, ESQ.")

A Fugitive from Justice, Rufus Slimmey Tries to Escape the Penalty of His Crimes by Taking His Brother's Place.

THE SCHOOLBOY'S SHOW-DOWN!

"Send your brother away—or I'll tell the Mounties you're hiding him." Frank Richards delivers his ultimatum, never doubting that the man before him is Paul Slimmey, the master of Cedar Creek School.

by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Mum's the Word!

"RICHARDS!"

Frank Richards started, and coloured as Miss Meadows spoke in severe tones.

"Yes, ma'am," he stammered.

"I asked you a question, Richards," said the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek severely.

"Ye-es, ma'am."

"The name of the British commander at the Battle of Quebec?" rapped out Miss Meadows.

"Rufus Slimmey, ma'am."

"What?"

Miss Meadows uttered that ejaculation in tones of astonishment, as well she might. There was a loud chortle from the Cedar Creek fellows at Frank Richards' reply.

Frank's face was crimson. He did not mean to be inattentive during the history lesson, for he was one of Miss Meadows' most painstaking

pupils. But that morning his thoughts were wandering, in spite of himself.

His glance rested almost incessantly upon Mr. Slimmey, the master of the junior class, who was busy in another part of the big log school-room.

Mr. Paul Slimmey was not, as a rule, particularly interesting. But matters were not quite as usual that morning.

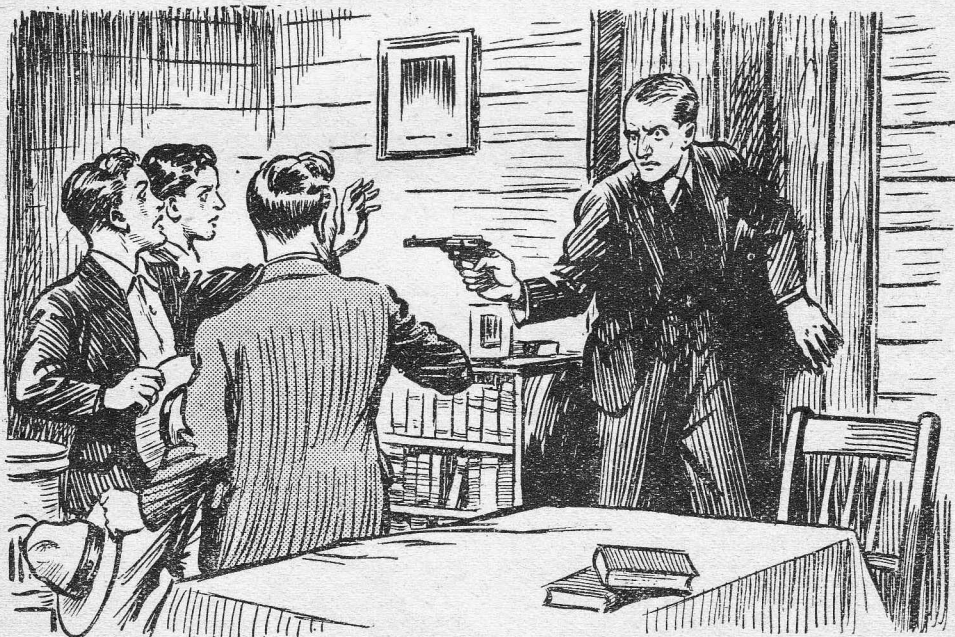
"I—I'm sorry, ma'am," stammered Frank. "I—I mean General Wolfe, ma'am."

"You must not think of other matters during lesson-time, Richards."

"N-n-no."

"I will excuse you as lessons have been interrupted this morning by the visit of Sergeant Lasalle," said Miss Meadows severely. "But you must be more careful, Richards."

Frank Richards tried to keep his attention on the lesson, but it was not easy work. He was glad



One glance at the schoolboy's startled face told the adventurer his secret was discovered. "Look out!" Frank Richards yelled, as the crook leapt to the door and jerked up his revolver. "That is not Mr. Slimmey—it's his brother, Rufus!"

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when morning classes were dismissed and he was able to escape from the school-room.

Frank came out with his chums, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc, in the crowd of Cedar Creek fellows.

There was a buzz of discussion around him. Only one topic just then was of interest to the schoolboys—the visit of Sergeant Lasalle, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to the lumber school.

The sergeant had come in quest of Rufus Slimmey, the twin brother of Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master. And the resemblance between the twin brothers very nearly led him to arrest Miss Meadows' assistant master in the school-room.

Mr. Slimmey, with his somewhat vacant face and big glasses, was regarded with good-humoured toleration by the Cedar Creek fellows. It was a startling revelation that the quiet and unassuming young man's brother was a fugitive from justice, sought for by the Mounted Police.

"Poor old Slimmey!" said Chunky Todgers compassionately. "This must be a big shock to him."

"There he goes," murmured Dick Dawson.

All eyes were turned upon Mr. Slimmey as he left the log schoolhouse and walked towards the cabin by the creek. Mr. Slimmey walked straight on, looking neither to the right nor to the left. He did not appear to observe the curious glances on all sides of him.

"And there's the sergeant!" said Lawrence.

"Still on the trail!" grinned Hacke.

The big, athletic figure in the uniform of the Mounties loomed up in the gateway.

Sergeant Lasalle's eyes were resting on Mr. Slimmey as he walked towards his cabin, not suspiciously, but very searchingly.

Mr. Slimmey's resemblance to the photograph of Rufus Slimmey was still evidently in the sergeant's mind. Save for the fact that Mr. Slimmey was clean shaven and wore glasses, that resemblance was exact.

Only Miss Meadows' positive assurance that Mr. Slimmey had been her assistant master for over a year had convinced the sergeant that he had not, after all, found the man of whom he was in search.

Frank Richards sauntered down to the creek with his chums, leaving the other fellows still engaged in excited discussion. Frank's face was clouded and troubled.

"This is rotten, you chaps," he said, when they were out of hearing of the others.

"I guess it is," assented Bob Lawless. "I wondered what was going to happen when the sergeant was questioning Slimmey in the school-room."

"And I," said Beauclerc. "I did not think Mr. Slimmey would tell a lie. But from what you've told us, Frank—"

Frank nodded.

"That's what beats me," he said. "Mr. Slimmey denied, point-blank, having seen or heard from his brother. And I told you fellows how I happened to hear them talking in the timber yesterday. There was no mistake about it, it was Slimmey and his brother Rufus. The man did come here—and Slimmey knows it. He met him and spoke to him. He told him he wouldn't help him certainly. But—"

"He can't be expected to give his own brother away to the police," remarked Bob Lawless.

"I know! But it was rotten, all the same, and

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it's so unlike Slimmey, too," said Frank. "It beats me! Slimmey is rather an ass, but I always thought he was the soul of honour."

"It beats me, too," said Beauclerc thoughtfully. "Slimmey seems rather queer to-day, in more ways than one. He was even forgetting the names of the kids in his class. And he had forgotten all about the Latin lesson he gives you once a week in his cabin, Frank."

"Yes; I shall have to see him about that some time. I suppose it's worry," said Frank Richards. "Look here, you fellows, we shall have to keep mum about what we know. It's horrid, Slimmey having lied to Mr. Lasalle like that, but—but we're not going to show him up."

