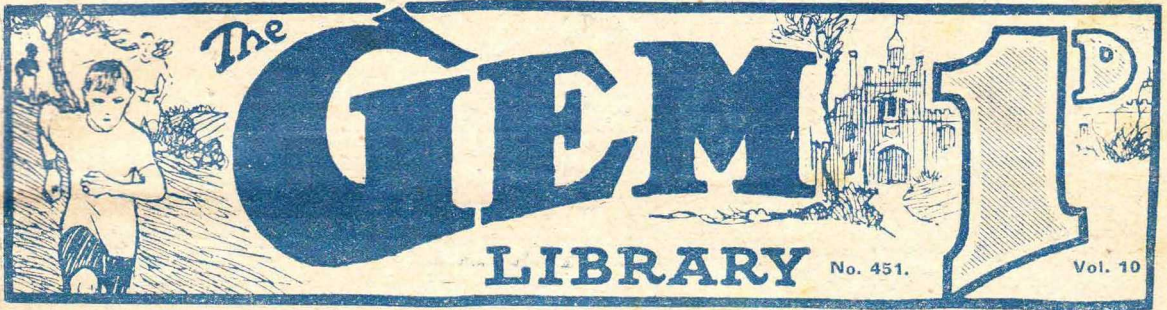


LEVISON MINOR!

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



RIDING TO SAVE HIS BROTHER!

(An Extraordinary Scene in the Grand, Long, Complete Story in this Issue.)



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to — — — — —
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
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For Next Wednesday :

"REDFERN TO THE RESCUE!"

By Martin Clifford.

There seems to be a very strong desire among a large section of our readers for stories in which the old inter-house feud of the St. Jim's juniors plays a part. Next week's fine yarn should please these. Figgins & Co. are away, and in their absence Redfern and his chums, Owen and Lawrence, are the leaders of the New House junior brigade. It occurs to Dick Julian that Tom Merry & Co. have gone to sleep as far as the feud is concerned, and he, Reilly, Kerruish, and Hammond start in to revive it at the expense of Redfern and his chums. The result is quite an unexpected one. Julian falls under the shadow of a terrible suspicion. His chums are staunch, and only the cads among the juniors believe in his guilt; but no help for him comes from the School House. Help does come at length, however, from a quite unexpected quarter. It is a case of

"REDFERN TO THE RESCUE!"

TO MY CORRESPONDENTS.

Again and again I have had to warn my correspondents that there might be delay in answering their letters, but I regret to say that these warnings seem utterly void of effect so far as some of them are concerned. These impatient readers write angry, and sometimes even abusive, letters because their communications are not dealt with as quickly as they think right. Let me repeat here that when there is delay it is unavoidable; that the sending of a stamped and addressed envelope does not entitle anyone to an immediate reply, and that it would really be well if my readers would do a little thinking before they write in so reproachful a strain. Everywhere the drawing away of men needed for the Army has made a difference. Do they imagine that we here stand alone in not having suffered from this? If they could only see the long roll of names of men who have left this great building to do elsewhere the most important work of all work in the world to-day—the work of helping to beat Germany—they would know better. So far as may be, the places of those men are filled, but it does not need very much insight for anyone to understand that few of the substitutes are capable of handling things as the men who have been used to them for so long did. This applies especially to our correspondence. A very large proportion of the "Gem" and "Magnet" letters ask questions to answer which needs an intimate acquaintance with bygone stories of St. Jim's and Greyfriars, and no stranger is at all likely to have that intimate acquaintance. Some others entail quite a lot of research. Time for dealing with these is lacking. Others throw unnecessary work upon us through the carelessness of the writers. Such are those from readers who want the address of Private So-and-So, which was given some time ago in one of the papers—the writer does not remember which—but which has been mislaid by them. A reply to this may mean anything up to half an hour's search in the files of two papers.

A letter lies before me in which a reader inquires for the titles of all the "Gem" stories from No. 51 to No. 231, and for some few after 231. This is a sample of the sort of thing which should not be asked for. Perhaps it is partly my own fault, for the same reader asked for the titles of Nos. 1 to 50, and I supplied them. That was quite big enough job. I think he should have realised that his further request was altogether off the rails. It would mean at least half a day's work for somebody.

NOTICES.

Leagues, Correspondence, etc.

Edward Long, 44, Newport Road, Barnstaple, would like to hear from a Naval Cadet reader on a training ship.

C. Fielding and J. Corbridge, 56, Balaclava Street, Black-

burn, are starting a "Gem" and "Magnet" League (local) for sending parcels of back numbers to men at the Front, and would be glad to hear from anyone interested.

Will Ben W. Trencher, late of St. Kilda, Melbourne, write to his old chum, G. Watson, at the same address as formerly?

C. H. Noyce, 18, Corunna Road, New Road, Battersea, S.W., wants more members for his "Gem" and "Magnet" League, open to anyone in the United Kingdom. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

G. Mitchell, 3, Neely Street, Belfast, asks members of his League to note that his address is as above, and not "Peely" Street. He would be glad to have more members.

The Mersey Correspondence Exchange, devoted to the exchange of picture postcards, stamps, correspondence, etc., members in many parts of the world.—For particulars, write to C. C. Haynes, 12, River View, New Ferry, Cheshire, enclosing stamped and addressed envelope.

George Lownie, 54, North Ellen Street, Dundee, is forming a League for sending the companion papers to the Front, and would be glad to hear from anyone interested.

A. W. Small, 59, Mysore Road, Clapham Junction, S.W., would like to correspond with readers anywhere who are interested in the cinemas from any point of view.

Miss Lydia Johnson, Kent House, Castle Bar Road, Ealing, W., would be glad to correspond with some other girl-readers of the "Gem."

B. W. Mitchinson, Woodbine Cottage, Durham, would like to correspond with a boy-reader of about 17 in Australia.

Bert Gardner, Kildcan, Stirling, wants correspondence with a boy reader of about 16.

Horace Marsh, 9, Fitzarthur Street, Tong Road, Armlley, Leeds, thinks of starting a small amateur magazine, and would be glad to hear from readers interested. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Back Numbers, etc.

By J. Staveley, The Picture House, Bridlington: The "B. F." 3d. books, "Tom Merry & Co." and "The School Under Canvas."

By Private E. Trow, 23802, 11th Loyal North Lancs. Regt., Hut 28, South Camp, Seaford: Back numbers of "Gem" and "Magnet," if any reader can spare them.

By G. Stone, 30, Aspland Grove, Amhurst Road, Hackney, N.: "Talbot's Triumph," "Master Marie," "The King's Pardon," and "Figgins' Folly."

By W. Pinkham, 9, Laceby Street, Monk's Road, Lincoln: Back numbers up to 300, both "Gem" and "Magnet."

By Miss Murielle Chapman, 45, Stallard Street, Trowbridge: Numbers containing "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays" and "Figgins' Fig-Pudding."

By Harold Nelson, The Avenue, Mount Eden, Auckland, New Zealand: "School and Sport" and "The Mystery of the Painted Room," if any reader would spare them to him.

By Cyril Pratt, 111, Far Gosford Street, Coventry: Nos. 184, 219, and 243 of the "Gem"; 149 and 184 of the "Dreadnought"; and the "Magnets" containing "Wun Lung's Secret," "War at Greyfriars," and "A Race against Time."

By William C. P. Wilson, 3, Surrey Street, Blackley, Manchester: "Caught Red-Handed."

By Driver F. F. Goddard, 1/1 Wessex (Hants) Regt., R.G.A., 61st Heavy Artillery Group, B.E.F., France: Back numbers of "Magnet."

By Private J. Williams, 8485, D Coy., 2nd. Batt. East Surrey Regt., Salonika Forces, Greece: "Magnet" and "Gem" each week from some generous reader.

By P. G. Visagie, P.O., Volkkrust, Transvaal, South Africa: "The Mystery of the Painted Room."

Your Editor

PUBLISHED IN TOWN
AND COUNTRY EVERY
WEDNESDAY MORNING



COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

LEVISON MINOR!

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



Levison minor sat up, blinking. "Had enough?" asked Wally, quite good-naturedly. "No!" panted Frank. (See Chapter 8.)

CHAPTER 1.

Levison Makes Up His Mind.

"YOU'RE coming, Levison?"

Levison of the Fourth did not reply.

He was seated on the edge of the table in the study, with his hands driven deep into his pockets and his brows knitted.

Mellish of the Fourth and Piggott of the Third were looking in at the study doorway, and they regarded Levison curiously.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and most of the fellows were out of doors. Tom Merry & Co. were already at footer

practice, getting into form for the coming season. Levison and his friends, however, were not thinking of football. They had quite a different kind of occupation for their half-holidays.

"I can't come," said Levison at last.

"Can't come!" repeated Mellish in surprise. "You must be off your rocker! Racke's standing the whole thing. There won't be anything to pay."

"Nothing at all to pay," grinned Piggott, "and everything of the best. You know Racke's style—splashing his money about. He's bursting with quids, as usual. Why ain't you coming?"

"I can't come."

Next Wednesday:

"REDFERN TO THE RESCUE!" AND "CORNSTALK BOB!"

No. 451. (New Series.) Vol. 10.

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"Well, you're an ass!" said Mellish. "I wouldn't miss a chance like that! Besides"—he lowered his voice—"there will be a little game after the picnic, and smokes—a really high old time! Better come!"

"I can't!" growled Levison.

"But why can't you?" said Piggott curiously. "You're not detained?"

"No."

"Not playing footer, by any chance?" asked Mellish, with a sneer.

"No, ass!"

"Then why can't you come? Racke will be annoyed. He doesn't expect to have his invitations refused."

"Hang Racke! I've had too much to do with Racke!" snapped Levison. "Hang him and his money! I've a jolly good mind to throw Racke over for good!"

"Mind he doesn't throw you over!" grinned Mellish. "He would, fast enough, if he heard that. You're coming?"

"I can't, I tell you. My minor's coming this afternoon." "Your minor?" Mellish yawned. "Didn't know you had one."

"I've mentioned to you that he's coming to St. Jim's," said Levison, frowning.

"Have you? I forgot. What does it matter, anyway? You're not going to dry-nurse your minor, I suppose?"

Mellish and Piggott cackled at the idea. Levison of the Fourth, the blackest sheep in the School House at St. Jim's, was the last fellow in the school who might have been expected to bother his head about his minor.

"Let him come, too," suggested Piggott. "It will be ripping for him, his first day here. Racke won't mind—he's good-natured. If your minor's anything like you, Levison, he'll enjoy it."

Levison turned on Piggott with a savage look.

"You rotten young cad!"

"Eh? What's the matter?"

"Do you think my minor's a smoky, sneaking, disreputable cad like you?" exclaimed Levison fiercely.

Piggott stared at him in blank astonishment. The sudden outburst from the black sheep of the Fourth astounded him.

"My hat!" he said, with a deep breath. "Is he some young prig, and are you afraid of his telling tales at home? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Some giddy paragon?" chuckled Mellish. "Good little Georgie come to life again? Is he going to give you lectures on your naughty ways, Levison? He, he, he!"

Levison slipped from the table, with his hands clenched. He looked so dangerous for a moment that the two juniors backed away in alarm.

"Oh, keep your wool on!" said Mellish. "If you won't come, you won't! I think you're a fool, that's all. Shall I tell Racke you're not coming?"

Levison's expression changed, and he hesitated.

He wanted to go.

What was proposed for the afternoon was exactly to his taste. Racke of the Shell, whose father reeked with war-profits, had more money than was good for him, and he was standing a picnic in Rylcombe Wood—a picnic that was a good deal out of the common for St. Jim's juniors. There would be champagne, and cigarettes, and cards, and, as Racke was a reckless gambler, a good opportunity for Levison to replenish his exchequer. Levison had great skill in all games of chance, and he had done very well out of Racke since the latter had come to St. Jim's. Racke's picnic, certainly, meant the sack for all concerned if it was discovered by the school authorities; but Levison was not thinking of the danger. He rather enjoyed the risk than otherwise. Even in case of discovery, he had full reliance upon his cunning to escape the consequences. His luck had always been good. Fellows who knew Ernest Levison well wondered that he had not been expelled from St. Jim's a dozen times over. But his luck had always held.

He wanted to go. All his instincts drew him to join Aubrey Racke's party that afternoon. But his minor was coming to the school that afternoon, and it made a difference.

Why it should make a difference was a puzzle to his associates. It was something of a puzzle to Levison himself. Somewhere in his hardened nature there was a streak of good, and he was more than half-ashamed of it as a sign of softness. The cad of the Fourth prided himself upon being "a hard case."

Mellish and Piggott turned away from the door, grinning. Levison made a movement, and Mellish turned back.

"Don't be an ass! Come!" he said. "You can't afford to quarrel with Racke. Dash it all, he's worth keeping in with! He's been a regular windfall to the lot of us!"

"Confound Racke!" growled Levison. "I'm bound to go to the station and meet my minor!"

"What rot! He can find his way here, I suppose?"

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"Let's all call at the station for him and take him with us," said Piggott.

"You young cad, I tell you my minor isn't that kind of chap!" said Levison savagely.

"Then let him go and eat coke!" said Mellish, with a shrug of the shoulders. "We don't want any goody-goody prigs in the party, that's certain. Have your people asked you to meet him?"

"Yes."

"Well, get another chap to go. Crooke's going down to Rylcombe. He might do it."

"I don't want my minor to have anything to do with Crooke."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Piggott. "Crooke would be flattered!"

"For goodness' sake, let the kid go and eat coke!" exclaimed Mellish. "What does he matter to you, anyway? Tell him you've forgot the train, or forgot he was coming, or something, if you're afraid of his complaining at home."

"He isn't that sort."

"Then what is there to bother about? Come on, and don't be an ass! Racke and Clampe are nearly ready to start."

Levison hesitated.

"After all, there's no reason why I should go to the station," he said, as if arguing it out with himself. "The train isn't till four, too, and I should be wasting the afternoon. I shall see him when I get back."

"Of course you will, if you're set on seeing him. If I had a snivelling cad of a minor, I should give him a wide berth!" grinned Mellish.

"I—I might get another chap to go!" muttered Levison.

"Somebody ought to meet the kid. He's expecting it."

"Let him expect!"

"Oh, rats! Tell Racke I'm coming," said Levison, making up his mind. "I'll try and get another fellow to go."

"All serene!"

Mellish and Piggott went their way, grinning. Levison's unexpected concern for his young brother amused them. They could not understand it, and would have set it down to humbug, only there was no reason why Levison should attempt to humbug fellows who knew him so well.

Levison remained in troubled thought for some minutes. Then, with an angry gesture, as if dismissing reproachful reflections, he quitted the study.

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry Lends a Hand.

SEEN TALBOT?" Levison asked that question as he met Tom Merry in the quadrangle. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had come off the football-ground, and were crossing over to the tuckshop for refreshment in the shape of ginger-beer.

"Gone out," said Tom. "He's gone over to Abbotsford for the afternoon, to see his uncle."

"Oh, rotten!" growled Levison.

Talbot of the Shell was the only fellow Levison cared to ask to do him a favour. He had his own reasons for not wanting any member of his own particular set to meet his brother Frank.

The worried expression on his face struck the Terrible Three, and they looked at him curiously.

"Anything the matter?" asked Tom Merry good-naturedly.

"I—I suppose you're busy this afternoon?" asked Levison doubtfully.

"Not specially; we're going back for some more footer, that's all."

"I—I suppose you won't be going down to the village?"

"No," said Tom. "We weren't going."

"Oh, never mind, then! My minor's coming by the four train," added Levison. "I can't meet him, as it happens; I'm kept away. If a chap was going down to the village, he might drop in at the station."

"Oh, your minor?" said Monty Lowther. "Nice boy like you, Levison?"

"Not much like me, as a matter of fact, if you want to know," said Levison, his lip curling.

"How lucky for him!" said Lowther cheerfully. "Shall I give you a tip?"

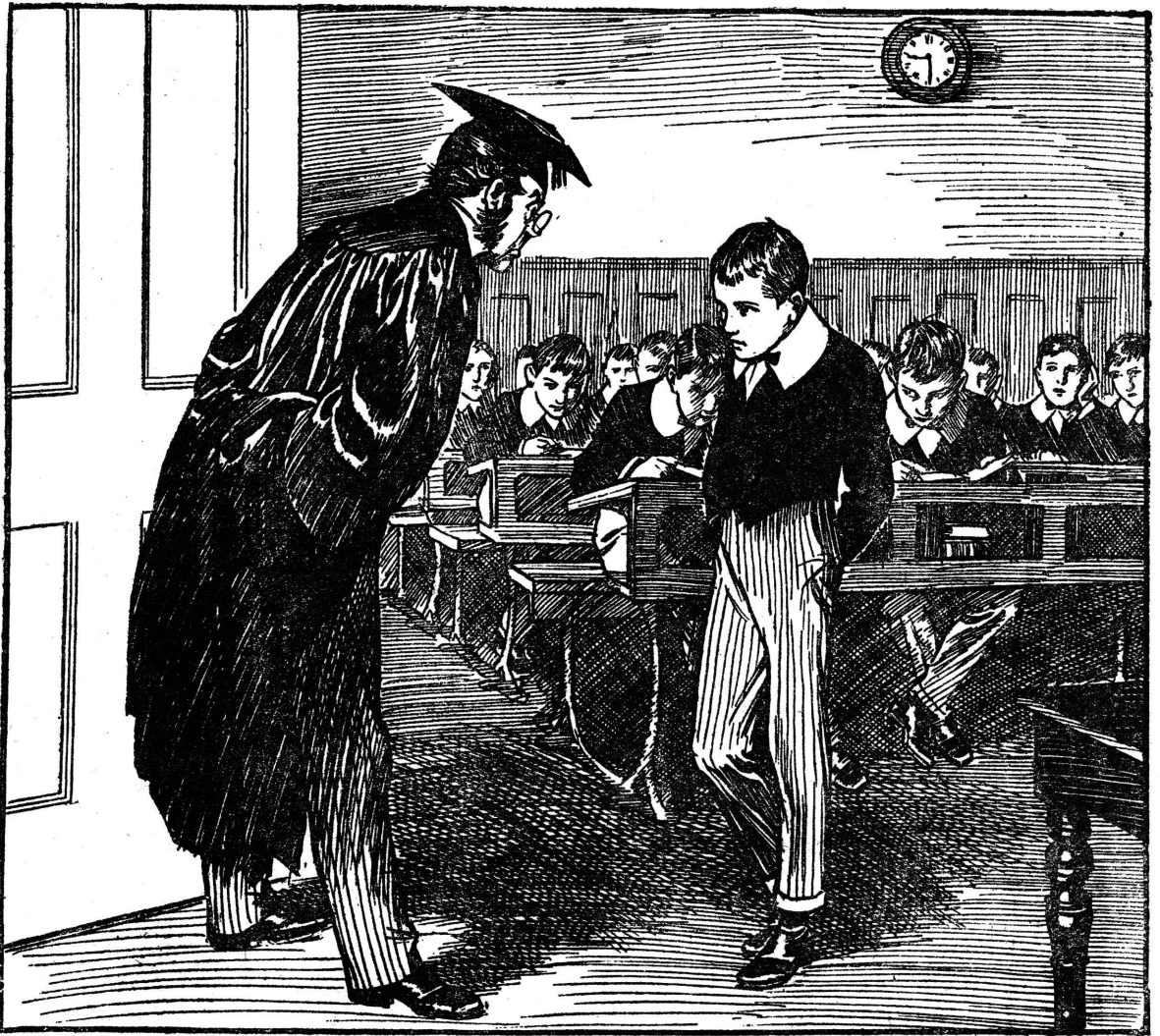
"You needn't trouble."

