

“ROGUE’S REVENGE!” and “THE PERFECT ALIBI!”

And 250 FOOTBALLS for READERS!

The **GEM**

SMOKED OUT!

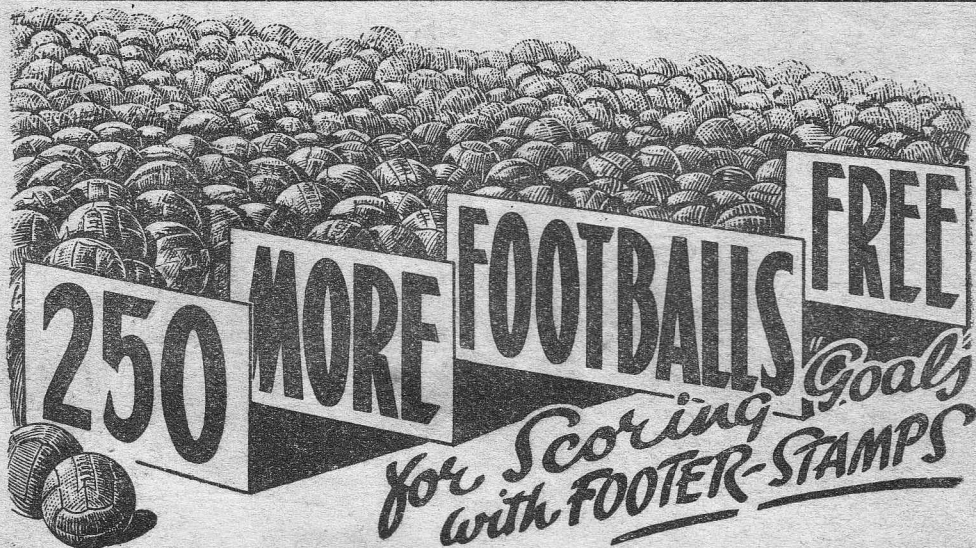
—A Lively Incident from
“THE BOY WITH A BAD
NAME!”—the Powerful
St. Jim’s Yarn Inside.

2^D



ANOTHER HUGE OFFER

GET BUSY FOR OUR NOVEMBER PRIZE-GIVING!



LOOK! LISTEN! Another 250 Super Footballs to be won FREE in yet another thrilling "Footer-Stamps" Competition!

If you are already collecting "Footer-Stamps" and haven't so far won a ball, you will want to make another great effort to be a winner. Or if you haven't started, here's your chance—jump straight into this month's competition!

It's a great idea! "Footer-Stamps" are appearing every week, and the object is simply to make up as many "goals" as you can with them. The stamps illustrate *six* different actions on the football field.

The six actions are: **KICK-OFF—DRIBBLE—TACKLE—HEADER—SHOT—GOAL**, and every complete set of the six actions you collect scores a "goal." (The "goal" stamp by itself does not count as a "goal"—you must get a set of the stamps 1 to 6 each time.)

There are ten more stamps this week, five below and five more on page 35, and you will find a complete "goal" among them. Then go all out to get as many more of these stamps as you can. Ask your friends for them, swap with them if you like, or even collect them together. The more you get, the more "goals" you'll score—and here's good news:

"FOOTER-STAMPS" with complete "goals" are also in other famous papers like MODERN BOY and MAGNET—get the stamps from these papers to swell your score.

The 250 Prize Footballs in the November prize-giving will go to the collectors scoring the most "goals" for the month.

No stamps to be sent in yet—just wait until we give you the word at the end of the month. So if you haven't won a football yet—get busy with "Footer-Stamps."

OVERSEAS READERS—you are in this scheme also, and special prizes in cash are to be awarded for the best scores from readers outside the British Isles. There will be a special closing date for you, of course.

..... 5 "FOOTER-STAMPS" HERE—5 MORE ON PAGE 35!



WHO PLAYED A MEAN TRICK ON CLIVE OF THE FOURTH? SUSPICION
AT ONCE FALLS UPON ERNEST LEVISON—

The Boy with a BAD NAME!



"You call this fair play?" exclaimed Levison bitterly. "Give a dog a bad name and hang him—that's your motto! You've all made up your minds that I've played a dirty trick on Clive, without a shred of evidence. You don't want any evidence!"

CHAPTER 1. Smoked Out!

LEVISON of the Fourth looked up with a smile as his minor came into Study No. 2, in the Fourth Form passage of the School House.

Levison minor had two or three books under his arm, and a woeful expression upon his usually cheery face.

He paused in the doorway, and looked doubtfully at his major.

"Not busy, Ernie?" he asked.

"No. I haven't started my prep. But that doesn't matter. What's the trouble?"

Frank Levison made a grimace.

"Old Selby's been going for me. If you'd like to help me—"

Levison laughed.

"Right-ho! Let's pile in. What is it—Eutropius?"

"No; Cæsar."

"Well, Cæsar oughtn't to bother you very

much," said Levison. "Where are you? I suppose you've got a bit farther than 'Omnis Gallia divisa est in tres partes'?"

The fag grinned.

"Yes, a bit. Here you are: 'Ea res n't Helvetii per indicium enunciata.' Let's get on from that."

Tom Merry came along the passage, and glanced in at the half-open door.

"Hard at work?" smiled Tom.

"Yes. Want anything?"

"I was going to speak about the Rookwood match. But another time will do," said the captain of the Shell. "Pile in!"

Levison's eyes glistened.

"You don't want me for the match?" he asked.

"But I do!" said Tom.

"Good! I'm your man!"

"All serene!"

Tom Merry passed on, and Levison turned to his work with a cheery face. Since his reform, it was not uncommon for Levison to find a place in the junior school team.

Ernest Levison has so far found the path of reformation difficult to follow. Now comes another setback, when his gift for imitating handwriting causes him to be accused of treachery towards his new studymate!

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

It was a lot better, he could not help reflecting, than nap or banker with Crooke and Racke, or hanging about the Green Man, in Rylcombe, for a surreptitious game of billiards with Mr. Lodgey. His reform certainly had turned his old associates into bitter enemies. And two of them were his studymates. But that could not be helped.

Major and minor were very busy with the "Gallic War," when Mellish of the Fourth came into the study.

"What's that blessed fag doing in this study?" he asked.

"Shut up, Mellish!" said Levison, without looking up.

"Oh, keep on, if you like!" said Mellish. "We've got a little party on in the study. If it interferes with your mollycoddling, I'm sorry."

Baggy Trimble followed Mellish in. His fat face wore a grin.

"We shall want some more chairs," he said.

"They're going to bring some with them," said Mellish. "Racke's bringing the smokes."

"He, he, he!"

There was another arrival—Clampe of the Shell, a New House fellow. He came in grinning.

"Not late?" he asked.

"Not at all. Racke and Crooke and Scrope haven't turned up yet."

Mellish, Clampe, and Trimble proceeded to talk all at once. It was not easy to keep working in the circumstances, but Levison paid no heed. Mellish and Trimble had a right to talk in their own study if they liked, and to ask their friends into it.

Racke and Crooke of the Shell arrived together a few minutes later. Mellish closed the door after they were in.

"Got the smokes, Racke?"

"Here they are."

Racke laid a box of cigarettes on the table. The merry party sat down at the table, and cigarettes were handed round. It was a smoking-party, and Levison knew that it was intended specially for his annoyance.

Scrope of the Shell came in and joined the party. Then the door was locked. It was necessary to take that little precaution against a surprise visit from School House prefects.

Frank Levison began to cough. The smoke thickened in the study, and the merry company exchanged grins and chuckled.

Levison rose to his feet, his eyes glittering.

"You've planted this on me for a rotten trick, you rotters!" he said.

"My hat! Don't you like smoke in the study?" exclaimed Racke. "You've smoked in my study often enough."

"Are you going to chuck it?" demanded Levison.

"No fear!" said Mellish promptly. "I suppose I can have a little party in my own study if I like? You can join us if you choose."

Levison set his teeth. He could not turn the crowd of young rascals out of the study—that was clear. And Racke & Co. had evidently come to stay.

"We'll go down to the Form-room, Frank," said Levison at last.

"Yes, Ernie."

Racke & Co. chuckled joyfully. Levison and the fag left the study together, and Mellish turned the key after them.

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"I rather think we've scored this time," grinned Mellish. "We'll jolly well keep it up, too. I wonder I never thought of it before. A smoking-party in the study every evening, and that will make the blessed humbug sit up, I think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke & Co. roared with laughter at the idea. The way of the transgressor is said to be hard; but if Racke & Co. could help it, the way of reform was not to be easy.

CHAPTER 2.

Gussy's Little Mistake!

"**B**AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form was chatting with Blake, Herries, and Digby outside Study No. 6 when Levison and his minor came along.

They brought with them a very distinct whiff of tobacco-smoke—hence the surprised ejaculation of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Pway hold on a moment, Levison, deah boy!" said D'Arcy gravely.

Levison held on.

"I am sowwy to see this, Levison."

"Hallo! What are you burbling about now?" asked Levison.

"Pway do not chawactewise my wemarks as burblin', Levison! Are you aware that you are smellin' of smoke?"

"I hadn't noticed it."

"It is vewy distinct—in fact, vewy unpleasent," said Arthur Augustus. "I am sowwy to notice that Frank is smellin' of smoke, too."

"Look here—" began Levison minor hotly.

"Pway do not intewwupt your eldahs, Levison minah!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "I am surpriswed and shocked, Levison, that there has been smokin' goin' on in your study."

Levison nodded.

"Bai Jove! You admit it?"

"Certainly!"

"Is that the way you are goin' to keep fit for the Wookwood match?" demanded Arthur Augustus. "If I were Tom Mewwy, Levison, I should certainly not play you against Wookwood aftah this."

"How lucky you're not Tom Merry, then!" remarked Levison, unmoved. "Have you finished your sermon—and is there any charge?"

Blake, Herries, and Digby chuckled.

The Terrible Three came along the passage, and they paused to look on.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Monty Lowther. "Gussy on the high horse again?"

"Barely on it," said Blake. "It's as good as a cinema. Go it, Gussy!"

"I shall not allude to the mattah in Tom Mewwy's pwesence," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I do not wish to spoil Levison's chances for the Wookwood match."

"Oh, don't mind me!" said Levison cheerily. "Go on, tell Tommy the whole harrowing yarn. I dare say he's noticed already that I smell of smoke."

"I did notice it," said Tom Merry in surprise. "But what—"

"Gussy is talking to me for my own good," explained Levison. "If you listen you will be edified, too. Hallo, Talbot! Come and be edified. Don't miss this chance of having your mind improved."

"What's on?" asked Talbot of the Shell.

"Gussy is," said Blake. "On the high horse, and putting his foot into it, as usual. Go it, Gussy; we're all listening."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his celebrated monocle a little more tightly into his eye and surveyed the grinning group with rising indignation.

"I wegard this mewwment as vevy unseemly, not to say wibald," he said. "I should weally have expected you fellows to be shocked."

"But what are we to be shocked about?" asked Talbot.

"I am not goin' to mention about Levison smokin', as the football skippah is pwesent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at, Tom Mewwy! I think Levison ought to be spoken to vevy sewiously."

"Gussy is alarmed because there has been smokin' in my study," said Levison.

"As you wefer to the mattah yourself, Levison, I will mention it. Do you think that smokin' cigawettes is the way to keep fit for footah?"

"Not at all."

"Then why do you do it, you widiculous ass?"

"But I don't do it," said Levison cheerfully.

"You admit that there has been smokin' goin' on in your study?"

"Certainly."

"Vevy well, in the circs—"

"In the circs, we'd better go and get on with Cæsar, Franky, as D'Arcy seems to be wound up," remarked Levison. "Come on!"

And Levison went on down the passage, followed by his grinning minor.

Arthur Augustus gazed after him sadly, and then looked at his chuckling companions.

"If you wegard this as a laughin' mattah, you fellows, I can only remark that you are labouwin' undah a sewious misappwehension," he said sternly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now that Levison has taken to smokin' again—"

"But he hasn't, you howling ass!" roared Blake.

"Can't you see that Levison was pulling your fatheaded leg, you duffer?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You cheerful idiot!" said Herries. "Didn't you see Racke and Crooke and that crowd go into the study? They've been smoking 'him out.'"

"Bai Jove!"

"I thought it was something of the sort," said Tom Merry, laughing. "You can always rely on Uncle Gustavus to put his noble foot in it."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face was a study.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated at last. "Do you weally think that is the case, Blake?"

"I know it is, fathead!"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead, Blake! If you knew that was the case, why didn't you tell me so?"

"Oh, I like to hear you run on!" said Blake cheerfully.

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake. Bai Jove! I weally think I owe Levison an apology," said Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed and hurried away down the passage. Having put his noble foot in it, he was bound to make the "amende honorable." To leave a debt of that kind unpaid did not consort with the noble manners of Vere de Vere.

The swell of St. Jim's searched for Levison

major and his minor and found them in the Fourth Form Room deap in Latin.

Levison waved his hand as Arthur Augustus entered.

"Busy! Buzz off!"

"It is wathah important, Levison. I appeal to have been labouwin' undah a misappwehension—"

"You'll be labouring under a Latin dictionary if you don't clear off!" said Levison.

"It appeahs, Levison, that you were not smokin'—"

"Buzz off!"

"But you were smoked out of your study by a set of wottahs—"

"Good-bye!"

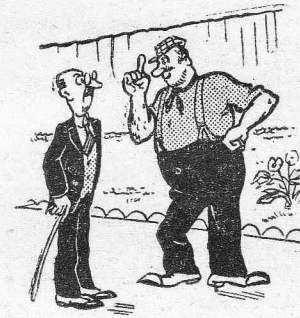
"In the circs, I owe you an apology—"

"Will you shut up?" shrieked Levison. "I tell you Frank has got to go to Selby in ten minutes, and he's got to get through this dashed thing first!"

"I am sowwy to intewwupt you, in the circs, Levison. But I feel bound to explain to you that— Yawwooooh!"

Whiz!

A Latin dictionary flew through the air, and



"While I'm away, Roberts, you will take your orders from the mistress."

"Yes, sir—same as if you were at home!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Warrick, 25, Manchester Road, Reading, Berks.

it landed upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's waistcoat. The swell of St. Jim's sat down in the Form-room doorway with a bump.

"Gwoogh!" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Frank. "Well hit!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled up, his eyeglass flying at the end of its cord, his trousers dusty, and his face crimson with wrath.

"Bai Jove! I wefuse to apologise now, Levison! I wegard you as—"

"You'll get the inkpot next!" said Levison.

Arthur Augustus dodged out of the Form-room as Levison clutched the inkpot. He closed the door with a terrific bang.

Levison of the Fourth and his minor worked on without any more interruption, and the apology was never delivered.

CHAPTER 3.

Lowther Has an Idea!

BLAKE & CO. grinned when Arthur Augustus came back into Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus was looking a little dusty and somewhat excited.

"Hallo! Didn't the apology go off all right?" asked Digby.

"Levison cut up wusty, for some weason, Dig. He is wathah a wuff beast."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard that laughtah as entirely out of place," said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "And, in spite of Levison's wude conduct, I am goin' to bewfend him."

"Going to put your foot in it again?" yawned Blake. "Why not get on with your prep instead?"

"Pwep can wait, Blake!"

"Lathom won't wait in the morning," said Herries, with a shake of the head. "Better pile in! Give your lower jaw a rest."

"Wats! Levison has been simply dwiven out of his study by those smokay wottahs," said Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to speak to them vewy severely. If they do not stop their wepwehensible wascality I shall use dwastic measures. I wegard it as bein' up to me. You fellows comin'?"

"No; we'll get our prep done," said Digby. "You run along and remonstrade with the rotters. I expect the door's locked, but I dare say you can remonstrade with them through the keyhole."

"Weally, Dig—"

Blake, Herries, and Dig bent over their work. Arthur Augustus gave them a lofty glance and departed from the study.

He stopped at the door of Study No. 2, tapped, and turned the handle of the door.

"Who is there?" came Mellish's voice.

"It is I, Mellish."

"Well, go and eat coke!"

"Open the door!"

"Rats!"

"I wish to point out to you that your conduct is uttally wotten, Mellish! You have no wight to smoke Levison out of his own study!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of wottahs!"

"Buzz off, fathead!"

"Bai Jove!"

The locked door was between Mellish and vengeance, so he rattled on cheerfully.

"Go and eat coke, fathead! Run away and play, ass! Do anything you like, but don't sing one of your tenor solos!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus retired, breathing wrath; but he did not return to Study No. 6. He walked on to Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage. There he found the Terrible Three at prep.

"I want you fellows to back me up!" he announced.

"Cut off—busy!" said Tom.

"Those smokay wottahs have smoked Levison out of his study. I wegard it as bein' up to somebody to chip in. Blake wants to do his pwep—"

"I want to do mine," said Manners plaintively.

"I say, something must be done, though," said Monty Lowther, with a glimmer in his eyes which showed that a wheeze was coming. "It's really hard lines on Levison."

"Look here, we've got prep to do!" said Manners warmly. "None of your little jokes now, Monty."

"But it is a good wheeze," said Lowther eagerly. "They've smoked Levison out. Why shouldn't they be smoked out? There's a chimney in the study, and we could get at the chimney-pot over the leads."

"My hat!"

"And we could fasten the door up first, so as to give 'em a good smoke," said Lowther.

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Tom Merry laughed.

"Good egg! What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Prep can wait a bit."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard it as a wippin' ideah, deah boys."

"After which there is nothing more to be said," remarked Lowther. "Gussy approves!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"You stay here and work your lower jaw, Gussy," said Lowther. And the Terrible Three left the study.

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort, you uttall ass!" roared Arthur Augustus indignantly, and he followed the chums of the Shell.

Monty Lowther stopped outside Study No. 2 in the Fourth. His preparations were soon made. Quietly and steadily he drove a screw into the doorpost close to the lock. It was a big screw, and he left about an inch of it out of the wood. Then he bound a stout whipcord about the handle of the door, and fastened it to the screw, pulling it quite taut. Within the study there was a chatter of voices, and Racke & Co. had no suspicion of what the humorist of the Shell was doing outside.

"There you are!" murmured Lowther. "Now I'll just get out on the leads and attend to the chimney. Won't be long!"

Monty Lowther disappeared up the passage. At the top of the back staircase was a trapdoor, giving access to the leads.

Having found a piece of sacking in the box-room, Lowther opened the trap and stepped out on the leads. His chums waited in the Fourth Form passage for what was to happen.

CHAPTER 4.

Sauce for the Gander!

RACKE & CO. were enjoying themselves after their own peculiar fashion.

The room was quite hazy with smoke.

But it was only cigarette smoke, so far, and the black sheep were accustomed to that.

Racke and Croke, Scrope and Mellish, were gathered round the table, playing cards. Baggy Trimble was looking on with envious eyes. Baggy was, as usual, short of cash, and Racke & Co. did not feel inclined to play for wastepaper, as they poliately termed Baggy's IO U's.

"Your deal, Croke," yawned Racke. "I say, it seems a bit smoky in this study. Anything wrong with the chimney?"