"Shove it out of your mind and come out in the canoe," said Bob Lawless cheerily. "No good thinking about it."

Bob Lawless' advice was too good not to be taken. But as they paddled the canoe on the shining creek, Frank Richards could not wholly dismiss the matter from his mind. Rufus Slimmey haunted his thoughts.

A Desperate Game!

MR. SLIMMEY entered his cabin and the door closed behind him. As he had crossed the school ground the young man's manner had been indifferent, and he had not appeared to observe the many glances that were turned upon him, or the fact that the big sergeant was eyeing him from the distance.

But immediately the cabin door was closed the indifference dropped from him. He moved to the little window, and, without removing the curtain, peered out towards the schoolhouse. In the distant gateway the big sergeant was still visible, talking now to a trooper of the Mounted Police.

He drew a deep breath.

Then, leaving the window, he placed the bar in the sockets at the door, and unlocked the door of the inner room.

On the camp-bed the figure of a man lay stretched. He was bound to the bed and securely gagged. He could move nothing but his eyes, which fastened at once upon the man who came in with a burning glance.

If Sergeant Lasalle could have looked into the room he would have had no doubt that he was hot upon the track of the fugitive from Vancouver. For the bound man on the bed was the exact counterpart of the man who stood gazing moodily down upon him.

"You are not looking happy, Brother Paul!" The man's lips curled sardonically as he looked down at his prisoner. "Hang you! Why couldn't you give me the help I asked? I might have been safe now. But I would rather be in your position than mine, hang you!"

The bound man's eyes burned at him.

"But I guess I shall play the game out. I've managed to get through morning lessons." He laughed. "What would they say if they knew that their teacher was Rufus Slimmey, robber and outcast, hunted by the Mounties? I've faced the sergeant himself, my dear brother, and your kind headmistress bore witness that I had been a master in this school for a year or more! She takes me for you, my dear Paul, as everyone else does!"

Rufus Slimmey laughed mockingly. But his reckless insouciance could not conceal the anxiety that was gnawing him.

"Paul, listen to me!" he went on more

seriously. "If I free you, will you help me? Close your eyes if you mean 'Yes.'"

Paul Slimmey's eyes remained wide open, gleaming.

The adventurer made an angry gesture.

"You fool! Do you want to stay tied up here for days without food, without drink? That's what it means."

Still there was no sign from the prisoner.

"Listen, Paul! There is a boy here named Frank Richards, to whom you give private lessons. Will you tell me the details if I remove your gag, so that I can ward him off?"

The steady stare of the bound man did not waver.

"Very well. Remain as you are! Starve, for all I care! I shall play the game out without your help!"

He quitted the room and locked the door, putting the key into his pocket. He removed the bars from the outer door, and he had barely done so when there came a tap on the outside.

For a moment the adventurer's face went white. But with a steady hand he threw open the door, and looked over his spectacles at the tall figure of the Canadian sergeant without.

Rufus Slimmey was quite himself again now. His face was calm, and he looked at the big sergeant with polite inquiry.

"These are your quarters, I think?" said Sergeant Lasalle.

"Yes, that is so. Will you step in?"

Sergeant Lasalle entered. Only the board wall separated him from the room where the gagged prisoner lay bound. But the door of the bed-room was closed, and it was not evident that it was locked. There was nothing to excite the sergeant's suspicions.

"Well," said Mr. Slimmey, "I am quite at your service, sergeant. Believe me, if I could do anything to help you, you would not need to ask."

"You are not on friendly terms with your brother Rufus?" the sergeant remarked, his eyes on the young man's face.

"Not in the least. He has always been my enemy as well as his own."

"Yet he has fled to this place."

"Is that certain?" asked Mr. Slimmey.

"Quite certain. He has been traced on this side of the town of Thompson. Certainly he has been within five miles of the school."

Mr. Slimmey looked troubled.

"Then I suppose he means to see me," he said slowly. "I can guess his intention, I think. I—I admit, sergeant, that I am not a man of resolute character, and on a previous occasion Rufus extorted money from me by threats. But I have not seen him yet."

"And if you should see him—"

"I shall give information at once, of course. He has forfeited all the claims of a brother upon me."

"Thank you, Mr. Slimmey! If you wish to communicate with me, you can do so at Gunten's store, in Thompson."

"You are going back to Thompson, then?"

"It does not seem much use remaining here."

The sergeant was disappointed. There was a vague suspicion in his mind that Rufus Slimmey was concealed in the vicinity, assisted by his brother.

But he scanned Mr. Slimmey's face in vain for any sign of relief at his announced intention to depart. Instead of looking relieved, Mr. Slimmey had an anxious expression.

"Of course, you know your own business best, Sergeant Lasalle," he said hesitatingly; "but—but, in case the ruffian should come here, attempting to see me, wouldn't it be best for you to remain near at hand?"

The sergeant's lip curled involuntarily.

"I will think that over, Mr. Slimmey," he promised.

Mr. Slimmey closed the cabin door after him

(Continued on the next page.)



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and breathed hard. He had played his part well, but there was deep anxiety in his heart.

Frank Richards could not help glancing at Mr. Slimmey when Cedar Creek School assembled for afternoon lessons. The young man came in as usual to take his class. His aspect was quite normal. Frank had expected him to be worried and troubled by the occurrences of the morning, but Mr. Slimmey was quite calm.

His class, however, did not find him quite as usual. It was odd that Mr. Slimmey, who was very short-sighted, and had to peer through his glasses at everything, now wore his spectacles well down his nose and looked over them. Several of his pupils observed that oddity with some curiosity. But the impostor had no choice in the matter. His sight was not defective, and he could not look through lenses designed to assist defective sight. And his forgetfulness, as they deemed it, on the subject of the names of his pupils, afforded the "kids" considerable merriment.

They found, however, that Mr. Slimmey was not so good-tempered and patient as usual. He was decidedly irritable and snappish.

Immediately classes were dismissed Mr. Slimmey went to his cabin. He was anxious to avoid Miss Meadows, whom a chance remark at any time might have made suspicious by betraying his ignorance of many things which Paul Slimmey knew perfectly well.

He was anxious, too, about his prisoner. He had to take the risk of leaving Paul Slimmey unguarded in his cabin, secured only by the locked door of the bed-room. And the sergeant and the trooper were still in the vicinity.

"I suppose I'd better go, you chaps," said Frank Richards dubiously. Once a week Frank stayed for half an hour after lessons to swot with Mr. Slimmey in his cabin, and he had been discussing the master with his chums. "Slimmey put me off yesterday, but I suppose he meant me to stay to-day instead. It would look rather slighting if I let the lessons slide. Only I don't want to bother him while he's worried about that blessed brother of his."

"Well, you can put it to him," said Bob Lawless. "Ask him whether it's convenient."

"I suppose I'd better."

"I guess so."

"We'll wait for you," said Vere Beauclerc. "I dare say you'll get your lesson this time, Franky. Buzz off!"

Frank Richards made his way to the log cabin. He tapped at the door and pushed it, but the door did not open.

Frank could not help feeling surprised. Why Mr. Slimmey should bar his cabin door in the day-time was a mystery.