"Oh, I'll give it you, all the same! Don't teach him to smoke cigarettes!"

Levison gave the humorist of the Shell a fierce look.

"Shut up, Monty!" said Tom Merry. "Levison wouldn't do that, anyway."

"Rotter as he is?" sneered Levison. "That's what you're thinking."



The door opened, and Mr. Selby entered. He frowned at Levison minor. "Why are you not in your place?" he said harshly. "Go to your place at once!" (See Chapter 8.)

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, perhaps I was thinking something of the sort," he confessed. "What Form is your minor going into, Levison?"

"The Third, I expect."

"There's young Wally—ask him. He's going out."

D'Arcy minor of the Third, with Frayne and Jameson, was on his way to the gates. Levison hesitated a moment, and then called to him.

"Hold on a minute, young D'Arcy!"

Wally looked round.

"Hallo, cocky! What do you want?" he inquired.

"Are you going down to Rylcombe?"

"Yes."

"My minor's coming by the four train. He's going to be in your Form," said Levison. "If you'd care to drop in at the station—"

"Thanks. I wouldn't!" said Wally coolly. "I'm not bothering about your blessed minor. Why can't you meet him yourself?"

"I've got an engagement."

"Put it off, then. It will do you good to give up smoking for one afternoon," advised Wally. And Frayne and Jameson chuckled.

"You cheeky little beast!"

"And I'll tell you something, too," said Wally. "If your minor's coming into the Third, he'll have to mind his p's and q's. We're not keen on smoky rotters in the Third, Levison, I can tell you! We've thumped that kind of thing out of Manners minor—"

"What's that?" growled Manners.

Wally grinned at the Shell fellow.

"We've thumped it out of your minor, Manners. Young Reggie is quite decent now," he said coolly. "But I fancy Levison's minor will be rather a tougher case. If he's anything like his major, he will have a gorgeous time in the Third—I promise him that. I don't know how they stand Levison in the Fourth; and I jolly well know that we won't stand a second edition of him in the Third! You can give your minor the tip, Levison, that he's going to have a high old time!"

And Wally & Co. marched off.

Levison gritted his teeth.

"Look here, Levison," said Tom Merry. "If you really can't get off to see your minor, and you want him looked after, I don't mind going."

"Footer!" said Manners and Lowther together.

"Well, it's only practice, and there's lots of time before four," said Tom. "A trot down to the village won't hurt us."

"But why can't Levison go?" said Manners. "It's his bizney, if he wants his minor looked after."

"I tell you, I'm kept away!" muttered Levison.

"Oh, I know; Racke's got a little party on this afternoon!" said Manners disdainfully. "Mind you're not bowled out and sacked on the same day your minor comes. It might happen."

"Mind your own business, confound you!" said Levison angrily.

"Shush!" said Tom Merry. "It's all right, Levison; I'll fetch the kid from the station. The four train, you said."

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY;

"REDFERN TO THE RESCUE!"

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

"Yes. I say, I—I'm awfully obliged, you know!"
 "Bow-wow! A walk won't hurt me, and there's nothing special doing."
 "Thanks, all the same! You'll go, then?"
 "Yes."

And Levison walked away, evidently relieved in his mind. Racke and Clampe and Mellish and Figgott came out of the School House, some of them carrying bags, and Levison joined them on their way to the gates.

"Well, you're a silly ass, Tommy!" commented Manners. "You can see what Levison's precious engagement is—he's going out blagging with that gang."
 "Perhaps they're not going blagging," said Tom mildly. "I think I heard they were going on a picnic."

Manners sniffed.
 "Dash it all, it won't hurt us!" said Tom. "You fellows needn't come, if you don't want the walk."

"Rot!" said Lowther. "We'll come. Besides, we're going to keep an eye on you."

"Why, you fathead, what do you mean?"
 "We're not going to leave our innocent Tommy to the tender mercies of a young reprobate like Levison minor," said Lowther solemnly. "No fear! You'd come home smoking or squiffy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Manners.
 "Look here, you ass!" said Tom warmly.

"Shush! We're coming with you, to see that you don't get into mischief. If Levison minor is anything like Levison major, one afternoon with him might do the business. They're both tarred with the same brush, I suppose. And we're going to keep you as respectable as possible."

"You silly chump!" roared Tom Merry.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go and have that ginger-pop, and get back to the footer, if we've got to waste the afternoon prowling round after Levison minor. Blow Levison and blow his minor!" added Lowther.

The chums of the Shell proceeded to the tuckshop, and disposed of the ginger-pop. They went back to the footer-ground, but at twenty minutes to four Tom Merry came off and changed hurriedly. Manners and Lowther followed him.

"Slackers!" hooted Kangaroo of the Shell. "Chucking it up already?"

"Important engagement," said Monty Lowther. "Tommy's going to meet a disreputable character, and we're going to look after him."

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Tom Merry. "Come along and don't jaw, old chap!"

And the Terrible Three walked down to Rylcombe, wondering a little what Levison minor would turn out to be like.

CHAPTER 3.

Levison Minor!

"HERE comes the train!" yawned Monty Lowther. Lowther and Manners were not in a wholly good-humour. It seemed rather absurd to them for Shell fellows to come down to the station specially to meet so utterly insignificant a person

as a new fag for the Third Form—and more especially a brother of Levison of the Fourth, whom they cordially disliked. Tom Merry's good-nature had planted the task on them, and they had come along with him without grumbling, but not quite pleased.

The train came in, and the Terrible Three looked among the passengers for Levison minor.

According to Lowther, they would be able to recognise him at a glance, as he was sure to turn up with a cigarette in his mouth, and his hat on the back of his head.

There was no one answering that description among the passengers who alighted from the four o'clock train, however.

There was only one boy among them at all, and the juniors concluded that this must be Master Frank Levison.

He was a lad of about thirteen, in Etons, with a pleasant face that was not unlike Levison's—though Ernest Levison's face could not be called exactly pleasant. There was a similarity of feature, but the expression was very different. The lad looked up and down the platform with rather a timid, hesitating manner, evidently expecting to be met there.

"That's the kid," grunted Manners. "Looks like a lost sheep."

"All the more reason why we should take him in hand," remarked Tom.

"Br-r-r!" said Manners. "Blow Levison minor! When THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 451.

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^o.

my minor came to St. Jim's, Levison used to give him cigarettes, and I hammered him for it. Why the dickens should we bother about Levison's dashed minor?"

"He looks a harmless little chap."
 "Not much like his major, if he's harmless," grunted Manners.

"Well, let's go and speak to him, anyway. You can see he expects somebody to meet him here."

"His major, of course. Why couldn't his major come?"
 "Well, he hasn't come, and we have," said Tom. "For goodness' sake, don't be grumpy, old chap! Come on!"

"Oh, I'm coming!"
 Tom Merry assumed a cheery smile as he walked up to the new-comer. Manners and Lowther contrived to grin amiably.

"Are you young Levison?" asked Tom.
 The new boy looked at him timidly.

"I am Frank Levison," he said. "I'm going to St. Jim's. Do you belong there?"

"Yes, rather. We've come to take you to the school."
 "Thank you; you're very kind. Isn't my brother coming?"

"He's got an engagement," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "He was awfully keen on coming—ahem!—but he simply couldn't! We came instead."

"You are very kind," said Levison minor gratefully. "I—I thought Ernest would be here. I don't know the way to the school."

"We'll show you, young 'un," said Tom Merry kindly. "Where's your box? I'll tell the porter about sending it on. Cheer up, you know!"

"What are you looking down in the mouth about?" asked Manners.

The fag's lip trembled a moment.
 "I—I didn't mean to," he faltered. "It's the first time I've been away from home, except on a holiday. I thought my brother would be here. But, of course, I know he'd have come if he could. Are you in his Form?"

"No fear! We're in the Shell," said Lowther. "Allow me to introduce our unworthy selves. Tom Merry, captain of the Shell, and good-natured fathead, who can't say no to a measly bounder. Manners, potty on photography. Myself, Montagu Lowther, ornament of the Lower School and glass of fashion and mould of form in the Shell."

The new fag looked puzzled, as well he might.
 "I don't understand," he said. "What—what is the Shell?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Manners.
 "Hasn't your brother told you about the school at all?" asked Tom.

"Yes, sometimes. Not much. He is in the Fourth Form, I know. Is the Shell a Form?"

"Ha, ha! Yes. Did you think it was an egg-shell?" grinned Lowther.

"Is it a lower Form than the Fourth?"
 "What!"

The question made Manners and Lowther glare. It seemed to indicate that Frank Levison was a born idiot, to their minds.

"No," said Tom, laughing. "It's the next Form above the Fourth. It's the Lower Fifth, really. Blake will tell you it's the Upper Fourth. But Blake's in the Fourth, you see."

"So, you see, we are practically seniors," said Lowther gravely. "In us, in fact, you behold reverend, grave, and respected seigniors. Savvy?"

Frank evidently did not "savvy"; in fact, all Monty Lowther's remarks were a puzzle to him.

"Cheese it, Monty!" said Tom. "Lowther is the funny man of the Shell, young 'un. He can't help it; he was born funny. Come on, and we'll see about your box."

Instructions having been given regarding the box, the Terrible Three led the new junior from the station. Levison minor was still looking a little down in the mouth, though he tried to smile and to be cheerful. Tom could see that it was a disappointment to him that his brother had not met him, and that he had relied upon Ernest Levison to be his guide and helper from the outset. And being entirely new and strange to the school, he did not know what a tremendous concession it was for three Shell fellows to waste an afternoon on a fag of the Third!

"Buck up!" said Lowther, smacking the fag on the shoulder. "Keep smiling, you know. Are you hungry after your journey?"

"No; not much."
 "Come in here and have some tarts," said Tom, as they were passing Mrs. Murphy's shop.

"I—I'd rather get on, if you don't mind."
 "In a hurry to get to the school?" asked Tom, with a smile.

"I—I want to see Ernest as soon as possible."
 "Oh, I see!" It was difficult for Tom to understand why

anybody should be anxious to see Ernest Levison. "Come on, then! We'll go through the wood; it's a shorter cut, and not so dusty."

It was a very pleasant walk through the wood, rich in autumn tints. Frank Levison brightened up a little, as he walked on with the Shell fellows, tramping through fallen leaves. Tom Merry & Co. knew almost every foot of the wood, and they kept on their way through the trees without troubling to go round by the footpaths. They were almost in the middle of the wood, when a sudden sharp sound came to their ears through the bushes.

Pop!

"Is that somebody shooting?" asked Levison minor.

The Terrible Three exchanged glances. It was the popping of a cork, and it was not a ginger-beer cork, either.

"My hat!" murmured Lowther. "We're coming on the giddy picnic! Better keep off the grass. What?"

Tom Merry nodded quickly. If it was Levison's precious party they were coming upon, the less Levison minor saw of it the better. It was no business of the Terrible Three to enlighten the fag as to his major's character. They had already observed, easily enough, that Frank was not much like his major. It was probable that he knew little or nothing of Levison's peculiar pursuits; and, though he was pretty certain to make the discovery before long, Tom naturally did not want to have a hand in helping him to make it.

He turned off at once in a new direction, to avoid the party under the trees, as yet hidden from sight by clumps of thick bushes.

But as the juniors turned off, a voice came through the bushes.

"Better go easy with the cham, Mellish! You can't stand it as I do."

It was the voice of Levison of the Fourth.

Levison minor gave a start, and stopped.

"That's my brother!" he exclaimed.

"Never mind, come on," said Tom hurriedly.

"But my brother's there. I'd like to speak to him."

And Frank Levison turned back, and ran through the bushes. The Terrible Three looked at one another, and Manners shrugged his shoulders, and Lowther grinned. They followed the fag slowly.

CHAPTER 4.

Major and Minor!

RACKE and his party were camped in a glade in the heart of the wood, and the picnickers had no fear of interruption or detection. The solid portion of the picnic had been disposed of, and the young rascals were enjoying themselves after their own fashion. Racke had stooed the champagne, and there were several bottles, and there was a large box of cigars open in the grass. The juniors were seated or sprawled round a bag that was serving as a card-table, and they all had cards in their hands.

Racke had been drinking, as his flushed face testified; but the other fellows had only sipped the champagne. It seemed to them awfully doggish to have "cham," but, as a matter of fact, they would have preferred ginger-beer. Quite a cloud of smoke hung about the party.

"Your deal, Levison," Racke was saying, as Levison minor came through the bushes.

Levison shuffled the cards.

"Cut!" he said.

"Ernie!"

Levison jumped.

"What the thunder——" he ejaculated.

He dropped the cards into the grass, and the cigarette slipped from his mouth. He spun round, knocking over his glass.

"Frank!" he exclaimed, as he saw his minor.

He jumped up hastily.

"What the dickens are you doing here?" he exclaimed.

"I—I heard you speak, Ernie, so——"

Levison's face was crimson with anger and shame. Frank's startled eyes had lingered on the cards, the cigarettes, and the bottles. Racke & Co. stared at the fag, and grinned at one another.

"How the dickens did you come here?" exclaimed Levison angrily. "This isn't the way from the station." He turned a furious look upon the Terrible Three, as they appeared through the bushes. "You brought him here, did you?"

"Quite by accident," said Tom Merry. "I didn't know you were here, of course."

"Why couldn't you take the road?" muttered Levison savagely.

"Did you buy the wood this afternoon, before you went out blagging?" inquired Monty Lowther politely.

"That your minor, Levison?" yawned Racke. "Looks a spoony little prig, by gad! Never mind, he can join us. Sit down, young 'un, and help yourself to the smokes."

"I—I don't smoke, thank you," faltered Frank, with a scared look.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Racke. "You've got a lot to teach your minor, Levison!"

"Oh, shut up, you cad!" growled Levison. "You'd better get off, Franky; I'll see you later at the school."

Frank hesitated.

"Aren't you coming with me?" he asked.

"I can't come at present."

Frank looked at the cards again, and the cigarettes. A frightened look was coming over his face.

"Will you cut off?" exclaimed Levison angrily. "I tell you you can't stay here, and I can't come away at present. Cut off!"

"I—I——"

"What rot!" grinned Clampe. "Let the kid stay! We'll make a man of him. Sit down here, kid, and take a hand in the game."

"I—I'd rather not, thank you!"

"Oh, be a man!" squeaked Piggott. "It's great fun, you know. Haven't you ever played cards before? He, he, he!"

"I—I've played cards at Christmas for—for nuts."

"Nuts!" yelled Piggott. "Ha, ha, ha! Nuts! Oh, my hat! Nuts!"

Levison's face was pale now with rage and mortification.

"I've told you to go, Frank!" he said savagely.

"Won't you come?" asked his minor. "I—I say, Ernie, I don't know much about the school; but—but I know this can't be allowed there. You'll be getting into trouble. I didn't know——"

"I say, I suppose that young cad isn't going to sneak?" exclaimed Mellish, in alarm. "You'd better warn him to keep his mouth shut, Levison!"

"I sha'n't say anything, of course!" exclaimed Frank, his eyes flashing. "You needn't be afraid of that. But it's rotten to get my brother to play cards with you!"

"I get him to play cards!" ejaculated Mellish. "Oh, my aunt! That's rich! A lot of getting he needs! Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison strode towards his minor.

"Get out of this!" he muttered.

"You won't come?"

"No, I tell you!"

Frank Levison turned away without another word, and left the glade. Levison, with a sullen brow, rejoined his associates. The Terrible Three had looked on in silence. There was nothing for them to say or do. But as Levison minor walked away, with hanging head, they followed him.

The fag's face was pale, and his eyes heavy; he looked dangerously near the point of "blubbing."

Tom Merry and his chums exchanged uncomfortable glances.

They had fully expected Levison minor to be a second edition of his major, and they could see very plainly that they had been mistaken. The youngster had been shocked and dismayed by the discovery of his brother's occupations, and it was quite clear that he had had no previous suspicion of the truth. And he had made it quite apparent that his own tastes did not lie in the same direction.

"Cheer-o, young 'un!" said Tom Merry, attempting comfort, as they walked on. "Keep cheery, you know!"

"That's why my brother couldn't come to meet me?" asked Frank, in a low voice.

"I—I suppose so."

"Surely there would be trouble for him if—if anyone found that out—a master, I mean?"

"Why, of course!"

"It's rotten of them!" said Frank passionately. "It would serve them right to tell the headmaster!"

"Eh! Whom?" asked Manners.

"Those rotten cads who have got Ernie into that!" exclaimed Levison minor. "He's not that kind of fellow at all. I know he's never done anything of the kind before. I suppose they've talked him over somehow."

"Oh!" ejaculated Manners.