"Not that I know of," said Mellish, looking round and sniffing. "It does seem a bit smoky, though. My hat!"

He jumped up as a sudden rush of smoke poured down the chimney. It came out in a black, rolling cloud, which showed that its natural passage upward had been stopped.

Racke started up angrily.

"What the thunder's the matter with it? Oh crumbs!"

Smoke was simply pouring from the chimney now. It filled the room with a dense cloud, and the young rascals began to cough and splutter frantically.

"I'm getting out of this!" snarled Croke, and he dashed to the door and unlocked it. He dragged at the door, but it did not open.

"What's the matter with this confounded door?" roared Croke, dragging furiously at the handle.

"Get it open!" shrieked Racke. "We shall be suffocated at this rate!" Racke jammed the window open to its fullest extent. "Why don't you open the door, Croke, you silly ass?"

"I can't, you dummy!"

"Get aside, fathead! Let me try!"

Racke dragged at the door in his turn. But the door did not open. The smoke thickened in the study, in spite of the opened window. All eyes were smarting and running with water now. Outside a voice was audible.

"Bai Jove! There's smoke comin' through the keyhole, deah boys! It must be feahfully smokay in there, you know."

"It's a trick!" hissed Racke. "D'Arcy, you rotter, open this door!"

"I wefuse to be called a wottah. Wacke!"

"Will you open this door, you dummy?"

"I wegard that as an oppvobwius expression, Wacke, and I wefuse to weply!"

Outside there was a buzz of merriment. Blake & Co. had come out of Study No. 6, forsaking even the delights of prep. Kangaroo, Dane, and Glyn had come along, and Julian & Co. from Study No. 5. Smoke was issuing from the keyhole and round the door of the study. The furious voices of the merry blades could be heard from within as they struggled with the door.

"Open this door!" yelled Crooke. "We're suffocating!"

"Suffocate quietly, then!" said Manners.

"We're choke—choke—choked!"

"Let us out!"

"What's the matter with the chimney?" exclaimed Clive.

"Lowther and a sack, I think," grinned Manners.

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess that study will be rather nice after

that," said Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth. "Whose idea was it?"

"It was weally my idea, Lumley."

"Then I guess I'd bump you baldheaded, if I hadn't changed into Study No. 8!" grinned Lumley-Lumley. "If that were my study now—"

"Weally, Lumley-Lumley—"

"I wonder how Levison will like it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lumley-Lumley joined in the roar. He did not mind. He had changed out of Study No. 2, having become completely fed-up with Mellish and Trimble. Lowther's little joke was really being played on Levison's account, but how Levison would like the result was a problem.

It was certain, at all events, that Racke & Co. did not like it. They were raging in the smoky study like rats in a trap.

Monty Lowther came back along the passage with a genial smile upon his face.

"Seems rather smoky here," he remarked.

"Anything wrong with anybody's chimney?"

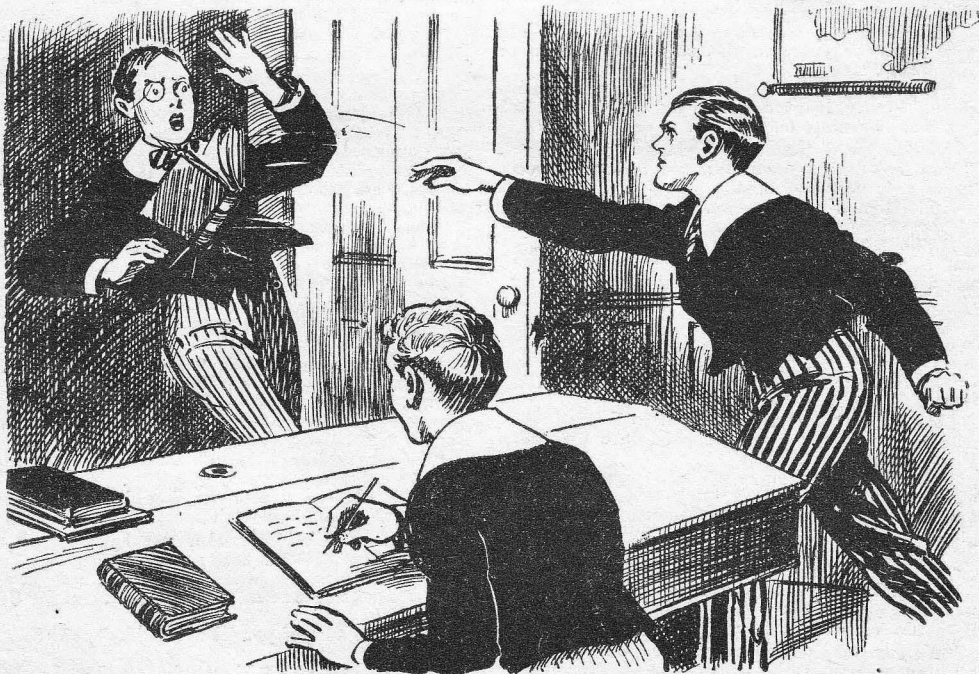
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You haven't left the sack on?" exclaimed Tom.

"No; I've taken it off," grinned Lowther. "I thought about ten minutes would be enough. It must be quite thick in there. I say, Racke, is it rather thick in that study?"

"Open the door, you rotter!"

Racke & Co. had ceased to drag at the door, as they had found it would not open. Lowther, with a grin, cut through the whipcord and put the driver in the screw. The screw was withdrawn,



"I am sowwy to intewwupt, Levison," said Gussy. "But I feel bound to explain that—Yawwooh!"
He broke off with a yell as a Latin dictionary flew through the air and hit him on the chest.

and Lowther slipped it into his pocket with the screwdriver.

The juniors yelled with laughter. There was nothing now to prevent Racke & Co. from opening the door, if they liked; but they were not aware of that fact. They were hammering on the door with their fists and yelling to be let out.

"Cave!" sang Clive along the passage. "Here comes Kildare!"

"Let him come!" grinned Lowther.

"We're not doing any harm, I suppose. In fact, we're sympathising with Racke."

Kildare of the Sixth came striding along the passage. He had his ashplant in his hand.

"What's all this thumping row about?" he exclaimed.

"About to leave off, I think," said Monty Lowther genially. "Yow-ow! Keep that blessed ashplant away, Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's did not seem to appreciate Lowther's humorous reply.

"Let us out!" roared Croke, thumping away at the door.

"Yow-ow-ow! Lemme gerrout!" shrieked Trimble.

"Why don't you come out, then?" exclaimed Kildare. He opened the door. "Great Scott! What's all this smother?"

"Groogh! The chimney started smoking!" gasped Racke. "And those rotters were holding the door shut!"

"You young rascals!"

Kildare turned to the passage again. But the passage was empty, and the juniors had disappeared, as if by magic.

"The chimney seems all right now!" exclaimed Kildare. "It's drawing right enough. You've been up to some tricks here!"

"We haven't!" spluttered Racke furiously. "Do you think we got into this state for the fun of the thing?"

Kildare grinned as he looked at the smoky company. Really, it did not seem likely that they had got into that state on purpose.

"Well, you'd better get cleaned," he said. "You look like a set of chimney sweeps. Don't make any more row, that's all."

And Kildare beat a retreat; he had had enough of the smoke.

Racke & Co. came out into the passage gasping and coughing and wheezing, and tramped away to get a much needed wash and brush up.

CHAPTER 5.

A Change of Quarters!

"MY hat!"

Levison of the Fourth uttered that ejaculation as he looked into his study about half an hour later.

The room and everything in it was smothered with blacks. Smoke still clung to the furniture, and table and chairs and books reeked with blacks.

"My hat!" repeated Levison.

"Hallo! Is that you, Levison, deah boy?" Arthur Augustus came out of Study No. 6.

"Looks wathah wotten in there. Pewwaps—"

"What on earth's happened?"

"We smoked them out, deah boy, to give them a lesson about smokin' a chap out of his study," grinned Arthur Augustus. "Wathah a neat idea—what?"

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"You howling idiot!" roared Levison.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Look at my things—my books—everything!" shrieked Levison. "How am I going to get that lot cleaned?"

Arthur Augustus looked into the dismal study and shook his head. It was a problem too difficult for him, and he gave it up.

"I weally do not know, deah boy," he replied.

"I nevah thought of that."

"You dummy!"

"Weally, Levison, if that is what you call gwatitude—"

"You frabjous ass!"

"I wegard you as an ungwateful beast, Levison, and the next time you are smoked out of your study I shall wefuse to come to the wescue!"

And Arthur Augustus returned to his quarters with his noble nose high in the air.

Trimble and Mellish came along the passage, newly swept and garnished, so to speak, but still a little sooty and smoky.

"You've got your precious new pals to thank for that, Levison," said Mellish viciously. "You'd better clear it up. I'm going to do my prep in Croke's study."

"And I'm going to Scrope's," growled Trimble.

Levison grunted. He did not feel inclined to do his prep in the study, neither did he feel inclined to start the cleaning process. He sorted out the books he needed and went along to Study No. 7. He found Clive and Smith minor and Bates at work there.

"You chaps mind if I do my prep here?" asked Levison.

The three juniors grinned. They had been witnesses of the smoking out of Study No. 2.

"Right you are!" said Clive at once. "Make room, you chaps!"

"You're welcome," said Smith minor and Bates.

"You don't pull with Mellish and Trimble now?" remarked Clive, with rather a curious look at Levison.

The South African junior, like Tom Merry & Co., had got on much better with Levison since the latter's change of habits.

"No," growled Levison. "It's rottener than it was before, now Lumley-Lumley's changed out."

"Why don't you change out, too?" suggested Clive. "We're a bit crowded in here, and I've been thinking of asking for Study No. 9, only I don't want to dig by myself. Railton would let the two of us have it."

It was true that Study 9 in the Fourth Form passage was empty, two fellows who had shared it not having come back for the new term. Levison had thought of asking the Housemaster for it, but he did not want to dig alone.

"You mean that?" asked Levison.

Clive nodded.

"Why not? I expect we should pull together all right. And there isn't much room here."

"It's a go!" said Levison. "I'd rather like it if you would. We'd better ask old Railton this evening; the study will be snapped up pretty soon. Macdonald was talking about asking for it."

"Let's go now, if you like the idea," said Clive.

"Done!"

The two juniors left the study together, Levison looking very thoughtful.

Sidney Clive's offer to share a study with him had given him more pleasure than he would care

EVERY WEDNESDAY

to admit. The healthy, hearty, open-hearted Colonial junior was not much like Levison, but Levison could not help liking him. Levison realised that he was getting on quite a new footing in the Fourth, and it naturally pleased him.

He tapped at the Housemaster's door, and Mr. Railton's deep voice bade him enter. The two Fourth Formers entered together.

The Housemaster gave them a kind nod.

"What is it?" he asked.

"We've come to ask if we may have Study No. 9, sir," said Levison. "It's empty at present, and—"

"And there isn't much room for three in my study, sir," said Clive.

Mr. Railton nodded.

"Quite so, Clive. But why do you wish to change, Levison?" His eyes dwelt keenly on Levison's face.

"I don't get on so well now with my study-mates, sir," said Levison. "Clive and I would get on first-rate."

"The fact is, there is a new boy coming in a few days, and I intended to place him in Study No. 9," said Mr. Railton. "However, we will see. For the present, you may change into Study No. 9, if you wish."

"Thank you, sir!" said the two juniors together.

And they left the Housemaster's study quite satisfied.

Levison looked at his companion rather oddly in the passage.

"You think you'll get on with me?" he asked.

"I have no doubt about that."
"Some of the fellows wouldn't think it so easy."
Clive laughed.

"Well, I'll chance it. If we row, we shall row."
After prep that evening the two new study-mates removed their personal belongings to Study No. 9. Levison's belongings required some rubbing and dusting before they could be removed, and Clive lent him a willing hand.

Mellish glanced in at the doorway while they were so engaged.

"Cleaning it up?" he sneered.
"No fear!" grinned Levison. "That's your job, if you want it cleaned up. I'm getting out."

Mellish's face fell.
"Changing studies?" he ejaculated.

"Exactly. Come on, Clive! We've got to get the study in order before bed-time. Sorry to deprive you of the armchair, Mellish, but it happens to be my property!"

And Clive and Levison bore away the study armchair, leaving Mellish staring.

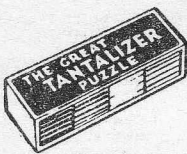
"Well, my hat!" he ejaculated.

And Mellish made his way to Racke's study to tell the news. He found Racke and Crooke looking decidedly bad-tempered. They had not quite got over the smoke yet.

"The game's up about Levison," announced Mellish. "We shan't be able to smoke him out again! He's changed out! Chummed up with Clive, of all chaps. Blessed if I ever thought a chap like Clive would take to Levison!"

Crooke gave a whistle.
(Continued on the next page.)

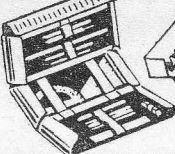
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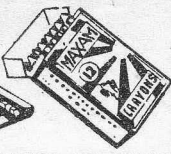
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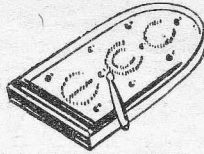
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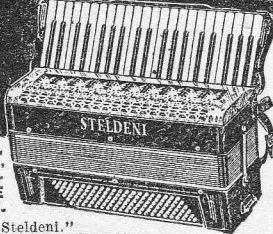
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"He's spoofing them all round, of course," he remarked. "I don't believe in these precious reforms, for one! There'll be rows when Clive finds that he smokes, and takes sporting papers into the study, and leaves cigarettes about, and playing-cards and things."

Racke snorted.

"Whether he's spoofing or not, he's keeping it up," he said. "He means to throw us over for good, and creep into Merry's good graces. But one thing's jolly certain—I'm not going to be thrown over by a rotten outsider like Levison without making him sit up! If we can't make him squirm one way, we can another! I've got an idea in my head already."

"You can keep it there, so far as I'm concerned," said Mellish. "I'm not looking for a Form ragging!"

And the cad of the Fourth quitted the study.

Crooke went on with his preparation, but Racke did not.

Racke threw himself into the armchair, and lighted a cigarette. His wrinkled brows looked through a cloud of smoke, and he cogitated upon the new scheme that had come into his head—the scheme for making Ernest Levison repent him that he had thrown over his old associates—the estimable Racke & Co.

CHAPTER 6.

Study-mates!

LEVISON of the Fourth found himself decidedly more comfortable in his new quarters with his new study-mate.

Contrary to the expectations of a good many fellows, Study No. 9 pulled together very well indeed.

Levison was quite clear of his old associates now, and out of reach of the knavish tricks they had so kindly planned for him.

Frank Levison, too, was "persona grata" in Levison's new study. Clive of the Fourth always had a cheery nod and a smile for the fag, and sometimes lent him a hand when he brought his books to the study to wrestle with the difficulties of Eutropius and old Julius.

The smoking-out scheme having failed, in consequence of Levison's change of quarters, Racke & Co. appeared to have given the matter up in disgust. Mellish and Crooke, indeed, would probably have let the business drop, but Racke was differently built. He neither forgave nor forgot, and he was biding his time.

Levison gave him hardly a thought, if a thought at all. He was busy now in keeping up his footer practice in readiness for the Rookwood match. That match was one of the most important on the junior list, ranking next to Greyfriars in the estimation of the junior players. It was a high honour to be selected for the team on such an occasion, and the new recruit meant to make himself well worthy of a place in Tom Merry's front line.

Levison came into Study No. 9 after practice one afternoon, looking very ruddy and cheerful, very different from the old Levison.

Clive was there, getting tea ready, and Grundy of the Shell was sitting on the corner of the table.

"Oh, here you are!" said Grundy, as Levison came in. "I've been waiting for you, Levison."

"Have you?" yawned Levison. "Well, don't wait any longer, there's a good chap!"

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"I've got a job for you," explained Grundy. "Old Linton's given me two hundred lines!"

"Better buzz off and do them!"

"Two hundred lines!" said Grundy indignantly. "Doubled my impot, you know, because I told him I hadn't had time to do the hundred yesterday!"

"You told Linton that!" ejaculated Levison.

"Certainly! It was so, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at, Levison, and I don't like being cackled at by fags!" said Grundy, frowning. "However, I want you to do the lines. Two hundred of Virgil, in my fist, and here's your two bob."

Grundy tossed a two-shilling piece on the table, and lounged out of the study.

Levison picked up the coin.

Clive looked at him.

"You're going to do them?" he asked.

"Yes; I often do."

"In Grundy's fist?"

"Well, it wouldn't be much use doing them in my own, would it?" grinned Levison. "Linton's a bit sharper than old Lathom."

Clive was silent, and went on getting the tea. A new hesitation came into Levison's manner, and he eyed the South African junior keenly.

"You don't think I ought to do them?" he asked.

"It isn't my bisney," said Clive shortly.

"Lots of chaps do each other's lines."

"Not for money."

"Well, no. But I've often made a little extra tin that way, and I don't have very much pocket-money, you know. All's grist that comes to the mill when you're short of cash!"

"Not all, I should think." Levison knitted his brows. As a matter of fact, it had come into his mind that the question was not quite so unimportant as he had always deemed it, and he could see that Clive did not like the idea.

Levison was still the old Levison in some respects. The old suspicious and uncertain temper were not quite cured.

"You're not hard up," he said. "What's the harm in writing Virgil in Grundy's clumsy fist?"

"I don't know that there is any harm in it."

"But you wouldn't do it?"

"No, I wouldn't."

"I know you've helped Smith minor with his lines, all the same."

"That's different."

"You mean you weren't paid for it?"

"Well, yes. But let it drop!" said Clive.

"Make the tea while I finish the toast. What's the good of jawing one another?"

Levison gave a grunt, and the subject dropped.

When tea was over, however, he pushed the tea-things aside, and took out a sheaf of impot paper. He did not need a copy of Grundy's fist; he had done so many lines for Grundy that he knew it only too well. He hardly needed a Virgil before him, either. Levison had a retentive memory, and could have recited hundreds of verses from the *Æneid*.

Clive had lines to do on his own account, and he sat down to do them—with much less facility. He glanced at Levison's work in wonder. Levison's own handwriting was very small, and very neat and clear; but without an effort he was filling the page with Grundy's huge, sprawling hand. It was a dangerous gift for any fellow to possess, and

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

The Fifth of November may well pass unnoticed at St. Jim's, observes Mr. Ratcliff. Except for the explosion of 108,253 thunder-flashes, 97,054 rockets, 87,255 starshells, 47,254 jumpers, and about 200,000 golden rains, jack-in-the-boxes, Roman candles, and catherine wheels. "Bang" on the mark, Mr. Ratcliff!

How did the Roman candle get its name? asks a reader. Will somebody kindly throw a light on this?

Our firework display last year was a sizzling success, says Wally D'Arcy. I understand several of the jags got sizzled, as well as the fireworks!

Hot news: The biggest bonfire ever was the

time when Nero, fiddling about in his laboratory, set all Rome on fire trying to make the first Roman candle. Well, give me a prize, even if you don't believe me!