He tapped again, and heard a hurried movement within, followed by the unmistakable click of a key turning in the lock. A moment or two later the door was opened.

Mr. Slimmey looked out at him, his eyes glittering over his spectacles. Frank, utterly astonished, stood dumb for a moment. Mr. Slimmey had been in the inner room, and he stopped to lock the door before opening the outer door. Frank's glance wandered involuntarily to the inside door.

The key was not to be seen. After locking it Mr. Slimmey had evidently put the key in his pocket.

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"What is it? What are you troubling me for?" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey in sharp and angry tones.

Frank flushed.

"I—I came—"

"What have you come for?"

"I—I— About the lesson, sir," said Frank. "I did not have it yesterday, sir. I don't want to bother you, of course, sir, but I thought I'd better mention it."

"Oh, the lesson!" Mr. Slimmey's face cleared. "I—I am afraid I cannot give you the time this evening, Richards. Another time."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

Mr. Slimmey closed the door in the schoolboy's face.

"Well, my hat!" muttered Frank.

He walked away, surprised and uneasy, suspicion creeping into his mind in spite of himself. His face was so disturbed when he rejoined his chums that Bob and the Cherub looked at him curiously.

"Slimmey seedy again?" asked Bob.

"No. But—"

"What's happened?" asked Beauclerc quietly.

"Blessed if I catch on," said Frank. "I—I can't help thinking that—that—"

He broke off abruptly. He hardly cared to frame in words the dark suspicion that had forced itself into his mind.

"Go ahead!" said Bob. "What's the trouble, old chap? Get it off your chest!"

"I—I say, it's jolly serious, I believe!" said Frank. "The door was barred on the inside when I knocked!"

"What on earth for?"

"Well, it was. Slimmey was in the other room, and when he came to let me in he locked the bed-room door and put the key in his pocket. What the dickens would he do that for?" Frank drew a deep breath. "I've been in Slimmey's cabin lots of times, and he's never done anything of the kind."

"He could only act like that for one reason," said Beauclerc. "He wasn't running any risk of anybody looking into the inner room. It can't be possible that—that—"

Beauclerc paused, startled by his own thoughts.

"He couldn't be ass enough to hide that rascally brother of his in his own cabin!" breathed Bob Lawless.

"I—I couldn't help thinking of it," said Frank. "He lied to the sergeant, and that could only have been to help Rufus Slimmey to keep clear."

Frank Richards compressed his lips.

"I like Slimmey," he said. "I always thought him a good sort. I was for standing by him, even after he lied to the sergeant. But if he's hiding a thief, with his plunder still in his pockets, at this school, the time has come for us to chip in. If he's doing that, he's no better than a criminal himself."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob.

"But what are we going to do?" asked Beauclerc. "If the man's there, we're not going to let him stay there. This school isn't a refuge for criminals."

"No jolly fear!" said Bob Lawless emphatically. "Let's go and put it straight to Mr. Slimmey. Either the man clears off at once, and takes his chance, or else we call the sergeant in. That's fair."

"Come on!" said Frank Richards.

And a few minutes later the chums were at the door of Mr. Slimmey's cabin, with very determined expressions on their faces.

An Amazing Discovery!

FRANK RICHARDS knocked at the cabin door and opened it. This time it was not fastened. Mr. Slimmey was in the room, moving about restlessly. The young master spent much of his leisure time in study, but there was no sign of study in the room now. He swung angrily towards the door as it opened.

"You again, Richards!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"I have told you that I cannot be troubled with you this evening. Is that not plain enough?"

Frank bit his lip.

"Quite, sir. I have not come to speak about the lesson."

"Then what do you want?"

"I will explain, sir. I had better come in."

Frank entered, followed by his chums, watched angrily by Mr. Slimmey. His anger did not deter Frank Richards, however. He had a duty to do, and he had come there to do it.

"Well, what is it?" snapped the man.

"I ought to tell you first, sir, that yesterday I heard you talking in the timber with your brother Rufus," said Frank quietly.

Mr. Slimmey started violently.

"You—you heard——" he gasped.

"Yes. It was quite by accident. I had gone there to mug over my books, when I heard your voices," said Frank. "I never intended to let you know that I had heard you, or knew anything about your brother——"

"My—my brother——"

"Your brother Rufus, the man Sergeant Lasalle is in search of."

"Oh!"

The expression of relief in the man's face puzzled the schoolboy. Frank did not know that for one terrible moment the impostor had feared that the boys knew the whole truth.

"You told the sergeant in the school-room that you had not seen or heard from your brother," went on Frank, in the same steady tone. "It isn't for me to judge you, sir, but that man cannot stay here."

"What—what man?"

"Rufus Slimmey!"

"Are you mad? Do you think he is here?" panted the man.

"I can't help thinking so, sir. I think he's persuaded you somehow to give him shelter here," said Frank. "It can't be done, sir. We all like and respect you, Mr. Slimmey, but we can't keep silent while you hide a thief and criminal in the school. You know what Miss Meadows would say if she knew."

"You—you have not told her this—this ridiculous suspicion——"

"No."

"Don't think we intend to be disrespectful, sir," said Bob Lawless. "But we should be doing wrong if we let him stay here and said nothing. You can see that."

"And we don't want him arrested here," said Beauclerc. "Simply let us know that he is gone, sir, and that ends it as far as we're concerned. We're not asking you to give the man up."

"But—but you're out of your senses!" panted Mr. Slimmey. "Do you imagine for one moment that I have the man hidden in this small cabin?"

"Will you let us glance into the bed-room, sir?"

"The—the bed-room?"

"Yes," said Frank steadily. "If that room's empty, we shall know that we're mistaken, and we'll beg your pardon, sir. If there's no one in the room, you needn't mind us seeing."

"I give you my word, Richards, that Rufus Slimmey is not in that room."

"Will you let us see, sir?"

"Do you dare to doubt my word?"

"You gave the sergeant your word this morning, sir, that you had not seen or heard from your brother, and I had heard you talking to him in the timber," said Frank quietly. "I'm sorry, sir, but we shall have to see into that room, or else——"

"Or else what?"

"Or else we shall have to ask the sergeant to make a search of this cabin, sir."



The man who found the needle in the haystack! Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Robinson, 162, Pixmore Way, Letchworth, Herts.

Frank Richards broke the silence.

"We're sorry to take this line, sir; but you can see for yourself that we couldn't take part in hiding a criminal in the school, for that's what it amounts to if we conceal what we know. Let the man go, and we shall say nothing."

Mr. Slimmey drew a panting breath.

"You—you are mad to suspect such a thing——"

"Will you let us see into the other room?"

"No, I will not. Am I to be dictated to by schoolboys? I shall report this insolence to your parents."

But the attempt at bluster had no effect upon the chums of Cedar Creek. The matter was too serious for that.

"We intend to tell our parents, in any case, sir, unless that man goes," said Bob Lawless. "That cuts no ice, sir. We've got to see that man off."

"If—if I should admit the truth of what you say, will you keep silent?" muttered Slimmey.

"Yes, if the man goes."

"I—I agree, then. Keep silent, and as soon as it is dark, the man shall go. I promise that."

The chums of Cedar Creek looked at one another. It was a complete admission. The man was there. They had been sure of it, yet that complete surrender on the part of the assistant master startled them a little.

