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No. 657, Vol. XVIII.
September 11th 1920.



THE PURSUIT OF THE LEVISON'S! SEE COMPLETE TALE.

MAGNIFICENT FOOTBALL ANNUAL FREE WITH THIS ISSUE.

MY READERS' OWN CORNER

NOTE.—Half-a-crown will be awarded to the sender of every paragraph published on this page.

TOADS.

Toads are often to be seen. Their bodies are covered with warts. They have no teeth. They leap badly, and, except in the breeding season, avoid water. They feed on insects and worms. The bite of a toad was once considered poisonous, but it has been proved otherwise. Toads creep into holes in the winter-time. They are easily tamed. There are strange tales about toads. How they had been shut up for years and emerge from their imprisonment not much the worse. Dean Buckland proved that only a sturdy toad could live for a year and more when deprived of air and food.—R. L. Clay, Ivydene, Tingley, near Wakefield.

THE BICYCLE.

The first bicycle was the old dandy, or hobby-horse. Datzell's bicycle was worked by a crank and lever. The old bone-shaker had wooden wheels, worked by pedals on the front axle. The same principle was adopted with the old high bicycle. Then came J. F. Lawson's bicycle, the same shape as the high bicycle, but the rider sits on the little wheel instead of the big one. Afterwards succeeded the tandem-bike, the Rover safety, the quad, or four-seater, and the present-day bicycle, the most modern of which is fitted with an auto-wheel.—E. H. Rigby, County Police Office, Market Place South, Leicester.

BIG BEN'S RIVALS.

The largest clock in the world is stated to be one at a soap factory in New Jersey, U.S.A. It has a diameter of thirty-eight feet. The hour hand is thirteen feet in length, and the minute hand eighteen and a half feet. The numerals are five and a half feet long. Big Ben, at Westminster, has a face diameter of twenty-two and a half feet, and the hour and minute hands are sixteen and nine feet, respectively. The figures are two feet long, and the minute spaces a foot wide. Big Ben reports itself once a day to the Observatory, and it is seldom as much as two seconds out.—Miss Marion Gomersall, 2, Earl Terrace, Lee Mount, Halifax, Yorks.

THE WORM.

But for this intelligent and useful animal we should hardly be able to live. It is the worm that makes the earth fertile by loosening the soil, and allowing the rain to get into the ground. The worm refines the clay. Charles Darwin has shown that it was owing to the worm that ancient monuments and cities became buried; but the good the worm does outweighs the apparent mischief. Do not do any injury to a worm, but look upon it as one of the most useful animals on the earth.—L. W. Mortimer, 1, Marlborough Street, Londonderry.

All contributions to this feature should be sent to: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4., and marked: "Readers' Own Corner."

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1st WEEK. MAGNIFICENT NEW COMPETITION.

GRAND CASH PRIZE CONTEST FOR READERS OF THE "GEM."

1st PRIZE 10/- every week for one year.
2nd " 5/- " " " " "
3rd " 2/6 " " " " "
And many Consolation Prizes.

THIS WEEK WE ANNOUNCE A VERY NOVEL COMPETITION.

Below you will find six puzzle-pictures, and each of these has the last two or three letters of the word represented.

What you have to do is to fill in, IN INK, the letters which you think should go before those we publish.

For instance, Picture No. 1 has the letters "IFE," and when the correct letters are supplied, which in this case are KN, the word is revealed. The same thing applies to the other pictures.

This competition will run for eight weeks, and there will be seven more sets of pictures for you to solve.

DO NOT SEND IN YOUR EFFORTS NOW.

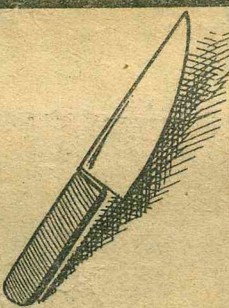





FULL INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE GIVEN AS TO HOW YOUR EFFORTS ARE TO BE SENT TO US.

The First Prize of 10/- a week for one year will be awarded to the sender of the set of eight pictures which bear solutions identical with the list now locked in the Editor's safe, and other prizes to the competitors sending in the least number of mistakes.

Competitors must bear in mind that the Editor's decision must be accepted as final and binding, and entries are only accepted on this express understanding.

You may send as many complete sets of eight as you please, but each must be submitted on a coupon taken from the "GEM," and when the time comes for sending in, sets must be made up separately.

START TO WORK NOW, BUT DO NOT SEND YOUR EFFORTS IN UNTIL WE ASK YOU TO DO SO. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

			
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RENTON OF THE ROVERS!