BANG! Gosh, what was that? Only the study door slamming.

It takes two to make a bargain, we read. True; but only one gets it.

"Centenarians Fast Dying Out," runs a headline. Some of our ninety-year-olds will have to be more careful, and use the pedestrian crossings.

I hear that hikers who find out good walks are keeping them dark. Treks of the trade!

William Tell was the greatest archer of all time, says a reader. You're telling me. Ow!

Scientists are to attempt to induce rain by driving hot air upwards. All they need is to get a couple of Form-masters chatting and put a fan behind them!

Third Form flash: "Do you object to war?" inquired Mr. Selby of his class. "Yes, sir," replied Curly Gibson. "Why?" demanded Mr. Selby. "Because war makes history, sir," replied Gibson—"and I hate history!"

Lots of fun on the Fifth, chaps! Chin, chin!

Levison had sometimes turned it to bad account; but it was certainly a gift.

"What do you think of that?" said Levison, when he had finished the impot.

"Jolly clever, at least!" said Clive.

Levison laughed.

"I'll help you with your lot if you like," he said. "Give me the next sheet, and I'll fill it for you."

Clive hesitated a moment, but he allowed Levison to have his way. It was not unusual for studymates to help one another with impots, and trust to luck for the Form-master not to notice the difference of hands. It was Levison's uncanny skill at what was dangerously near forgery that made the thing unsavoury to Clive's mind. But Levison meant to be good-natured, and Clive did not want to be ungracious, and he gave in.

Levison glanced at what Clive had written, wrote a line or two for practice, and then started on the impot. The Colonial junior stared as the lines raced off under Levison's pen in Clive's own handwriting.

"There you are!" said Levison. "It's nothing to me. You can take them in to Lathom now. Don't tell him I wrote them. Hallo, Racke! What the dickens do you want?"

Racke was looking in at the doorway.

"Job for you," said Racke, with a curiously furtive glance. "A hundred lines for Kildare. Mind you make them in my fist."

"I'm not going to do your lines!" snapped Levison.

"I'm going to pay you, of course," said Racke loftily.

"Oh, clear off!"

Racke stood his ground.

"Does that mean that prices have gone up?" he sneered. "I'll make it two bob a hundred, if you like."

"You can make it ten bob a hundred," said Levison. "I'm not doing your lines for you."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't choose."

"Go and eat coke, then!"

Racke strode away with a sulky brow, but with a strange glitter in his eyes. Racke's thoughts were busy.

Levison gave a hard laugh.

"To think that I chummed with that worm once!" he said. "Do you know why he came here, Clive?"

"To get his lines done, I suppose?"

"Yes; and to let you know about my doing them for money, in case you didn't know already. They'd like to start trouble in this study if they could."

"I dare say that was it," agreed Clive, after a moment's thought. "It would be like Racke."

Levison rose to his feet.

"I'll take this lot to Grundy," he said. "He's depending on me, and I can't let him down. But it's the last lot. I'll tell him so. I hadn't thought much about it before, but I'm chucking it now."

And Levison left the study with Grundy's impot in his hand.

Clive looked after him rather curiously. Certainly the change in Levison had gone deep, and Clive did not regret that he had gone Co. with him in Study No. 9.

CHAPTER 7.

Trimble is Made Useful!

"WHAT are you doing here, you fat boulder?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Trimble.

Sidney Clive had come into his study suddenly a day or two after the affair of Grundy's impot. He found Baggy Trimble of the Fourth there, very busy.

It was not uncommon for Baggy Trimble to raid another fellow's study. Trimble had an appetite that put into the shade the famous appetite of Fatty Wynn of the New House. And although he never tired of talking of the splendours of Trimble Hall, it was noticeable that remittances came very seldom from that magnificent residence.

Trimble was always short of money, and whenever he had any it went at once to Dame Taggles in the tuckshop. Hence Baggy's frequent surreptitious visits to study cupboards, and hence many a bumping that had been bestowed upon Baggy by exasperated fellows who found their supplies raided.

But Baggy Trimble was not at the study cupboard this time. He was examining the wastepaper-basket by the table, though what he could want with the wastepaper-basket was a mystery.

He looked up with a red and guilty face as Clive came in.

The Colonial junior eyed him sternly. Clive had come back to the study unexpectedly after leaving it, to fetch a book he had forgotten.

Baggy had undoubtedly watched him go, and fancied that the coast was clear.

"Well, what are you up to?" demanded Clive.

"N-nothing!" stammered Baggy, jumping up. "I—I thought I'd tidy up the study for you while you were out. That—that's what I really came for."

"You fat spoofer!" growled Clive. Trimble never tidied up his own study, and he was certainly not likely to tidy up anybody else's. "I've had to kick you out of this study before!"

"I—I thought you were in here when I came in, you know."

"You thought I was here?" ejaculated Clive.

"Ye-es, of course—"

"And you just said that you came in to tidy up the study while I was out!"

"D-did I? I—I meant—"

"There's an old proverb that liars should have good memories," said Clive. "I suppose you were after the grub?"

"Yes, exactly!" gasped Trimble. "That—that was it, Clive!"

Clive stared at him. Trimble generally denied such an accusation with great promptness. It really looked as if he had come into the study for some other purpose, and was relieved to find that Clive supposed he had come in for the grub.

"What the dickens did you want with the wastepaper-basket, then?" demanded Clive.

"N-nothing at all! I—I wasn't looking for anything in it!" gasped Trimble, edging to the door.

"Blessed if I don't think you're half off your rocker!" said Clive, in wonder. "Were you grubbing in the wastepaper-basket because you didn't want anything that was in it, then?"

"Ye-es; that's just it."

"You fat duffer!" shouted Clive.

"I—I mean I—I did want something!" gasped Trimble, with a longing eye on the door. "I—I wanted some paper to light the fire in my study,

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and—and I thought you wouldn't mind, you know."

"Why the dickens didn't you say so, then, instead of rolling out lies?" growled Clive. "You can take the paper if you want it."

"Thanks, old chap, I will!" said Trimble.

"If you call me old chap, I'll boot you down the passage!" grunted Clive. "Take it, and go! And if I catch you here again I'll scalp you!"

"All right, old chap—I mean, old fellow—that is, I'm going!" gasped Trimble. And he clutched up a double handful of paper fragments from the basket and vanished.

Clive looked for his book, found it, and left the study. He did not bestow a further thought on Baggy Trimble. He would have thought about the matter, however, if he had been aware of Trimble's further actions. Baggy had taken the crumpled papers into his own study, and there he was sorting them out. He did not light the study fire with them, however.

He scanned each paper in turn, and stopped at one in Clive's handwriting. It was a sheet upon which the South African junior had written an exercise and thrown away.

"That will do," murmured Trimble.

He threw the remainder of the papers into the grate, and slipped Clive's old exercise into his pocket. Then, with a fat grin on his face, he rolled out of the study and left the School House.

He looked up and down the quadrangle for some time, and at last spotted Racke lounging by the tuckshop. Baggy Trimble joined him with a familiar nod.

"Got it!" he said.

"Don't shove it at me, fathead!" growled Racke. "Slip it into my hand. Do you want all St. Jim's to see it?"

"Blessed if I see why not!" said Trimble. "What are you so jolly secretive about?"

"Find out!"

"I don't see what you want the paper at all for," said Trimble inquisitively. "What's the good of it?"

"That's my business!"

"And I don't see why you couldn't have got it yourself," said Trimble.

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

"Look here, you ought to tell a fellow, you know!" urged Trimble. "What's the good of a bit of paper in Clive's writing? I don't see it myself."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"You owe me a bob, anyway," said Trimble sulkily.

"You weren't seen there?" asked Racke.

"Oh, no!" said Trimble, afraid he might lose his reward if he confessed that Sidney Clive had caught him in the act. "I was jolly careful, of course."

"All serene! Here's your bob!"

Racke strolled away with the paper in his pocket. Trimble blinked after him, and then rolled into the tuckshop with the shilling.

All other matters were dismissed from Baggy's mind until that coin had been disposed of in refreshments, liquid and solid.

An hour later, when Crooke of the Shell went to his study, he found the door locked, and rapped on it impatiently.

"You here, Racke? Let me in, fathead!"

"All right. Don't make such a thumping row!"

Racke opened the door and Crooke entered. He stared at the table, which was covered with written sheets. Racke had evidently been hard at work.

"Swotting!" ejaculated Crooke, in amazement. Fellows sometimes "sported their oak" for the purpose of swotting, but Crooke had never known his studymate to swot before.

Racke grinned as he turned the key again.

"Yes, in a way," he said. "Keep your head shut about it, Crooke!"

"That isn't your fist," said Crooke, in wonder, as he looked at the papers. "Are you taking up Levison's old trade? I hear that he's dropped it."

"Not exactly."

"Why, that's Clive's fist!" said Crooke. "What the merry thunder are you practising Clive's fist for?"

out of it, and I won't interrupt you. Mind, I don't know anything about it."

He left the study at once, and Racke laughed as he locked the door after him. Then he sat down at the table and resumed the work Crooke had interrupted, covering sheet after sheet with writing. And when he had finished he burnt every sheet carefully in the study fire—a proceeding that would certainly have made anyone who had seen it very curious indeed.

CHAPTER 8.

A Startling Accusation!

"MY hat!" Tom Merry, Manners, and Monty Lowther uttered that ejaculation in a sort of combined exclamatory chorus.



"Well, what are you up to?" demanded Clive, as he came into his study and caught Baggy Trimble examining the wastepaper-basket. Baggy looked up with a red and guilty face. "N-nothing," he stammered. "I—I thought I'd tidy up the study for you!"

Racke smiled unpleasantly.

"Levison's so beastly clever at the game that I thought I would try my hand and see what I could do," he remarked.

"You're not going to get Levison's old connection and do lines for a bob a hundred?" grinned Crooke.

"Don't be an ass! You think that's pretty good?" asked Racke. "Here's the copy; look at it!"

"Jolly good!" said Crooke. "You've got nearer and nearer to the original every time. What's the game?"

"I'll tell you if you like."

Crooke shook his head.

"No fear!" he exclaimed. "You can leave me

They were surprised. The Terrible Three were chatting on the steps of the School House after lessons, when Clive came out. At the same time Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was coming in.

Clive gave the swell of St. Jim's a smiling glance.

Arthur Augustus paused a moment, looking Clive full in the face, and then passed on, silent and grim.

Clive stood rooted to the steps.

An hour before he had been chatting cheerily with D'Arcy and his chums. Now, in full view of half a dozen fellows, D'Arcy had cut him dead.

The Terrible Three stared blankly at Arthur

Augustus as he came in with a heightened colour and a grim brow.

"Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three lined up in D'Arcy's way. They felt that an explanation was needed.

"Hold on, Gussy!" said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"What's the matter with you, fathead?" exclaimed Lowther.

"I wufuse to be called a fathead, Lowthah! Nothin' is the mattah!"

Sidney Clive had turned round, and he came in again. His cheeks were flushed. Clive was one of the best-tempered fellows in the House. But he was not the fellow to allow such an insult to pass without a word.

"D'Arcy!" he rapped out.

Arthur Augustus gave him a lofty glance, and did not reply.

Clive's hands clenched, and his eyes gleamed.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed hotly. "If you haven't gone potty, what do you mean?"

"I wufuse to ansawah you!"

"What!"

"I have nothin' to say to you, exceptin' that I weward you with contempt!"

"Contempt—me!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Clive drew a deep breath.

"What have I done?" he asked. "I think there must be some mistake, or somebody has taken you in. I'll give you a chance to explain before I knock your silly head off!"

"I should wufuse to have my silly head knocked off—I mean, to have my head knocked off! I weward you with contempt!"

"What has Clive done?" shouted Tom Merry.

"I wufuse to entah into any discussion of the mattah."

"That's enough," said Clive. "You'll come into the gym, D'Arcy."

"I'll come into the gym whenever you like, and give you the thwashin' you deserve for your witten conduct," said Arthur Augustus disdainfully.

"What has Clive done?" yelled Lowther.

"Acted like a wotten cad, Lowthah!"

Arthur Augustus strode away, leaving Clive and the Terrible Three staring blankly at one another.

"Well, this beats it!" said Manners. "What bee has Gussy got in his bonnet now? What on earth have you done to him, Clive?"

"Nothing that I know of," said the South African junior quietly. "But I'm going to do something—I know that! You can tell the silly fathead I'm waiting for him in the gym!"

The Colonial junior strode off, and the Terrible Three followed Arthur Augustus, who had gone up to Study No. 6.

They found a warm argument proceeding in that celebrated study. Jack Blake turned an exasperated look upon the Shell fellows as they came in.

"What do you think is Gussy's latest?" he exclaimed. "The howling ass wants to fight Clive, of all chaps! And wants me to be his second. I'll second him! I'll bump his fat head on the floor!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What do you mean by it?" roared Herries.

"What do you want to fight Clive for?"

"He has challenged me, Hewwies."

"Then what did you do?" growled Digby.

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"Clive isn't a chap who's always looking for trouble like Grundy. I'll bet it's your fault!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Clive's waiting in the gym," said Tom Merry. "I must say it seems to be all Gussy's fault. He's called Clive names."

"I have chawactewised him as he deserves, the wottah!"

"Clive isn't a rotter!" howled Herries.

"He is an uttah wottah!"

"Can't you give it a name?" demanded Lowther. "What has the chap done?"

"The mattah is so uttahly wevoltin', Lowthah, that I wufuse to discuss it. It is beneath my dig."

"Oh, blow your dig!" said Blake disrespectfully. "We're getting rather fed-up with your dig in this study—I warn you!"

"Tell us what he's done!" shrieked Herries.

"I wufuse to talk about the wottah, Hewwies! A chap who talks to a chap in a vewy friendly way, and w'ites wotten things about him behind his back, is not a chap that a chap chooses to talk about."

"What a lot of chaps!" murmured Lowther. "Better begin at Chap. No. 1, and tell us the whole story."

"I wufuse to discuss the mattah, Lowthah! Blake, if you will not be my second, I will wuequest Julian or Kewwuish to act for me."

"We'll come to the gym, anyway," said Blake. "Gussy's got some bee in his bonnet, and we'll make him apologise."

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort, Blake!"

"You're not going to disgrace this study with your bad manners, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove, you uttah ass!"

"So Clive's written something about you—is that it?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What has he written?"

"It is beneath my dig to take any notice of his wotten insult. I simply intended to cut him diwect, and let him undahstand that I weward him with contempt and despision. As he has challenged me, however, I shall give him a feahful thwashin', and let the mattah dwop there. Pway come with me, Blake, as I wequiah your services!"

Arthur Augustus strode out of Study No. 6 with his noble nose elevated, and his chums followed him, perplexed and exasperated. They were quite certain that Clive was incapable of a mean action such as D'Arcy believed him to have committed, and the only possible conclusion was that somebody else was at the bottom of it, and that the unsuspecting swell of the Fourth had been deceived. And the six juniors followed Arthur Augustus with the determination to have a clear explanation before the matter came to the punching of noses.

Sidney Clive was in the gym, waiting. He would have asked his studymate to be his second, but Levison was not to be seen, and he had asked Dick Julian.

Julian, surprised as he was, had assented. But he was as anxious as Tom Merry & Co. to have an explanation first.

"Pway take care of my eyeglass, Blake!"

"Never mind your silly eyeglass now!" growled Blake. "You're going to explain what's the matter first."

"Wats!"

"What's the matter, Clive? I suppose you



Detective Kerr Investigates

No. 16.

Mr. Selby's Firework Display!

MR. SELBY, the master of the Third, had the start of his life when he put a match to the fire, already laid, in his study. As the flames leaped up, there was a deafening explosion, followed by a series of flashes and bangs—whilst out of the chimney shot an assortment of whirling catherine wheels, fireworks which detonated like artillery, and “jumpers” which popped and bounded round the Form-master’s feet! By the time the “display” had ceased, Mr. Selby’s carpet was in a ghastly state—and Mr. Selby, convinced that he was the victim of a jape by the heroes of the Third, was thirsting for gore. In spite of a denial by Wally D’Arcy, on behalf of the Form, that the Third had anything to do with it, Mr. Selby got them gated by the Head, and promised a thrashing apiece. At this point, “Detective” Kerr determined to investigate.

KERR: So you’ve already told Mr. Selby that neither you nor any member of the Third had a hand in planting those fireworks in his study chimney?

D’ARCY MINOR: That’s right, Kerr. But Selby isn’t in the mood to accept explanations, unfortunately.

KERR: There must be a culprit, if he can be found. The fireworks didn’t just float into the chimney. They must have been put there by a chap with a grudge against Mr. Selby.

D’ARCY MINOR: That leaves every member of the Third open to suspicion. Naturally, as Selby is by no means popular, we’ve all, more or less, got a grudge against him.

KERR: But why won’t Mr. Selby listen to you, Wally? He knows you’re a straight kid, and wouldn’t lie.

D’ARCY MINOR: The trouble is, Selby thinks it was a reprisal. You see, he kept the whole Form after classes every day last week—and

can explain, as you’ve got more sense than that fathead!”

“Wally, Blake—”

“Blessed if I know!” said Clive. “D’Arcy has called me names, and insulted me, and I’m going to hammer him. That’s all I know.”

“It’s up to you, Gussy,” said Tom Merry. “What have you got up against Clive?”

“I have already explained, Tom Mewwy, that a discussion of the maitah is far beneath my personal dig.”

“You’ve made accusations against Clive,” said Tom Merry angrily. “I suppose you don’t want to be set down as a slanderer?”

“Gweat Scott!”

“If you don’t, you’d better explain.”

he knew we were at boiling point. So he naturally can’t look at the thing as calmly as you do—which places us in a fix. Do you think you could speak to Selby for us, Kerr?

KERR: Not without evidence of some kind.

D’ARCY MINOR: You might get something out of Mellish.

KERR: Why Mellish?

D’ARCY MINOR: Well, old Selby overheard him the other day saying something disrespectful about Mr. Latham, your Form-master—and reported him. So Mellish had a motive for getting even with Selby, don’t you think?

KERR: Br-r-r! Jolly chilly in here without a fire on a cold, frosty day, Mellish, isn’t it?

MELLISH: Yes; the maid forgot to lay the fire first thing this morning.

KERR: Well, it’s been laid since. I should put a match to that fire, if I were you.

MELLISH: No, the wind blows the smoke down into the study. It’s going to be seen to, I think. Look here, Kerr—what have you come bothering me about this time?

KERR: Frankly—didn’t I see you taking in a big box of fireworks the other day?

MELLISH: What if I was? Nothing suspicious in a fellow having fireworks just before Guy Fawkes Day, is there? And, in any case, they were for Racke. He’s making an effigy of Kildare, and intends to set it alight in front of Kildare’s window on the Fifth—to get even for an old score.

KERR: So you have no fireworks in this study?

MELLISH: No. You can search, if you like.

KERR: I’d rather not. I’ll take your word for it, Mellish.