"Are you satisfied?" he muttered hoarsely. "I will do as you wish. I—I will pass over your conduct in treating me in this manner. The man shall go to-night. That is a promise."

His face was deadly white, a hunted look was in his eyes. His hand was in his pocket, and the schoolboys knew, from the sagging of the coat, that it was grasping a weapon hidden there.

It was not the Mr. Slimmey they had always known, and there was a vague fear and suspicion in their looks. Mr. Slimmey had never been known to carry a weapon, yet they knew that this man had a revolver hidden in his coat, upon which his fingers had closed convulsively.

What did it all mean? What amazing change had come over the quiet, irresolute man? Why was the hard and desperate look creeping on his pale face?

The distrust they had already felt intensified. His eyes gleamed at them with anxious and savage inquiry.

"Well!" he muttered. "What do you say?"

"That's good enough, sir," said Frank, after a long pause. "Let the man clear off. We don't want to have a hand in arresting your brother. The sergeant can take the money he has stolen. That can be arranged—"

"The money! What do you mean?"

"Sergeant Lasalle told you that he had the stolen money upon him," said Frank. "He cannot take that away with him. We can't agree to be parties to a robbery, sir. If he keeps his liberty he is lucky. He cannot take the stolen money. Let him leave it here, and it can be handed over to the sergeant in some way, to be taken back to Vancouver."

"Agreed! Now go!"

"But the money?" said Frank.

"He shall leave it here."

Frank smiled slightly.

"He is hardly likely to do that at your asking, sir."

"He—he will do as I ask."

"He will not," said Frank quietly. "When I heard you talking in the timber, sir, it did not sound as if he would do as you asked. You asked him to go and leave you in peace. Did he do so? I am sorry, Mr. Slimmey, but—"

Frank Richards paused suddenly.

He started violently as a strange and startling suspicion flashed into his mind. On that occasion, when he had heard the brothers speaking in the timber, there had been a contrast between Paul Slimmey's hesitating tones and the clear, cool, hard voice of the adventurer from Vancouver. The voices had been similar, but the manner of speaking very different.

Unconsciously the impostor, in his anxiety and bitter rage, had spoken without disguising his tones. He was no longer affecting the low voice of the schoolmaster, and back into Frank's mind came the hard, sardonic tones he had heard that day in the timber.

"Good heavens!" muttered Frank, almost dazed by the startling suspicion.

The look on the boy's face was enough for the adventurer. He guessed that Frank Richards knew.

His hand flashed from his pocket now, and a revolver glittered in it.

Frank sprang back.

"Look out!" he shouted. "That is not Mr. Slimmey! That man is Rufus Slimmey!"

With the bound of a tiger, the ruffian reached the cabin door, slammed it shut, and set his back to it. The revolver in his hand rose to a level, gleaming at the startled chums of Cedar Creek.

"Silence!" he hissed.

At Close Quarters!

FRANK RICHARDS gasped. He knew the truth now—Rufus Slimmey's action had left no doubt of it—and his chums knew.

Amazing as it was, they wondered that they had not guessed it before. It was not Mr. Slimmey, but his double. All was clear now.

The resemblance, which had almost made the Canadian sergeant arrest him in the school-room, had enabled Rufus Slimmey to play this trick upon the school.

And the secret of the locked room was that it hid the real Paul Slimmey, not his outcast brother. He was a prisoner there, or— Frank felt a chill as he looked at the desperate face of the outcast. What had happened to the man whose name and place the outcast had taken?

"Silence! One word aloud, and you shall die for it!" hissed Rufus Slimmey. "You shall pay dearly for spying on me!"

"Rufus Slimmey, by gum!" said Bob Lawless dazedly. "Well, carry me home to die! This beats the whole deck!"

"You have found me out!" Rufus Slimmey gritted his teeth. "Mind, I am a desperate man! Your lives will not stand in the way of my freedom!"

"What have you done with your brother?" muttered Frank Richards.

"He is a prisoner, and you will join him while I get clear!" said Rufus Slimmey grimly. "Hold up your hands!"

The chums hesitated.

"You dare not shoot!" said Vere Beauclero quietly and contemptuously. "Sergeant Lasalle is not twenty yards away!"

"I shall take my chance of that! Up with your hands!"

There was a pause, and then the schoolboys obeyed. The ruffian looked desperate enough to shoot, and his liberty was at stake.

"I shall not be taken alive!" said the outcast, between his teeth. "And if I am to swing for a trooper I may as well swing for you! If you value your lives you will give me no trouble. If it were not that that accursed sergeant would hear the shots I would shoot you out of hand!"

He advanced towards them, the revolver still levelled.

"Open that door, Richards!" He flung a key to Frank. "Open the door and get into the next room, all three of you!"

Frank unlocked the bed-room door. Then the three schoolboys backed into the room. The bound man on the bed gave them a look. Paul Slimmey had heard every word that was uttered in the outer room.

For some brief moments, now that the truth

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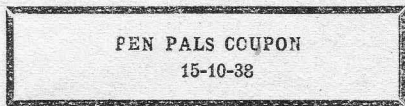
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was known, he had hoped. But the desperate outcast still held the upper hand.

Rufus Slimmey followed them in, and with his left hand placed the key on the inner side of the door and locked it.

"Now I will deal with you!" he said, between his teeth. "I shall leave you bound here while I take my chance. And if you resist, beware! Keep your hands up!"

He drew a cord from his pocket with his left hand.

"Make a noose in that, Richards!"

Frank obeyed.

The outcast threw the noose over Bob Lawless' wrists and drew it together.

Frank was standing close by a stool under the window, and as the ruffian was securing the cord, his hand closed on the stool. It was a desperate chance, for he knew that the man would shoot; but he took it. With a sudden swing of his arm,

the stool was lifted and flung at the same moment.

Crash!

The ruffian spun round towards him, the revolver up; but the whizzing stool struck him at the same moment, and he reeled.

Crack!

The pistol-shot filled the little room with deafening sound. But the bullet flew into the plank ceiling. The next moment Vere Beauclerc drove his fist under the chin of the staggering man, and Rufus Slimmey went with a crash to the floor.

Beauclerc was upon him in a second, and he kicked the revolver from the rascal's hand before he could pull the trigger again. Frank Richards was only a second behind, and as Rufus Slimmey struggled up, Frank hurled himself upon him and bore him to the floor again.

"Back up!" panted Frank.

(Continued on page 36).

**BOOKED FOR A RAGGING, HIS CAPTAINCY AT STAKE, VERNON DAUBENY,
THE LEADER OF THE BUCKS, HAS TO DO SOME QUICK THINKING.**



"You're afraid to stand up for yourself," accused Daubeny. "What?" howled Drake. The dandy made a sudden lunge forward, and his open hand fell across Drake's face. "Now put up your fists!" he said between clenched teeth.

Facing the Music!

"**D** AUBENY!"
"Come out!"
Bang!

Vernon Daubeny of the Shell listened to the uproar outside his study, with a troubled brow.

The door was locked, and the study table was jammed against it for additional security. Within the study, Daubeny & Co. listened and looked at one another.