THE FIRST INSTALMENT OF
A GRAND NEW FOOTBALL
SERIAL.

By PAUL MASTERS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. His Last Match.

JIMMY RENTON of the Fifth was far and away the most wretched fellow at St. Clive's. But he didn't look it as he accompanied the other members of the First Eleven on to the playing-field.

Jimmy was an expert at masking his real feelings, and to see him chatting good-humouredly with Tony Harcourt, the skipper of the eleven, one would have imagined that he hadn't a care in the world.

Out on the field the visiting eleven—Grandcourt—were indulging in shots at goal, and round the ropes stood a cheering, clamorous crowd of St. Clive's fellows.

"Harrah!"

"Play up, St. Clive's!"

"On the ball, Renton!"

Tony Harcourt laughed.

"It's a wonder some of those kids don't break a blood-vessel!" he remarked. "They're giving you a great reception, Jimmy."

"The last I shall ever get at St. Clive's!" said Renton.

But there was no inflexion of sadness in his tone. He spoke calmly—almost cheerfully.

Harcourt darted a curious glance at his chum.

"Dashed if I can make you out, Jimmy!" he said. "You seem almost bucked at the prospect of leaving St. Clive's."

"I'm not," was the reply. "Matter of fact, I feel like a condemned felon about to be exiled for life. But what's

the use of worrying? You know what the song says."

And Jimmy Renton started humming:

"Pack up your troubles in your old kitbag,
And smile, smile, smile!"

"I don't think I should be able to do that in the cires," said Tony Harcourt. "It would be a case of scowl, scowl, scowl, if I were in your shoes."

The skipper of St. Clive's felt very sorry for Jimmy Renton.

By rights, Jimmy should have remained at the school for many terms to come. He was one of the youngest fellows in the Fifth—a brainy fellow in the Form-room, and a champion on the playing-fields. He could do the hundred yards in just under eleven seconds. He was a fine swimmer, a brilliant bat, and a useful change-bowler.

But it was as a footballer that Jimmy Renton excelled. Football was in his bones and blood. He had inherited his father's love of the grand winter game, and he seemed likely to attain his father's proficiency.

Mr. Renton had for many years been player-manager of the Bluecastle United Club, of which he had subsequently become a director, but the club had fallen upon evil days. There was some talk of its being disbanded.

Jimmy's father had resigned his directorship, and simultaneously his business had failed. He was in straitened circumstances, and his income was so depleted that he could no longer afford to

pay the necessary term fees to enable his son to remain at St. Clive's.

And so Jimmy Renton's school career, just as it promised something really brilliant, was rudely curtailed.

This was his last day, and his last match. On the morrow he would leave his schooldays behind him, and pass into the great world of work beyond.

Many fellows in Jimmy Renton's position would not have felt in the humour for football. But Jimmy was eagerly looking forward to the match with Grandcourt. He had resolved to play the game of his life—to wind up his school career in a blaze of glory.

It was a singular fact, but St. Clive's, although their team was well above the average, had never been able to defeat Grandcourt.

Year after year the two schools had met, and Grandcourt had either retired with the honours or divided the spoils. They had an unbeaten certificate, so far as their meetings with St. Clive's were concerned, and they confidently expected to add yet another victory to their long list of successes.

Phoop!

The referee blew a shrill blast on his whistle, and the teams lined up.

The crowd continued to exercise their lung-power.

"St. Clive's! St. Clive's!"

"On the ball!"

"Play up, Renton!"

Jimmy Renton needed a stimulus. Right from the kick-off he was as active as a squirrel. He played at outside-left—his usual position—and he gave the Grandcourt backs no peace. His speedy

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manœuvres on the wing were always a source of danger, and if only the inside-forwards had availed themselves of his clever passes St. Clive's would have been a couple of goals to the good within a few minutes.

After several narrow escapes Grandcourt warmed to their work. Their centre-half set the forwards going, and with perfect precision the whole line swept down upon the St. Clive's goal.

The crowd on the touchline fidgeted uneasily. And when they saw the Grandcourt centre-forward in possession of the ball, with only the goalie to beat, they groaned audibly.

Crash!

The ball whizzed in from the centre-forward's toe—whizzed in with such velocity that it almost broke the net.

The custodian was beaten all ends up.

"Goal!"

"That's the first nail in our coffin!" grunted Tony Harcourt as he walked to the centre of the field.

"Dry up, Tony!" said Jimmy Renton. "You talk like a beastly undertaker! I'll send you over some nice, crisp passes, and we'll soon wipe off the deficit!"