KERR: Oh, Racke! A little bird tells me you’re thinking of playing a joke on Kildare. I’d think it over well, if I were you—

RACKE: The little bird told you wrong, Kerr. I admit I did think of levelling up an old score with a jape on Kildare—but on second thoughts I’m not fool enough to play tricks on the captain of the school.

KERR: Not even on Guy Fawkes night?

RACKE: Oh, don’t be an ass! I had some fireworks, but I got rid of them. I’ve no fireworks in my study. You can look if you like. Only shut the door after you. There’s a nice fire drawing since they swept the study chimneys. I’ll be back in a tick with a few pals for a game of nap! Care to join us, Kerr?

(Who placed the fireworks in Mr. Selby’s chimney? And how has the culprit given himself away? Turn to Kerr’s solution on page 33.)

“In the cirs, deah boys, I will explain, as I should be sowwy to leave any fellow undeah a misappwehension as to my motives,” said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. “Clive has always acted in a fwiendly mannah towards me—you have pprobably noticed that.”

“Are you going to fight him because he has always been friendly, you apology for an ass?”

“No, you duffah! But suppose a chap was fwiendly to your face, and w’ote wotten untwee things about you at the same time—”

“Well, Clive hasn’t done that, fathead!”

“Clive has done that, Tom Mewwy!”

Clive broke in quietly.

“I won’t say that’s a lie,” he said, “because

it's clear that D'Arcy believes what he says. The silly ass is making a mistake! But silly asses aren't allowed to make mistakes like that, so you can put up your paws, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove! Do you ventuah to deny it?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, his eyes blazing.

"Yes, you idiot!"

"You fellows know that you can wely on my statement."

"Nothing of the sort, ass! You're making a mistake, as I said all along," growled Blake. "Who told you Clive had been writing things about you?"

"Nobody told me."

"Then what put it into your head?"

"I have seen it with my own eyes, Blake! I suppose I cannot doubt the evidence of my eyes?" said Arthur Augustus. "Clive has alluded to me, in witin', as a swankin' ass and a purse-pwound snob, if you must know the particulahs; and I'm goin' to thwash him for it. I suppose you do not agree with the wottah that I am a swankin' ass and a purse-pwound snob?" said Arthur Augustus, his voice thrilling with indignation.

"You—you've seen that in Clive's fist?" ejaculated Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's not true!" said Clive.

"I suppose you never wrote anything of the kind, Clive?" said Tom Merry, utterly bewildered.

"Of course I did not!"

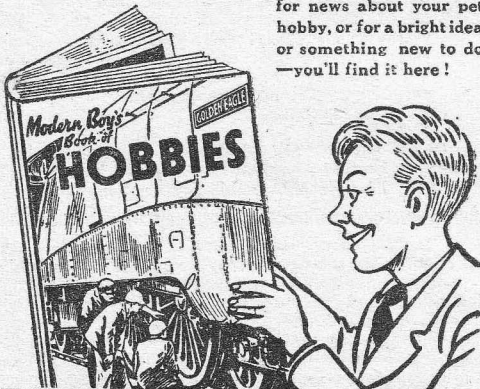
"I can pwoduce your own w'itin' as evidence," said Arthur Augustus, with cold and cutting contempt.

There was a pause.

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CHAPTER 9.

In Black and White!

SIDNEY CLIVE'S face was very grim now. The accusation was a serious one in the eyes of the juniors.

But they could not believe it, though Gussy's assertion that he had seen it in Clive's own hand was a "staggerer."

Arthur Augustus had evidently been wounded in the tenderest part. Swank was a thing he despised with all his heart; snobbery was utterly foreign to his nature; and, as for being purse-proud, Arthur Augustus shuddered at the thought. If Arthur Augustus had been called a purse-proud snob, it was no wonder that he was thrilling with indignation and contempt.

"You say you've seen that in Clive's fist?" said Tom Merry at last.

"Yaas."

"Then you can let us see it, too."

"And you can let me see it!" said Clive, with a curl of the lip. "You'll find it rather difficult, I think."

"I have not the papah about me now," said Arthur Augustus. "I should not be likely to keep such a wassally papah!"

"And what paper was it, and how did you see it?" exclaimed Blake. "Can't you see that this has got to be cleared up, you ass?"

"I am perfectly willin' to explain. I found the papah used as a bookmark in my copy of 'The Schoolboy Slaves,'" said D'Arcy. "I lent that book to Clive a few days ago. I pwesume he will not deny that. Seweval fellows were present when I handed it to him in the Common-woom—Wacke and Talbot, and some othahs."

"You lent me the book," said Clive. "Why should I deny it, fathead?"

"The uttah wottah returned me the book this mornin'," continued Arthur Augustus. "I was weadin' some of it ovah again when the papah drowped out. I was weadin' it undah the elms yondah, a quartah of an hour ago. I picked up the slip of papah, thinkin' it might be somethin' Clive had forgotten in the book, and might want to keep. There were a couple of lines w'ritten on it, and I could not help seein' them, of course. They wan: 'As for that swankin' ass and purse-pwound D'Arcy—' That was all. It was part of a lettah. I thwew it away."

"You ass!" roared Blake. "What did you throw it away for? Do you think you can bring an accusation like that without proof?"

"I did not intend to bring an accusation, Blake. I simply intended to treat this person with the contempt he deserves. Natuwallly, I cwumpled the wotten thing in my hand and thwew it away."

"Then it is still there!" said Tom Merry. "If you threw it away under the elms a quarter of an hour ago we can find it."

"It is not necessary, Tom Mewwy. I expect my friends to take my word!"

"Do you expect me to take it?" said Clive contemptuously. "You will have to make up a better yarn than that."

"Bai Jove! You—"

"Shut up, both of you!" roared Blake. "We'll find that paper, and see about it. Come along and look for it!"

"I'm goin' to thwash you, Clive! Blake—"

"You're coming along to look for the precious paper!" growled Blake.

And he took Arthur Augustus by the arm and dragged him away.

Tom Merry & Co. followed with Clive, whose face was pale and set.

The South African junior was calm, but it was evident that he was very angry.

Arthur Augustus stopped at one of the old oaken benches under the elms.

"I was sittin' here!" he said, with dignity.

The juniors searched under the trees. They had, of course, not the slightest doubt of D'Arcy's statement concerning the existence of the paper. And in a few minutes Digby had fielded a crumpled fragment of paper.

He picked it up and unfolded it.

"Here you are!" said Digby, his eyes beginning to gleam.

It was a portion torn from a letter—less than half a sheet.

It looked like a fragment from a letter that had been written, and then had been torn up and thrown away. A fellow might have picked up the fragment carelessly to use as a bookmark. And there, in plain black and white, was the sentence, with neither beginning nor end:

"—As for that swanking ass and purse-proud snob, D'Arcy—"

The juniors stared at it.

"That's Clive's fist!" said Tom Merry, after a long pause.

He took the fragment, and held it up for Clive to see. The South African junior looked at it fixedly for some moments without speaking.

"Well, what have you got to say?" asked Tom Merry gruffly.

Clive raised his head and looked calmly and fearlessly at the dark faces before him.

"I did not write that," he said quietly.

"It's in your handwriting?"

"It looks like it. I have mentioned D'Arcy in my letters home, but never in a way I shouldn't care for D'Arcy to see. I did not write that, and I never used that, or anything else, as a bookmark in the book D'Arcy lent me. I read the book through at one sitting, and never needed a bookmark. Somebody else has written that in my hand."

"Oh!" said Blake.

"Some chap who is jolly clever at imitating writing, too!" said Clive. "I don't know whom, or why he should do it. I should be taken in myself if I weren't sure that I had never written such a caddish thing. You fellows have been longer here than I have; you ought to be able to guess who did it better than I can."

The juniors exchanged a quick look. One name leaped into all their minds at once.

"Levison!" said Tom Merry.

And from each of the other fellows came, like an echo:

"Levison!"

CHAPTER 10.

The Meeting!

THE name was uttered with conviction by all the juniors in the group under the old elm-trees.

"Levison of the Fourth! Who else?"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, utterly taken aback.

Only Clive had not joined in the chorus.

"Levison!" said Blake. "Of course! You ought to have remembered his tricks, Gussy, you ase!"



PROFESSOR SKIMPOLE'S HOROSCOPE

This Week:
TOM MERRY.

"**H**ALLO, Skimpole," said Tom Merry, as I looked into Study No. 10. "What can I do for you? Do you want to be included in the eleven for the Rookwood match, like all the rest?" I shook my head. "I should never aspire to distinction in the sphere of sport," I replied modestly. "I came to cast your horoscope, Merry." "Well, that will be a change from poring over this footer list," admitted Tom Merry. "Perhaps it will help me to make up my mind who to play at outside-left in place of Gussy, who is crooked."

A true subject of Leo, the Lion (July 23rd to August 23rd), coming under the patronage of the Sun itself, Merry is shown to be a remarkable personality, powerful, self-reliant, well able to act either as a staunch friend or as a formidable foe, as the occasion demands. There is a complete absence of littleness, a well-balanced comprehension of the responsibilities of leadership, and a sportsmanlike attitude towards life which indicates that however successful, Merry is never likely to become swollen-headed.

"Speaking of swollen-headedness," said Tom Merry, "about the only fellow who hasn't boasted of his ability to play outside-left in Gussy's place is Hammond. I think I'll play him. He's very fast on the wing, and did well in the last House match. Well, thanks, Skimpole, at any rate, for helping me solve my problem. Cheerio!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus was covered with confusion. "I—I nevah thought of that, you know, I—I had forgotten about Levison's wotten forgin' twicks. It's just like the twick he played on Hammond once, and on old Bwooke, too. Clive, deah boy, I beg your pardon!"

Arthur Augustus needed no more convincing. The supposed handwriting of the South African junior had carried conviction in the first place, and D'Arcy had not doubted, hurt and indignant as he was. But the mention of Levison was enough. It was almost impossible to doubt the clear, steady eyes, the frank and honest face of the Colonial junior. But it was possible enough to remember Levison's old impish trickery, and his skill at imitating hands.

The black sheep of the Fourth had broken out once more, in spite of his pretended reform. Not wholly a pretended reform, either, the juniors had to admit that. But doubtless the wretched junior, so long accustomed to dark and tortuous ways, had been unable to resist sliding back into his old trickery. Doubtless he had deemed himself safe from discovery in this instance.

"I am mose sowwy than I can say, Clive!" said Arthur Augustus, deeply distressed. "I weally ought to have known you bettah; but how was I to guess that an uttah wottah had been imitatin' your handw'tin'?"

"I don't blame you!" said Clive quietly. "You couldn't think anything else, so far as I can see. I'm glad you see now you were mistaken!"

"Yeas, wathah, and I weally apologise!"

"We can all see that," said Tom Merry. "You see, we know Levison and his tricks. He played this game on Brooke of the Fourth once, and was jolly nearly sackered for it. Jolly lucky we all know that, too. Otherwise—"

He paused.

Clive compressed his lips.

"Otherwise you would have believed that I had written that rotten, caddish thing, and lied about it!" he exclaimed.

"I don't say that, but it would have been a staggerer, anyway!" said Tom uneasily. "You say yourself you can't see any difference between that fist and your own. What could a fellow think?"

Clive nodded shortly.

"I don't say I blame you," he said. "A fellow's own handwriting is generally supposed to be pretty conclusive evidence. Only that doesn't happen to be my handwriting."

"We know that now," said Julian. "But—but what on earth did Levison play such a trick for?"

"To start a row between Gussy and Clive, as he did once between Gussy and Hammond, by just such another trick," said Blake. "He would have succeeded that time, only Cousin Ethel was here, and she spotted it. He does these things just out of mischief, I suppose."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But—but I can't quite believe it of him!" exclaimed Clive. "Why should he play such a trick on me, his studymate?"

"He's as full of tricks as a monkey!" growled Herries. "Anyway, it wouldn't have been anybody else. Only Levison could have done it."

"That's certain!" said Tom Merry.

"And the uttah wottah has been pwetendin' to weform, and takin' us all in!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I suppose some chaps are born to go ewoked, and can't help it."

"If so, Levison's one of them," said Manners. "Look here, you fellows, this is a jolly serious matter. The rotter might play a trick like that on any of us. It doesn't make any difference with him if you're on good terms with him, either."

"I can't quite swallow it," said Clive.

"Oh, rot!" said Tom Merry impatiently. "It's clear enough. Levison's the only fellow who can do it. He's well known for it. He does other fellow's lines in their handwriting at a bob or eightpence a hundred."

"Yes, I know that."

"It's too jolly serious to pass over," said Blake grimly. "Levison's got to have a lesson on the subject of forging other fellows' fists! Anybody know where the cad is?"

"He might be in the study," said Clive, with a troubled look. "But—"

"You go and fetch him, Julian! Bring him to the Hobby Club-room," said Tom Merry. "This is a House matter. We'll call the fellows together, and Levison can answer for it to all the Fourth and the Shell."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Julian nodded, and went away to the School House.

Tom Merry & Co. proceeded to call the junior meeting. That outbreak on Levison's part exasperated them beyond measure. There was not the faintest doubt of his guilt among any of the Co. It was exactly one of Levison's old tricks—one of the old tricks they knew so well.

True, Levison had changed since then. It could not be denied that he was no longer a smoky and shady blackguard, as he had once been. He had given up smoking and pub-haunting for footer,

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The juniors crowded round to read the torn piece of for that swanking ass and purse-proud snob,

and he was a credit to the junior team. But the impish keenness for making mischief apparently remained unchanged.

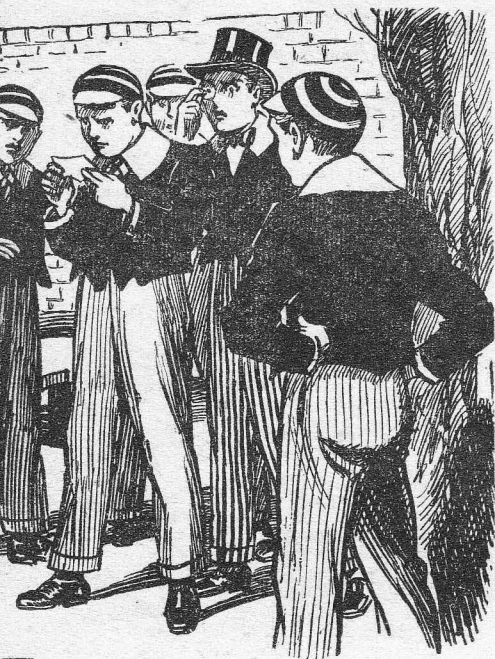
Possibly, too, Levison did not wholly like the friendship between Arthur Augustus and his own new chum, Clive, and intended to nip it in the bud by this trick. It would be like him—like him as he had been the previous term, at all events.

It was exasperating, and such tricks were not only exasperating, but dangerous. Any fellow might be the victim next, and the juniors did not forget that just such a trick—brought home to Levison—had caused a fight between D'Arcy and Harry Hammond.

A severe lesson was needed, the juniors agreed on that; and the word was passed round for a general meeting of the Fourth and the Shell to deal with the matter.

The juniors, forgetting tea-time, crowded into the Hobby Club-room, as the news was spread. It was, as Tom Merry said, a House matter, and on such occasions all members of the two Forms had to be present. The Shell and the Fourth turned up to the last man—Baggy Trimble being routed out of the tuckshop, and Racker and Crooke dragged away from cigarettes in their study; Bernard Glyn being yanked away from an experiment in the end study, and Brooke of the Fourth—the day-boy—stopped on his way to the gates.

The Hobby Club-room was soon crowded with Shell fellows and Fourth Formers, and as the story of the forged letter was now known to all, there were grim faces awaiting Levison of the Fourth when he arrived to face the charge.



in plain black and white, was the sentence: "—As
That's Clive's fist!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 11.

A Dog With a Bad Name!

LEVISON was in his study with his minor when Dick Julian came in.

Julian looked very curiously at the two. Frank was deep in Eutropius, and Levison major was helping him, with quiet, kind patience.

It seemed odd enough that the affectionate brother—the fellow who was giving up his own leisure hours to help a fag over the stumbling-blocks of learning—should be the fellow who had played a mean and dastardly trick.

But Levison's nature had always been a strange mixture of good and evil. In his worst moments he had shown glimmerings of something better; in his best moments the cloven hoof would peep out now and then.

Julian was surprised, but not really very much. It was, after all, what might really have been expected of a fellow of Levison's peculiar nature.

"Will you come along, Levison?" asked Dick Julian.

"What's on?"

"House meeting."

"Well, I'm busy!" said Levison. "It can wait! What the dickens is the House meeting about?"

"As a matter of fact, it's about you," said Julian dryly. "You'd better come along."

Levison stared.

"About me?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Some of my sins found me out?" asked Levison, with one of his old sneers.

Frank looked a little alarmed.

"Something of the sort," said Julian coolly. "You'd better come!"

"Well, I won't come till I've finished this!" said Levison obstinately. "Get on with it, Frank!"

But the fag shook his head and rose.

"It's all right, Ernie," he said. "You cut along! I'll wait for you, if you like. But do go now!"

"Oh rot!"

"Do go!" urged Frank. "If it's a House meeting, you're wanted—every fellow has to turn up!"

Levison hesitated for a moment or two, then he nodded.

"Right-ho!" he said. "I'll go. You wait here, and I'll be back soon!"

He followed Julian down the passage.

"What's the row about?" he asked, as they proceeded to the Hobby Club-room.

"Better wait till you get there," said Julian, hesitating. "I—I hope you'll be able to clear yourself."

"But you don't think so?" sneered Levison.

Julian did not reply.

"Blessed if I like being called over the coals like this!" Levison growled. "But I'll see it through! Here we are!"

The two juniors entered the Hobby Club-room. The room, large as it was, was crowded.

The Fourth Form and the Shell were there to the last fellow, so far as the School House portions of the Forms were concerned. The New House, of course, had nothing to do with the matter.

Levison stared at the grim looks that met him on all sides. Even Talbot of the Shell, generally quite friendly with Levison, was looking very grave. Sidney Clive looked troubled and doubtful.

Levison fixed his eyes on his studymate.

"So you're in this, Clive?" he exclaimed.

"Well, I'm present," said Clive. "I don't know what to think about it, and that's a fact. I can't quite believe it of you."

"Believe what, you ass?"

"I fancy you can guess," said Blake, with a sniff. "Think over your last mean trick, Levison, and you'll guess!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"So you're all down on me, and you don't mean to tell me what you've got up against me?" sneered Levison.

"We're going to tell you fast enough," said Tom Merry sharply. "It's a House meeting to make you answer for what you've done! Look at that!"

He threw a slip of paper across the table to Levison. The latter picked it up and stared at it blankly.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

"You've seen that before?"

"No."

"Weally, Levison, if you are goin' to tell whoppahs—"

"Shut up, Gussy! Skipper does the jawing!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You don't know anything about that paper?" asked Tom Merry, with a searching look at Levison.

"How should I know anything about it?" said Levison impatiently. "It's in Clive's fist, I can see that. I think it's pretty rotten of Clive to write like that about D'Arcy, if that's what you mean."

"I did not write it," said Clive quietly.