There were five fellows in the room—Daubeny, Egan, Torrence, Chilcot, and Chetwynd. They were all members of the junior eleven—the inglorious eleven that had been beaten that afternoon by six goals to nil. The other six members were scattered somewhere in the recesses of the old Benbow—keeping out of sight. Daubeny & Co. had fled from the wrath of their schoolfellows to come to Study No. 3 in the Shell, and locked themselves in. It was a terrible humiliation for the great Daub; but it was better than the ragging that was waiting for him outside.

"Come out!"

"Let us in, Daub!" squeaked the voice of Tuckey Toodles through the keyhole. "Let us in, you worm! I'm going to scalp you, Daub!"

Daubeny gritted his teeth.

So low was he fallen that even the fat and grubby Toodles ventured to lift the heel against him. Tuckey Toodles, who had trembled at his frown, who had lurked round his doorway, many a time and oft, in the hope of being asked in to a feed—even Toodles dared to be down on him.

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DAUB'S WAY OUT!

By Owen Conquest.

"Oh gad!" muttered Daubeny.
"Precious state of affairs!" growled Egan.
"Look here, Daub, what's goin' to be done?"
"Yell for the prefects!" suggested Torrence.
"That'll only put it off, even if they come!" said Chetwynd of the Fourth. "Look here, those fellows are right in a way! Daub oughtn't to have got St. Winny's licked as he did. He chucked the match away. All the chaps know it—Daub knows it. Let them rag you, Daub! You've asked for it!"

"Why, you—you—" stuttered Daubeny.
"Chet's right," said Chilcot. "They'll be busting in the door soon. Let them in, Daub!"
Daubeny stared speechlessly at his chums.

It was true that he had thrown away the Highcliffe match through his obstinate determination to play his knotty pals instead of fellows who could play football. But it was rather hard for his pals to round on him like this, now that it was time to pay the piper.

"Oh, draw it mild!" murmured Torrence.

Jack Drake finds the lackadaisical skipper of the junior team a crafty opponent when he tries to clean up St. Winifred's footer.

"We're bound to stand by old Daub. He stood by us!"

"Oh, quite!" said Egan.

Bang! Thump!

Jack Drake's voice came through the door.

"Are you going to let us in, Daub?"

"No, hang you!" said the junior captain of St. Winifred's between his teeth.

"We'll bust the door!"

"Go and eat coke!"

Bang!

Thump!

"They mean business!" said Egan, who was rather pale. "Why, it's a regular riot! The fellows have never cut up rusty like this before!"

"It's all Drake's doing—and Rodney's!" muttered Daubeny. "Look here, this is a bit too rotten—hidin' in a study! After all, I'm junior skipper. You fellows back me up and we'll rush them!"

"Catch us!" said Chilcot.

"No jolly fear!"

Bang!

Vernon Daubeny drew a deep breath. He could hear the sound of some instrument at work on the lock outside; the study door would not protect him long.

He looked round scornfully at his chums.

"Are you goin' to back me up?" he asked. "We've got more of the fellows on our side than Drake's crowd; we've only to call them together and—"

"Rats!"

"It's you they want," said Chetwynd sulkily. "You've no right to drag us into it!"

"I—I—"

"Look at the way you pitched away the game," said Chetwynd. "You dropped Drake from the team—the only good man we had, excepting myself, perhaps!"

"You!" shouted Daub. "You played like a goat!"

"Well, who put me in the team, then?" said Chetwynd sulkily.

"I was a fool to play you, I know that!"

"You always were a fool, Daub!" retorted Chetwynd.

"There's something in what Chetwynd says," remarked Egan. "Here's a chance for you to be heroic, Daub—give yourself up as a giddy scape-goat, you know!"

Daubeny did not answer. Not only was his captaincy trembling in the balance, but he was in danger of losing his position as chief of his own select followers.

He turned to the door and began to drag away the table. His comrades watched him rather uneasily.

"What are you going to do?" muttered Torrence.

Without a word, Daubeny hurled the table aside, and turned the key in the lock. Then he threw the study door wide open.

"Come out!" The juniors in the passage were yelling. "Daubeny, come out, you rotter!"

The sudden opening of the door took the besiegers by surprise. The yell died away suddenly.

Vernon Daubeny stepped out into the passage.

"Here I am!" he said.

The next moment the door slammed behind Daubeny, and Chetwynd turned the key in the lock again. Evidently the bucks of St. Winifred's were not disposed to follow their leader. Daubeny stood with his back to the locked door, facing the excited mob of juniors in the passage.

Very Deep of Daub!

JACK DRAKE of the Fourth stepped forward. Daubeny met him with a steely look.

"So you've come out!" said Drake.

"Did you think I was afraid to?" said Daubeny contemptuously.

"Well, rather!"

"It looked a bit like it, locking yourself up in the study!" chuckled Tuckey Toodles. "Yah!"

Smack!

Daubeny smote suddenly, and Tuckey Toodles went spinning. He landed on his back with a bump and a roar.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tuckey Toodles sat up quite dazedly. His companions roared with laughter. The sudden downfall of the warlike Tuckey struck them as funny.

"Yow-ow-ow!" howled Toodles. "Wow! Collar him! Rag him! Wow!"

"You collar him, Tuckey!" grinned Estcourt.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" was Tuckey's reply.

"Now I want to know what this thumping row means!" said Daubeny, speaking quite coolly.

The chief of the bucks had already recovered some of his old ascendancy. The St. Winifred's juniors admired pluck; and there was no doubt that Daubeny had shown plenty of pluck in stepping alone from the shelter of the study to face the excited mob—while his worthy followers locked him out and left him to his fate.

The juniors held back.

"You know what it means," said Jack Drake quietly. "You were warned that if your dud team threw away the Highcliffe match, you'd be put through it. Now the time's come!"

"And what are you goin' to do?"

"Rag you bald-headed," answered Drake at once. "You're going to have the frogs-march, and run the gauntlet; and we're going to parade you on deck with a fool's cap on your head!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Collar him!" yelled Toodles.

There was a move forward.

Daubeny's heart beat faster.

He deserved the ragging—he was well aware of that. Jack Drake's followers had swelled in number since the woeful exhibition on Little Side that afternoon. Even without Drake and Rodney to take the lead, there would probably have been trouble for the bucks. Now more than two-thirds of the Lower School had risen against Daubeny—his star was on the wane.

But he did not give up hope by any means.

"Anythin' else?" he asked, with a coolness that made an impression on the juniors in spite of their wrath.

"Yes, something more," said Drake. "After you've been through it, there's going to be a meeting and an election to settle whether you keep the captaincy. I don't think you'll keep it."

"Not likely—after this!" said Dick Rodney.

"And that's all?" asked Daubeny.

"That's all."

"Collar the cad!" howled Toodles, keeping behind Drake, however. "Why don't you collar him?"

"Hold on a minute!" said Daubeny, with the same coolness. "Let a chap speak a word for himself."

"What have you got to say?" demanded Rodney.

"Nothin' to you," answered Daubeny, with a curl of the lip. "This is between Drake and I. Drake's got up this riot because I dropped him from the team."

"That's not true," said Drake at once.

"And because I've dropped his acquaintance," said Daubeny, with a sneer. "Because I don't choose to consort with shabby bounders."

Drake flushed.