"Right you are!"

Jimmy Renton kept his part of the compact. But the St. Clive's skipper was found wanting. When favourably placed he ballooned the ball high over the bar, and a few moments later he repeated the performance.

The crowd waxed sarcastic.

"Pull yourself together, Harcourt!"

"You're not playing Rugger!"

"If you can't see the net," yelled a cheeky fag, "I'll fetch you a pair of binoculars!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tony Harcourt frowned.

"I can't seem to do a thing right to-day!" he growled.

St. Clive's had no more chances in the first half. They were busily engaged in defending their goal.

The Grandcourt forwards attacked hotly, but the defence prevailed, and when the whistle went for half-time the score was still 1-0 in favour of the visiting team.

The St. Clive's fellows, with the exception of Jimmy Renton, were gloomy and subdued during the interval. They considered that they were in for yet another licking at the hands of Grandcourt.

Jimmy Renton was smiling cheerfully. "You fellows look as if you were attending a funeral!" he exclaimed.

"We are!" grunted Tony Harcourt. "We're attending our own. Don't you realise that we're a goal to the bad, you grinning gargoyle?"

"My dear fellow," said Jimmy, "I've known teams to be four goals down at the interval and then win!"

"So have I," said the St. Clive's skipper, "in fiction, but not in real life. Without wishing to damp the spirits of the company in any way, I give it as my opinion that we're booked for a thundering good licking!"

"Talk about a giddy pessimist!" said Jimmy Renton. "Look on the bright side, Tony, for goodness' sake!"

"There isn't one!" said Harcourt.

But he didn't really mean that, or he would never have played up as he did in the second half.

The resumption of the game was highly sensational.

Jimmy Renton put in one of his lightning dashes along the touchline, and, after tricking several opponents, he lobbed the ball across to his captain.

On this occasion Tony Harcourt made no mistake. He clumped the leather

into the net with what a novelist would describe as a sickening thud.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

The spectators fairly let themselves go. Arms were waving like windmills, caps went whirling in the air, and cheer upon cheer rang out across the playing-fields.

"Smile, Tony—smile!" urged Jimmy Renton.

But Harcourt's countenance remained impassive.

"We're not out of the wood yet," he remarked.

The ball was kicked off from the centre of the field, and a ding-dong struggle ensued.

Both sides were fighting grimly for the lead, and Grandcourt had rather the better of the exchanges. It seemed inevitable that they would score, but the St. Clive's backs were playing right on the top of their form.

And presently the ball went out to Jimmy Renton again, and he sped away like a hare.

"Good old Jimmy!"

"Take it through on your own!"

"Shoot! Shoot!"

A dozen yards from the goal Jimmy Renton steadied himself, and the ball shot in like a pip from an orange.

But the Grandcourt goalie was all there. He brought off a brilliant save, and sent the leather soaring away into midfield.

Then the ding-dong struggle was renewed, and the excitement rose almost to fever-pitch.

Jimmy Renton was here, there, and everywhere. Nominally he was at outside-left, but he often cropped up unexpectedly in another part of the field, and relieved an anxious situation. Jimmy was what is known as a wandering player; but he always seemed to wander to good advantage.

Ten minutes to go! And the crowd rallied St. Clive's for a final effort.

"Buck up, Saints!"

"Put your beef into it!"

The majority of the St. Clive's players were nearly dropping with fatigue by this time, for it was a super-strenuous game, and Grandcourt had given their opponents no rest.

Jimmy Renton was still comparatively fresh, and he realised that if the match was to be won he would have to win it. Tony Harcourt had bellows to mend; and the other forwards were played to a standstill.

Jimmy made desperate efforts to capture the ball; and once he did so he refused to part with it.

On and on he sped, feinting and dodging and swerving—eluding all opposition until he came within shooting distance.

Crash!

The ball cannoned against the cross-bar, and the spirits of the onlookers fell. But they rose again the next moment, for when the ball rebounded into play Jimmy Renton got his head to it and it went whizzing into the net.

"Goal!"

It was not a shout. It was a roar—a roar that would have awakened the celebrated Seven Sleepers.

As for Jimmy Renton, he was in danger of being torn limb from limb by his exuberant fellow-players. They thumped him on the back; they shook his hands like pump-handles; and Tony Harcourt, weary though he was, proceeded to dance a hornpipe.

"Great, Jimmy! Great!" he chortled.

"Save your breath," said Renton, "There are still several minutes to go."

And in those remaining minutes the Grandcourt forwards tried all they knew

to equalise. But they came up against a rock-like defence.