Levison started a little.

"It's your fist," he said.

"It is an imitation of my handwriting."

"Oh!" said Levison, with a deep breath.

He began to understand.

"Clive says he never wrote that, and we all believe him," said Tom Merry.

"I believe him, too, if he says so," said Levison calmly.

"That paper—part of a letter—or, rather, meant to look like part of a letter—was put in the book D'Arcy lent to Clive. D'Arcy found it in the book when Clive returned it. He concluded that Clive had used it as a bookmark, and left it there without noticing it specially. It's clear enough that it was written by somebody else, and put in the book specially for D'Arcy to find it."

"A dirty trick!" said Grundy of the Shell. "I vote for the frogmarch first, and sending him to Coventry afterwards."

"Shut up, Grundy!"

"Well, I vote with Grundy," said Racke. "It was a dirty trick!"

"Rotten trick!" grinned Mellish.

"Horrid!" chimed in Trimble. "I despise you, Levison. I do, really. You're unprincipled."

"Shut up!" growled Blake. "Levison's got to answer for it. If he's got anything to say, he can say it."

A bitter sneer was on Levison's lips.

"You think I wrote that?" he asked.

"You know you did," said Manners.

"Nobody else in the school can forge a fellow's hand as you can, and nobody else has ever played such a trick," said Tom Merry quietly.

"You've done it before. You played it on Brooke, and another time on Hammond. Everybody knows it. It was easy enough for you to put that scrap of paper in the book, as Clive had it in your study. It's clear enough to me. But if you've got anything to say, you can say it. You'll get fair play."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You call this fair play!" exclaimed Levison bitterly. "Give a dog a bad name and hang him—that's your motto. You've all made up your minds that I've played a rotten trick on Clive, without a shred of evidence. You don't want any evidence."

"Who else could have done it?" demanded Blake.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know, and don't care! You've called me here to answer this. Well, I won't answer it. If you want an answer, here it is. Go and eat coke, the lot of you!"

And Levison turned to the door.

Blake turned the key in the lock and put his back to the door grimly.

"Not yet!" he said.

"Have you anything to say, Levison?"

"Nothing!" said Levison coolly.

"I think that settles it," said the captain of the Shell. "Guilty or not guilty, you fellows?"

"Guilty!"

It was an almost unanimous shout from all sides.

Loudest of all were the voices of Racke and Crooke, Mellish and Scrope.

Levison's old associates were grinning with satisfaction. The fellow who had thrown them over was down at last, and they rejoiced in it.

"Levison, you hear?"

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"I'm not deaf," said Levison, unmoved.

"You can take your choice; you'll be dealt with by the House, or the matter can be reported to the Housemaster. Which do you prefer?"

"Go and eat coke!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"Then we'll deal with you here! You'll run the gauntlet, and you'll be sent to Coventry to the end of the term."

"Hear, hear!"

"Line up!" said Tom Merry tersely.

Talbot of the Shell stepped forward.

"Hold on!" he said.

CHAPTER 12.

Talbot Takes a Hand!

"**H**OLD on!" There was a buzz at once as Talbot's quiet voice was heard.

"Cheese it, Talbot!"

"Line up!"

"Don't waste time!"

"Weally, Talbot—"

"Don't be an ass, Talbot!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "There's nothing more to say. I suppose you're not going to stand up for that rotter?"

"Let them get on, Talbot," said Levison, with a satirical smile. "They're going to enjoy this. What's the good of talking? There isn't any evidence required. This will be very entertaining, especially to the chap who wrote that scrap of paper."

"Mind your own business, Talbot!" exclaimed Racke. "Don't you chip in here!"

Talbot did not budge.

"If Levison's guilty, I'll send him to Coventry as fast as anybody," he said. "But we want to see justice done, I suppose?"

"Don't you believe he did it, you ass?" shouted Grundy.

"No!"

"Then you're a silly idiot!"

"Thanks!"

"Look here, Talbot—" began Tom, in a tone of exasperation.

"I think Levison ought to have a chance," said Talbot quietly. "You don't want to hang him first and try him afterwards. Let's hear what Levison has to say."

"He hasn't anything to say."

"Give him a chance, anyway. Levison," said Talbot earnestly, "don't play the giddy ox now! Say whether you wrote that paper or not."

"They've all made up their minds without asking me," said Levison bitterly. "Still, as a matter of form, I'll say that I didn't write it. I don't expect anybody to believe me."

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is utterly impos to cwedit that statement, Levison."

"Exactly," assented Levison. "Better go ahead! After all, if I'm sent to Coventry, I shan't get any more of your conversations. There will be compensations, you see."

"Bai Jove! You uttah wottah—"

"Suppose we go into the matter?" said Talbot quietly. "It's true that Levison could have slipped the paper into the book, as Clive had it in his study. But he may not have done it. Somebody else may have had a chance of doing it. When did Clive give the book back to you, D'Arcy?"

"This morning."

"But you didn't find the paper till this afternoon?"

"Yaas!"

Talbot was having his way. Punishment was delayed till he was through. Talbot, in his quiet way, had a good deal of influence, and the juniors were willing to hear what he had to say on behalf of the culprit.

"Where was the book all that time, D'Arcy?"

"In my study, deah boy."

"Then anybody could have gone there and slipped that paper into the book, for you to find afterwards."

"Yaas, I suppose so."

"That's clear enough," admitted Tom Merry. "But whether Levison put the paper in the book or not, he wrote it, and that's the point."

"That's the point that's got to be proved," said Talbot. "Levison says that he did not write it."

"Only Levison could have."

"Perhaps. We all know that Levison can imitate hands," said Talbot. "We all know that he has played tricks like that, but not lately. We know, too"—Talbot's voice was hardening now—"we know that there are several fellows in this House who are down on Levison because he has chucked up their company, and refused to go blagging with them. That's no secret, I suppose. We know that they have tried to blacken Levison. We know they had a scheme of worrying him with smoking-parties in his study, and that it was knocked on the head by his changing studies. Before we sentence Levison, we want to know whether this is one more of their rotten tricks!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry, quite taken aback.

Levison gave Talbot a grateful look. That suspicion had come into the old-time Toff's keen mind, though it had occurred to no one else.

"Levison's trick of imitating hands is so well known that a scheming rotter would expect all the fellows to jump to one conclusion—the conclusion you did jump to," resumed Talbot. "It's true that Levison could have written that paper in Clive's hand more easily than anybody else. But any fellow could have done it, if he had taken a copy of Clive's hand, and practised it for a long time."

"I—I—I suppose so," said Tom Merry. "But—but—"

"But there's no reason to suppose that anybody did," growled Herries.

"There is reason—good reason," said Talbot. "I think that before the matter goes any further, the fellows who are known to have played tricks on Levison before should be questioned. We know who they are—Racke, Crooke, Mellish, and Trimble."

"Well, as you put it like that, we'll go into it," said Tom. "Even Levison is entitled to fair play."

"Even me!" sneered Levison. "Good!"

Racke & Co. were looking much less satisfied now. Mellish had sidled towards the door; but Blake was there, and he did not move.

Baggy Trimble was looking the picture of consternation.

"Speak up, you chaps!" said Tom Merry, looking at the group of uneasy black sheep. "What have you got to say?"

Racke burst into a scoffing laugh. Aubrey Racke had plenty of nerve, though his comrades lacked it.

"I don't see that we need say anything," he said. "Talbot's talking out of his hat. As for

(Continued on the next page.)



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playing tricks on Levison, I shouldn't condescend to take notice of the poverty-stricken cad!"

"That's rot!" said Tom at once. "We all know how you smoked him out of his study. Still, I must say that I don't see there's any evidence in this case."

"Let's go into it," said Talbot. "Whoever wrote that paper must have had a copy of Clive's handwriting before him. Clive may be able to tell us whether anybody had wanted a specimen of his fist lately—"

There was a yell from Clive. Back into his mind rushed the recollection of Trimble rummaging in the wastepaper-basket in his study.

"Trimble!" he yelled. And he rushed at Baggy Trimble, caught him by the collar, and shook him vigorously. And the yells of Baggy filled the room.

CHAPTER 13. Not a Success!

"YAROOOOH! Leggo! Help! Yoooooop!" roared Trimble.

Clive shook him savagely.

"You fat rotter!" he shouted. "It was you!"

"Yaroooo! It wasn't! I didn't! I never!"

"Hold on, Clive!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"That isn't the way to get evidence. Let Trimble alone for the present, and tell us what you've got in your head!"

The Colonial junior released Baggy, who scuttled away round the table like a rabbit. Racke was deadly pale now.

"It's plain enough now!" panted Clive. "It was Trimble."

"It wasn't!" yelled Trimble.

"Go ahead, Clive!"

"The other day I caught the fat rotter in my study," said Clive excitedly. "I came in unexpectedly, and he was there, rummaging in the wastepaper-basket. I wondered what on earth he wanted with it. He told me a bushel of lies on the spot—pretending he had come there to raid the cupboard at first, and afterwards said he wanted the paper to light his study fire. I let him take it away—all there was in the basket, and it was pretty full of old papers, exercises, and things done by Levison and me. If he wanted a specimen of my fist, he had plenty of it there."

"I didn't!" howled Trimble. "I wasn't—"

Talbot smiled. It looked as if he was on the right track, after all, and the truth was coming out.

Tom Merry's brow was very dark. He had never doubted for a moment that Levison was guilty. And the thought that he had very nearly taken the lead in condemning a fellow unjustly was very troublesome.

"Come here, Trimble!" he said.

"I—I won't!"

"Bring him here!"

Trimble yelled as two or three pairs of hands were laid upon him, and he was yanked forward forcibly.

"You admit what Clive says, of course?" asked Tom.

"No, I don't! It's a lie!"

"Why, you fat rotter!" shouted Clive.

"I—I mean, it's a mistake," stammered Trimble. "Of course, Clive wouldn't tell a lie. It's a mistake. I never was in his study. I didn't touch the wastepaper-basket! I swear that! I was after his grub, as I told him at the time!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat chump!" shouted Tom Merry. "How could you have told him at the time, if you weren't there?"

"I—I mean, it's a mistake," stammered the unfortunate Baggy. "I—I should have said that. Besides, I burnt all the paper in my study—every atom of it!"

"You burnt it in your study?"

"Every atom," said Trimble fatuously.

"You've just denied that you had the paper from the basket at all!"

"S-so I did—I mean, I didn't! It—it was some other paper I burnt in my study," stammered Baggy.

"Bai Jove! What an uttah ass!"

"That much is clear—Baggy Trimble raided Study No. 9's wastepaper-basket," said Tom Merry. "What did you do it for, you fat idiot? Don't tell any more lies, or you'll get a bumping!"

"He was doing it for somebody else," said Talbot quietly. "Trimble hasn't brains enough to play a trick like this himself."

"I think so, too," said Tom, with a nod. "Trimble had to get some of Clive's fist—that's clear enough. Who made you do it, Trimble?"

"Nun-nun-nobody."

"Did you go to Clive's study of your own accord?"

"N-no—I mean, yes! Exactly!" said Trimble, with a helpless glance at Racke of the Shell, who scowled at him savagely.

Trimble's glance didn't pass unnoticed.

"Perhaps Racke has something to say?" suggested Levison satirically.

"I've nothing to say!" snarled Racke.

"Did Racke send you to the study to get some of Clive's handwriting, Trimble?" asked Tom Merry.

"I—I—I—"

"Answer yes or no, you fat duffer!"

"I—I didn't know what he wanted it for!" wailed Trimble. "How should I know? He only gave me a bob."

"Oh, he gave you a bob," said Tom Merry grimly, "for getting him a specimen of Clive's handwriting!"

"I—I— The fact is, Merry, I—I've got an appointment—"

"What!"

"And I prefer to let the matter drop here," said Trimble.

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm late for tea already, you know," urged Trimble.

"Never mind tea now," said Tom Merry, half-laughing. It was not easy to be angry with the fatuous Baggy. "Racke gave you a shilling for getting him a specimen of Clive's fist."

Baggy gave a dismal groan.

"You see, they know all about it, Racke," he said appealingly. "It's no good, you see. I haven't given you away, have I?"

Racke ground his teeth.

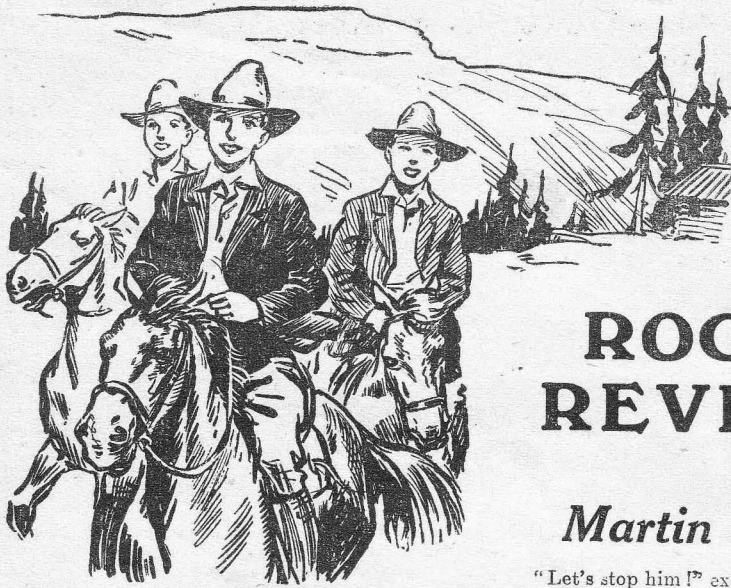
"Yes or no, you duffer?" demanded Blake.

"Yes!" groaned Baggy. "You—you see, Racke thought a Shell chap might be spotted nosing about Fourth Form studies. I never knew what he wanted the paper for. I didn't know he was a forger, like Levison—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He just said he wanted some of Clive's writing, and told me to get some from the study,

(Continued on page 36.)



Smarting under a deserved punishment, Kern Gunten plots a cowardly revenge on the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek—throwing the blame on his bitter enemy, Frank Richards.

ROGUE'S REVENGE!

by
Martin Clifford.

Gunten's Latest!

AREN'T you fellows coming?" Chunky Todgers' face was quite excited. Morning lessons were over at Cedar Creek School, and Frank Richards was chatting with Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc outside the porch when Chunky came up.

Frank had noticed that a good many of the fellows had cleared off at once in the direction of the old corral, at a little distance from the school. The school ground was almost deserted.

Chunky was following the rest when he spotted the chums near the porch, and bore down upon them.

"What's on?" asked Frank.

"Haven't you been told?" asked Chunky.

"Not a word. What is it?"

"H'm! Perhaps Gunten doesn't want you there," remarked Chunky thoughtfully. "Still, I'd come, all the same, if I were you."

"Oh, Gunten!" said Bob Lawless, with a sniff. "What's the little game now—poker or euchre in the old corral?"

"A bit more exciting than that!" grinned Chunky Todgers. "It's faro!"

"What!" exclaimed the three in chorus.

"Faro!" repeated Chunky Todgers. "Gunten's the banker, and it's going to be some sport."

"My hat!"

"Aren't you coming?" demanded Todgers.

"I guess not!" growled Bob.

"Well, look here, lend me a few dollars—"

"I'll lend you my boot!" said Bob Lawless, lifting his boot to suit the action to the word.

Chunky Todgers dodged and ran for the gate. Chunky did not mean to be left out of Kern Gunten's new enterprise.

Frank Richards and his chums looked at one another. Well enough they knew the rascally nature of Kern Gunten, the Swiss; but this was a surprise to them.

"I think that's about the limit!" said Vere Beauclerc, setting his lips. "That young scoundrel ought to be stopped."

"Let's stop him!" exclaimed Frank. "Come on, you fellows!"

The chums of Cedar Creek followed in the footsteps of Chunky Todgers, who had disappeared through the timber.

Gunten, the son of the Swiss storekeeper at Thompson, was a rogue to the finger-tips, and he was very unpopular in the lumber school. In spite of his unpopularity, however, he had a certain amount of influence. He claimed to be a "sport," and certainly what Gunten didn't know about poker and euchre was not worth knowing.

Fellows who were easily led dropped into the way of joining in Gunten's little games, and the cunning Swiss had made his knowledge of poker a very paying thing.

His present scheme was a little more ambitious, and Frank was surprised that he had the nerve to carry it out so near the school.

He could guess what Miss Meadows' feelings would be like if the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek discovered that one of her pupils was running a faro game like a cardsharper of the frontier mining camps.

The three schoolboys hurried through the timber and reached the abandoned clearing on the creek, where the old corral stood. There was a buzz of voices in the corral as they entered. A dozen or more of the Cedar Creek fellows were gathered there.

Kern Gunten was seated at a plank bench, with a box in his hand containing the cards.

"Make your game, gentlemen!" the Swiss was saying, as Frank Richards came up. He spoke in the manner of the faro-banker, his keen, greedy glance passing from face to face.

"I guess I'm butting in," remarked Eben Hacke.

"Same here!" said Chunky Todgers. "Lend me a dollar, Hacke!"

"Go and chop chips!"

"Now then, gentlemen," said Gunter, "put up your dust! You don't often get a chance for a flutter like this."

"Blessed if I want it, either!" said Dick Dawson.

"Keep out if you don't want to come in it!" sneered the Swiss. "I'm talking to the sportsmen."

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"Bet you it's a swindle!" said Hopkins, the Cockney. "I don't 'old with this 'ere!"

"You don't 'old with aitches, do you?" said Gunten, and there was a laugh.

Harold Hopkins' lack of aspirates was a source of great merriment to the Canadian schoolboys. "Hallo! You fellows coming into the game?" asked Lawrence, as Frank Richards & Co. joined the crowd round the plank table.

Gunten gave them a dark look.

"No!" said Frank curtly. "Look here, you fellows, keep out of this! What's the good of throwing your money to that foreign swindler, for one thing?"

"Who's a swindler?" shouted Gunten.

Frank looked him steadily in the face.

"You are!" he said directly. "It's a swindling game, anyway; and I don't believe you would play it straight, either! You couldn't!"

"Stand back if you don't want to play!" said Gunten savagely. "I don't want your cents! Gentlemen, make your game!"

Three or four coins rattled down.

"Game all made?" asked Gunten, taking no further heed of Frank Richards.

"I guess so. Pile in!"

"Go it, Gunten!"

Gunten began to pass out the cards. Frank Richards was strongly inclined to take the rascally Swiss by the scruff of the neck and run him down to the creek and pitch him in.

He was standing undecided when there was a light step in the entrance to the old corral.

"By gum!" whispered Bob Lawless. "Miss Meadows!"

"Miss Meadows!" repeated Chunky Todgers faintly.

Chunky made a dive for a gap in the wall and disappeared through it like a fat rabbit.

But the other fellows, with crimson faces, stood still as the schoolmistress advanced, with a stern brow. Kern Gunten sat frozen at the table, with the card-box in his thick fingers.

"What does this mean?"

Miss Meadows' voice was very quiet, but it was very grim. Never had the Cedar Creek fellows seen the schoolmistress look so angry.

There was no reply, and the silence in the old corral could almost be felt.