"If that's all you've got to say——" he began.

"There's a little more. If there's an election for captain, I'm quite aware who's goin' to put up against me," sneered Daubeny. "You've got it all cut and dried, of course. And you want it at once, before the fellows have had time to think. You want the Lower School to take part in a personal quarrel between us—because you're afraid to stand up for yourself!"

"What!"

Daubeny made a sudden stride forward and struck at Drake's face.

"Now put up your hands!" he said, between his teeth. "The other fellows can see fair play."

Drake staggered from the sudden drive. The next moment he was springing forward.

Rodney caught him by the arm.

"Hold on!"

"Let me go!" shouted Drake.

"Hold on, I tell you! Can't you see that cad wants to turn this into a fight with you instead of a school ragging?"

"I don't care! Let him have his way, then!" exclaimed Drake. "How long do you think that smoky cad will stand up to me, anyhow?"

"But—"

"I'm ready," said Daubeny, with an evil smile. "How long are you going to hide behind Rodney, Drake?"

Drake shook off his chum's detaining hand.

"Come on!" he said between his teeth.

"A ring!" exclaimed Sawyer major. "Stand back, you fellows! Give them room!"

"Go it, ye cripples!"

Daubeny stepped from the study door and threw off his jacket. His face was a trifle pale, but quite cool. He had gained his point—the ragging was off. He was booked for a fight with one of the best fighting-men in the Lower School of St. Winifred's, and the prospect was not agreeable, but it was a choice of two evils.

Daubeny was not a fighting-man, if he could help it; but there was too much at stake for him to funk a contest now. And he was bitterly determined to do his best.

A victory over his rival would do much to re-instate him in his old position; and Daubeny, dandy and slacker, was not a coward.

A ring was formed and Rawlings ran for a set of gloves. Outside the windows in the passage the night was setting over the river; but there was a blaze of electric light within. The rivals of St. Winifred's faced each other in the space left for them by the throng. From far and near fellows were arriving as the news of the fight spread. Friends of Daubeny—who had been keeping off the scene—turned up now. Even some of the dud eleven showed themselves in the crowd. The door of Study No. 3 was opened, and Egan and the rest crowded the doorway—not yet venturing out. They were not even looked at. All interest was centred on the two combatants.

"Old Daub's jolly clever," Chilcot murmured to Egan. "The chaps seem to have forgotten the ragging already."

Egan nodded.

"But I wouldn't care to be in Daub's shoes all the same," he said. "Drake's a hard hitter and he's wild now."

Sawyer major took out his watch.

"Ready?" he asked. "Time!"

The rivals of St. Winifred's closed in combat, and there was a hush of breathless interest.

Man to Man!

"GOOD old Daub!"

"Go it, Drake!"

Vernon Daubeny was putting up an unexpectedly good show. His courage was screwed to the sticking point; and it was evident that he knew a good deal about boxing; as much as his opponent probably. He was a dangerous antagonist, which was rather a surprise to the onlookers. It was rather a surprise to Jack Drake, too. But

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Daubeny was in a savage mood, and there was much at stake.

The first round was hard and fast, and there was a good deal of punishment given and taken. In the second, Daubeny was severely punished, but in the third fortune smiled upon him, and a lucky uppercut laid the Fourth Former on the planks.

"Well hit!"

"Good old Daub!"

"Not so much thumping row!" exclaimed Sawyer. "Time! Keep your silly heads shut! Do you want old Packer or a dashed prefect to come down?"

Rodney helped Drake up. He was looking rather dazed, but he smiled faintly at his chum as the latter made a knee for him.

"Hard luck!" said Rodney. "It was only a fluke, though. You won't let him do that again."

"Not if I can help it."

"Time!"

Jack Drake put his "beef" into the fourth round. Daubeny had little chance this time, and he was driven round the ring under a shower of blows. He fought on, however, till the call of time came to give him relief.

Then he almost sank on Seeley's shoulder, and his second sat him down.

"There's one more round in Daub!" remarked Raik of the Fourth.

But Raik was mistaken. Daubeny held his own in the fifth round, and came up steadily for the sixth.

He was plainly getting the worst of it, and the punishment he had received would have justified him in throwing up the fight. But he was evidently determined to keep on till his powers failed him.

"Seventh round!" said Tuckey Toodles, in wonder. "Who'd have thought that ass Daub had so much beef in him!"

"Sticking it out, and no mistake!" said Raik. "Daub's got plenty of pluck, anyhow!"

Crash!

Daubeny was down, gasping for breath.

Sawyer major began to count. But before the tenth second was reached Daubeny was on his feet again. He tottered as he stood, but he faced his adversary. It needed only a drive to knock him spinning; but Jack Drake did not deliver that drive. He stepped back to give his enemy a chance.

"Come on, hang you!" muttered Daubeny thickly.

"Good old Daub!" muttered Egan. "I'd never have thought it of him. This will make a difference at the election, if it comes off."

"That's why Daub's sticking it out," said Chilcot.

"Time!"

Daubeny sank on his second's knee, panting.

"Keeping on?" muttered Seeley.

Daubeny gave him a savage look.

"Yes!"

"Oh, all right!"

Seeley sponged his principal's blazing face. At the call of time the chief of the bucks stepped up for the eighth round. Jack Drake came on more slowly.

"Dash it all, Daub, you've had enough," he said. "Let it go at that. You know you're done for—chuck it!"

Daubeny's reply was a savage blow at his face.

"Well, if you will have it!" said Drake

And he attacked hotly. Again Daubeny was

driven round the ring, his exhausted defence availing him little.

That Daubeny was "done" was apparent to all; but there were murmurs of encouragement for him. He was showing plenty of pluck, and pluck is always popular.

He finished the round on his back, gasping.

Sawyer major called time for the ninth round, and Daubeny made an effort to stagger into the ring.

Drake dropped his hands.

"Chuck it!" he said. "What's the good of going on, Daub? Look here, the ragging's off—now chuck it!"

"I'll fight you while I can stand!" gasped Daubeny.

"Well, you can't stand, you ass!"

"Chuck it, Daub!" called several voices.

Daubeny made a last effort and lurched towards his adversary. Drake stalled him off without hitting him. Somehow, Daubeny kept his feet till time was called. Then he collapsed on Seeley's knee.

Sawyer major, with almost an awed look, called time. But Vernon Daubeny could not get on his feet again.

Seeley tossed the sponge into the air.

Daubeny blinked at Drake through his half-closed eyes. He had put up a fight that astonished the St. Winny's juniors, and rather astonished himself. And the looks of the juniors showed that Daub had recovered much of the ground he had lost with them.

Drake put on his jacket slowly. He was feeling the effects of the hard tussle, though not to the same extent as Daubeny.

After a moment or two of hesitation, he stepped towards Daub. The Shell fellow's eyes glittered at him.

"You've put up a jolly good fight, Daub," said Drake. "If you'd been in better condition, it would have been even chances. Look here, I'm sorry we've come to this; we used to be pals, old chap. There's my fist, of you like to take it!"

Daubeny's hand clenched hard. For a second it looked as if he would strike the proffered hand savagely aside.

But second thoughts were wiser. He took Drake's hand.

"All serene!" he muttered thickly. "I—I don't mind! There you are!"