"You know he's not that sort, if you're friends of his——"

"Ahem! We're not exactly friends," said Lowther. "We don't chum up with the Fourth, you know," he said hastily.

"The Forms generally keep to themselves."

Frank gave him a sharp look.

"But—but you know something about him; you must, as you came to meet me this afternoon. You haven't seen him doing anything of that kind before!"

It was rather an assertion than a question.

"We've never seen him at a cham picnic, if that's what you mean," said Lowther. That was true enough. It was one

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of the varieties of Levison's blackguardism which the Shell fellows had not seen with their own eyes before.

"Yes, that's what I mean. I knew it!" said Frank. "Those rotters, of course! One of them looked a wicked beast—the one with the pointed nose!"

"Oh, that's Racke of the Shell!" said Tom. "The biggest blackguard in the school. He comes of a war-profit family. It's only a question of time before he's found out and sacked. He's been jolly near it once already."

"I wish Ernie would keep clear of him. He will get into trouble if he lets those cads lead him into that kind of thing."

Tom Merry & Co. walked on in silence. That Levison was at least as bad as any other member of the party, they knew; but it was not their business to tell his brother so. Frank had concluded, without doubt, that his brother had been led into temptation, that the champagne picnic was an unique experience for him, and the Shell fellows were quite willing to leave him to his delusion, so long as he could keep it.

They reached St. Jim's, and went on to the School House. Blake of the Fourth met them in the doorway, glancing curiously at the fag.

"You slackers chucked the footer for good?" he demanded. "What about getting into form for the House match? Figgins & Co. are going it like old boots!"

"We're coming along now," said Tom Merry. "This kid is Levison's minor. I'm going to take him to Selby."

"Well, buck up, and come along!"

"We'll come along now," said Lowther. "You can take the kid in, Tom."

"All serene!"

Manners and Lowther went with Jack Blake to the footer-ground, and Tom Merry entered the School House with the fag. He led him to Mr. Selby's study, and tapped at the door.

"You're going to see your Form-master," he said—"Mr. Selby, you know! He's the master of the Third."

"Come in!" said Mr. Selby's disagreeable voice.

Tom opened the door, and ushered Levison minor in.

"The new boy, sir," he said. "Levison minor."

Mr. Selby peered at the fag.

"Oh, very well! Leave him here!"

Tom Merry quitted the study. He walked down the passage rather slowly, in a thoughtful mood. Tom was kindness itself, and he was a little concerned for the lonely fag, abandoned to himself on his first day at the big school. His brother should have been there to take him in hand; but Levison major was certain not to return much before calling-over. Manners minor of the Third was lounging in the passage, and Tom tapped him on the shoulder.

"Hallo!" said Reggie.

"There's a new kid come for the Third," said Tom.

"Is there?" asked Reggie, with utter indifference.

"Yes. Young brother of Levison of the Fourth."

"Cad like his brother?" asked Reggie.

"Ahem! No. Quite a decent little chap."

"Hard lines on him to have a major like Levison, then," remarked Reggie.

"He's with Selby now—"

"Poor beast!"

"Well, as he's in your Form, Reggie, you might speak to him when he comes out, and—and be friendly—what?"

"What rot!" said Manners minor. "I don't like Levison."

"But this isn't Levison. It's his minor."

"Well, he can go and eat coke! Catch me playing kind uncles to new kids," said Reggie Manners disdainfully.

"Why, you young ass, how long is it since you were a new kid yourself?"

"Oh, rats!"

Tom Merry manfully resisted a strong inclination to take Master Reggie by the ears, and knock his head against the wall.

"How's the exchequer, Reggie?" he asked amicably.

"Rotten!" said the fag dismally. "Stozy broke! And that idiot of a major of mine has blued all his tin on films, and can't lend a chap a bob. Have you got a bob to spare? Settle on Saturday, honour bright!"

"Two if you like," said Tom.

Manners minor extended a grubby paw.

"Shell out!" he said, with Spartan brevity.

"And you'll speak a word or two to Levison minor?" said Tom, dropping a two-shilling-piece into Reggie's palm.

"Oh, yes, if you like! I'll stand him a bun!"

"Good!"

Tom Merry went down to footer practice somewhat relieved in his mind. He felt that he had done the best he could for the new-comer.

CHAPTER 5.

Manners Minor is Very Good.

LEVISON minor came out of Mr. Selby's study, and looked about him.

Mr. Selby was hardly a pleasant gentleman, and the interview had not given Frank a very cheery impression of the school and his prospects there.

He was feeling lonely and depressed, and he had an intense longing to see his brother—the only fellow he knew in the big, crowded place. He had hoped that Ernest might have returned, and would be waiting for him in the passage. But there was no sign of Levison major.

Frank had been told to go to the House-dame, and report his arrival, and he wondered where to find the House-dame. Fortunately he met Toby, the page, who directed him. Mrs. Mimms made a better impression on the fag, and she gave him a cup of tea and a piece of cake, which cheered him up considerably. He was feeling better when he left Mrs. Mimms.

A fag bore down on him in the passage.

"You the new kid?" he asked. "I suppose you are—looking like a lamb just going to the slaughter. I'm Manners minor."

"I'm Levison minor," said Frank.

"Yes, I know that. Come along."

"Has my brother come in?"

Reggie stared.

"How the dickens should I know?"

"Oh! I—I thought you might—"

"What rot! I don't know anything about your brother, and don't want to, either. You come along with me and shut up!"

Frank followed his new acquaintance. He wondered where he was going. Reggie led him to the quadrangle and across it.

Manners minor intended to do what he had told Tom Merry he would do—to wipe out the obligation of the loan.

Having been well over a term at St. Jim's himself, Reggie felt quite like an old hand, and had a profound contempt for sheepish new boys. He had no desire, and no intention, to be bothered with Levison's minor—not if he knew it! But he was going to do what he had agreed to do—that was understood.

They entered the tuckshop, and Reggie slapped the two-shilling-piece.

"Had your tea?" he asked.

"I had some cake in the housekeeper's room."

"She wears a wig," said Reggie.

"Eh?"

"Old Mimms, you know—she wears a wig," said Reggie confidentially. "Piggott says so, at any rate; he says he knows. He was trying to get me to fish it off from a window with my fishing-rod one day. Catch me! Just like Piggott to get a chap a licking if he could. Old Mimms ain't a bad sort."

"I thought she was very kind."

"So she stood you some cake? Got any of it left?"

"Nunno!"

"Silly young ass, why didn't you put some in your pocket? Old Mimms wouldn't have said anything."

"I—I never thought—"

"No, you wouldn't—you're a fatheaded new kid," said Reggie disparagingly. "Why don't old Taggles come?"

He rapped on the counter with the two-shilling-piece, and Dame Taggles came out of her little parlour at last.

"Are you hungry?" asked Reggie, and he went on at once, "I suppose you're not, as you've just been scoffing cake with the house-dame. Like a bun?"

"Ye-es."

"Give this kid a bun, please, Mrs. Taggles," said Reggie, with a lordly air. "I'm standing treat. There you are, kid. Now I want some things—"

Reggie ran over a list which he had evidently compiled with great care, to extract the last pennyworth of value from the two-shilling-piece.

Frank ate his bun mechanically.

He wondered whether he would ever be such a knowing, cool, and independent young person as Manners minor.

Reggie surveyed his purchases with evident satisfaction.

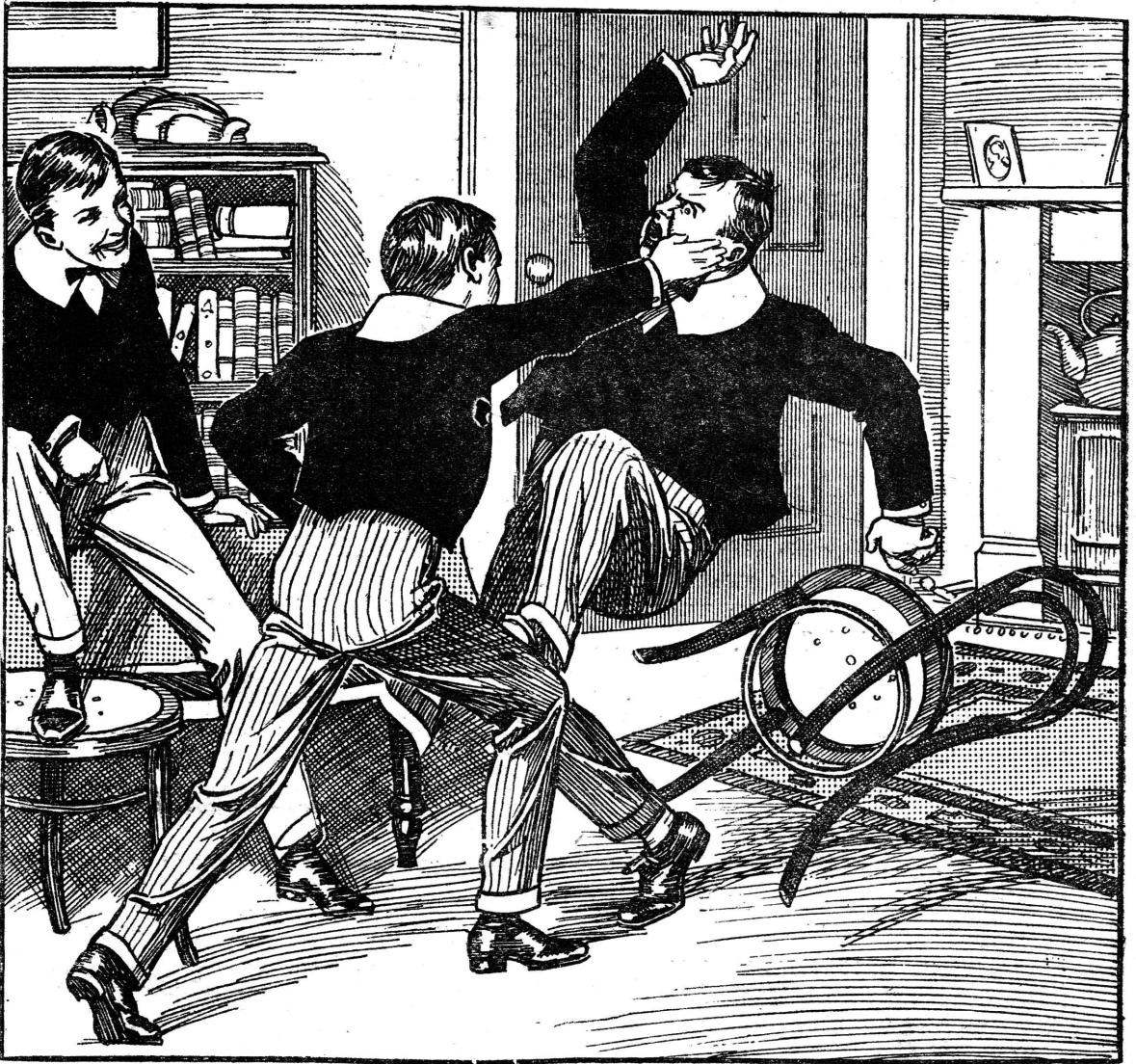
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ANSWERS

The Popular Penny Weekly

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TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1st.



Smack! To the Fourth-Former's astonishment, he was interrupted by the fag's open hand descending on his fat face with a crack like a pistol-shot. Trimble staggered back, gasping. (See Chapter 6.)

"Rather a surprise for D'Arcy minor when he comes in," he chuckled. "He won't know there's anything for tea. There's enough for three. I suppose I'd better ask Frayne, too—lemme see, or shall it be Jameson?" It did not occur to Manners minor to ask the new boy. "No; Jameson's a New House waster, anyway. Wally and Frayne—I wonder when the bouders are coming in? I sha'n't wait for them long. Ta-ta!"

He nodded carelessly to Levison minor, and went to the door with his purchases. Frank followed him quickly. He was not much taken with this extremely off-handed young gentleman; but he had an instinctive desire to attach himself to somebody, and not to be quite alone in the big, strange place.

Manners minor stared at him, not understanding.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"N-n-nothing," faltered Frank, crimsoning.

"Finished your bun?"

"Yes."

"Like another?" asked Manners minor, with so evident an effort that Frank politely shook his head at once.

Manners minor turned away, leaving Frank in the doorway. He turned back, however, with a kindly impulse.

"I dare say your brother's come in by this time," he remarked. "If he's come in, you'll find him in his study very likely—that's in the Fourth-Form passage. Anybody will tell you where it is. Here, I'll take you to the School House, if you like—I'm going to the Form-room."

"Thank you," said Frank.

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Reggie graciously.

Frank followed him back to the School House, and Reggie pointed to the stairs, and told him where to find the Fourth-Form passage. Then he walked away to the Third Form-room, not concealing his anxiety to be done with the new boy. The manners and customs of the Third Form at St. Jim's were not precisely those of Vere de Vere.

Frank was too shy and sensitive to stay in company where plainly he was not wanted. He was destined to have a good deal of the sensitiveness knocked out of him in the rough-and-ready Third, but that was not yet. He ascended the big staircase with a heavy heart, and stopped in a broad passage with numbered doors. Most of the numbers were more or less obliterated; but as Frank did not know the number of his brother's study, they were useless to him in any case. There was no one in the passage. Some of the study doors were open, but the rooms seemed to be deserted. From one or two studies, however, a smell of cooking proceeded. He passed a half-open door, and caught sight of a junior within—a very elegantly-clad junior, who was trying on a necktie before the glass. He paused and knocked at the door timidly.

The elegant youth looked round.

"Hallo! Come in, dear boy!" he said.

Frank came in.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave him a kindly look. The swell of the School House was famous for his polished manners, and his heart was of the softest.

"New kid?" he asked. "Nevah seen you befoah, that I wemembah!"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"REDFERN TO THE RESCUE!"

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of
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"Yes," faltered Frank.

"And you've wandahed in the w'ong quartahs, what?" smiled Arthur Augustus. "That's all wight. I'll set you wight. What are you looking for—Third Form-room?"

"N-no. I'm looking for my brother's study," said Frank, much encouraged by Arthur Augustus' gracious manner.

"Is he in the Fourth?"

"Yes."

"Then his study is in this passage, deah boy. I know all the fellows' names in the Fourth. What's your bwothah's name?"

"Levison."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"You know my brother?" asked Frank.

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus put his eyeglass into his eye, and looked Frank over very curiously. "I wemembah now Talbot mentionin' that Levison had a minah comin'. So you're young Levison?"

"Yes."

"I'll show you his study," said Arthur Augustus. "Wait a minute, deah boy. I can't vewy well step out of the studay with my tie unfastened."

Having tied his tie to his satisfaction—which occupied several minutes—Arthur Augustus conducted the fag to Levison's study. No one could have suspected, by D'Arcy's manner to the fag, that he was on the worst of terms with Levison major. He tapped at the door and opened it. Trimble of the Fourth was in the study, his fat face looking disconsolate.

"Oh, so you've come in!" grumbled Trimble. "What about tea? Oh, it ain't Lumley-Lumley! Why don't that ass come in to tea?"

"This is Levison minah, Twimble."

"Blow Levison, and blow Levison minor!" growled Trimble. "The rotters went off without me this afternoon."

"This is your bwothah's study, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "He will pwobably be in vewy soon, as it is past teatime. Anythin' more I can do for you?"

"No, thank you."

With a kindly nod, the swell of St. Jim's quitted the study. Frank Levison was left alone with Baggy Trimble. He looked at Trimble, and Trimble looked at him.

CHAPTER 6.

Trimble Catches a Tartar,

"SO you're Levison's brother?"

"Yes."

"You look as if you might be," said Trimble.

The fag made no reply to that remark. Trimble eyed him a good deal—as if he were a strange dog. The fat Fourth-Former was in a discontented mood. He was hard up, as usual, and much exasperated at being left out of Racker's party. There was no tea in the study till Lumley-Lumley came in, and Trimble was hungry.

But a new thought came into Trimble's mind, and he adopted a more amiable manner.

"Glad you've come," he said. "Levison's my pal, you know—we're study mates, and great chums. I lent him five bob this afternoon."

"Did you?"

"Yes; my last five bob," said Trimble confidently. "Rather thoughtless of me, but that's me all over—I never think of myself where a pal's concerned. As your brother hasn't come in, I dare say you could hand me the five bob, and he'll settle with you—it comes to the same thing."

"I don't know whether Ernie would like that," said Frank.

"Oh, he would! That's all right," said Trimble reassuringly. "You hand over the five bob, and you can take my word for it."

"Don't do anything of the sort," said a cheery voice at the door, as Jerrold Lumley-Lumley came in. "If you lend Trimble any money, young 'un, you won't see it again."

"You rotter, Lumley!" growled Trimble. "Look here, I lent that kid's brother five bob—"

"I guess you didn't!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Cheese it, Trimble! You're not going to spoof a new kid—I won't let you!"

"I tell you I did!" howled Trimble. "Levison was hard up, and he had to stand some of the smokes."

"That's not true!" struck in Frank.

Trimble stared at him.

"Eh! What's not true?" he demanded.

"You didn't lend my brother money to buy smokes," said Frank. "I don't believe you lent him anything, either!"

"Right on the wicket!" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"You cheeky young cad, have you come here for a tick

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ear?" exclaimed Trimble. "I tell you I lent your rotten brother five bob to buy cigarettes."

"And I tell you it's a lie!" said Frank undauntedly.

"My brother doesn't smoke—at least, not as a rule," he added, remembering what he had seen in the wood.

"Don't smoke!" ejaculated Trimble, in astonishment.

"You'll say next that he doesn't play nap or bet on geegees!"

"I know he doesn't."

"Why, you silly young idiot, he's gone out this afternoon for that special purpose! My hat! You've got a lot to learn!" chuckled Trimble. "They'll tell you about Levison in your fag Form—ask Piggott. If the Housemaster knew what we could tell him, Levison would be kicked out of St. Jim's before he could say ninnence for fourpence!"

"That's not true," said Frank, "and you're not a friend of my brother's, as you said, or you wouldn't speak of him like that! And you wouldn't dare to do it if he was here, either!"

"Bravo!" chuckled Lumley-Lumley. "What a little bantam! You don't know much about your major, do you, kid?"