The Way of the Transgressor!

MISS MEADOWS fixed her eyes upon Kern Gunten. The Swiss rose clumsily to his feet. All his nerve had vanished at the sight of the cold, stern face of the Canadian schoolmistress.

"Gunten, what are you doing with those cards?" The schoolmistress' voice was like ice.

"I—I—"

Gunten stammered helplessly.

"It—it—it's only a game, ma'am!" stammered Hacke.

"And what is the game called?"

"F-f-faro, I guess."

"Take up your money!"

With crimson faces, the discomfited gamblers took up their stakes from the board.

"Give me those cards, Gunten!"

Without a word, Kern Gunten handed over the box to Miss Meadows.

"Richards!"

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Take this box and throw it into the creek!"

"Yes, ma'am!"

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A minute later there was a splash, and Frank Richards came back into the corral. The amateur faro-banker's stock-in-trade had vanished in the muddy depths of Cedar Creek.

Miss Meadows' clear glance travelled over the ashamed faces before her. No one was anxious to meet her eyes.

Frank Richards & Co. were feeling equally uncomfortable. They had not come there to join in the rascally game, but with a half-formed intention of stopping it by ragging the Swiss. That, of course, could not be explained to Miss Meadows.

"I am ashamed of you!" said the schoolmistress quietly. "I hope that, when you think a little over this, you will be ashamed of yourselves! You are all well aware that gambling is wrong and base, and very harmful!"

Silence.

"You are the worst, Gunten!" continued Miss Meadows.

"I—I—"

"More than once, Gunten, I have suspected you of this kind of rascality!" said Miss Meadows. "Now I have found you in the act of inducing your schoolfellows to gamble!"

Gunten bit his thick lip hard. Apparently Miss Meadows had not been so blind to his real character as he had supposed.

"You," continued Miss Meadows, "I must punish. The others I shall leave to their consciences."

"We—we were all in it, ma'am, I reckon," stammered Hacke, "all but Richards, Dawson, Lawless, and the Cherub. They were against it."

"Indeed! I am glad to hear that," said Miss Meadows. "Lawless!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Take your knife and cut me a strong switch in the thicket."

"Yes, ma'am."

Bob came back in a few minutes with the switch. Gunten eyed it uneasily. He could guess to what use that instrument of punishment was to be applied.

"I shall punish you, Gunten," said Miss Meadows. "It is the only way, I fear, to bring you to a sense of your wickedness. Hold out your hand!"

The Swiss' eyes glittered. He clenched his hands hard.

"Do you hear me, Gunten?" said Miss Meadows very quietly. "Unless you obey me at once, I shall send you home, and you will not be allowed to return to school."

Gunten drew a hard breath and held out his hand. He winced and gasped as he received the cut. The weedy, unfit Swiss could not bear pain.

"The other hand!"

Swish!

Gunten clasped his hands and yelled.

Miss Meadows threw away the switch.

"Gunten, I shall send a report of your conduct to your father. The rest of you, I trust, will think over this, and come to understand how contemptible such conduct is."

"I—I say, we—we're sorry, ma'am," blurted out Eben Hacke. "We—we never meant any harm!"

"It was only a lark," said Lawrence.

"I believe you, so far as you boys were concerned," said Miss Meadows. "With Gunten, I fear it was much worse. You may go back to the school."

The crowd of fellows cleared off, and Miss Meadows followed them from the corral.

In school that afternoon Kern Gunten sat with a face like a demon. The caning had hurt him, but the quiet contempt of the schoolmistress had probably cut still deeper.

And Gunten was looking forward with dismay to that report which was to go home to his father. Gunten senior was well known in Thompson for his sharp practices, but it was likely that he would regard in a very different light such practices on the part of his son.

Gunten dreaded a vigorous application of the parental cowhide, and the covert glances he bestowed on Miss Meadows were full of hatred and malice.

It was not a happy afternoon for the sharper of the lumber school, and it was very unlikely that the game of faro would ever be played again at Cedar Creek with Kern Gunten in the role of banker.

Gunten's Scheme!

"RICHARDS!"

"Yes, Miss Meadows."

"Please step in here."

Frank Richards stepped into Miss Meadows' little sitting-room, which opened off the hall.

"I wish this letter to be taken to the office of the 'Thompson Press,'" said Miss Meadows. "I had intended to trust it to Gunten, as he goes home to Thompson. I have decided not to do so, however. Would you care to ride over to Thompson and deliver the letter?"

"Certainly," said Frank.

"You know the office of the newspaper?"

"I passed it when I was in Thompson before," said Frank. "I'll take the letter with pleasure, Miss Meadows."

"Your uncle will not mind your being home a little later than usual?"

"Oh, no!" said Frank. "We weren't going home at once, anyway. We were going to stay and help Mr. Slimmey split logs, ma'am. Bob and Beaulcer can split the logs while I'm gone to Thompson."

"Very well," assented Miss Meadows. "Here is the letter, and here is a dollar. It is an advertisement for the paper, and you will pay for it."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Tell them I specially want it to appear this week if possible," said Miss Meadows. "There is no one to do Black Sam's work while he is ill unless I get a man from Thompson."

"Yes, ma'am."

Frank took the envelope and the dollar and slipped both into his pocket. As he quitted the room, he almost ran into Kern Gunten. He gave the Swiss a look of contempt. He could see that Gunten had been listening close by the open door of Miss Meadows' room.

"Get out of the way!" muttered Frank.

He pushed past the Swiss and went out of the schoolhouse.

Gunten cast a bitter look after him, and then stepped into Miss Meadows' doorway. The schoolmistress gave him a cold glance.

"Here is the letter for your father, Gunten. You will take care that you deliver it to him."

"You can trust me, ma'am."

"I hope so," said Miss Meadows. "In any case, I shall communicate with your father afterwards. You may go, Gunten."

"Good-night, Miss Meadows," said the Swiss, in his most oily tones.

"Good-night!" said Miss Meadows curtly.

Gunten left the schoolhouse with knitted brows. He had to deliver Miss Meadows' report to his father, and he was apprehensive of the result.

At the school gate he joined Keller, the only fellow at the lumber school he was friendly with. Keller was a Swiss like himself, the son of an emigrant from Europe who had "left his country for his country's good."

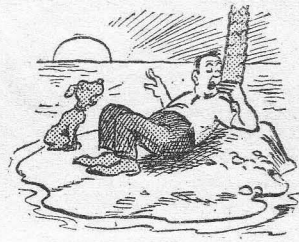
Keller was holding two horses. Gunten took his own, dragging the animal's head round savagely.

"Got the letter?" Keller asked, with a grin.

"Yes," snarled Gunten.

"It means a lambasting at home," grinned Keller. "Your popper will be mad."

"I guess so. The popper wants to keep in with Miss Meadows and the mission and all the respectable folk in the section," said Gunten, with a sour smile. "It makes it easier to run his store in Thompson. Sheriff Henderson has been nosing into things, and popper doesn't want to lose the



"No, Bonzo, I'm too tired to take you for a run now!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to K. G. Jagers, 62, Wilton Avenue, Chiswick, London, W.4.

postmastership. And the postmaster isn't supposed to allow a faro bank in his back parlour. I guess I shall get the cowhide."

"For following your popper's footsteps!" chuckled Keller.

Gunten grunted and vaulted on his horse.

"Richards isn't gone yet?" he asked.

"No; he went over towards Slimmey's cabin."

"Good! Ride faster," said Gunten.

The two Swiss rode away on the trail through the timber in the falling dusk. Gunten's brows were knitted, and there was a glitter in his narrow, deep-set eyes.

About a mile from the lumber school he drew rein.

"Hold on!" he called out.

Keller stopped.

"What's the game?" he asked.

"Get down."

Keller dismounted, Gunten led the two horses into the timber, and tethered them at some distance from his own saddle. He removed the trail-rope from the end of the rope.

Keller watched in astonishment.

"What the thunder is the game?" he asked.

"Frank Richards is going to Thompson for Miss Meadows. She's given him the advertisement to take to the 'Press' office," explained Gunten. "I heard her telling him when I went to her room. He's going to ride to Thompson, and he must pass this spot."

"And you're going to rope him in?" exclaimed Keller.

"You bet!"

"I guess I'd let him alone," said Keller un- easily. "That fellow is too hefty with his fists."

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"Never mind his fists," said Gunten. "I can stand that. I'm not doing it for fun. I'm after that letter of Miss Meadows'."

"What for?"

"I guess I'm going to put a spoke in the wheel," said Gunten, with a malicious grin. "Frank Richards is high up in favour now, but suppose Frank Richards played a rotten trick on Miss Meadows and caused her a lot of trouble—"

"He wouldn't."

"He might be made to seem to," said Gunten coolly. "I'm going to rope him in on the trail and take the letter. When Frank Richards gets it back it won't be the same letter; but he won't know it. He's taking an advertisement to the 'Press' for an odd-job man. I guess it's going to be a different kind of advertisement when it appears."

"I—I say, it's risky!" muttered Keller. "What sort of an advert is it going to be?"

"You know the new stunt they've started in the 'Thompson Press,'" grinned Gunten—"the matrimonial agency? Miss Meadows' advertisement is going in that column!"

Keller gasped.

"Gunten, you jay, you wouldn't dare—"

"You'll see," said Gunten coolly. "Frank Richards can tell a yarn about being roped up on the trail if he likes; but how's he going to prove it? We shall deny it, and it's two against one. It will be supposed to be his doing."

"By gum!"

"And if Miss Meadows isn't mad with him, you can call me a sucker," grinned Gunten. "There'll be a letter to Rancher Lawless, and the cowhide for Master Frank, I guess, as well as me."

Keller burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess it's a cinch!" said Gunten. "Come back to the trail."

The two young rascals crept back to the trail and waited in the timber, watching the hoof-beaten path under the trees.

The dusk was thickening. Frank Richards was certain to pass before long, and he was equally certain to fall a helpless victim to the ambush.

"Hark!" muttered Keller, holding up his hand. Thud, thud, thud!

From the direction of the creek came the steady beat of hoofs. Gunten, with a grim smile, prepared the lasso for the cast.

Roped on the Trail!

FRANK RICHARDS, after leaving Miss Meadows, went towards Mr. Slimmey's cabin by the creek.

Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master of Cedar Creek, was there in his shirtsleeves, splitting logs for the winter. Several of the Cedar Creek fellows had stayed behind to help him. It was the custom of the Canadian West, where everybody lends everybody else a helping hand when needed.

Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc were busy with axes already, with Dick Dawson, Tom Lawrence, and Harold Hopkins.

"Wade in, you slacker!" called out Bob, as his English cousin came up.

"I'm going over to Thompson for Miss Meadows," said Frank. "I'll be back here, Bob, by the time you're finished."

"Right you are!" said Bob.

Frank walked away for his horse. Only a few minutes after the two Swiss, he rode away from THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,603.

the lumber-school—at a more leisurely pace, however. The two rascals were well ahead of him on the trail.

Frank Richards was thinking of anything but Kern Gunten as he trotted along the trail to the distant town of Thompson.

But suddenly there came a swish under the trees, and as he heard it Frank drew rein hastily. But even as he pulled in his horse the noose settled over his shoulders, and the drag on the rope wrenched him from the saddle.

Bump!

The pony reared as the schoolboy rolled from its back and bumped heavily in the grass.

There was a shout under the dusky trees, and Gunten and Keller came running into the trail.

Frank struggled with the rope, but the tightening noose pinned his arms to his sides, and Gunten kept the rope taut. The two Swiss reached him in a few moments, and then their grasp was laid upon him.

"You rotter!" panted Frank. "Is that you, Gunten? Let me go, you hound!"

"I guess not!" smiled Gunten.

He tightened the rope further and knotted it. Frank Richards was a helpless prisoner now. The two Swiss dragged him aside from the trail, and Gunten ran the rope round a big trunk and fastened it there.

Frank eyed them in helpless anger.

"What does this mean?" he panted. "What game are you playing?"

"I guess we're going to leave you here all night to cool your heels," chuckled Gunten.

"How do you like the prospect?"

"You dare not!" shouted Frank.

"I guess that's the stunt," said Gunten. "We'll let you off if you beg for mercy."

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Frank.

"Well, I guess I'll give you a night out," said Gunten. "Good-bye!"

"You know I've got a letter to take for Miss Meadows!"

"I'm going to take that for you. All serene! I'll deliver it safe and sound in Thompson," said Gunten.

He felt in Frank's pocket and took the letter.

"Come on, Keller!"

The two young rascals disappeared in the wood.

Frank Richards struggled savagely with the rope that secured him to the tree, but he struggled in vain. Gunten had done his work carefully. Frank was a prisoner until the Swiss chose to come and release him.

Not for a moment did Frank believe that even the revengeful Swiss would dare to leave him tied to the tree all night. He concluded that Gunten was trying to frighten him, and was waiting in the wood to hear him appeal to be released.

Meanwhile, Gunten and Keller plunged deeper into the wood. It was very necessary to keep Gunten's next action safe from chance observation.

From his saddle the Swiss took a small lantern. He lighted it and set it on a log amid the thickets. Keller watched him, with much curiosity. Gunten's next step was to fill a tin dipper with water from the spring in the timber.

Opening the top of the lantern, he set the tin dipper over the flame. In ten minutes a thick steam rose from the water.

Taking Miss Meadows' letter, Gunten held it carefully over the steam, and in a couple of minutes the flap of the envelope was loose enough to open easily.

"That's done," grinned Gunten.

He drew out Miss Meadows' letter to the "Press." There were two enclosures. One was the letter from the schoolmistress, and it ran, in Miss Meadows' well-known, delicate handwriting:

"Dear Mr. Penrose,—Please insert the enclosed advertisement in this week's 'Press.' I should very much like it to appear this week, if possible.

"Yours sincerely,
E. MEADOWS."

Gunten chuckled explosively as he read that letter, which he did without the slightest scruple. The other enclosure was the advertisement, which ran:

"Handy man wanted for a few weeks at Cedar Creek School. Cabin, firewood, and good wages for a suitable man.—Apply at once to Miss Meadows, Headmistress."

That latter was in Mr. Slimmey's handwriting. The assistant master had evidently drawn up the advertisement for Miss Meadows.

Gunten twisted the paper and held it in the flame of the lantern. It was consumed in a moment or two.

"Phew!" murmured Keller.

"All serene! I guess I'm going to draw up a better advertisement than that for Miss Meadows," said Gunten coolly.

He opened his pocket-book, and took out a sheet of notepaper and an indelible pencil. The cunning Swiss spread the paper on the cover of the book and rested it on his knee.

With the other letter before him, he wrote with

the pencil, and his hand bore a remarkable resemblance to that of Miss Meadows'. Skill of this kind was one of the gifts of Kern Gunten.

Keller fairly gasped as he read, over Gunten's shoulder, what was written, for the advertisement ran:

"Schoolmistress, age twenty-three, tall, considered good-looking, would be glad to hear from a bachelor, with a view to matrimony. Photographs exchanged.—Miss Meadows, Cedar Creek School, Thompson Valley."

Gunten grinned over that remarkable composition.

"How does that strike you?" he asked.

"Great Jerusalem!" gasped Keller. "You—you won't dare to have that shoved into the paper, Gunten!"

"You'll see!"

Gunten slipped the precious advertisement into the envelope with Miss Meadows' letter, and carefully resealed it. There was nothing about the envelope now to hint that it had been opened.

The bitter humiliation of his schoolmistress when that advertisement appeared in print was nothing to Gunten. He rejoiced in the prospect. It was upon Frank Richards' devoted head that her wrath would fall. Gunten meant to take good care of that.

He slipped the envelope into his pocket.

"Come on, Keller!" he said. "Not a word, mind!"

"Ha, ha! I guess not."

And the two rascals threaded their way through



Suddenly there came a swish on the trail, and as Frank Richards heard it he drew rein hastily. But even as he pulled in his horse the noose settled over his shoulders, and he was wrenched from the saddle.

the wood towards the spot where Frank Richards was still struggling with the rope that fastened him to the tree.

Tricked!

FRANK RICHARDS breathed more freely as he heard footsteps on the trail in the deep shadows. He had been left nearly an hour tied to the tree, and he had begun to fear that the Swiss had ridden on to Thompson, really intending to leave him there for the night.

He peered through the darkness at the two shadowy figures that came along the trail.

"Is that you, Gunten?"

"Yep."

"You bound! Let me loose!"

"Did you think I was going to leave you all night?" chortled Gunten. "Ha, ha! Were you scared?"

"I was not!" said Frank contemptuously. "I'll make you pay for this when I get loose, you cad!"

"Then I reckon you won't get loose in a hurry!" smiled Gunten. "I'm quite prepared to leave you here another hour. Come and have another game of poker while he cools down, Keller!"

"Let me loose!" exclaimed Frank.

"I'll let you loose if you agree not to make a fuss about the matter," said Gunten. "I'm not going to fight you."

"You rotten funk!"

"Funk or not, that's the terms! Give me your word to let the matter drop here and now, and you're free," said Gunten coolly.

"I intended to give you a jolly good hiding!" snapped Frank Richards.

"Take another spell of it, then! Perhaps you'll cool down presently! We've got lots of time!" laughed Gunten.

Frank panted with wrath. He was already aching from his bonds, and his limbs were chilled by the night air, sharp and cold from the Rockies.

Even at the price of allowing Gunten to escape unpunished for his trick, Frank did not want to remain another hour tied to the tree. Gunten had the upper hand, and it was necessary to come to terms.

"Let me loose!" he said, between his teeth. "I'll let the matter drop if you're afraid to put up your hands."

"Good enough!"

Gunten picked open the knots and unwound the trail-rope. Frank Richards stood free. He rubbed his numbed wrists to restore the circulation.

"So-long!" smiled Gunten. "Come along, Keller! It's time we hustled on the home trail!"

"Give me my letter!" exclaimed Frank.

"Oh, by gum, I'd forgotten that! I hope I haven't dropped it somewhere!" exclaimed Gunten, feeling in his pockets.

"If you've lost it—" began Frank savagely.

"All O.K.! Here it is."

Gunten drew the letter from his pocket, and Frank Richards almost snatched it from him. Not for a moment did it cross Frank's mind that the letter had been opened and resealed in the wood.

Frank slipped the letter into his pocket, and called to his pony.

Without another word to the Swiss, though his hands were fairly itching to be upon Gunten, he jumped upon his pony and rode away down the trail.

Gunten grinned as the hoofbeats died away in the darkness ahead. Frank Richards was riding

fast. He had a great deal of lost time to make up for.

"Come on!" said Keller.

"He doesn't smell a rat!" grinned Gunten. "Not the faintest idea that the letter's been opened!"

"Not the least!" said Keller, laughing. "But, by Jerusalem, what will Miss Meadows say? Richards can't deny that he handed in that advertisement at the 'Press' office, and he won't be able to prove that that letter was ever out of his hands."

"Let him try!" said Gunten. "Who's going to believe him? Miss Meadows doesn't even know that I know that he's got the letter. I shan't mind the cowhide so much now if I get it at home. Frank Richards will get something worse than a cowhiding after this."