"Good man!" said Sawyer major, putting away his watch. "Blessed if I thought you had it in you, Daub! You ain't such a fluffy ass as you've always made out, old top!"

Jack Drake walked away with his chum. He had damages that needed seeing to, and for some time afterwards he was seeing to them, with Rodney's assistance. And when he went to his study he sank down in the armchair in fatigue—the tough "scrap" had told upon him.

"You'll feel all right to-morrow," said Rodney. "Oh, yes! I don't feel so bad as I did after my scrap with you," said Drake, with a smile. "That was rather a twister. Who would ever have thought of Daubeny standing up like that to a logging!"

"The ragging's off!" said Rodney.

"Yes, rather! Couldn't very well rag a fellow in Daub's state. Besides, after he's showed so much pluck—and he shook hands with me at the finish, too!" said Drake. "Daub isn't such a rotter, after all. I suppose he can't help being rather a snob; but he's got his good points. Anyhow, he took my fist."

Rodney looked rather curiously at his chum.

"The fellows would have been down on him if he had shown malice," he remarked. "Daub's rather too deep to do anything unpopular—especially just now, Drake."

"Oh!"

"He's stalled off the ragging and given the fellows something else to think about instead of the football match," said Rodney. "He's practically been pulling our leg in all this."

"I—I hardly think so—" Drake hesitated. "Dash it all, Rodney, I can't quite agree with you! Fellows aren't so deep as all that."

"Daub is. What about an election for a new skipper?"

Drake shook his head.

"Well, we were thinking of that; but I've shaken hands with him. Of course, we shall never be friends again, but— Look here, after the lessons he's had to-day, Daub won't play the goat with the footer any more, I should think. If he bucks up and puts a good eleven in the field, that's all we want. Give him a rest."

"And if he doesn't?"

"Then we'll down him, if we can. Don't you agree?"

Rodney smiled.

"Oh, I agree!" he said. "I don't think Daub is feeling quite so jolly forgiving at the present moment—but never mind. Let's have tea. Toodles, you bouncer, come and cook the sosses!"

And the subject of Daubeny of the Shell was dropped in Study No. 8.

Declined With Thanks!

TUCKEY TOODLES were a thoughtful expression during tea in Study No. 8. The grubby junior was deep in the throes of reflection.

His thoughtfulness did not prevent him from annexing the lion's share of the meal, as usual; but while his jaws were busy his brain was also working.

After tea, which was rather late, the table was prepared for prep. But Rupert de Vere Toodles had not been thinking about prep.

He coughed.

"You fellows—" he began.

"Anything wrong?" asked Rodney.

"Eh? No—why?"

"You haven't been talking for ten minutes or more."

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Perkins thought he was being very clever by saying he had been up in the other plane at the same time as the St. Jim's party. If so, it would have made a perfect alibi. His description of the flight was rather inaccurate—modern cabin planes are as comfy to ride in as trains; but the thing that really gave Perkins away was the fact that Trimble had seen the other plane taxi over to the hangar. The plane had evidently finished making trips for the day, and we also had the official's statement that the one Tom Merry & Co. went on was the last trip of the afternoon. So Perkins had apparently been for a sip in a plane that didn't go up! Cornered, Perkins handed over the wallet; and though Gussy's regard for Grimes and the other village youths' prevented him pressing the matter, when Grimes heard, he and his chums dealt with Perkins—drastically!

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"Rats! You fellows, we'd better have this out plain," said Toodles. "We were talking about a new election for the junior captain, with a candidate from this study."

"Oh, that's off!" said Drake.

"That's where you make a mistake," said Toodles firmly. "It's not off!"

"Eh?"

"Rodney suggested your putting up as captain. Now, I didn't like to say so, Drake, but I thought that was rather rot."

"Thanks!"

"You're all right in your way, of course," said Toodles magnanimously. "But hardly up to the mark as junior captain, you know."

"Fathead!"

"Still, there's a fellow in this study who would fill the bill to a T!" announced Toodles.

"You flatter me, Tuckey!" said Dick Rodney gravely.

"I wasn't referring to you, Rodney. You wouldn't be any good. Besides, you're only a half-pay chap—not much account, you know. You don't mind my mentioning it, I'm sure."

"Not at all," said Rodney placidly.

"Of course, I don't mind being chummy with you," explained Toodles. "I rather like you—in a way. But facts are facts—aren't they?"

"I believe so."

"And the fact is that you're a bit of an outsider—compared with a fellow like me, for instance. You see that?"

Rodney glanced at the fat, grubby junior and laughed.

"Quite so," he said. "It's really kind of you, Toodles, to take any notice of my existence at all."

"Well, really, you know, I'm a kind-hearted

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chap," said Toodles fatuously. "I'm always kind to my inferiors—always."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at, Rodney. But to come back to the subject of the election——"

"Would you mind ringing off?" asked Rodney politely. "Prep now, and it's difficult to work with a goose cackling all the time."

"Look here——" roared Tuckey.

"Cheese it!"

"To come back to the election!" howled Tuckey Toodles. "I think it ought to come off, with a candidate from this study. Drake isn't really suitable, and you're an outsider, Rodney; but there's me."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I've often thought I should make a jolly good junior skipper," said Toodles modestly. "Often and often. I don't see anything to grin at, Drake—nothing at all. Think of the football record, and what it would be like if I were skipper."

"Only think!" chuckled Rodney. "Daub would have to hide his diminished head. He only gathers up lickings of six goals to nil—nothing to what you could do."

"I should give you a place in the team, Drake."

"Go hon!"

"And you, perhaps, Rodney——"

"Only perhaps?"

"Well, I'd do the best I could for you as you're in my study," said Toodles generously. "In fact, I think I could promise you a place, on condition that you vote for me in the election. I ought to get eleven votes sure—the chaps I should put into the team, you know, and myself. I can vote for myself if I like. Then I'd put down about twenty as reserves, and get their votes. That seems rather a good idea. What do you fellows think?"

"I think it's time we did prep," said Rodney, laughing.

"Look here, are you going to back me up?" demanded Toodles warmly. "I suppose you're going to support a fellow in your own study? And I suppose you can see that I'm just the skipper St. Winny's wants. The right man in the right place, you know—that's me."

Toodles' studymates chuckled.

"You see, now's the chance," went on Tuckey. "Daub's on the down-grade; you can see that. Some cheeky cad may get setting up as a candidate—some silly ass who's no good!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that would be rotten for the school. It's a case of the hour and the man. See? If you fellows are only going to cackle——"

The chums of Study No. 8 yelled. The idea of Tuckey Toodles as junior captain of St. Winifred's was too much for them.

Toodles rose from his chair wrathfully.

"Are you going to vote for me?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha! Not quite!"

"I shall leave you out of my football eleven, then, if I'm elected."

"If!" gasped Drake. "Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I ever heard such a pair of cackling asses! I'm jolly well going to call a meeting!"

"Better do your prep."

"Blow prep!"

Tuckey Toodles strode loftily from the study and slammed the door after him.

The chums of the Fourth chuckled, and then, dismissing Tuckey Toodles from their minds, they

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RULES: 500 Footballs will be awarded in the October contest to the readers declaring and sending in the largest number of "goals" scored with "Footer-stamps." The Editor may extend or amend the prize list in case of too many ties, and no reader may win more than one prize in "Footer-Stamps."