"Yes, I do!" said Frank. "I know that that fat fellow is lying about him!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lumley-Lumley.

"Lying!" ejaculated Trimble. "Why, Levison brags of it—it's his special pride that he's the hardest case in the House, you young fool! It's only his luck that's kept him from being sacked lots of times."

"Liar!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Liar!" repeated Frank, his eyes flashing.

"Well, my word! Ask Lumley-Lumley; he will tell you."

"I guess he won't!" grinned Lumley-Lumley. "I'm not going to tell the kid anything. What do you want to run a fellow down to his minor for, Trimble?"

"You know it's true!" howled Trimble.

"Shut up, all the same!"

"Do you think I'm going to have a cheeky fag coming here and calling me a liar?" exclaimed Trimble. "Why, I'll knock his cheeky head off! You young jackanapes, your major is the rottenest, smokiest, rankest outsider in the House! No decent fellow ever speaks to him, and— Yaroooooop!"

Smack!

To the Fourth-Former's astonishment, he was interrupted by the fag's open hand descending on his fat face with a crack like a pistol-shot.

Trimble staggered back, gasping.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lumley-Lumley. "Go it, young 'un!"

"I'll smash him!" yelled Trimble.

Trimble of the Fourth was not a fighting-man, as a rule. But even Trimble did not fear a fag of the Third—and a timid, new fag at that. He made a rush at Levison minor, his fat fists lashing out. Lumley-Lumley looked on, roaring with laughter. Trimble was much bigger than Frank, and twice as heavy; but the little fag stood up to him pluckily, and hit out with all his strength.

"By gum, he's a plucked 'un!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley. "Go it, kid! He's a funk! Pile in and whop him!"

"Groogh!" gasped Trimble, giving ground as he met with so fiery a resistance. "Oh, my hat! Get out of this study, you young villain, or I'll chuck you out!"

"Aren't you going to smash him?" chortled Lumley-Lumley.

"Get out!" yelled Trimble.

"I won't get out!" retorted Frank boldly. "I'm going to wait here for my brother."

Trimble rushed on again. Lumley-Lumley's jeering laugh urged him on. But the fag stood his ground, and they were soon going hammer and tongs, and Frank certainly was not getting the worst of it.

"Hallo, a giddy scrimmage!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, as the Terrible Three passed the study, on their way in to tea. "My hat! It's young Hopeful!"

"Fighting already!" grinned Manners.

"Let him alone, Trimble!" said Tom Merry, frowning.

"Better tell him to let Trimble alone!" chuckled Lumley-Lumley. "Trimble ain't exactly enjoying himself—are you, Baggy?"

"I'll smash him—"

"No, you won't!" said Tom Merry, pushing him back. Trimble was not reluctant to be pushed back, as a matter of fact. "Now, what's the row about?"

"Tell your Uncle Tom all about it," grinned Lowther.

"The cheeky young cub—"

"He was calling my brother names," panted Frank. "I told him he was a liar, and so he is!"

"Biggest Prussian in the House!" said Monty Lowther.

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^D.

"How the dickens did the kid know you so well at sight, Trimble?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you know, you fellows know all about Levison! Isn't he a smoky, sporting rotter, and isn't he barred by all the decent chaps?" exclaimed Trimble. "That's all I said, and the cheeky young cub punched me—me, you know!"

"Serve you jolly well right! Why couldn't you hold your tongue?" said Tom Merry gruffly.

"But it's true, ain't it?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" The captain of the Shell turned to Frank, who was still panting from his exertions. "Don't take any notice of what that cad says, kid—he's a regular worm!"

"Look here, Tom Merry——"

"Oh, dry up! Hallo, here's Levison! Your minor's here, Levison."

And Tom went on to his study with his chums.

CHAPTER 7.

Under Levison's Wing!

LEVISON and Mellish came in together. Levison eyed his minor curiously. Frank was dabbling his nose with his handkerchief. Trimble's fat fist had done some damage.

"What's the matter, Frank?"

"Oh, nothing!" said the fag.

Levison glared round the study.

"If anybody here's been bullying my minor——"

"No guilty, my lord!" said Lumley-Lumley cheerfully. "Baggy's been on the war-path, but he got as good as he gave."

"I didn't want a row," stammered Trimble, backing round the table. "The young ass went for me, he did, really——"

"Did you, Franky?"

"Yes."

"What in thunder did you go for Trimble for?" exclaimed Levison. "Looking for trouble on your first day at school?"

"He knows!" said Frank, with an angry glance at Trimble. "He's a cad!"

"It isn't your business to punch every cad in the school, I suppose? You'll have your hands full if you begin that," sneered Levison. "For goodness' sake, keep out of rows, to begin with!"

"I guess that's ungrateful!" grinned Lumley-Lumley. "The young 'un was standing up for you."

"For me?"

"Yes; defending the character of the absent." Lumley-Lumley yelled with laughter. "He didn't like Trimble saying you smoked! Ha, ha, ha!"

Mellish burst into a yell.

Levison's face was a study for a moment.

"You—you punched Trimble for saying I smoked?" he ejaculated at last.

"Yes; and I'll do it again!" said Frank sturdily. "I'm not afraid of him. He's a cad!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lumley-Lumley and Mellish in chorus, and even Trimble left off rubbing his chin, and began to cackle, too.

The situation struck them as irresistibly comic. Levison himself could barely restrain a grin.

"I knew he was lying," said Frank.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Mellish.

"Shut up, you cackling monkey!" said Levison roughly. "You'd better not be quite so ready to punch a fellow's nose, Franky. You won't find many funks here like Trimble, and you may get mopped up next time. Have you had your tea?"

"No."

"Come along with me, then, and we'll do some shopping," said Levison. "I'm in funds to-day."

That observation brought a renewed yell from Mellish. Levison gave him a threatening look as he left the study with his minor.

"Levison in funds!" said Lumley-Lumley. "He was hard up enough this afternoon, I guess. He wanted to stick me for a quid."

"It's the giddy war profits," grinned Mellish. "He's done Racker out of a couple of quids at nap. What is he humbugging his minor for?"

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"Goodness knows! But there's no need to tell the kid anything!"

"He'll find it out pretty soon," said Mellish, laughing. "They'll tell him in the Third fast enough!"

"Well, no need for you to tell him, or Trimble either. Might mean trouble at home for Levison if the kid blabbed!"

Levison and his minor attracted some curious glances as they went out. A good many of the fellows were curious to know what Levison's minor was like, the general expectation being that he would be a second edition of his major. Levison did not heed the glances cast at him. He led Frank to the tuckshop, and proceeded to make purchases there.

Frank's expression was very bright now. Few fellows who knew Levison would have expected him to be kind or attentive to a young brother planted on him at school. But there was much in Levison's curious nature that would have come as a surprise to those who knew him best.

They left the tuckshop with parcels in their hands, Frank trotting along beside his major with a very contented expression.

"Have you mentioned to anybody about—about seeing me this afternoon, Frank?" Levison asked, as they walked across the quad again.

The fag shook his head.

"You needn't mention it, Frank."

"No, I won't."

"You don't want to get me into trouble, I suppose?"

"Of course I don't, Ernie," said the fag reproachfully. "I wouldn't say a word to anybody. Of course, I know what you were doing must be against the rules!"

Levison grinned.

"But—but you don't mind me speaking, Ernie——"

"Eh? Go ahead!"

"I—I wish you'd not have anything more to do with those chaps, Ernie. I—I know you're older than I am; but—but——"

"But you want to give me advice, all the same?" grinned Levison.

"No, I don't," said Frank, his cheeks crimsoning. "But—but I'm afraid of something happening to you. Those fellows must be awful cads to do as they were doing, and to lead you into it!"

"Lead me into it?"

"Yes; I know that's how it came about, because you're easy-going——"

"Easy-going!" murmured Levison. "Oh, my hat!"

"But fellows of that kind won't do you any good," said Frank earnestly. "I wouldn't think of giving you advice, Ernie. But—but it's rotten to think of a fellow like you mixing with cads like that! You see how it makes fellows talk about you, from what that fat fellow Trimble said to me!"

Levison gave his minor a very curious glance.

The simple faith of the fag in taking it for granted that he was not to blame in that shady transaction touched him strangely.

"You're not waxy?" mumbled Frank, looking at him anxiously.

Levison burst into a laugh.

"No," he said; "of course not. And you're right, kid. I'll think over what you've said. I didn't mean you to see me—I mean—well, never mind now! Let it drop. If fellows talk to you about me, don't believe all you hear. I've got some enemies, and fellows will talk!"

"Of course, I shouldn't believe a word against you!"

"Ahem! That's right! Well, here we are!"

They entered the School House, and went to the study. Trimble's round eyes opened wide at the sight of the parcels. For that evening at least Levison's study was a land flowing with milk and honey, and Baggy Trimble assumed his most agreeable and ingratiating expression.

"That fag feeding here?" asked Mellish.

"Got anything to say against it?" asked Levison, with lowering brows.

Mellish gave a shrug.

"If you're going to dry-nurse him, Levison——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Mellish grunted, and subsided into silence. Tea in Levison's study was a cheery meal enough. Lumley-Lumley was very agreeable to the fag, from sheer good nature, and Baggy Trimble overflowed with amiability, since he was allowed to share the feed. He seemed quite to have forgotten his bout of fisticuffs with Levison's minor. Levison started as seven chimed out.

"By Jove, it's time you were in your Form-room, kid!" he exclaimed. "Prep for the Third is at seven. Old Selby takes the Form in prep. Come along! Mind how you treat Selby; he's a Tartar. But he won't worry you much the first night. You'll only have to look round you, and do as the others do!"

"Right you are!" said Frank cheerily.

Levison hurried him downstairs.

"I may see you later," he said. "You'll meet the Third at prep. Don't have much to say to Piggott if you can help

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it. Make yourself agreeable to D'Arcy minor when you find him out. He's a decent kid. Got any money?"

"Father gave me ten shillings."

"Here's another ten."

"Oh!"

"It's all right. I'm in funds to-day," said Levison, with a smile. "Look here, the Third often have one of their piggy feeds after prep. If there's anything of the kind stand your whack, and never mind how the money goes. They're greedy little pigs, and if you pay your footing they'll be more decent to you. Here you are! Keep a stiff upper lip!"

Levison pushed his minor into the Third Form-room, and went his way. His way led him to Racke's study, where he was soon deep in the mysteries of banker with Racke and Crooke of the Shell.

Frank Levison little dreamed how his major was engaged, as he faced the ordeal of his first prep with the Third Form at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 8.

Trouble in the Third!

"HALLO! There's the new kid!"

"Levison minor, by Jove!" Frank looked round the big Form-room, with its washed walls, and array of desks and forms, and its crowd of fags. Mr. Selby had not arrived yet to take the Third in evening preparation. The master was sometimes late, and the Third Form were not in their seats, but chattering in groups about the Form-room.

D'Arcy minor bestowed a stare upon the new-comer. Several fags gathered round him curiously. A new boy in the Form naturally attracted some interest, and this new boy was a little out of the common, as the younger brother of the black sheep of the School House.

"Yes, that's the new kid," said Manners minor. "I've seen him before. Rather a moony-faced booby!"

"Yes, he looks it," agreed Jameson. "Not quite what you'd expect of Levison's minor. Got any cigarettes about you, young 'un?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No," said Frank.

"Don't you smoke?"

"Certainly not!"

"Certainly not!" mimicked Jameson. "Not a chip of the old block, at any rate. May be fibbing, though!"

"Oh, he's a washy sort of worm!" remarked Piggott contemptuously. "If I were his major, I'd kick up a row about his being sent here. I wouldn't stand it!"

"You get on pretty well with his major, don't you, Piggy?" sneered Jameson. "Birds of a feather!"

Piggott sniffed.

"Well, the kid doesn't look the kind of worm I expected," said Wally, surveying Levison minor as if he were a zoological specimen. "His fingers ain't stained with 'baccy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And his teeth ain't brown with it, like his major's!" Frank flushed. He was feeling exceedingly uncomfortable under the inspection of the Third-Formers, and the reference to his brother made him angry.

"Blushes like a baby!" sneered Piggott. "Yah!"

"Well, you haven't a blush left in you, Piggy, and you've got lots to blush for!" said Wally caustically. "Let the kid alone! I'm talking to him! Levison minor!"

"Yes," said Frank.

"I'm going to give you some advice for your own good."

"You needn't trouble!" said Frank testily.

"Cheeky cub!" said Jameson.

"Punch his head, Wally!"

But Wally nobly forebore to punch the new-comer's head.

"We're down on blagging in this Form," went on Wally calmly. "I suppose you know what blagging is?"

"N-no!"

"Being a blackguard, you know, like your major," explained Wally.

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"My major isn't a blackguard!" said Frank fiercely.

"Don't snort at me, young 'un," said D'Arcy minor calmly. "I shall biff you if you do. I'm D'Arcy minor, captain of the Third!"

"D'Arcy minor!" repeated Frank.

He remembered that his brother had told him to be agreeable to D'Arcy minor, who was a "decent kid." He unclenched his hands.

"Yes; and I can tell you that I'm top dog in this Form-room," said Wally. "I keep these fags in order—"

"Oh, come off it!" said Jameson.

"Draw it mild, Wally!" protested Curly Gibson. "No swank, you know!"

"Shut up!" said Wally ferociously. "Now, kid, look here! We're down on blagging in the Third; that's a straight tip. We knocked it out of Manners minor. Didn't we, young Manners?"

"Oh, rats!" said Reggie crossly.

"Young Manners came here a regular blade," pursued Wally calmly. "Smoking cigarettes and chumming with cads in higher Forms—fellows like Cutts. We didn't stand it. We ragged young Manners till he had some sense. Didn't we, Reggie?"

"Fathead!" said Reggie.

"Manners minor wouldn't touch a cigarette now to save his life," said Wally impressively. "Only last week I punched him for smoking behind the wood-shed. Didn't I, young Manners?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you understand that you've got to toe the line," said Wally. "You can't help having Levison of the Fourth for your major, any more than I can help having Gussy. 'Tain't really against you, so far as that goes. But if you bring any of his tricks into this Form-room you'll get sat on so hard that you won't know what's happened to you. That's a straight tip. You'd better not have too much to do with him, either."

"I shall please myself about that," said Frank, his voice trembling. "And you're a cad to talk about my brother like that!"

Wally started.

"Eh? What did you call me?"

"A cad!" said Frank fiercely. "A slandering cad, if you like that better!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Jameson.

"Knock his silly 'ead off, Wally!" advised Joe Frayne.

Wally stared at the new junior. It had not even occurred to him before that Levison minor did not know what his major was like. The Lower School at St. Jim's knew Levison very well, and Frank's ignorance on the subject was astounding.

"Well, my only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally at last. "Do you mean to say, young 'un, that you don't know—"

"Doesn't know his major's giddy reputation?" grinned Jameson. "Oh, what a lark!"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Piggott.

Frank glared round at the grinning fags. He was quite prepared to stand up for his brother's good name, as he had done in Trimble's study.

"You've called me some pretty names, kid," said Wally quietly.

"If you don't know anything about your brother, I'm sorry I spoke. But you'd better be careful how you call a chap names here, that's all."

Wally turned away with that, exhibiting really creditable self-control.

"Aren't you going to wallop him for his cheek?" demanded Jameson indignantly.

"No. Let the young ass alone."

"What rot! I suppose a new fag isn't coming in here to talk to us as he likes? Why, the cheeky little beast! Look here, D'Arcy minor; you're funkng!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" said Wally irritably. "I could knock the baby-faced little idiot out with one hand, and you know it!"

"Well, then, don't let him call you names."

"I'll call anybody names who tells lies about my brother!" said Frank fiercely.

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OUT TO-DAY!

ONE PENNY.



Under the shadow of the old elms close to the wall, Racke helped Levison minor up, and the fag dropped from the wall into the road. (See Chapter 11.)

"Lies?" said Wally, swinging round.

"Yes, lies!"

"Now you're going to let him call you a liar, I suppose?" sneered Jameson. "Why, I'd make mincemeat of the cheeky cub!"

Wally's eyes were gleaming now.

"Shut up, Jimmy! 'Tain't your bizney!" he said. "Levison minor, put up your hands! I'm going to teach you manners."

"Bravo!"

Frank put up his hands willingly enough. But as Wally advanced upon him there was a footstep outside the door. The fags knew that footstep, and they bolted to their desks like rabbits into burrows.

The new fag, in a state of great bewilderment, was left standing alone in the middle of the Form-room.

The door opened, and Mr. Selby entered.

He frowned at Levison minor.

"Why are you not in your place?" he said harshly. "Go to your place at once!"

"Yes, sir," said Frank, understanding now the cause of that sudden scamper on the part of the Third-Formers.

He went towards the desks, wondering which was his seat. He paused and looked back at the Form-master.

"Have I not told you to go to your place?" snapped Mr. Selby.

"I—I don't know my place, sir," faltered Frank.

"You stupid boy, take the bottom place!"

Manners minor indicated the place, and Frank went to it with burning cheeks, and sat down.

Then evening prep commenced.

Levison minor did not find it such an ordeal as he had expected; but he was glad when it was over. He was wondering, too, what was going to happen afterwards. He was in trouble with D'Arcy minor, with whom his brother had recommended him to make friends; but he did not consider that he was to blame for that. He wondered, too, why D'Arcy minor had spoken of his brother as he had done, for he was quite keen enough to see that Wally was a different sort of fellow from Trimble. Was it possible that his brother had a bad reputation throughout the Lower School? And if so, why? Why did everyone seem to take it for granted that he would be a young reprobate, simply because he was Levison's brother? Ernest was evidently misjudged, perhaps because of one or two acts of recklessness, such as his joining Racke's picnic that afternoon.

Prep was over at last, and Mr. Selby, glad to have done, quitted the Form-room at once. The fags were left to their own devices until bedtime. Levison minor moved from his place, and he was immediately surrounded by a dozen fags, with D'Arcy minor at their head.

"Now, young shaver!" said Wally.

Frank faced him without fear.

CHAPTER 9.

A Feast of the Gods.

"W HAT a thumping smother you're making, young Frayne!" growled Wally.
 "If you can do better, D'Arcy minor—"
 "If I couldn't make a better fire than that, I'd—I'd eat it!" said D'Arcy minor. "For goodness' sake chuck it, and leave it to me!"
 "Br-r-r-r-r!"