And Gunten and his worthy comrade rode after Frank Richards, chuckling with satisfaction.

Handed In!

FRANK lost no time in getting to Thompson. It was risky riding fast on the dark trail, but Frank rode hard, anxious to make up for lost time.

He reached the town at last. He rode past the well-lighted store kept by Gunten's father, and stopped at the office of the "Thompson Press."

The "Press" was not an ambitious publication. Mr. Penrose, the editor, publisher, and printer, dwelt in a two-roomed cabin near Gunten's store. One room was Mr. Penrose's living-room, and the other was the editorial and publishing office and the printing works.

After his editorial labours were done, Mr. Penrose became a compositor and set up type, and then he became a machine-man, and turned off the copies of the local paper on a hand-press.

Primitive as the arrangements were, Thompson was rather proud of its local paper. There was nothing else in that line nearer than Kamloops.

A third part of the paper consisted of advertisements, mixed with demands for "hands" for the fruit farms and ranches of the valley, and tempting appeals to try Hop Chung's Chinese laundry, or to visit McNab's dance hall for a jolly evening.

When advertisements were short, Mr. Penrose's editorial remarks were long. When the advertisements were plentiful, the editor compressed his personal observations into a remarkably small space.

Mr. Penrose was an enterprising gentleman. His latest stunt was a matrimonial column. Humorous citizens of Thompson inserted "spoo" advertisements in that column, which were read out, with roars of laughter, round the stove in Gunten's store. But there were a good many genuine advertisements, too, at a dollar each. All was grist that came to the editorial mill.

Lonely bachelors up-country tried their luck, in the hope of finding a helpmate, and there were generally two or three notices from members of the gentler sex.

But in a section where bachelors were plenty and spinsters few, it was highly probable that the gentle advertisers possessed few of the attractions mentioned in the descriptions given.

There was a light burning in the editorial office as Frank Richards jumped off his pony and knocked at the door.

"Walk right in!" came a deep voice.

Frank Richards walked right in.

Mr. Penrose was a little fat gentleman, with



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging views on matters of mutual interest. If you wish to reply to a notice published here you must write to the Pen Pal direct. Notices for publication should be accompanied by the coupon on this page, and posted to THE GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

R. R. Wilkinson, 10, Irlam Road, Flixton, near Manchester; stamps, sports; overseas.

H. Bloom, 256, Kent Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; pen pals; stamps; England, Australia, B. W. Indies.

Miss M. Mills, 27, Court Farm Road, Shorheath, Erdington, Birmingham; girl correspondent, age 17-20; music, radio, films; America.

L. E. Emmier, Quaque House, Adisadel College, near Cape Coast, Gold Coast; pen pals, age 11-20; football, swimming, collecting stamps and coins; anywhere.

Q. Snipper, 498, Somerset Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; exchanging stamps of British Empire only; India, Ceylon, W. Indies or any small British possessions.

F. Head, 132, Colney Hatch Lane, Muswell Hill, London, N.10; age 10-13; stamps, cricket, sports; anywhere.

C. B. Hutchfull, Baptist Mission House, Hester Hill, Cape Coast; pen pals; sports.

S. E. Quagrainic, 21, Prospect Hill, Tantri Road, Cape Coast; pen pals; all parts of the world, except Gold Coast.

N. Summers, 70, Lyndhurst Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hampshire; age 12-14; stamps, sport; Canada, Bermuda, British Guiana, Grenada, Dominica, Newfoundland.

S. Libby, Town Hall, Shanklin, Isle of Wight; sports, stamps and films.

R. Stocks, 472, Hampton Street, St. James, Winnipeg

rubicund nose. The colour of that organ hinted that he often sampled the firewater at Gunten's store, not wisely but too well.

He was in his shirtsleeves at present, and there was a dab of printers' ink on his red nose and another on his stubby chin.

"Good-evening, Mr. Penrose!" said Frank. "Not too late for an advertisement for this week, is it?"

"I guess it is some," said Mr. Penrose. "Office closed an hour ago. But I've got a corner left. Chuck your ad. over here, sonny!"

Frank laid the letter on the bench, and felt in his pocket for the dollar. Mr. Penrose opened the envelope, took out the letter, and glanced at it. He knew Miss Meadows' handwriting well, having often received school notices for insertion in the "Thompson Press."

"Right as rain!" he said.

But as he unfolded the enclosed advertisement and looked at it, Mr. Penrose gave a jump.

"Jehoshaphat!" he ejaculated.

"How much?" asked Frank, surprised by the editorial gentleman's astonishment.

"Oh, a dollar!"

"Right! Here you are!"

Mr. Penrose blinked at the advertisement, and blinked at Frank Richards as he mechanically took the dollar.

"You belong to Cedar Creek School?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Miss Meadows gave you this to bring to me?"

"Yes," said Frank, in wonder.

"All O.K.! What Miss Meadows says goes.

But—carry me home to die!" said the astonished Mr. Penrose. "Have you read this, sonny?"

"Of course not!" said Frank. "The envelope

Manitoba, Canada; age 16 upwards; stamps; France, B.W. Indies, N.W. Pacific Islands, S. America, African Crown Colonies.

E. Elliott, 113, Cranborne Way, Hayes, Middlesex; pen pals, age 11-14; books, films, general topics; America, Switzerland, anywhere in the Empire except British Isles.

B. Weintraub, 4601, Bannontyne Ave., Verdun, Quebec, Canada; stamps, newspapers, etc.; anywhere.

"Stars and Stripes" Sports Club, 62, Kelvin Street, Hull, wants members, age 14-16, in U.S.A. or Canada.

Miss R. Havier, 70, New Petaling Road, Kuala Lumpur, Federated Malay States; girl correspondents, age 16-18; collecting stamps, postcards, snaps; Hawaii, Texas, California.

R. Cornwall, 12, Golding Road, Cross Roads, Jamaica; pen pals, age 17-26; literature, arts, photography, general topics; anywhere.

Miss H. J. Surin, 1697-5, Cochrane Road, Pudu, Kuala Lumpur, F.M.S.; girl correspondents, age 18 upwards; postcards, snaps; overseas.

A. Fidler, "Cedars," Bathurst Walk, Iver, Bucks; any age; matchbox labels; all letters answered.

C. Thompson, 18, Hellsborough Parade, Belfast, N. Ireland; pen pals, age 14-18; stamps; anywhere.

H. van der Beek, "Tom's Cot," 219, Joo Chiat Road, Singapore; pen pals; photography, art, collecting film stars portraits; any part of the world.

J. Schreiber, 1619, Lajoie Ave., Outremont, Quebec, Canada; pen pals, age 13-15; stamps, scouting and photography.

R. P. Waller, Prestongate, Hessle, E. Yorks; age 12-15; stamps, sports, general topics; overseas.

PEN PALS COUPON

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was sealed when Miss Meadows gave it to me at school."

"All right! Leave it with me. There's your receipt."

"Thank you!" said Frank. "Good-night, Mr. Penrose!"

"Good-night, sonny!"

Frank Richards left the editorial office, leaving the editor-compositor-printer setting his type.

Mr. Penrose's manner had surprised him a good deal, and he was rather inclined to suspect that the editorial gentleman had been visiting the bar in Gunten's store before he started composing type.

He jumped on his pony and rode away. In spite of the darkness, he made good speed back to the lumber school on the creek.

There he went into the schoolhouse to hand Miss Meadows the receipt for the dollar, and to inform her that the advertisement would appear in the current week's number of the "Thompson Press."

Miss Meadows thanked him, with a smile, and Frank went along to Mr. Slimmey's cabin to join his chums. He found them waiting for him, and the three started for home together.

The next morning, when Frank Richards saw Gunten at the lumber school, the Swiss was looking sulky and savage. Frank could guess that the cowhide at Gunten's store had been used the previous night as a lesson to the amateur faro-banker.

Gunten did not speak to him, but he smiled a slow, malicious smile as Frank Richards passed him. That day the "Thompson Press" was in print; that evening half Thompson would be staring and chuckling over the advertisement, therein.

And then the storm would break upon Frank Richards!

Next Week: "VICTIM OF VENGEANCE!"

THE CHIEF BUCK OF THE BENBOW STRIKES AGAIN AT HIS RIVAL,
JACK DRAKE, AND COVERS HIS GUILT WITH—



"Why—what—what—" yelled Jack Drake as the flickering matchlight glimmered in the study. "Great Scott!" gasped Rodney. "The place is wrecked!" exclaimed Drake. "Why—'ll—'ll—" Words failed him.

Daubny's Idea!

"**Q**UODSI me lyricis vatiibus inseres, sublimi foriam sidera vertice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was Jack Drake's voice that repeated the verses from Q. Horatius Flaccus, and Dick Rodney's merry laugh that followed.

The moon was up over the Chadway, gleaming on the river and the dark woods on the banks. Daubny & Co. of the Shell were lounging forward, with the intention of sitting out on the bowsprit of the old warship and enjoying a quiet smoke. But the sound of the voices warned them that the bowsprit was already occupied.

Daubny, Egan, and Torrence pained on the deck and peered in the dimness forward. They could just make out the two Fourth Formers on the bowsprit, sitting with their legs dangling over the river. Drake and Rodney were evidently improving the shining hour by an extra "sap," which was the St. Winifred's word for studying.

"Those two swottin' cads!" murmured Daubny. "Let's shift 'em!" muttered Egan.

Vernon Daubny shook his head.

The two sturdy Fourth Formers were not likely to be shifted easily by the dandies of the Shell, and Daubny had not come along for a "scrap," with a good chance of tumbling into the Chadway thrown in.

Daubny stood and listened, with a dark look on his face.

It was not long since Jack Drake had been the comrade of the bucks of St. Winifred's, and at one with them in their risky escapades and somewhat shady adventures. They had been immensely tickled by his announcement that he was

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THE PERFECT ALIBI!

By Owen Conquest.

going to work for the Founders Scholarship, but Drake was keeping his word, though after a good many failures. From one of the most thoughtless and idle fellows on the Benbow, he had become one of the steadiest and most industrious, and the change was as much due to Dick Rodney's influence as to anything else.

Daubny had no grounds for complaint. He had "dropped" Drake when he found that the latter had fallen from fortune. But Drake's cheerful relief at being dropped by the merry bucks and his evident intention of keeping clear of their society in the future annoyed the great Daub. Probably he had expected Jack Drake to turn into a needy hanger-on and flatterer. If so, he had been woefully disappointed.

Jack Drake went his own way cheerily, finding much more satisfaction in keeping the promise he had made to his mother than he had ever found in the escapades of the reckless bucks.

"You're getting on, old chap," came Rodney's voice from the shadows, as the knuts of the Shell