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(N.B. "Footer-Stamps" may also be collected from the following papers: "Magnet," "Modern Boy," "Boy's Cinema," "Detective Weekly," "Triumph," "Wild West Weekly," "Thriller," "Sports Budget," and "Champion.")

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settled down to work. Jack Drake worked as steadily as his new chum. Rodney's example had its effect upon the wayward junior, and his work was no longer done in the desultory fashion of old. The previous term Drake had often done his prep with Daubeny and Egan sitting on the corner of the table, smoking and talking, which was not conducive to good work. He was finding the difference now, and Mr. Packe, the master of the Fourth, found a great improvement in the results. For some weeks now Jack had not found himself in his Form-master's black books—which was rather an agreeable change.

But the fatuous Tuckey was not quite to be dismissed from mind, as it happened. Soon after his departure from the study there came a sound of loud laughter from the direction of the Common-room.

Apparently Tuckey was propounding his new scheme to the juniors there, and, to judge by the hilarity, he was not being received with the due respect as a candidate for the junior captaincy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tuckey's going it, I think," Drake remarked, looking up from his work.

Rodney grinned.

"Sounds like it," he said. "Poor old Tuckey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a fresh roar.

There was a sound of trampling feet on the planks outside. Above the howls of laughter came the squeaky tones of Tuckey Toodles.

"Yaroo! Lemme down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yoop! You'll drop me! Ow! Help!"

The door flew open.

Outside there was a crowd of the Fourth, headed by Sawyer major, Conway, Furdy, and Raik. They bore Tuckey Toodles shoulder high.

Drake and Rodney stared at the scene.

"What the thump—" began Rodney.

"Yaroo! Rescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's your candidate!" howled Sawyer major. "We've brought him home. This is a triumphal march. Now, land him!"

"Yoooop!"

Apparently Tuckey Toodles had not found favour with the juniors of St. Winny's as a candidate for Daub's position.

"There's your candidate!" gasped Sawyer. "Declined with thanks!"

"He's not our candidate, you silly ass!" roared Drake. "Why, you—you—"

"Didn't you say that you'd support him if he put up for captaincy?" asked Estcourt.

"You fooling chump!" howled Rodney.

"Didn't you say you thought he was the right man at the right time?" grinned Conway.

"Idiot!" yelled Drake.

"Didn't you say—"

"No!" howled Rodney and Drake together before Sawyer Major could get any further.

Sawyer turned to the crowd round the door.

"Is it possible, gentlemen," he said, with portentous gravity, "that our revered Toodles has been prevaricating?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!"

"Yoop! Help!"

Tuckey Toodles sprawled wildly on the table. Papers and pens and inkpot went flying. The Fourth Formers, yelling with merriment, crowded out of the study, leaving the unhappy candidate howling wildly.

"You—you silly ass!" gasped Drake. "Look what you've done!"

"I haven't—I didn't—I—I—leggo!" roared Toodles.

But his studymates did not let go. They grasped him and rolled him off the table and bumped him on the floor. Tuckey Toodles sat there and spluttered.

"Ow! Wow! Yah! Ow! Rotters! Wow! I—I jolly well won't be junior captain of St. Winny's now! Yow-ow! Not if you ask me on your bended knees! Groogh! Never! Yoop!"

And he never was!

(Next Wednesday: **TOODLES THE MAGNIFICENT.**)

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THE SCHOOLBOY'S SHOW-DOWN!

(Continued from page 29.)

Panting with rage, Rufus Slimmey struggled in the grasp of Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc. He would probably have been too much for the two of them, but Bob Lawless had dragged the unfastened noose from his wrists, and he joined in with great vigour. He caught up the fallen revolver, clubbed it, and the heavy butt crashed on the ruffian's head.

Rufus Slimmey yelled, and sank back on the floor.

Frank Richards' knee was jammed on his chest, and Beauclerc grasped his wrists. Bob thrust the revolver muzzle fairly into his mouth.

"Chuck it!" said Bob grimly.

"The cord—quick!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

Dazed by the crashing blow, the ruffian lay almost helpless. Frank Richards caught up the cord and looped it over his wrists as Beauclerc held them, and drew it tight and knotted it.

Then the schoolboys left him, lying on the floor and panting with rage.

"Fetch the sergeant here, Beau!" exclaimed Frank breathlessly.

"You bet!"

Vere Beauclerc unlocked the door and dashed out. Frank took out his pocket-knife and cut the bonds that held Paul Slimmey to the bed. He removed the gag, and the master strove to speak, but no word would come from his numbed lips. He groaned faintly as he moved.

"All right now, Mr. Slimmey?" said Frank cheerily.

There was a heavy tread in the outer room. The sergeant had heard the pistol-shot, and he was already coming towards the cabin when Beauclerc found him. The big Mountie loomed up in the doorway.

"Here's your man!" said Bob Lawless.

"Holy smoke!" ejaculated Sergeant Lasalle.

"And—who is this?"

His eyes turned to the man stretched on the bed. "That's our master, sir—Mr. Slimmey. That villain had been passing himself off as Mr. Slimmey!" panted Frank.

"By gosh!"

The sergeant understood now. His bronzed face was very grim as he stooped and jerked Rufus Slimmey to his feet.

"I guess you played a bold hand, Slimmey!" he remarked. "But the game's up now! You're the man I want!"

The exposed impostor ground his teeth.

"I owe it to that brat!" he muttered, his eyes glittering at Frank Richards. "I shan't forget this!"

Frank Richards laughed.

"Remember it as long as you like!" he said cheerily. "I'm jolly glad I had a hand in laying you by the heels!"

"Same here!" said Bob Lawless. "I guess the rotter's got his plunder about him, sergeant! We make you a present of the dear man!"

The sergeant laughed, and marched his prisoner out with an iron grip upon his shoulder.

Five minutes later two Mounties were riding away for Thompson, and between them, bound upon a horse, was Rufus Slimmey. The lumber school had seen the last of the desperate rascal.

Miss Meadows, to whom the sergeant had briefly explained, came to the cabin in great astonishment. The chums had helped Mr. Slimmey into the outer room, and he was sitting there, pale and worn, when the schoolmistress entered.

Mr. Slimmey made an effort to rise, but sank back from sheer weakness.

"Don't get up," said Miss Meadows. "The sergeant has told me. My poor friend, you have had a terrible experience. If one had only guessed! But you are rid of that rascal now. And you boys were the cause of the discovery?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Frank Richards modestly.

"You have not been hurt?"

"No. The rotter—ahem!—I mean Rufus Slimmey—had time for only one shot," said Bob. "That's in the roof. All serene, ma'am!"

Miss Meadows smiled.

"You had better go home now," she said. "You have done very well! I am proud of you!"

And the three chums walked out, feeling very proud of themselves.

The next day the lumber school was buzzing with the story, but it was some time before Mr. Slimmey appeared in the school-room. He came back at last, looking very quiet and subdued. By that time a judge and jury in far Vancouver were dealing with the reckless rascal whom Frank Richards and his chums had laid by the heels.

(Next Wednesday: "THERE'S DANGER ON THE TRAIL!")

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