There was going to be a feast of the gods in the Form-room that evening. Money, unfortunately, was short; but Frayne had brought in four kippers, which had to be cooked. Wally had brought a supply of butter from Kildare's study—he fagged for Kildare of the Sixth. Manners had begged a loaf from his major in the Shell, and Curly Gibson contributed a tin of sardines. The feast was of the fish fishy, so to speak; but there were two courses—sardines and kippers. But it was the cooking of the kippers that presented difficulties. The weather was still too warm for a fire in the Form-room, and there were no coals. Frayne was building a fire of old exercise-books, old impot paper, and the covers of school-books recklessly torn off for the purpose. He succeeded in making a tremendous blaze, and scorched his hands and blackened his face, but did not seem to produce much of a fire for cooking purposes.

There was a warm debate as to how the kippers should be cooked. Frying was out of the question, as there was no frying-pan. Jameson maintained that they ought to be grilled, but he did not explain how they could be grilled at a wide, open grate with a fire of exercise-books. The first kipper, supported on a couple of rulers, was beginning to frizzle, and to burn in places. A strong smell already pervaded the Form-room.

Levison minor, as he recovered from his exertions, watched the scene with curious interest.

He was getting his first experience of the peculiar manners and customs of the Third Form.

He remembered his brother's sage advice, and he would willingly have contributed the abundant supply of cash in his pocket to increase the resources of the feasters. But he did not venture to chip in. He knew no one there, and the fags had seemed all against him when he was fighting with Wally. He felt as if he were alone among enemies. At the same time, he felt a keen desire to join in the rough familiarity of the fags—to be one of them—to be taking a part in the life of the Form. He wondered whether that time would ever come, never guessing how short a time it would take him to shake down into his place in the Third. The evil reputation of his major, and its consequences, had given him a bad start.

Voices were waxing loud and emphatic round the spluttering fire and the smelly kippers. The fags could have had a good supper of bread and cheese if they had chosen, but they preferred their own fare, cooked by their own hands, to anything that the House dining-room could have offered.

"That blessed fire won't keep in!" said Frayne in despair. "We want some wood for it, you know."

"Use your head," said Wally sarcastically. "Can't you get some wood from your major, young Manners?"

"Nothing doing," said young Manners. "Got any more books?" asked Wally, looking round.

"There's that new kid. I suppose he's got some books? Hallo, young Levison!"

"Hallo!" said Frank, surprised at being hailed so familiarly by the junior he had been fighting with ten minutes before.

"Got your books here?"

"I'm ready for you," he said, "and ready for anybody who runs my brother down!"

D'Arcy minor looked at him queerly.

"Rum young codger!" he commented. "But you can't call a chap a liar. I wouldn't have said anything about your major, but I supposed you knew all about him. But you can't call me a liar without being licked. Put up your paws! I won't hurt you much," added Wally considerably.

"Pooh! Give him a jolly good hiding!" said Jameson.

"I'll give you one, Jimmy, if you don't shut up!"

"Come on, then!" said Jameson at once.

"Look here—"

"Well, you look here—"

"Don't you two begin rowing," broke in Frayne. "Look 'ere, if you're going to wallop the kid, Wally, get going. We've got to have supper."

"Well, I'm waiting for the baby-faced little beast, ain't I?" growled Wally. "Why don't he come on?"

"Waiting to get his courage up," sneered Piggott.

"Give him a dot on the nose, and have done with him," said Frayne impatiently. "If we're going to cook those kippers, Wally—"

"Blow your silly kippers! Come on, you young fathead!"

Wally gave the new fag a tap on the nose by way of a start, and Levison minor came on willingly enough, returning the tap with interest. He was full of pluck, and he knew something about boxing; but he was no match for Wally, who was the most redoubtable fighting-man in the Third Form. To Frank's surprise, he found himself lying on his back in less than two minutes, blinking up dazedly at the ceiling of the Form-room, while the fags yelled with laughter.

"Well, that's soon done!" said Hobbs. "Now about supper."

Frank sat up, blinking.

"Had enough?" asked Wally, quite good-naturedly.

"No!" panted Levison minor.

"Better chuck it," said Wally, in quite a friendly manner.

"I could knock you out with one hand, you know."

"We'll see!"

Levison minor scrambled to his feet, and came on again pluckily.

"The kid's game," remarked Joe Frayne approvingly.

"Go it, Wally! I'll get on with the kippers while you're licking him."

"I'll help you," said Curly Gibson. "Don't be all night, Wally."

"Rats!" growled Wally. "The kid won't keep me a minute. You wait till I give him my left."

Frank, thus forewarned, kept on his guard against Wally's left, which was quite famous in the Third. But his watchfulness did not avail him much. The left caught him on the chin suddenly, like the kick of a mule, and he went down on the floor with a heavy bump. Wally grinned down at him amiably.

"Chuck it!" he said. "Don't be a young ass, you know."

"Oh!" mumbled Frank.

"Yes, chuck it!" said Manners minor. "You're wasting time. Come on, Wally!"

Frayne and Curly were already busy at the firegrate, and Wally joined them there, leaving Levison minor gasping on his back. Frank rose slowly to his feet. He was licked; there was no doubt about that. His head was singing, and he felt quite done. He was game to go on, but the fight was evidently over; Wally seemed to have forgotten his existence. Levison minor limped to the nearest desk, and sat down, breathing very quickly. The Third-Formers, oblivious of his existence, were busy, and no one even looked at him.

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"Yes."

"Bring 'em over here."

Frank rose and obeyed. His nice new set of school-books met with an approving glance from Wally's eye.

"I suppose I can have the cover of this grammar?" asked Wally.

"Of course you can have it!" snorted Jameson. "Are you asking permission from a new kid, you ass?"

"Well, it's his," said Wally. "Of course I'm going to have it, anyway, but there's such a thing as being civil, Jimmy, though you don't seem to have heard of it in the New House."

Wally had asked permission, but he was not waiting for it. He was already jerking off the cover of the Latin grammar.

Frank had come to St. Jim's with the intention of keeping his books in excellent order, and having them looking nice and spotless at the end of the term. He watched Wally's proceeding in dismay. But he raised no objections. It would not have been much use, and he could see that any objection would have been looked upon as mean and contemptible by the fags. The stout cover of the Latin grammar gave quite a fillip to the fire, which blazed up again.

"I—I say, are you allowed to use books like that?" was all Frank said.

"Of course not," said Wally. "School-books have to be kept clean and neat. That's one of the rules. Still, accidents will happen. This is one of them."

And the fags chuckled at Wally's humour.

"Shove the whole book on!" said Manners minor. "The kid can use my Latin grammar. I'll lend it to him."

Wally shook his head.

"Selby might be down on him."

"Well, let him! What does it matter?" growled Jameson. "I suppose those kippers are going to be cooked?"

"Couldn't we get some wood?" said Frank. He uttered the "we" rather nervously, surprised to find himself already speaking as one of the Third.

"Do you know where to get any, fathead?"

"I'll ask my major if you like."

"Cut off and ask him, then."

"Bring a bit of coal in your pocket if you can," called out Frayne. "Don't shove it under anybody's nose bringing it here. I suppose you know we're not supposed to have a fire here?"

"All right," said Frank.

He hurried out of the Form-room, quite elated with his mission. Already he was feeling like one of them, and, to his astonishment, after his fight with D'Arcy minor, he seemed to be getting on friendly terms with that lively young gentleman. He lost no time in getting to his brother's study. Trimble and Mellish and Lumley-Lumley were there, doing their prep, but Ernest Levison was not present.

"Isn't my brother here?" said Frank, looking round.

"You'll find him in Crooke's study!" chuckled Mellish.

"Don't go there, young 'un," said Lumley-Lumley, with a frown at Mellish. "Levison don't want to be interrupted."

Mellish and Trimble cackled.

Frank nodded, and left the study. He did not intend to interrupt his brother if his brother did not want to be interrupted, little dreaming how Levison major was engaged at that hour, when he ought to have been at his preparation. But he was unwilling to return to the Third Form-room with his mission unfulfilled. As he hesitated in the passage, a cheery voice hailed him:

"Hallo, kid! Looking for somebody?"

It was Tom Merry.

"I wanted to see my brother," said Frank. "I wanted to borrow some wood."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Come here," he said.

Frank followed him to his study, and was surprised and delighted with a present of two bundles of wood.

"Anything else you want?" asked Tom hospitably.

"M-m-may I take some coal?"

"Certainly!"

"Thanks, awfully!"

"Is it a feast in the halls of the Third?" asked Monty Lowther, looking up from his prep. "Is the festive board spread in the magnificent mansion of the fags?" And Manners chuckled.

"We're having kippers for supper," said Frank simply.

"We can't get the fire going."

"Mind old Selby don't smell the kippers!" chuckled Lowther. "Better put those bundles under your jacket and smuggle 'em in."

"Yes, I'm going to."

Frank left the study with his trousers' pockets full of chips of coal, and the two bundles of wood under his jacket. Thus equipped, he arrived in the Form-room. Heated voices were arguing round the spluttering fire, but there was a chorus of approval as Frank turned out his prizes.

"Good egg!" said Wally heartily. "That kid's got some sense! You shall have some of the kippers, Levison minor."

Wally's skilled hand soon built a satisfactory fire, and the kippers were duly roasted. It was true that they were underdone in places, but, to make things even, they were considerably overdone in other places. A meal cooked by a French chef would not have given so much satisfaction to the fags, however. They were quite satisfied with their own methods.

Frank shared in the feast, as cheerily as the rest, and he forgot the bump on his chin, and the fact that his nose was swelling a little. He was feeling quite happy by the time he went up to the dormitory with the Third. His earliest experiences had not been agreeable, but he was already feeling at home in the Third Form at St. Jim's, and finding, to his surprise, that the fellow he had fought with was the one he liked best.

CHAPTER 10.

The Parting of the Ways.

TOM MERRY spotted Levison minor in the quadrangle the next day, and stopped to speak to him. The captain of the Shell did not have much to do with fags of the Third as a rule, but he took a kindly interest in Levison minor. There was a candid simplicity about the new fag which was quite taking, and the contrast between him and his brother, too, was odd.

"Getting on all right in the Third?" asked Tom cheerily.

The fag nodded and smiled.

"Yes, first-rate!" he said brightly.

"Where did you get that nose?"

Frank laughed.

"I had a fight with D'Arcy minor," he said. "But we're getting on all right now. D'Arcy minor is a brick!"

"So he is—quite a little brick," said Tom. "I suppose you were licked—what? You tackled the most terrific warrior in the Third."

"Yes, I got licked," confessed Frank. "D'Arcy minor hasn't said anything about my brother since, though." He flushed. "It was a misunderstanding, and he's really a ripping chap. He could lick me any time, I suppose, but he's shut up just as if I had licked him."

"You'd better not fly out when a chap speaks about your major," said Tom. "We don't stand on ceremony here, you know. Fellows say what they like."

"Yes, I know. Ernest told me the same," said Frank, his face clouding. "But—but it's queer that a lot of fellows seem to think like that about Ernie. Of course, he doesn't care what they think, and he's too proud to take any notice. But—but I wish they wouldn't. They don't know what a splendid chap he is!"

"Oh!" murmured Tom. It came as a surprise to him that anyone could possibly regard Levison of the Fourth as a splendid chap, but he liked the fag for it.

He walked away in a thoughtful mood, wondering whether there was really any good in the cad of the Fourth, after all. There must surely be some reason why his young brother had so good an opinion of him!

He was surprised when, later, he passed Levison's study, and through the open doorway saw the brothers seated at the table at work. Levison was helping his minor with his lessons, and putting him up to Form work. Tom passed on, wondering still more.

Levison and his minor were still at work when Racke of the Shell came into the study. Racke stared at them, and burst into a rude laugh.

"Hallo, what's the game?" he asked.

"Don't interrupt," said Levison, without looking up.

"Got a fag?" asked Racke.

"No."

"Look here, I've run out of smokes," said Racke. "I'm dying for one."

"Go and die somewhere else, then, confound you!"

"You mopped up enough of them last night, anyway," said Racke sulkily. "Look here, have you got a cigarette about the study, Levison?"

"No, I tell you!"

"I suppose your minor could go and get some?"

"No, he couldn't!"

"Why couldn't he?" said Racke warmly. "Look here, young 'un, will you cut down to Rylcombe for me?"

Levison rose to his feet, his eyes glinting.

"Cut off, Franky!" he said. "We'll get on with it another time!"

Frank gathered up his books, and left the study without a word. Levison closed the door, and fixed his eyes on Racke.

"I've asked you before not to jaw that kind of rot before my minor," said Levison.

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"REDFERN TO THE RESCUE!"

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"Why shouldn't I?"
 "He doesn't understand it. It's not in his line. If you can't keep your mouth shut, you can keep out of my study!"
 Racke laughed mockingly.

"What's the good of humbug with me?" he asked contemptuously. "Do you think I'm going to believe that your minor is a dear little innocent? That's rather too thick! I don't know why you're playing this silly game, but I can tell you it won't work with me. Look here, I can't go down to Rylcombe myself for smokes—it's too jolly risky! Safe enough for a new kid. Send your minor. I'm paying."

"My minor's going to have nothing to do with you or your rotten tricks!" said Levison.

"Well, I'll ask him myself. I suppose he'll go for a bob?" sneered Racke. "If he's anything like you, he'd do anything for money."

"You won't ask him!" said Levison between his teeth. "You won't speak to him on the subject again, Racke."

"Who's going to stop me?"
 "I am! If you do, I'll hammer you!" said Levison, his eyes blazing. "Mind, I mean it! My minor's going to have nothing to do with you or your set!"

Racke stared at him, his pasty face growing crimson with rage. This language from a hanger-on of the rich man's son was a surprise to the heir of the Racke war-profits, and it was not an agreeable surprise.

"Why, you confounded, cheeky cad!" exclaimed Racke. "You've only stuck on to me for what you could get, and you know it! I've kept you in pocket-money ever since I've been here, you poverty-stricken outsider! And now you're getting your ears up to me! You think you can afford to quarrel with me, do you?"

Levison breathed hard. He could not afford to quarrel with Moneybags minor, as Racke was called in the Shell. He made too good a thing out of the millionaire's son to wish to break with him.

"I don't want to quarrel," said Levison at last. "But my minor's got to be left out of anything of that kind. He's not your sort."

"Hang your minor!" said Racke furiously. "Not my sort, isn't he? My sort isn't good enough for that baby-faced, whining little waster—what? Well, I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to send him for the smokes, and I'm going to make him smoke some of them, too, and I'm going to ask him into my study this evening for a game of nap! We'll see whether you can ride the high horse with me, you sponging outsider!"

And Racke pushed roughly past Levison, and left the study.

The black sheep of the Fourth stood breathing hard, his face quite pale. Racke's savage insults stung him; but Levison could endure a goodly amount of insults when his interests were at stake. He had stood any amount of insolence already from the millionaire's son, and he was ready to stand more, so long as it paid him. But the mere suggestion that his company was not good enough for Levison minor had stung the blackguard of the Shell to the quick, and it was clear that he meant what he said.

Levison clenched his hands hard. He realised that he come to the parting of the ways.

If he was to keep his young brother clear of the dingy black-guardism of his own ways, it meant more than he had anticipated. It meant that he had to make a break with the fast set in the Lower School—that his unwilling feet must tread the path of reform. And that was a sacrifice that the black sheep of St. Jim's was hardly prepared to make.

CHAPTER 11.

When Rogues Fall Out.

"STOP a minute, young 'un!"
 Levison minor stopped.

It was dusky in the big quadrangle. Levison minor had taken a message from Kildare to Monteith, in the New House, and he was on his way back when Racke of the Shell hailed him.

"Busy?" asked Racke, with a smile.
 "No," said Frank; "not till prep."

"You'll have time to cut down to Rylcombe before prep." said Racke. "You can run, you know. Will you go, to oblige me?"

Frank hesitated. He did not like Racke, and he had not forgotten what he had heard in his brother's study.

"It's really for your brother," explained Racke. "He wants something fetched from the village. Do you know the Green Man?"

"Yes; I saw it yesterday," said Frank. "It's an inn, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's it. You go to the back door, and ask for the packet for Master Levison. That's all. They'll give you the packet, and you bring it here."

"I'll go," said Frank at once.

If Racke had told him to ask for a packet for Master Racke, he would have refused. But there seemed no harm in fetching a packet for his brother.

"I'll help you over the wall," said Racke.
 "Can't I go out of the gate?"

"It's locked, you young ass!"
 Frank paused.

"I—I say, we're not allowed out after locking-up!" he said. Racke laughed.

"We often do it," he said. "Levison would go, but the prefects have an eye on him. But if you'd rather he risked it—"

"I'll go!"
 "Then come along!"

Under the shadow of the old elms, close to the wall, the Shell fellow helped Levison minor up, and the fag dropped from the wall into the road.

Racke turned away, with a mocking grin.
 "So much for Master Cheeky Levison!" he murmured.

"I'll bring him to his senses, the cheeky cad! Hallo!"

He started as Levison of the Fourth came under the trees. Levison looked round him, puzzled.

"My minor was with you," he said.
 "Was he?" said Racke carelessly.

"Yes, he was. He's not here now!" Levison came closer to Racke, his eyes glittering. "Has he gone out?"

"I dare say he has."
 "You know whether he has or not!" said Levison between his teeth. "If he's gone out, you've sent him!"

Racke shrugged his shoulders. Levison clenched his hands hard. The mocking look in Racke's eyes was sufficient to tell him all he wanted to know.

"You've sent him out?" he said.
 "Suppose I have?"

"Where has he gone?"
 Racke grinned.

"He's gone to the Green Man, if you want to know."
 "You've sent my minor to that low hole?" exclaimed Levison.

"You've been there often enough yourself," sneered Racke. "So have I, for that matter. Do you think I'm going to help you keep your minor in cotton-wool? He's gone there for smokes—for you!"

"You're lying!" said Levison fiercely. "He wouldn't go there."