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*Jack Drake is not slow to guess who has wrecked his study—but proving the culprit guilty is quite another matter!*  
~~~~~

stood listening. "Old Packe will be pleased with your copy of verses to-morrow, I can tell you that."

"I hope so," said Drake cheerfully. "I never used to worry much about old Packe's opinion. But now—well, he's not a bad sort, though he does expect a chap to swot when he gives him extra tuition for nothing."

"Let's hear your verses again."

"Like a bird," grinned Drake.

He held up a sheet of impot paper, to catch a gleam from the moon, and read out his latest copy of verses, Rodney listening attentively. Daubny & Co. listened, too, in wonder. They could not even follow the really decent Latin that Drake was reading, and they were astonished by the progress the one-time slacker had made since he had parted with their honourable company.

"Good—jolly good!" said Rodney, when his chum had finished.

Drake laughed.

"Well, you're a good judge, old top!" he said. "At this rate, I shall certainly strike the stars

with my sublime head. By Jove, I'm beginning to think that I shall bag the schol., after all!"

"You will if you stick to it."

"I'm going to. I think I may get ahead of Estcourt, and you're the only fellow in the Fourth who could beat me, Rodney. And you're not going in for it, thank goodness!"

"Fed up?" inquired Rodney.

"Not at all. It's jolly here," said Drake, with a glance along the moonlit river. "We've found a jolly quiet spot for a sap."

"Let's give old Horace a turn, then."

"I don't mind."

"Carmen one," said Rodney. "Maecenas, etcetera. Go ahead!"

"For goodness' sake let's clear!" growled Egan. "I'm fed up with this, Daub, if you're not. Let's get somewhere for a smoke."

Daubeny nodded, and the three knuts turned quietly away.

Vernon Daubeny's brow was dark as he lounged back to his study with his comrades. Even in the days when they had been friendly he had never felt cordially towards Drake; they were too unlike. Now malice ran riot in his heart.

In Study No. 3 of the Shell, forward on the main deck of the old Benbow, Daubeny lighted a cigarette, and his eyes glinted through the curl of the smoke.

"Queer how Drake's stickin' to it," said Torrence, as he followed his leader's example. "I never thought he would."

"It's Rodney's doing!" growled Daubeny.

"Drake's an easy-going fool, and anybody can lead him like a lamb."

"All the better for him, now he's hard up. He won't be able to stay at St. Winny's unless he bags the schol."

"We don't want him to stay."

"I don't see that it makes any difference to us," yawned Torrence. "He's not in our set now, and we can keep him at a distance if we like. Though, by gad, he seems rather bent on keeping our noble selves at a distance."

Daubeny scowled.

"It makes a lot of difference to us," he retorted.

"Drake's up against me for one thing. The way things are goin' Drake will be junior captain before the end of the term, and then where do I come in? I'd be jolly glad to see the last of him. Either he's got to go down, or we go down. St. Winifred's won't hold the two of us."

"My dear man, you're talking out of your hat. Drake won't clear out of St. Winny's to please us."

"He'll have to go, if he doesn't bag the schol.," said Daubeny in a low voice. "And he's lost so much time playing the goat that he's got none left to lose. Estcourt will run him close, in any case. That swottin' cad only lives to work. I don't care if Estcourt bags it, but I do care a lot if Drake does. He's goin' to be stopped."

"Phew!"

"There's lots of ways of interferin' with a chap's sappin'," said Daubeny, "and that will do the trick. What about raggin' his quarters for a start?"

"Oh, quite!" grinned Egan.

Torrence looked doubtful.

"I—I say, that's rather thick," he muttered.

"The poor beggar's got no tin, and if we damage his stuff—"

"St. Winifred's isn't the place for a poor beggar who's got no tin," said Daubeny coolly. "Let him travel to a more suitable place. There are plenty of Council schools for his sort. Those

two cads are fixed out there for a bit now, and we've got a good chance of gettin' at their study."

"Toodles will be hangin' about; he's their studymate."

"Easy enough to clear Toodles off."

Torrence still hesitated.

"I don't quite like the idea," he muttered.

"Cold feet?" inquired Daubeny, with a sneer.

Torrence flushed.

"Oh, I'll come if you're set on it!" he said. "I only said I didn't like the idea. There'll be a row."

"We can cover up our tracks easily enough. Come on."

Daubeny threw away the stump of his cigarette, and the three Shell fellows left the study and made their way aft, towards the Fourth Form quarters. On the bowsprit of the old Benbow, Drake and Rodney were still giving Horace his turn, oblivious of what was happening below.

The Rag!

"HALLO, old chaps!"

Tuckey Toodles greeted the Shell fellows affably as they lounged down the Fourth Form passage. The fat junior was hanging about disconsolately. He had missed his studymates, who evidently were not yearning for his society. Their disappearance had baffled Tuckey's intention of "touching" Drake for a small loan, and he was very glad to see Daub & Co. Daub had plenty of that necessary article, cash; though there was considerable doubt whether he would part with any of it to Rupert de Vere Toodles.

But Tuckey was not thin-skinned; he did not mind a rebuff; he was, in fact, quite accustomed to such trivial incidents. So he beamed upon the knuts of the Shell, and, to his surprise and relief, Daubeny honoured him with a genial nod.

"Just lookin' for you, Toodles," said Daubeny.

"Here I am, old boy," said Tuckey affectionately. "Jolly glad to see you, dear old fellow. I was going to ask you fellows to supper in my study—"

"Jolly good of you!"

"Only, as you don't pull with Drake and Rodney, I thought it wouldn't quite do," said Toodles. "So—so I was thinking I'd come to your study to supper instead. Same thing, really!"

"Quite!" agreed Daubeny. "But—"

"The fact is," said Toodles, with an air of imparting great confidence, "I'm stony."

"Not really?"

"Yes," said Toodles. "My pound note blew away, you know. Wasn't it rotten? Of course, a pound isn't much to me, but it happened to be the only one I had."

"Hard cheese!" said Daubeny gravely. "I was thinkin' that you might be willin' to do some shoppin' for me for supper—"

Toodles beamed.

"My dear old chap," he said, "I'm your man! Leave it to me!"

"Just get the stuff along to my study," said Daubeny, "and stay to supper, of course. We'll come in in about twenty minutes—what? That'll give you plenty of time."

"Heaps," said Tuckey.

He held out a fat hand, and Daubeny placed a ten-shilling note in it. With a face beaming like unto a moon at the full, Tuckey Toodles shot away in the direction of the canteen.

The bucks of the Shell grinned as he vanished.

"The coast's clear now," said Daubeny.

"That grubby boulder will scoff most of the tuck," said Torrence.

"Let him!" said Daubeny. "Come on, before some dashed fag comes along and spots us!"

The three Shell fellows stepped quickly into Study No. 8 in the Fourth, and Daubeny closed the door behind him.

They were safe for some time, at least, and the rag was not likely to be interrupted with the three owners of the study at a distance.

"Turn on the light?" asked Egan.

"No; wait till I've closed the blind. Those cads on the bowsprit may see it reflected on the river."

"Good!"

Daubeny groped across the study and closed the blind carefully over the window. Then the electric light was turned on.

Daubeny glanced round the study, with a sneering grin. The room was unusually tidy for a Fourth Form study—a circumstance probably due to Dick Rodney.

"Pile in!" murmured Daub.

He lost no time in beginning. Books—principally school books—were gathered up from the table, and Daub, drawing aside a corner of the blind, dropped them, one by one, from the open window into the river.

The light splashes they made in falling were hardly noticeable amid the murmur of the waters round the hull of the old warship.

Torrence stared at his leader.

"I—I say, Daub, draw it mild!" he exclaimed. "I say, those books are worth quids, and you're chuckin' them away!"

"What did we come here for?" grinned Daubeny.

"We came for a rag!" said Torrence rather hotly. "I don't call this a rag! This is dashed hooliganism!"

"You can slide out if you're funky!"

"Oh, rot!"

Volume after volume slid from the window into the waters of the Chadway, to disappear for ever in the depths of the river.

Meanwhile, Egan was equally busy. He was gathering up the study crockery, and each article, as he gathered it, he gave a hard tap on the table. Cups and saucers, plates and jugs, fell in pieces from the taps till the floor was littered with fragments.

Considering the amount of damage they were doing, the ragers were working very quietly, and there was little to draw attention to the study from without.

Books and crocks having been disposed of, Daubeny and Egan looked round, like Alexander of old, for fresh worlds to conquer. Torrence stood with his hands in his pockets, without offering to help.

Two or three pictures were on the walls, and they were taken down and ripped to pieces. There was a bookcase in the corner with a glass door, and the door was wrenched off and the glass knocked out. This made rather a loud crash, and the bucks listened a little nervously for some moments after it; but no one came to the study. The Fourth Formers were mostly in the Common-room and out of hearing.

"Go ahead!" chuckled Daubeny.

"There'll be a ghastly row about this!" said Torrence.

Daubeny laughed.

"That won't hurt us. Drake won't sneak to the

Head, at any rate. Even if he finds out that we did it, he will have to stand it."

"Better not let him find out."

"Lend a hand, then, and we'll be through the sooner."

"I'm not having a hand in dashed ruffianism like this!" growled Torrence. "I tell you it's too thick!"

"Rot! Lend a hand with the table, Egan."

"Oh, quite!"

The table was upended, a shower of paper and an inkstand going to the floor. Daubeny exerted his strength, and dragged off the legs of the table. It was not a massive article of furniture, and the captain of the Shell was quite equal to the task.

Table-legs lay beside the table-top on the floor. Then the two young rascals began work on the chairs.

Fragments of chairs, jerked in pieces, strewed the floor in a few minutes. Quite a heap was growing up in the centre of the study. The clock was added to it, with the leg of a chair driven into the middle of the works.

Even that did not satisfy Daubeny. Every article that was breakable was promptly broken, and articles that were not easily breakable were twisted or dropped from the window.

In ten or twelve minutes the study looked as if a hurricane had played havoc with it.

Daubeny glanced round at the scene of ruin with intense satisfaction, but perhaps also with a trace of apprehension in his face. He had glutted his vengeance upon his old comrade; but the thought of the consequences was not pleasant—if he should be caught on the scene of the outrage.

"Better clear now!" he muttered.

"I should jolly well think so!" said Torrence. "I'm sorry I came here!"

"Bow-wow!"

Daubeny turned off the light, and cracked the electric globe so that it would not light again. Then he opened the door cautiously. The corridor without was clear.

"Buck up!" he whispered.

The trio hurriedly stepped from the room, and Daub closed the door. Without losing a second, the three young rascals scuttled away to the upper deck.

"Safe as houses!" murmured Daubeny, as he strolled on the deck in the dim moonlight. "Of course, we shall have to prove a rather strong alibi about this. Let's get along to dear old Toodles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Daubeny & Co. proceeded to their study, two of them at least in a state of complete and happy satisfaction.

The Guest of Honour!

"**W**AITING for you, dear old boys!"

The electric light was on in Daubeny's handsomely furnished study, and it shone upon a festive scene, and upon the beaming visage of Tuckey Toodles. Tuckey had not lost time.

The table was spread, and the good things Tuckey had brought from the canteen amidst were arrayed there enticingly. Tuckey had extracted full value for the ten-shilling note from Mr. Capps in the school canteen.

Daubeny gave an approving nod.

"Good man, Toodles!" he said.

"I thought you'd like it, old chap," said the gratified Tuckey. "Kettle's just on the boil. Shall I make the cocoa, or will you have coffee?"

"Any old thing."

"The ham is ripping," said Toodles—"I've tasted it. And the cake is a corker—I've tasted that. And the toffee—I thought I'd better get some toffee—"

"Right as rain!"

Daubeny had moved across to the clock, which stood on a little shelf. With his back to Toodles, and his actions concealed from that inattentive individual, he calmly moved the hands of the clock. It indicated a quarter past nine when Daub came in; and he made it indicate exactly nine o'clock before he closed the glass again. Tuckey, with all his thoughts on the tuck, which he had so liberally tasted, had not the faintest suspicion of Daub's peculiar occupation.

Daubeny turned round with a smiling face.

"Lots of time for supper!" he remarked.

"You've been jolly quick about this, Toodles!"

"Well, I haven't lost any time, you may be sure, old chap. But we shall have to buck up with supper—bed-time soon, you know."

"Oh, half an hour yet!" said Daub.

"Why, it's past nine—"

"No; look."

Tuckey Toodles glanced at the clock in surprise.

"Blessed if I didn't think it was later!" he said. "Only just turned nine. Lots of time, then. Now—"

"You sit down, kid," said Daubeny, placing a chair for Tuckey, with the back towards the clock. "We're goin' to look after you, as you're our guest. We can't have a guest waitin' on himself!"

"My dear old fellow, don't mind—"

"I insist!" said Daubeny. "Sit down. Begin on the ham, what?"

"Well, as you're so pressing, I will," said Tuckey, beaming.

And he did.

Daubeny gave his chums a significant look, which they understood. Egan and Torrence devoted their attention to Toodles, and kept that fat and grubby youth busily occupied.

Meanwhile, Daubeny calmly restored the clock-hand to its proper time; a proceeding of which Tuckey did not dream, as his back was towards the dandy of the Shell.

Then Daub sat down at the table.

It was not difficult to deceive Rupert de Vere Toodles; especially when there was tuck about to engage his attention.

In case of inquiry into the rag in Study No. 8, Daubeny had a witness now that he had been in his study from nine o'clock onwards; that is to say, all the time that the rag had been taking place.

Tuckey Toodles could not fail to remember that it was nine—by the clock—when the bucks came in to supper.

At half-past nine, which was bed-time for the St. Winifred's juniors, the supper-party would break up; and doubtless it would seem to Tuckey that the half-hour had passed unusually quickly. But time always did pass quickly with Tuckey Toodles when he was spreading himself at a festive board. Certainly he did not suspect Daubeny's trick with the clock.

The bucks quite enjoyed their supper—in spite of the company of Tuckey Toodles, which, perhaps, they did not wholly enjoy. But they were very kind and polite to Tuckey; he was a valuable witness on their behalf, and was to be placated.

As for the grubby junior, he was in the seventh heaven; never had he so enjoyed himself. A

handsome supper, and this condescending graciousness from the great Daubeny, made Tuckey Toodles feel amazingly pleased with himself and with the universe generally.

Being given his head, as it were, Tuckey did not fail to bag the lion's share of the spread. In Study No. 8 Tuckey's predilection for bagging the lion's share sometimes caused trouble; but with Daubeny & Co., on this occasion at least, hospitality was boundless. For once in his fat and grubby career, Tuckey Toodles was a fellow whom the bucks of the Benbow delighted to honour.

Tuckey was in the full tide of shiny happiness when there were footsteps outside the study.

Daubeny & Co. exchanged glances.

The door opened, and Chilcot of the Shell looked in, with a rather curious expression on his face.

"Trot in, old chap," said Daubeny. "There's some cake left—"

"I looked in to give you warning," said Chilcot.

"Not quite bed-time—"

"No, serapping-time. Drake and Rodney are coming along—"

"We haven't asked them to supper!"

"They're on the warpath!"

"What on earth about?"

"Don't you know?" asked Chilcot, with a grin.

Daubeny stared at him.

"How should I know? I suppose they're not objectin' to their studymate comin' to supper with us?"

"Like their cheek, if they do!" exclaimed Tuckey Toodles warmly. "They never stand a chap a decent spread in Study No. 8. I shall jolly well have supper where I like, I know that!"

"Well, here they-come!" said Chilcot.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage.

Not Guilty!

"LIGHT'S off!"

"That ass Toodles again!"

Drake and Rodney had come down to their study; Q. Horatius Flaccus having been given his turn on the bowsprit of the Benbow. It was getting near to bed-time, and the chums of the Fourth were ready for a hasty and frugal supper, their appetites whetted by the keen air on the river.

DETECTIVE KERR INVESTIGATES.

Solution:

KERR: While Racke's admission suggested that Mellish might have bought the fireworks for Racke, as he had stated, it was not clear what had actually become of them. One fact stood out—Mellish was concealing something in his study chimney. Racke's fire was drawing well, and the study chimneys, as Racke said, had just been swept—so why should not Mellish's? No doubt Mellish intended getting rid of the remainder of the fireworks on the Fifth—but he had a surprise when Wally D'Arcy & Co., acting on my information, "found" them. Mellish had no excuse to offer for concealing the fireworks in the chimney, and he was reported to Mr. Selby! Result, Mellish had to take his medicine, and Wally and his chums were completely exonerated.

Jack Drake put his hand to the switch as he stepped into the study, but the light did not come on.

"Got a match, Rodney?"

Dick Rodney fumbled in his pocket.

"I think so."

Scratch! A match gleamed out in the darkness of the study. It was not the first time that "something" had happened to the electric light. Indeed, such happenings were not at all infrequent in junior studies. A hurtling book or cushion was enough to "douse the lamp," and as the juniors had to replace broken lamps at their own expense, it was not uncommon for darkness to reign in a study for two or three evenings on end.

"There's a candle somewhere," said Drake. "I kept it after the last time that idiot Toodles busted the light with a ruler. I think I can find it—show a light."

Rodney held up the match.

"Why—what—what—" yelled Drake, as the flickering matchlight glimmered in the wrecked study.

"Great Scott!"

"What the thunder! Who's done this?"

The match went out.

"The place is wrecked!" exclaimed Drake breathlessly. "Why, I'll—I'll—" Words failed him.

"Let's get a light," said Rodney quietly.

He stepped to the next study, and found Raik and Newson there. They looked up inquiringly.

"Lend us a candle, will you?" said Rodney.

"Somebody's been ragging our study."

"Phew! We haven't heard anything."

Newson found a candle, and it was lighted; and the two juniors followed Drake and Rodney

into Study No. 8. Rodney held up the candle, and the light fell upon a scene of havoc and desolation. The bread-and-cheese intended for supper lay trampled on the floor, amid spilt ink, broken crocks, torn papers, and dislocated furniture.

Drake and his chum stared at the ruin with feelings that deprived them of speech for a moment.

Rags were not at all uncommon at St. Winifred's; but nothing of this kind had been seen before on board the Benbow.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Pierce Raik. "Looks as if there's been a cyclone. Who did it?"

Drake's eyes blazed.

"I don't know, but we'll find out," he said, between his teeth. "Some rotten cad has done this—by gum, we'll make him sit up for it! Didn't you fellows hear anything? You're in the next study."

"We've been in the Common-room," answered Newson. "We haven't heard anything since we came back to our study."

"It was done before that," remarked Raik. "There must have been a bit of a row, I should think."

Two or three fellows were coming along the passage and they stared in. And then more of the Fourth arrived as the news began to spread. In a few minutes the doorway and the passage were crowded with juniors, some looking serious and some grinning.

"Had an earthquake here, Drake?" chuckled Rawlings.

"Some rotten cad has been here! Any of you fellows know who it was?" exclaimed Rodney.

There was a general shaking of heads. Drake glanced over the crowd sharply. He did not believe that the ragger was in the Fourth Form at all; and certainly there were no guilty looks in the crowd round Study No. 8.

"Somebody from another Form, I should think," said Estcourt. "You ought to go to Mr. Packer about it, Drake."

"No sneaking in the Fourth," said Vane. "It's only a rag!"

"It's more than a rag. I'd go to the Form-master," said Estcourt.

Jack Drake shook his head.

Certainly, he would have been justified in laying a complaint before the master of the Fourth; but he shrank from the idea. It was the unwritten law of St. Winifred's that disputes were settled without masters or prefects being called in.

"Where's Toodles?" asked Rawlings suddenly. "Toodles ought to know who did it. Toodles sees and hears everything."

"Tuckey!" shouted Drake.

But Tuckey Toodles, for once, was not on the scene. He was busy elsewhere. Drake gritted his teeth.

"We don't need Toodles to tell us who it was—or anybody else," he said. "I can guess easily enough. It was Daubeny, of course!"

"Any proof of that?" asked Chilcot of the Shell, who had joined the crowd in the passage. "I don't want any—I know it!"

Chilcot quietly left the crowd and disappeared in the direction of the Shell quarters.

"We shall have to have some proof, Drake," said Rodney, in his quiet way. "Look here, we were in the study at half-past eight, and it's been done since then. It must have taken some time, too. The fellow couldn't have done all this

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RULES: 250 Footballs will be awarded in the November 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."

Each "goal" must consist of a set of "Footer-Stamps" Nos. 1 to 6, inclusive—and all claims for prizes to be made on the proper coupon (to be given later). No allowance made for any coupon or stamps mutilated, or lost or delayed in the post or otherwise. No correspondence! No one connected with this paper may enter, and the Editor's decision will be final and legally binding throughout. (N.B.—"Footer-Stamps" may also be collected from the following papers: *Modern Boy*, *Magnet*, *Champion*, *Triumph*, *Boy's Cinema*, *Sports Budget*, *Detective Weekly*, *Thriller*, and *Wild West Weekly*.)

FIVE "FOOTER-STAMPS" HERE—Others on Page 2!



damage in a few minutes. Any of you fellows been near the study since half-past eight?"

"Yes, rather!" said Sawyer major. "I was talking here with Furlly—"

"So you were," said Furlly.

"We went along to the Common-room at ten to nine," said Sawyer major. "I noticed the clock when we went in. Nobody went into your study at that time."

"I came along after that," remarked Estcourt. "I left the Common-room a few minutes after Sawyer came in, to go to my study."

"Then it was nine—or nearly—when the ragger got here," said Drake. "Any fellow about after that?"

There was no answer.

"Come on, Rodney!" said Drake. "We'll go and ask Daubeny of the Shell where he was at nine o'clock, and what he was doing. If he wasn't in our study ragging the place, he can tell us where he was."

"It was Daub, right enough," said Rodney. "But we'll give him a chance."

"And we'll come and see fair play," put in Sawyer major.

"Hear, hear!"

Quite a little crowd of the Fourth followed Drake and Rodney to the Shell quarters. The door of Study No. 3 in the Shell was open, and Chilcot was standing in the doorway. He stepped aside as the Fourth Formers arrived.

Drake strode into the study with Rodney, and the Fourth Formers crowded round the doorway behind them.

Drake paused, somewhat surprised to see Daubeny & Co. seated peacefully at the supper table, and Tuckey Toodles with them.

Toodles gave his studymates a lofty look.

"Look here, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "What do you want bothering here? I suppose I can have supper with my pal Daub if I like?"

"You fat idiot!" snapped Drake. "Our study's been ragged, and smashed from end to end."

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Toodles.

"Have you come to tell us about it?" yawned Vernon Daubeny, turning his eyeglass nonchalantly upon Drake. "May I mention, dear boy, that I'm not interested?"

Drake's eyes flashed.

"You cad!" he shouted.

"Oh, gad! What are you callin' me names for?"

"You did it!" shouted Drake. "And I'm going—"

"Hold on, Drake!" Dick Rodney caught his excited chum by the arm. "If it was Daubeny there's plenty of time to hammer him when it's proved."

"I know it was—"

"Let him speak!" Rodney turned quickly to the captain of the Shell. "Daubeny, was it you?"

"Not guilty, my lord!" said Daubeny.

"Where were you at nine o'clock, then?"

Daubeny smiled sneeringly.

"Where was I at nine o'clock, you fellows?" he drawled. "Do you happen to remember?"

"Why, here!" said Egan.

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Tuckey Toodles.

"You came into supper just at nine, Daub—I noticed the clock."

Drake started.

"Are you sure about the time, you fat idiot?"

"Yes, I am. I thought it was later, but when I looked at the clock it was only nine. I mentioned it," said Toodles.

Drake gave him a sharp look. It was evident that Tuckey was telling the truth, so far as he knew, at all events. He could not suppose that Tuckey was a party to the ragging of his own study.

"Satisfied?" sneered Vernon Daubeny.

Drake did not reply.

"It's clear enough, Drake," said Dick Rodney. "We shall have to look somewhere else. Come on!"

He drew his chum to the door.

Drake followed him out, but he turned back in the doorway.

"It seems clear enough," he said, "but I'm not satisfied. I'm going to find out the truth about this, Daubeny, somehow."

"Would you mind shuttin' the door after you, old top?" inquired Daubeny politely.

The door closed with a slam.

Next Week: "TUCKEY'S FURNISHING FUND!"

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THE BOY WITH A BAD NAME!

(Continued from page 22.)

and—and if I was caught there, to own up I'd come to raid the grub," mumbled Baggy. "He only gave me a bob. I think it was worth more than that, considering. Don't you, Levison?"

Levison grinned.

All eyes were turned on Racke of the Shell now.

"Your turn now, Racke," said Tom. "What did you want with a specimen of a Fourth Form chap's handwriting?"

"It's all lies!" said Racke, between his teeth. "I never asked Trimble to do anything of the kind."

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Trimble, in astonishment. "Don't you remember, Racke? You gave me the bob at the tuckshop afterwards, and you wouldn't tell me when I asked you what you wanted the paper for—"

"That will do," said Tom Merry. "There's only one reason why you should have wanted a copy of Clive's list, Racke. It was to play this rotten trick, and let us all jump to the conclusion that Levison had done it."

"Which you immediately proceeded to do," grinned Levison.

"Well, I don't see that we were to blame for that. You've got your old reputation to thank for that," said Tom. "You can't live a bad name down all at once. But I'm sorry."

"Yaas, waiha! I am vevy sowwy, Levison," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, I did not guess that it was that wascal Wacke all the time."

"And Crooke and Mellish were in it, of course."

"I wasn't!" howled Mellish, in alarm. "I told Racke plainly that I wouldn't have a hand in his scheme when he mentioned it."

"And so did I!" exclaimed Crooke. "I thought it was a rotten trick—"

"So you knew all about it," said Tom Merry grimly.

"I—I caught Racke copying the handwriting," confessed Crooke. "That's all I know. I swear that!"

"Gentlemen," said Arthur Augustus. "It was Wacke! It was vevly what we might have expected from the wotah! I vote that Levison leaves this court without a stain on his chawactah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Thanks!" yawned Levison. "If you've finished with me, I'll get back to my study. My minor's got to get his Eutropius ready for Selby."

And Levison, quite cool and unconcerned, sauntered out of the room.

The House meeting had finished with Levison, but not with Racke.

Racke's guilt was proved, and Racke had to be dealt with. And he was forthwith dealt with in the most drastic manner.

There was a terrific din in the Hobby Club-room for ten minutes, at least, while Racke of the Shell ran the gauntlet, and then experienced the joys of the frogmarch.

And by the time he escaped from the hands of the indignant juniors, he was feeling that, for an unscrupulous rascal, life was not worth living at St. Jim's.

Clive came into his study a little later, and found Levison major and minor hard at work on old Eutropius.

Levison rose and yawned.

"What about tea?" he remarked.

Frank left the study with his books.

Clive looked rather hesitatingly at his study-mate.

"I'm sorry, Levison," he said. "I had my doubts all along, but—"

"All serene!" said Levison. "A dog with a bad name, you know. I don't blame you."

Grundy of the Shell looked in.

"Hallo, Levison! I've got two hundred lines—"

"Business suspended until further notice," chuckled Levison. "Grundy, old man, I'm afraid you'll have to do your own lines in future. You'd better be a bit more careful with old Linton."

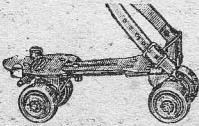
"Look here—" began Grundy warmly.

"Bow-wow!"

And Levison closed the study door on Grundy's nose.

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