"He's gone there to fetch a packet of cigarettes," chuckled Racke, enjoying the look on Levison's face. "I sent word to Joliffe to-day to have them ready—for Master Levison! Ha, ha! Your minor's gone for them. And he's going to smoke some of them in my study this evening, too."

"You cad!" muttered Levison furiously.
 "And if I have any more of your rot, I'll give him some whisky, too," said Racke deliberately. "I'll teach the young puppy to turn up his nose at me—and you, too! He'll be useful to us, with his baby face; and I'm going to teach him to be useful, and if you don't like it, you can lump it! Is that plain enough for you?"

Levison trembled with anger, as he looked at the hard, cynical face of the young rascal, gloating over the evil he had done and intended to do. Racke junior was a worthy son of Racke senior; he inherited the hard unscrupulousness of the war-profitteer, along with his share of the war-profits. The Head of St. Jim's had little dreamed what a corrupt young blackguard he was admitting to the old school, when Racke came there.

Racke was grinning with malignant satisfaction. He gloated over his evil trick for its own sake, as well as for the sake of punishment of Levison's cheek, as he regarded it.

"You cad!" muttered Levison again. "I told you what I'd do, if you didn't let my minor alone. Put up your hands!"

Racke started back.
 "Hands off!" he exclaimed savagely. "Don't be a fool, Levison!"

But Levison was advancing upon him, and he had to put



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CHAPTER 12.

Bitter Blood.

his hands up, in mingled rage and astonishment. He had not dreamed that Levison would dare to quarrel with him—to break for good with the owner of the horn of plenty. Racke had a firm conviction that his money could buy anything, and although he had been undeceived a number of times since coming to St. Jim's, he still held to that opinion.

But he was destined to be undeceived once more. For Levison, the poverty-stricken bouncer—Levison, who made a good thing out of him, and could not afford to quarrel with him—was quarrelling now, with a vengeance. He was raining savage blows upon Racke, which the weedy, unfit slacker of the Shell found it hard to stop.

"Hang you!" panted Racke. "You rotter—you beggar—you sponger! Oh!"

Crash!

The Shell fellow went down on his back, laid there by a terrific drive full in the face. Levison of the Fourth stood over him with blazing eyes.

"Get up, you cad! You haven't had enough yet! I'm going to thrash you till you can't stand!" muttered Levison thickly.

Racke sat up dizzily.

"Keep off, you rotter!" he screamed.

"Will you get up?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then I'll kick you till you do!"

Racke sprang up furiously, as Levison carried out his threat. The hanger-on, the sponger, the weedy satellite, was not to be recognised at that moment. As soon as Racke was on his feet, Levison's fists lashed out again, and the Shell fellow, defending himself feebly, was driven to the wall.

"Let me alone!" panted Racke hoarsely. "Are you mad, Levison? I'll yell for help if you don't let me alone."

Levison did not reply; his fists lashed out incessantly, knocking down the Shell fellow's weak guard, and dashing savagely into his face. Racke went down again, and lay groaning on the ground.

Levison gave him a bitter look as he lay and groaned.

"That's enough," he said. "That will do for this time. But look out, Peter Racke, you'll find that I mean business every time, you cad!"

Racke only groaned.

"Hallo! What's the trouble here?" asked a cheery voice. It was Tom Merry's. The Terrible Three were taking their evening spin round the quadrangle, and they had come upon the scene.

"Nothing that concerns you," said Levison coolly, and he put his hands in his pockets and walked away.

The chums of the Shell stared down at the groaning Racke. Tom Merry lent him a hand, and helped him to his feet.

"Racke!" said Lowther, in surprise. "It's a case of rogues falling out! My only hat! You look a beauty, Racke!"

"Better do something to your face before you're seen," grinned Manners.

Racke groaned.

"I'll make him suffer for this!" he said thickly. "That sponging cad—that hard-up waster who's been borrowing my money all the term—he's done this!"

"Must have been dotty," said Monty Lowther. "Or has the supply of war-profits run out, Racke?"

Racke did not reply. He staggered rather than walked away to the School House. Tom Merry whistled.

"Well, that's a go!" he remarked. "Levison has always been jolly careful to keep in with that merchant. He won't get a cent of the war-profits after this, I imagine."

"Perhaps Levison's turning over a new leaf," grinned Lowther. "It's about time he did. Only last night he was keeping it up, in Racke's study. Come on, my infants; we've got prep to do yet."

The Terrible Three resumed their trot. Racke, in the School House, was bathing his bruised face, and muttering fierce threats of vengeance upon the fellow who had handled him. And Levison of the Fourth, in deep anxiety, was waiting for his brother to come in. And he had cause for anxiety—more than he knew. For Racke, as he sponged his damaged face, groaning with rage and pain, was thinking of revenge upon his follower who had turned upon him, and a scheme was working itself out in his cunning brain, which—if it was successful—would more than pay his debt, and wipe out his bitter grudge.

"FRANK, is that you?"

The fag spun round in alarm, as Levison spoke in suppressed tones. The Fourth-Former was waiting under the trees by the wall, and Frank dropped lightly from the wall into the quad.

"Ernie!" exclaimed the fag.

"Thank goodness you've got back safe!" panted Levison. "Railton is in the village; he might have seen you."

"I saw him," said Frank.

"You've been to the Green Man?"

"Yes; I've got your packet."

"My packet?" repeated Levison.

"Yes; here it is."

"Did Railton see you?"

"No!" muttered the fag. "I dodged out of sight. I—I knew he musn't see me out of bounds, Ernie. What's the matter? I wouldn't have gone for anybody but you, of course."

"It wasn't for me," said Levison. "Racke was lying to you. I've got it out of him. It was a trick. Frank, you young ass, you might have been spotted!"

"I shouldn't have minded detention very much," said Frank.

"It wouldn't have been detention; it would have been a flogging. You might have been sent back home, even."

The fag gave him a startled look.

"Not just for breaking bounds, Ernie?"

"For going to that place," said Levison. "Don't you understand? It's out of bounds; it's a low hole. Any chap going there would get into awful trouble. Thank goodness you weren't seen! I never sent you. It was a lie of Racke's. Don't you know what's in that packet?"

"Oh," said Frank, "I—I thought it was for you! They knew your name there. The fat old man there asked me how you were, and whether you were coming on Saturday."

Levison gritted his teeth.

"What's in the packet, Ernie?"

"Never mind what's in it," said Levison. "Throw it over the wall."

"But—but—"

"It's cigarettes, if you want to know. Joliffe gets them for Racke, as he can't go into a tobacconist's himself. He used my name to get you to go there and fetch them. It was a rotten trick! Mind you never do anything again that Racke tells you; he's a low hound! Never speak to him if you can help it."

"But—but you speak to him, Ernie," faltered the fag. "I wish you wouldn't have anything to do with him."

Levison laughed harshly.

"That's all over," he said. "We sha'n't speak again; I've hammered him for sending you there. Give me that packet."

Frank handed the packet over in silence, and Levison tossed it over the school wall, careless where it fell.

"Now you'd better cut off," he said. "And mind, no more breaking bounds; you'll get into trouble."

"I thought it was for you," said Frank. "I wouldn't have done it for anybody else. But—but if that inn's such a rotten place, Ernie, why do you go there? That fat man, Joliffe, knew you. He asked after you, and another man—a man he called Lodgey. They both knew you. Lodgey said he expected you on Saturday afternoon, and so did Joliffe. You're not going there, Ernie?"

"Of—of course not," muttered Levison. "They're friends of Racke's, really. I've just happened to meet them. Don't worry about that. Cut off, or you'll be late, and old Selby will be down on you."

Frank obediently cut off, and Levison followed him more slowly to the School House. In the upper passage he passed Racke, and grinned at the sight of his face. Racke had a black eye, his nose seemed double its usual size, and there were dark bruises on his face. He gave Levison a look that a Hun might have envied, and went into his study.

Levison was not in a cheerful mood that evening.

He did his prep sullenly in his study, and afterwards, when Mellish went along to Racke's study, Levison stayed behind. Lumley-Lumley eyed him.

"Not joining the merry blades this evening?" he asked.

"Go and eat coke!" was Levison's polite reply.

"Been rowing with Racke?" asked Trimble. "Racke's got a face as if he'd been through a mangle. I asked him who'd done it, and he punched my head, the beast!"

"Serve you right!" growled Levison.

He lounged discontentedly out of the study. Blake and

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NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"REDFERN TO THE RESCUE!"

Herries and Digby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were chatting in the passage, and they eyed him curiously.

"I hear you've been hammering young War-profits," said Blake.

"Case of wogues fallin' out, bai Jove!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Had he been swindlin' you, Levison, or had you been swindlin' him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Find out!" growled Levison, and he lounged on, leaving the chums of Study No. 6 laughing.

On Saturday afternoon it had been arranged for him to go with Racke to the Green Man, for a merry afternoon. That arrangement, of course, would fall through now. And the loss of the millionaire's friendship was a serious matter to Levison of the Fourth, who had little money, and who had had a full share of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

The next morning both Racke and Levison received lines for fighting, both being called before the Housemaster, Racke's damaged features had attracted attention. As they left the Housemaster's study, Levison tapped Racke on the arm.

"Like me to do your lines?" he asked.

Racke stared at him.

"Do you mean that you want to earn half-a-crown?" he sneered.

"No," said Levison, flushing, "I don't. But there's no need for us to row, you know. I don't bear malice, if you don't! I only want you to let my minor alone."

Racke looked at him with a bitter sneer.

"I knew you would come round," he said. "You're sorry now, and I'll make you sorrier before I've done with you!"

"Are you coming along on Saturday?"

"Not with you. I sha'n't come along if you do."

"Then you can stay away!" said Levison, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"So you're going?" asked Racke, with a peculiar glimmer in his eyes.

"Why not?"

Racke walked away with a sneer on his lips. Levison had been willing to eat humble-pie to placate the millionaire of the Shell; but that was not enough for Racke.

Frank Levison joined his brother, as the latter stood, with his hands driven deep into his pockets, staring out moodily into the quad. Levison nodded to his minor, trying to clear his clouded brow.

"What about to-morrow?" asked Frank. "It's half-holiday."

"You'd better pal on with some of the Third," said Levison.

The fag's face fell.

"I thought you might like to come up the river," he said.

Levison forced a laugh.

"It won't do you any good to be chumming with Fourth-Formers, even your own major," he said. "The fags won't like it. Go along with them, and come to my study for tea afterwards."

"Right you are!" said Frank, brightening up. "D'Arcy minor's asked me to go in his boat, but I thought—"

"That's right; young Wally is the chap I'd like you to be friends with!" said Levison. "Keep away from that young rotter Piggott."

"I don't speak to him—D'Arcy minor doesn't, either. Piggott isn't in our set!" said Frank, with some pride.

CHAPTER 13.

For His Brother's Sake!

KILDARE!"

Levison minor looked involuntarily as Mr. Railton spoke.

It was Saturday afternoon. Football practice was on, and Levison minor was watching it, while he waited for D'Arcy minor. Wally was detained in the Form-room at present, having been in hot water with Mr. Selby that morning. Levison major had gone out some time before, and Frank was looking on at the senior practice to kill time while he waited.

Mr. Railton come down to Big Side with a very grave expression on his face. He called to Kildare, who was just going on, and the captain of St. Jim's came at once. His tone was so grave that the fag could not help noticing it.

"Yes, sir!" said Kildare.

"I suppose you are rather busy, Kildare—"

"Only practice, sir," said the Sixth-Former, with a smile. "I'm quite at your service."

"It is a rather peculiar matter," said the Housemaster.

"I have just received a telephone-call from the village, from THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 451.

whom I do not know, as I did not recognise the voice. Whoever it was tells me that he has seen a boy belonging to this school enter the Green Man, and thinks it his duty to acquaint me with the circumstance. It may, of course, be only some busybody; but if the information is correct, the matter should be seen into. I cannot get away this afternoon, and I was going to ask you—"

"Certainly, sir!" said the prefect, at once. "I'll change at once, and run down there on my bike, if you like."

"I should be obliged if you would, Kildare. I have had my suspicions turned in that quarter before, as you know, and it is my duty to see that this is looked into."

"Very well, sir; I'll go," said Kildare.

The Housemaster thanked him and walked back. Neither of them had taken any note of the little fag standing by the ropes. But every word had been quite plain to Frank's ears as he stood rooted to the spot.

Frank's heart was beating like a hammer.

Well he remembered what Mr. Joliffe and Mr. Lodgey had said to him. They had expected Levison at the Green Man on Saturday afternoon. Levison had said that he was not going, and Frank had dismissed the matter from his mind.

But it returned now.

His brother had avoided his company that afternoon, and he had gone out alone. Was it possible—?

Even while he asked himself the question, Frank knew that it was not only possible, but that it was certain.

It was his brother who was at that low den—his brother who was to be caught in the act by the prefect!

He knew it!

The doubts that he had driven from his mind, the painful misgivings he had absolutely banished, all returned with redoubled force now.

It was not for nothing that his brother was spoken of as a black sheep, it was not merely that he was a dog with a bad name; but he had earned the bad name!

His mind seemed to become suddenly clear. At that moment he saw his brother as the other fellows saw him—as Wally saw him, as Tom Merry saw him. That champagne picnic with Racke was not an isolated escapade; it was in keeping with Levison's real character—the character he had sought to conceal from his minor. Frank knew it now—a hundred troublesome doubts had crystallised at once into a grim certainty.

A slap on the shoulder started him out of his miserable reverie. He spun round and looked at Manners minor.

"Get a move on!" said Reggie cheerily. "Wally will be out in ten minutes, and he'll expect us to be ready. It's late now, owing to that fathead getting himself detained. Hallo, what are you looking like a boiled owl for?"

"I—I say"—Levison minor found his voice with an effort—"you—you've heard of a place called the Green Man, in Rylcombe, haven't you?"

"Yes; rotten low hole," said Manners minor.

"Suppose a chap went there—and was caught—"

Manners minor grinned.

"He would be sacked jolly sharp!" he said. "Is that where your major's gone?"

"I—I—!"

"Never mind, your major's too jolly cute to be spotted," said Reggie. "You can't help what he does. But I forgot—mustn't say a word about your major to you," Reggie chuckled. "Come on! We've got to get the boat out, you know—where the merry thunder are you off too, Levison minor?"

Frank did not answer; he was hurrying away. Reggie Manners stared after him in bewilderment.

"Off his blessed rocker!" he ejaculated.

Frank hurried down to the gates.

The sack! That word rang in his ears and hummed in his brain. Kildare had gone in to change—in a few minutes he would be riding down to Rylcombe. There was little time to lose.

For there was only one thought in the loyal mind of the little fag, and that was to warn his brother, and save him in time.

He did not think of the risk to himself—that it was almost as dangerous for him to be caught in those forbidden precincts as for his brother. That thought did not even cross his mind, and he would not have cared if it had. He ran out of the school gates, and there was a sharp exclamation as he ran into a group of juniors who were about to mount their bicycles.

"Hallo, where are you running to, you young ass?" roared Tom Merry.

Frank staggered back.

"Sorry!" he gasped; "I'm in a hurry." He ran on a pace or two, and then turned back. "Merry, lend me your bike, will you—lend it to me—?"

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^D.

"Well, I like that!" ejaculated Monty Lowther in indignant astonishment. "We're just going out for a spin, you young jackanape!"

"Hold on," said Tom quietly, as he scanned the fag's white terrified face. "Is anything the matter, kid?"

"Yes—yes—I—I can't tell you," muttered Frank. "But do lend me your bike, there's a good chap—I'm in an awful hurry—"

"Where are you going?"

"To the—to Rylcombe. Will you—?"

"You couldn't ride it," said Tom. "It's too high for you. But I'll give you a lift to Rylcombe if you're in a hurry. You can hang on behind, what?"

"Yes, yes, thank you!"

It was easy enough for Frank to stand on the foot-rests with his hands on the broad shoulders of the captain of the Shell. Tom Merry pedalled away down the lane. Manners gave an expressive grunt.

"Well, that takes the cake!" he remarked. "The Third are getting a bit too cheeky, in my opinion. Come on!"

Manners and Lowther rode after their chum. Tom was pedalling at great speed, with Frank standing behind. The extra weight meant little to the athletic junior. The wind blew in Frank's fevered face as they raced down the lane. He would be in time yet—he would be in time—that was his only thought.

"Stop!" he exclaimed, suddenly, as the inn came in sight. The Green Man lay on the outskirts of the village.

Tom slowed down and the fag jumped off.

"Thanks!" he panted. He was turning away when the Shell fellow's hand fell on his shoulder and stopped him. Tom's face was very grave.

"You're not going in there, kid," he said quietly.

Frank struggled almost hysterically.

"I must! Don't stop me—it will be too late! Let me go!" He cast a terrified look back along the lane, fearing to see Kildare in the distance. His fears were realised. Far down the dusty lane the figure of the captain of St. Jim's could be seen pedalling at a leisurely pace.

Tom Merry followed his glance. A sudden understanding flashed into his mind.

"You're going to see somebody—to give him a tip?" he asked.

"Yes, yes," panted Frank.

"Then I won't stop you."

He released the fag, who darted away at once.

"Pretty game this, what?" grunted Manners, and Monty Lowther gave a very expressive whistle. The Terrible Three rode on through the village.

Frank stopped a moment undecided. His brother was there—but where? He shrank from entering the building; but he remembered where he had gone before, and he ran down the side path. Further down the garden, overlooking the river, was a summer-house, and in the doorway a squat form was standing—that of Mr. Lodgey, the billiard-sharper. He was lighting a cigar. Frank panted up to him.

"Is he here?"

Mr. Lodgey blinked at him.

"Eh! Who—what—!"

But past the portly form of the sharper Frank could see into the summer-house, and he saw his brother, seated at a round table with two others—men with low brows and boozey complexions. There were cards on the table, and the summer-house was thick with smoke.

Levison of the Fourth started to his feet with a furious exclamation at the sight of his minor's pale face looking in upon him.

"Frank, you young idiot, what are you doing here?"

"The young gent's welcome," smiled Mr. Lodgey. "No reason why he shouldn't take a—and—"

"Ernie!"—Frank's voice was sharp and shrill—"come—come away at once! I've come to tell you—Kildare's coming—"

Mr. Lodgey whistled.

"Kildare!" exclaimed Levison. "Kildare!"

"He's coming on his bike!" panted Frank. "He knows—"

"How does he know?" hissed Levison. "Who's given me away—!"

"Somebody telephoned to Mr. Railton from the village; but—but, your name wasn't mentioned—he said a St. Jim's chap—"

"Racke!" muttered Levison between his teeth. "Racke—the hound! I'll make him sit up for this!"

"Will you come away?" almost screamed the fag. "Kildare will be here in a minute looking for you—he's on his bike—I saw him in the lane—"

"Better 'ook it," muttered Mr. Lodgey anxiously.

Levison brushed past him, and left the summer-house. He grasped his brother by the arm.

"Come along."

"But—but you've got to get away!" gasped Frank as his brother drew him further down the garden.

"This way, you young fool; we mustn't be seen going out." Levison was quite cool again now. "There's a gate on to the towing-path."

They ran down the garden under the trees. In a minute or less they were over the gate and on the towing-path. But they did not stop there. Side by side they ran on till a quarter of a mile lay between them and the inn.

Then Levison of the Fourth halted.

"Tell me how you knew," he said curtly.

Frank explained breathlessly.

"I suppose it was Racke," muttered Levison. "It must have been—he knew I was going there—that's why he stayed away, hang him! Nobody saw me going in, I know that. The cad—hallo, what's the matter with you? What the dickens are you blubbing about? We're safe here, Kildare won't find anything out now."

The fag sobbed helplessly.

Levison's expression changed as he looked at him. He realised more clearly now how much his brother knew, and knew what a blow it was to the faithful little fellow. The colour deepened in Levison's hardened face.

"It was jolly decent of you to come and tell me, Franky," he muttered. "I should have been caught like a rat in a trap, by gad! That's what Racke intended. Kildare will go back and tell Railton it was only a practical joke of somebody." He grinned. "But if you hadn't come—"

"You would have been expelled, Ernie," said Frank in a low, scared voice.

"I suppose so—the chopper would have come down and no mistake! They've had an eye on me already, but I've fooled them," said Levison. "I—I mean, of course—"

He broke off.

"I suppose you know all about it now, Franky," he muttered. "I—I didn't want you to know anything—"

"Oh, Ernie!"

"A fellow must have a flutter sometimes," muttered the black sheep of the Fourth. "You wouldn't understand, Franky—you're not like me. You thought I was a chap like—like Tom Merry, for instance; but it's no good. I've tried that game, and it doesn't suit me—I'm not built that way. I'm sorry you've got to know anything about it, but it was bound to come sooner or later. And—and you came for me all the same! Do you know it would have meant a flogging for you, at least, if Kildare had found you there too—and he might have."

"I never thought about that—I didn't care!"

"It's all right now," said Levison.

Frank did not reply. He was trying to check his tears. Levison paced to and fro in the thick grass, his hands in his pockets, his brows knitted. He knew what was in his brother's mind. He had felt before that he was at the parting of the ways—it came home more strongly to his mind now.

"Ernie! Why—why—?" muttered the fag miserably.

Levison made a restless gesture.

"Why can't I be decent?" he said half-sneeringly.

"It's rotten, Ernie, what you were doing—and it means awful trouble some day—you can't always get out of it," said Frank. "If—if you'd only—"

Levison's face cleared suddenly. He had made his resolution—a resolution that meant a grim, uphill struggle for the black sheep of St. Jim's.

"I'm going to!" he said. "You needn't say any more, Franky—I'm going to do what you want. I'm going to try, anyway. It's a mug's game, after all—there's nothing in it. It was bound to end in coming a cropper sooner or later, and I may as well chuck it before the cropper comes along. All serene!"

And Levison of the Fourth meant what he said.

There was a disappointment for Racke of the Shell that afternoon. Kildare returned with a report that no St. Jim's fellow was to be found at the Green Man, and the telephone message was evidently a hoax. Racke wondered, though he guessed something of the truth when he saw Levison major and minor come in together for calling over. That evening Racke had a second black eye, to match the one he already had. He waited for another opportunity of the same kind, but that opportunity did not come. The black sheep of the Fourth owed more than he knew to the influence of Levison minor.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"REDFERN TO THE RESCUE!" by MARTIN CLIFFORD.)

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Old TOM HILDER, a cattle-farmer of Katfarit, Australia, is faced with ruin for the want of £1,000. He goes to a friend in Sydney, HENRY NORMAN, from whom he obtains the money, but is afterwards robbed, and, in recovering the notes, becomes mixed up, in the eyes of the police, with a gang of scoundrels.

His son BOB receives the money from his father, and takes it to SUMMERS, the bank manager, who is in league with BOARDMAN, a scoundrel who has plotted to ruin old Hilder.

Bob is afterwards arrested, and charged with passing false notes at the bank, but is liberated from his prison-cell by CAPTAIN DASHWOOD, a notorious outlaw.

Bob learns from him that his father was robbed by a man named SUTHERLAND, the leader of another gang of outlaws, and he sets out in pursuit of him. He traces the villain to an hotel, where he also sees his father. A fight ensues, and the place is burnt down. Bob narrowly escapes with his life, believing his father to be dead. He hears later that the old man is still alive.

Later, the house of a squatter, of which Bob is in charge, is robbed by Sutherland; Dashwood manages to rescue Bob, but is unfortunately badly wounded. Old Hilder arrives upon the scene, and, with Bob, takes Dashwood into the scrub. Then Bogong, Dashwood's native servant, leads them all to the outlaw's secret hiding-place.

Here they remain for a week, at the end of which Bob and his father part from the outlaw for the purpose of tracking Gell, an accomplice of Sutherland's. They follow Gell, but fall into a trap, and are themselves captured by Sutherland.

(Now read on.)

Friends in Need.

As Bob fell, his gallant steed, Brave Bess, crashed into the scrub at the side of the road. She arose trembling. The lad, though terribly shaken, was not knocked unconscious. He heard the villain Boardman; he knew he was holding his father. He saw the group of scoundrels separating, and Sutherland and another of the gang rushed in his direction at Boardman's bidding. He was almost on his feet as they seized him, and flung him back.

Though half stunned, and realising that the villains meant taking his life, that a desperate fight was the only chance of escape, yet the words Boardman had just spoken kept ringing in his ears. Boardman had shouted that he and the gang yet had time for their evil work. What could he have meant? Could anyone be coming that way?

The lad was wrenched violently along the ground by the coat-collar. With his head and shoulders raised, he could see his father being dragged along, too. He fought with all his strength, and shouted with all the force of his lungs.

A voice from afar came in answer, and Sutherland, with a ferocious imprecation, struck him. Then, dropping him, he rushed for his horse. The cry was repeated. Bob could

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hear the thud of hoofs now; the scoundrels were running to mount and gallop away. He staggered to his feet.

He got to his father's side, and saw that the old man had been badly knocked about, and was not able to move.

"Run, Bob, run!" old Tom urged. "The police are coming, for certain."

Bob's heart turned cold.

"Run! Run!" the old man gasped.

But the lad did not stir. His father looked nigh to death, his face livid, his eyes full of pain, his breath coming in short, husky gasps. It was impossible to say how ill he was, but Bob knew that he had an iron constitution, and that he had often recovered from serious accidents; but, still, he might be dying now. To leave him at the last was impossible.

"Go while you have the chance!" the old man urged.

"No, father, I'll stay with you!" the lad insisted. "You said only the other day that now that we had met again we were never to be parted. I don't care if the police take me, too. Perhaps, later on, together we might be able to escape."

Old Tom raised his head, and listened.

"There ain't many coming," he said. "If there are only a couple, and that is what I think, we might be able to put up a fight against them. But that scoundrel has injured my right arm. I can't move it. Has he got away?"

Bob looked around. Boardman and Gell were galloping off in one direction together, and Sutherland and his gang had taken another.

"They've escaped!" he said.

His father groaned.

"And this is what we've got at the moment we thought the luck had turned for us at last!" he muttered. "The guilty ride off, and the innocent are caught. 'Tain't fair, lad, 'tain't fair!"

His voice trailed off. Bob had raised his head on his knee, and thus he waited for the last crushing blow. All his hopes had vanished. He felt that the fight had gone out of him. Nothing mattered now, neither poverty, nor disgrace, nor imprisonment. Fate had decreed that they should suffer injustice, and it was useless to fight against fate. Let the worst happen! He almost wished that death would end all. And nearer and nearer came the horsemen. He could hear them galloping up the hill, and he could calculate the few seconds of freedom that still remained to him. He looked down at his father, and saw that he had closed his eyes. He looked at the crest of the hill expectantly. Two horses shot up to the top of it. He smiled grimly.

But next moment a mingled expression of amazement and incredulity shot across his features. These were not police! Thank goodness for that! Neither were they just ordinary travellers. He knew them! But surely his overwrought mind must be playing him a cruel trick? For these two men ought to be well on the way to the Queensland coast by this time!

They cantered towards him and pulled up—Dashwood the outlaw, and Bogong the black tracker!

Bob stared up at them, his lips parted. Dashwood jumped from the saddle.

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^d.

"Hallo!" he said. "The old man as bad as that? Well, we rode our hardest!"

There was the old ring in the strong, melodious voice. The blood swept to the lad's face; a tumultuous joy coursed through his frame. They were safe!

"You!" he cried. "You here, and Bogong! I never thought we would see you again!"

There was a deal of meaning in Dashwood's answering smile; but for some moments he did not speak. Bending down, he felt old Tom's pulse. Bob looked at Bogong, who was holding both horses. His large white teeth were glittering in a merry and friendly grin; both the horses, with necks craned, were heaving, and their ribs were flecked with foam. Yes, the twain had ridden hard—that was clear. But why had they come this way?

"He's badly knocked about, but he's as tough as a young 'un, and he'll soon pull round," Dashwood said. "No bones broken, I hope?"

"I don't think so," Bob answered.

"That's a good job. And you've been through the mill as well, I see. That's a nasty cut over your eye, sonny, and your clothes are plastered with mud. Feeling a bit shaken up—eh? Leave the old man to me, and rest yourself. Sit down yonder whilst I get him out of this."

As Dashwood spoke, he took Bob's place, and the latter staggered across the road and sank down on a tree-stump. The outlaw picked up old Tom as easily as if he were a child, and carried him to the bracken and laid him there. Bob, with his aching head between his hands, was feeling the reaction now that the danger had gone. He was horribly sick and numbed. He did not know that Dashwood had left his father and was standing by him until he heard his voice again.

"Drink this! It will do you good," the outlaw said.

Bob took the proffered flask and swallowed some stimulant. It sent his blood tingling, and made his heart beat more steadily. The cloud seemed to lift from his brain, his legs grew firm. He stood up, the colour coming back to his face. On the opposite side of the road his father was sitting up, too, and rubbing his arm.

"He'll do!" Dashwood said, as he followed the lad's glance. "There's no need to worry about him; he's just about as hard as steel." And he chuckled. "I guess his temper is getting up," he continued, "and that he's thinking already how he'll pay out Sutherland for this. That's the way with these game old dogs like your father. Unless they're knocked out altogether, they only become the more dangerous."

"You knew Sutherland was here?" Bob cried.

"Rather! That's why Bogong and I nipped in!"

"But it's weeks now since we parted, and then you were starting for Queensland," Bob protested.

Dashwood looked a trifle confused. His handsome, tanned face took on a deeper tint. He gazed across at Bogong, and the black tracker shook with merriment.

"We can talk about that later on," Dashwood said. "First we had better get out of this; it's not the place for folks like us. If we put the old man on the saddle, he'll be able to hold on all right."

Bob crossed to where Brave Bess had been standing after her fall, and examined her carefully. To his joy he found that beyond the shaking, she was in no way injured. She still, however, was trembling violently. Dashwood helped old Tom on his horse, and took the bridle, and they all struck into the bush. They walked and cantered for an hour until they came to a thick wood, and there the outlaw suggested that they should off-saddle for the night. Soon they had a large pannikin on the boil, and he made tea. He had a piece of bully beef and a couple of loaves strapped in a bag to his saddle-bow, and they made a hearty meal. Bogong gathered a large pile of broken branches, and when these had been piled on the fire, they stretched themselves around it.

Dashwood had lit his pipe and was smoking, in deep thought. Bogong had gone to see to the horses for the night, and old Tom had fallen asleep, when Bob spoke again on the subject that was on his mind.

"I can't understand how you happened to know that Sutherland was likely to be this way," he began.

The outlaw took the pipe from his mouth and gazed at the bowl.

"It wasn't he I was after at first," he remarked. "I just happened to drop on his tracks."

"And how was that?"

"Through Boardman!"

"Then you know that Boardman—"

"Yes, I do. May as well tell you all. We had a lot of chats together, you may remember, during those weeks I was crippled in my lair. Your father and you often talked about your plans quite openly. You two had saved my life, and I'm not one to forget. I knew I was a drag on you; being seen

with me would only make your danger greater, so I decided to lie low."

Bob was listening intently, his eyes fixed on Dashwood's face.

"You were up against a big job; no one could see that better than me," the latter continued, putting his pipe between his teeth again. "I guessed there would be trouble before long, though I couldn't reckon that it would pan out this way. So Bogong and I had a yarn together. It's Bogong who did most."

"What did he do?"

"He seldom lost sight of you," Dashwood replied. "Whilst you were lurking around Glen Gully watching Gell, Bogong was tracking you!"

Bob nearly jumped.

"We never dropped across him," he said.

"Trust a black boy for that!" Dashwood replied, with a laugh. "And he found out more than you did. He discovered that Gell was getting into touch with Boardman. Working along on that, he found by chance that Sutherland and his gang were heading this way, too. That set me going, I tell you. And to cut a long story short, we knew that when Gell left the doctor's house he and Boardman were to meet."

Dashwood stopped. He was clearly uncomfortable. Bob stood up and crossed round the fire and looked down at him.

"You did all this for us?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then you didn't mean to go to Queensland and try to escape? You took this risk on our account?"

Dashwood stretched his legs uneasily, and drew them up again.

"Of course, I meant to go to Queensland, and what's more, I am going," he replied.

"But you resolved first to see us through our trouble?"

"What if I did? One good turn deserves another."

Bob looked across at his father, whose wrinkled face was pallid still.

"He would have been killed if it wasn't for you," he said. "Every day you hang round here makes your escape the more difficult. And you deliberately decided to risk everything; you even made us believe you were off on your own when you had resolved to watch over us. I have never heard of anything more generous, and I don't know what to say—I really don't! But I thank you from my heart for that poor old man's sake even more than for mine. Dashwood, from this on I will gladly give my life if ever I can save yours!"

The outlaw stumbled to his feet.

"Tush! That's enough," he said, a trifle gruffly. "Your life for mine—eh?" He laughed shortly. "Why, lad, I'm only a felon! Don't talk rot! I'm going to turn in!"

Dashwood's Plan.

The outlaw at once fetched his saddle, and, using it as a pillow, he stretched himself upon the ground and closed his eyes. It was clear that he was resolved not to continue the conversation, and Bob was left either to follow his example and seek rest, or sit up alone. His father was sleeping comfortably.

The lad remained for a long time thinking over everything. He fetched more wood, and made certain that the fire would last till dawn. Then, at last tired out, he, too, lay down, but with small hope of obtaining sleep; his mind was too stirred. As it happened, his eyes soon closed, and he passed into a dreamless slumber.

He awoke with a start, to find all astir except himself, and the sun on the horizon. He was stiff and sore in every limb, and his head was throbbing, but he took little count of that. He went to a creek, had a wash, and returned. Breakfast and the fresh air during the day would soon put him on the mend, he felt sure.

His father and Dashwood were talking as he joined them; the outlaw laughing, and the old man's face fierce and determined.

"How are you now, father?" Bob asked.

"Fit to get on the tracks of that cur Boardman without any delay, my lad!" old Tom replied, clenching his fists. "He nearly did me in, but I've got a bit of strength left, and he'll know that afore long."

"Just what I told you," Dashwood chuckled. "He's more full of fight than ever. He doesn't want to wait for breakfast, he's so keen to get a move on."

Bob eyed them both.

"Has Dashwood told you how he happened to turn up?" he asked.

"No. And I've been wondering about that," old Tom replied quickly.

"That'll do!" the outlaw cried. "Bob here wants to make a big fuss. I happened to know you were going into a trap, and I rode to save you."

"But you were on the way to Queensland, and—"
 "Bob and I have had it all out, and I'm not going over it again."

"He staid on to help us, father," Bob explained. "He took the risk for our sakes. I've tried to thank him, but he won't listen."

"And I'm not going to. If you fellows don't chuck it, I'll clear out straight away!" Dashwood said, with a touch of warmth. "I'm not going over the same ground. There's the grub; fall to and take it."

Old Tom's tired eyes began to sparkle. For a few seconds there was silence; then he broke it as he held out his hand.

"You'll shake, anyhow, and take my thanks?" he asked. "You're a brick, and neither of us will ever forget this to you—no, not if we have to chuck all our hopes on your account."

Dashwood clasped his hand. Then he seized the billy.

"There! Enough said!" he grunted. "And there's a deal to fix up instead of harping back on what's past. Don't spare the loaf. Bogong's got a couple more."

He cut himself a thick wedge, and began his breakfast. The others followed his example. It was pleasant sitting there with the sun shining, and whilst the day was yet cool; with all the bush for a breakfast-table, and the birds on every branch; a grand, free life, as open and boundless as the vast space, if only their hearts had been free from anxiety. Some thoughts such as these must have come after a time into the outlaw's mind, for he looked around, sighed, and scrambled to his feet.

"A snug spot, but not the wisest for us," he remarked.

"It's too near the road, for one thing. I vote we settle on our plans, and start to work 'em out."

"Aren't you and Bogong going to start East?" Bob asked.

Again Dashwood looked embarrassed.

"Not just yet," he replied. "We're coming along a bit with you. As we're in this, we may as well see it through, and we know a trifle more than you do. Besides, it would suit us to catch up with those scoundrels, and stop 'em from talking—to the police mebbe."

"They would round on you," old Tom agreed.

"And on you, too," Dashwood added. "We must get the first blow in."

"Then we'll go after Boardman and Gell; and you, I suppose, will follow up Sutherland?" Bob suggested.

"They didn't all take the same road yesterday?"

"No."

Dashwood tapped his leggings with his whip.

"Humph! That makes the game more puzzling," he remarked. "I'll tell you what's in my brain-box, and then you can have your say." He sat down again. "You fellows were after Gell; that was your idea when we parted," he continued. "You hoped, through Gell, to get evidence against Boardman. That was sound enough at the time, but you see what has happened. Gell has joined in with Boardman, and it's my notion that Boardman has got scared and has squared him."

"But that's all the more reason why we should nab Gell if we can," old Tom Hilder urged.

"Just so. But you won't be able to find him. Boardman will see to that."

Bob and his father sat turning this last statement over in their minds. It certainly was probable that Boardman would do everything possible to keep Gell out of the way; his safety depended upon that. Gell could prove that Boardman had sought to destroy them both at Mossfred.

"Now, look at things on the other side," Dashwood continued. "Boardman can't bring anything up against you himself; he can only set the police after you. You are both in trouble on account of Sutherland stealing the banknotes and giving the forged ones instead. There's where you both get landed—you, Mr. Hilder, for taking them in all innocence; and you, Bob, for lodging them in the bank. Now, if you could clear up that business, you would be free to go where you like. Your honesty would have been proved."

"Then you think—" Bob began.

"Tackle Sutherland first," Dashwood cut in. "When you have cleared yourselves, then go for Boardman. In time you will get evidence against him, so that he can't harm you with the police. That was a good idea about Gell, but it hasn't worked out. Boardman was too quick. Now start on the other lay."

"Capital!" Bob cried.

"You've hit the nail on the head," old Tom agreed. "You've got a big brain, Dashwood. But how are we to get Sutherland?"

"We must go after him, of course. And there's where Bogong and I come in. I told you we knew a bit more than you, and it's this way. Sutherland is being pushed pretty tight; he counted a lot on getting Mr. Coulter's silver, and there we checkmated him. He's not only hard up himself, but his crowd are grumbling. He can't give 'em any money,

and they'll soon shy off if he doesn't keep 'em with their pockets well lined. He's desperate, and out for a quick grab. Now, it's not hard to figure out what his game is when he hangs around this locality for a week, as we know he has done."

"What is it, then?" old Tom inquired.

"Well, there are only three or four cribs worth cracking for a hundred miles around, and so he's after one of them. Bogong and I have been puzzling out everything. It might be the bank at Jepville, but Sutherland has never had the pluck to stick up a bank; he's just a sneak thief. Then there's old squatter Humphreys with a house full of curios and things he got out from the Old Country, but Humphreys has three sons, and any one of 'em could chew up Sutherland. That brings us down to two likely jobs—Nayler's the money-lender in Tamsay, and young Gus Baker's, the horse-dealer's. It's common knowledge that Baker often has a pot of money in his house, for he buys quick and pays fancy prices when it suits."

"And which do you think it is?" Bob asked.

"I'll tell you that when you tell me the line Sutherland took yesterday," Dashwood replied.

"He went north-west."

"Then he's bound for Tamsay and Nayler's, and the sooner we follow on the better. There's another thing about Nayler's, too; no one would care a jot if that old miser was robbed of every cent."

They stood up and prepared to start. Bogong was sent on first, and the others rode together. Tamsay lay about forty miles ahead, and they did not want to get there until night-fall. Off-saddling in the heat of the day, they rested a couple of hours and then went on. Dashwood had been in Tamsay some years before, and he told them that Nayler's house was on the near side of the town, and stood alone. The miser was said to have an armoury of weapons and all sorts of contrivances for baulking burglars, but this was only gossip. He had two men in the house, and never allowed anyone farther than the front room where he did business.

Nothing happened on the journey to arouse suspicion; in point of fact, they only saw one horseman, and he was riding a couple of miles away. They got within five miles of the town after the sun had sunk, and they pitched on a thick clump of pine-trees for their camp. Tethering their horses, they decided to drink water with their supper and stay all night without a fire lest they might attract attention. After supper they sent Bogong into the town to glean what news he could.

He was away a couple of hours, and on his return told them that some strangers had ridden into the town that evening, had had supper in the hotel, and then had mounted and gone on their way again. He had been afraid to ask too many questions, as several troopers were in the town. Old Tom was for clearing out, but Dashwood shook his head. He decided to go himself as far as Nayler's house and watch there for a spell. Despite the protests of Bob and his father, he started off, leaving them in considerable anxiety on his account.

So long was he away that they sent Bogong after him, and to their delight they soon returned together, Dashwood having met the black tracker only a quarter of a mile from the wood. And Dashwood's eyes were sparkling.

"'Twas as I thought," he said. "Sutherland has come this way. Our luck will be dead out if we don't nab him to-night."

A Night Adventure.

Bob and his father spoke together in their excitement.

"Where did you find Sutherland?" they asked.

"I haven't seen him, but I know for certain that he is here," Dashwood explained. "I went to Nayler's house and hung around there. It was pitch dark; the house is in the middle of a lot of trees. I hid behind one close to the back door and watched. A man came through the trees and went to the house; he examined the door; he walked round the house looking at the windows, then he hurried off, passing within a few yards of me, and I recognised him. His name is Cassels, and he is one of Sutherland's gang."

"That's good enough," old Tom said heartily. "And it will be rum if we don't have the lot in our grip before morning. Hadn't we better make a start?"

"Yes. But let us fix up our plans first," Dashwood replied. "It's this way. They'll come down to the house through the trees, perhaps together, and perhaps singly, and if we make a dash for them, they'll have a good chance to double back. So I reckon we had better let them get into the house. Then we'll make a stir outside, and, taking alarm, they'll bolt out of the door or the window they have forced. We'll have spotted that, and we'll take up a position outside. They'll run out into our arms."

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

CORNSTALK BOB!

(Continued from page 20.)

"That's the ticket," Bob agreed. "There are four of us, and—"

"Three of us will be enough, and we'll set Bogong to keep watch in case anyone may be coming along from the town at the time," Dashwood cut in. "Sutherland has four confederates, but we're equal to the five including himself. We'll just lay 'em out if they show fight. But I don't believe they will. Cut a stout stick each of you, and use it without hesitation. I've got my revolver as well, in case the trouble becomes bigger than I reckon. Now, Bogong, come here."

He spoke to the black tracker whilst the others were making ready, and Bogong slipped noiselessly away. A couple of minutes later the trio left the camp, Dashwood leading, and they struck out through the scrub in single file. Old Tom Hilder was so worked up at the prospect of catching the scoundrel who had robbed and then fooled him, that he kept muttering and chuckling until Bob at last had to urge him to keep silent.

They got close to the miser's house, and through the trees they saw a light shining in a room close to the roof. Not a sound came to them. It was now close on ten o'clock, and the townsfolk had almost all gone to bed, tired out after a long day. For half an hour they stood each behind a tree, and listening for the crack of a twig or any other noise that would indicate the approach of the gang. Then Dashwood slipped across to Bob.

"They can't wait longer than eleven o'clock," he whispered. "Dawn comes very early now, and they'll need to get the booty, clear off with it, ride hard for thirty miles or more, and be under cover before then. Ah! The light has just gone out. Perhaps they've been watching for that only a few hundred yards away. Now, if—"

He stopped. The melancholy hoot of a night bird had broken the silence. For two seconds it rang out, then all was stillness again.

"That's Bogong!" Dashwood said, a trifle unasily. "He's giving us a warning of some sort. Someone may be coming down the road from the town, or it's just possible the gang may be approaching that way and have passed him, but that's not likely. I'll go and find out, and don't you fellows stir till I come back."

He dropped to the ground and trailed off. He had not gone ten yards before Bob lost sight of him. The lad crossed to the tree where his father was standing, and told what had happened. Old Tom gripped his stick the tighter.

"I'm against letting 'em go into the house," he said. "If they get in the back way, they may clear out by the front door and we standing here. Still, we're under orders in a manner of speaking. Dashwood has taken command, and it don't do to interfere."

"And Bogong would see them if they scooted that way, and follow them to their lair," Bob remarked. "He'd never lose sight of them. We're safe enough on these lines. But I wonder what's up yonder? If these scoundrels come before Dashwood returns— Ah, lie down—quick!"

He touched his father's arm, and fell flat on the ground himself. The old man dropped by his side.

"What's up?" he whispered.

Bob put his finger to his lips, and then pointed to the left. A man had stepped out into a small open patch. There he stood motionless as a statue. They could not identify him; they could not even see what his build was like. In that deceptive light his figure was abnormally large and vague, but that it was a man they were certain.

Breathlessly they watched him, and the half minute he stood there seemed like an age. Then he moved back and vanished.

In a few moments he emerged again. He was followed by another. Away to the right a third appeared, and they all moved towards the house. Then another came out at a sharp angle further down. A twig snapped close by, and a fifth walked past so near to them that he almost touched Bob. Had he been a foot closer, their project would have failed; the gang would have been given the alarm.

All the gang converged on the back of the house. Old Tom's lips were twitching. Only by a powerful effort was he able to master his excitement. So afraid was Bob that he might yield to a sudden impulse that he laid a restraining hand upon his arm.

They had strained their eyes so much striving to observe every movement that they had to rub them after a while.

They could see the gang in a group before the back door; but they did not try to force it. Presently one man seemed to rise to an immense height, and, watching closely and amazed, they saw that one of the scoundrels had mounted on the shoulders of another. He dragged himself thus up to the window-sill of a room, but not the one where the light had

been extinguished. There he sat for some seconds, and then evidently he had managed to open the window, for they saw him no more.

Now they listened for a sound inside the house, a cry of alarm, a thud as of something falling, anything that would notify that the burglar had been discovered. So fixedly did they gaze at the upper part of the house that when at last they looked to see what the other villains were doing they were completely taken aback, for the ground in front of the back door was unoccupied.

"He must have crept downstairs and let them in," Bob whispered. "Can you see, father, if the door is open?"

"No, I can't; but I reckon it's time for us to be on the move," the old man replied, stumbling to his feet. "That cur Sutherland ain't going to escape me. I couldn't spot him from here, but when we get close up I'll have no difficulty, and, whatever happens to the rest, I'm going to nab him or lay him out!"

"We had better wait for Dashwood," Bob urged.

"There's no time. It would be a nice job if they bolted whilst we were waiting," old Tom replied. "Come on, my lad, and trust to luck and our own strong arms. We'll get up near that door, and listen to what's going on. Mebbe they'll be in there for a long time, and Dashwood will join us afore they think of leaving!"

So doggedly determined was his father that Bob knew there was no gainsaying him. They cautiously crossed to the door. It was closed, but a touch of the latch revealed that it was not locked. They heard footsteps moving around the rooms close by. Evidently the gang were searching. But why had not an alarm been raised? Besides Naylor, there were two men in the house, according to Dashwood.

A shudder went down Bob's spine as he pondered over this. Had Sutherland adopted some terrible means to quiet them?

He was about to tell his fears to his father, when of a sudden they shot out of his mind, for the stillness all around was broken by a loud knocking at the front door. So amazed were both the watchers that they started and jumped away. Yes; and they could hear voices, too, stern and commanding. A body of men were in front of the house; they were bent on entering. They were the police!

Bob's first impulse was to clutch his father and drag him away. But if he was alarmed, that was nothing to the terror of the scoundrels inside. At once a loud clatter broke out—a wild scramble, in which all thought of caution was ignored. Clatter—clatter! They almost fell over one another in their wild anxiety to escape. Out of the door they rushed, looking neither to right or left.

Old Tom had his stick raised. His eyes were flashing and piercing. Wedged in the doorway for a moment, the gang shot out in a cluster, and made straight for the trees. Old Tom gave a yell. He had seen Sutherland, but that villain was in the middle of the cluster, and beyond his reach.

"He's gone!" he cried. "Follow on, lad! Drag him down!"

He, too, broke into a run, and it was lucky for him that he did so, for the police were running round to the back. He had only got to the trees when half a dozen troopers swung round each corner, and made for the door. Realising that they were too late, they blew their whistles, and made for the wood. Old Tom, the last to get to it, pushed on; and Bob, fifty yards ahead, kept on Sutherland's track.

He was gaining on him fast. The gang had scattered, and Sutherland was alone. The lad's heart thumped with exultation. This would be a clean fight between them both, and he had no doubt who would win. All the pent-up misery and injustice of months gave him a supernatural strength. Now at last he had the chance to redress the bitter wrong!

Sutherland looked back. He saw he was being pursued, and that he could not escape. He turned at bay. Bob, without a check in his stride, dashed at him.

"Now, you cur, I've got you!" he cried. "And whatever happens, you won't escape! To-night you'll make amends for the wrong you did my father!"

Sutherland hit out at him fiercely, but the lad parried the blow. Then he struck, and Sutherland reeled. He struck again, and the scoundrel fell. He bent down, and clutched him by the throat. Now to drag him away and hide him.

But on the moment a voice rang out sharply:

"Come with me! The police have my massa, but there is a chance you can get him away!"

Bob looked up. Bogong, trembling, was by his side. Agony was in the black tracker's eyes.

Bob squared his shoulders. He looked down at Sutherland. Must he let him go? Was all he had risked for nothing?

"Come—come!" Bogong urged, wringing his hands.

Bob groaned. He looked again at the villain. If he escaped, the hopes of the future vanished perhaps for ever.

"My massa!" Bogong wailed. "You said, if needs be, you would die for him!"

Oh, it was hard—hard! What was he to do?

(Another grand instalment next week.)

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

NOT SO DUSTY.

An Englishman, while spending a few months' holiday in New York, was one day asked by a Yankee friend to go for a motor drive in the country:

As soon as they were clear of the city, the American, who was driving, began to let the car rip. When the speedometer registered sixty miles per hour, and the dust was rising in volumes, the American turned to the Englishman and said:

"I say, old man, do you know that we are doing sixty miles an hour now? I do hope that you are not nervous!"

The Englishman, who had swallowed about a peck of dust, replied: "Oh, no, I'm full of grit."—Sent in by Edward Woodford, Battersea.

THE BITTER BIT.

A Highlander was being shown over a man-o'-war for the first time in his life, and naturally he was keenly interested in all that he saw.

The marines seemed particularly to impress him, and, going up to one, he pointed to the badge on the marine's cap, and asked him what it was. The marine, anxious to secure off the visitor, looked at him in surprise before he replied:

"Don't you really know what it is? Why, that's a turrip!"

"Mon," replied the Scot impatiently, "I was no' speakin' about yer heid!"—Sent in by B. Astington, Cheshire.

WANTED A WINNER.

Customer: "Look here, waiter, this lobster has no claws! How's that?"

Waiter: "Well, it's like this, sir; these lobsters are so fresh that they fight each other in the kitchen."

Customer: "Then take this one back, and bring me a winner!"—Sent in by H. Heath, Notts.

QUITE EASY.

Overseer of munition factory to a new man, with whom he expected to have some fun: "Well, what can you do?"

New man: "I can do anything you like."

Overseer: "Can you file smoke?"

New man: "Easily, if you will put it in a vice for me first."—Sent in by H. Burslam, Ashton-on-Lyne.

REMARKABLE.

It was a very wet day, and the inside of the tramcar was packed with passengers. Suddenly an old gentleman started searching about on the floor of the car.

"Has anyone lost a shilling?" he asked, when he had finished his search. Several of the passengers immediately felt in their pockets, and exclaimed at once: "I have!"

Holding up a coin, the old gentleman said:

"Well, here's a farthing towards your loss!"—Sent in by Miss L. Keeping, Brixton.

PAYING THE PARSON.

A young couple went to a minister's house to be married. The ceremony was carried out, and after the registers had been signed, the bridegroom drew the clergyman to one side and said:

"I'm awfully sorry, but I have no money to pay your fee; but if you will take me down to your coal-cellar, I'll show you how to fix your gas-meter so that it won't register."—Sent in by Norman Craven, Carlisle.

A GROWING FATHER.

Little Boy: "Papa, are you growing still?"

Father: "No, dear. What makes you think so?"

Little Boy: "Because the top of your head is coming through your hair."—Sent in by P. Hodson, Staveley.

ALL OUT.

The gas-collector had knocked twice at No. 6. On knocking again, the grimy face of an urchin appeared from behind the door.

"Is your mother in?" asked the collector.

"No; she's out," replied the boy.

"Then is your father in?" asked the man.

"He's out, too," retorted the urchin.

"Then," said the collector, "I'll just come in and sit by the fire till one of them comes home."

"No, you won't," came the reply, "because it's out, too!"—Sent in by R. Kinsmore, Australia.

A BIT TOO GENEROUS.

A furniture-van blocked the way in a small suburban thoroughfare. A little boy stood by the horse's head, and commenced feeding the animal with some bread. The driver looked on approvingly.

"That's right," he said to the young benefactor, "always be kind to dumb animals. 'Do your best for a horse, and he'll do his best for you,' is my motto. Look how the horse enjoys it. But does your mother always give you big hunks of bread like that to take out with you?"

"No," replied the youngster, "Mother didn't give me this bread. I found it lying on the back of the van."

"Wot!" yelled the carter, "Why, you wretched young rascal, that was part of my dinner!"—Sent in by Alex. Dow, Falkirk.

CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE.

The scene was a village market-place, and in the centre was a cheapjack, who shouted at the top of his voice with many long words the advantages of the pills which he wished to dispose of to his rural audience. At the end of his long-winded discourse he finished up by saying: "Yes, gentlemen, I have sold these pills for over twenty years, and never have I heard a word of complaint about them. What, I ask you, does that prove?"

A voice from the crowd: "It proves that dead men tell no tales."—Sent in by R. Whyte, Crewe.

TOO LATE!

A man was walking along the street, cleaning out the grids as he went along. He had lifted up one grid, and was getting ready to clean it, when a small boy came up and stood looking at him.

"My mother," said the small boy at last, "dropped a shilling down that grid."

This put fresh life into the labourer, and he went to work with all his energy. After some time the man said to the boy:

"Are you quite sure about that shilling?"

"Oh, yes," replied the boy, "quite sure, because I saw father get it out!"—Sent in by H. Carr, Liverpool.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

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