The St. Clive's players packed their goal, and staved off the fierce rushes of their opponents, whose last desperate attack was brought to an end by the shrill phee-e-p of the whistle.

St. Clive's had won by the odd goal in three, after a game that would live in the sporting annals of the school.

Jimmy Renton came in for a great ovation. He was borne shoulder-high from the field, and the cheers of his schoolfellows almost deafened him. He was plastered with mud from head to foot; his dark hair straggled and strayed over his forehead, and his jersey was rent in several places. But his face was radiant. He had scored the winning goal in his last match at St. Clive's—perhaps the last match of his career.

For the morrow would bring in its train sterner considerations than those of football.

Jimmy Renton would become one of the world's workers—one of the great army of toilers who, though footballers by inclination, have precious little time to indulge in their favourite game.

But if he never kicked a ball again in his life Jimmy Renton's footballing achievements would ever be remembered at St. Clive's, and he would always be spoken of as a sportsman in the best and truest sense of the word.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Jimmy Finds a Friend—and a Foe.

"GOOD-BYE all!" Jimmy Renton stood framed in the doorway of the dining-hall whilst the St. Clive's fellows were at breakfast, and uttered that brief but impressive farewell.

Jimmy had already said good-bye to his bosom chums in the Fifth, and he now took his leave of the school at large. He carried a closely-packed gladstone-bag in his hand, and he was all dressed up—though it would hardly be correct to say that he had nowhere to go.

The response to Jimmy Renton's "Good-bye all!" was so friendly and so unanimous that a mist rose before his eyes.

Several fellows jumped up from their seats and darted across to the doorway to shake Jimmy by the hand.

And from every part of the crowded hall came the genuine but regretful shout of:

"Good-bye, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Renton could not trust himself to linger in the doorway. He was strongly and strangely moved, and he felt that if he remained he would be in danger of making a fool of himself. So with a last muttered "Good-bye!" to the group of fellows who demanded a parting handshake, he turned away, and walked with unusual haste in the direction of the school gates.

Old Ruggles, the porter, came shuffling out of his lodge, and he extended one of his toil-worn hands to Jimmy Renton. He remembered, as if it were yesterday, the day that Jimmy arrived at St. Clive's on the back of the ancient horse which he had taken out of the shafts of the spation hack. As a fag Jimmy Renton had revelled in japes of all descriptions, and he had had many skirmishes with the authorities. He was more staid and sober now, as becoming a member of the Fifth Form; but he was still a fun-loving individual at heart.

Many a time and oft had Jimmy Renton played pranks on Ruggles, the porter. But Ruggles bore no malice. And as he took Jimmy's hand in a tight grip, he said:

"Good-bye, Master Renton, an' good luck! I'm main sorry you be a'goin'!"
"You can't be more sorry than I am, Ruggy!" said Jimmy, with a rueful smile. "I've known what it is to feel homesick, but that feeling's nothing to this. It's an awful wrench, having to leave St. Clive's."

"Never mind, Master Renton! You must look on the bright side. It's a long cloud that 'as no silver linin', as the poet says. An' I sincerely 'opes that you'll make a name for yerself, an' go down to prosperity."

"I don't quite know what you mean by that, Ruggles," said Jimmy, laughing. "Thanks very much for your good wishes, all the same. Good-bye!"

Jimmy shook hands with the old porter, who was as much a landmark at St. Clive's as the ancient, weather-beaten tower, and passed through the familiar gateway.

Out in the roadway he paused, to take one longing, lingering look behind at the place where he had spent five happy years—the place he was so loath to leave.

It was with difficulty that Jimmy repressed the sob which rose in his throat.

"This won't do!" he muttered, as if ashamed of his own weakness. "I must pull myself together! Dash it all, I'm not the first fellow who's felt a pang at leaving this jolly old place!"

And then, murmuring an almost inaudible farewell to the familiar buildings of St. Clive's, Jimmy Renton went on his way.

He had not proceeded a hundred yards along the road when a voice hailed him from the rear.

Turning, he beheld Tony Harcourt sprinting towards him.

"Half a jiffy, old man!" panted the captain of St. Clive's.

"Anything wrong?" asked Jimmy.

"Of course not."

"Then wherefore this thushness?"

"I've come to see you off at the station," said Harcourt. "Didn't know you were going so confoundedly early. Let me take a turn with that bag. It looks jolly weighty."

"This is very decent of you, Tony."

"Rot! What time's your train?"

"Nine o'clock."

"Then we can afford to take things easy. By the way, you haven't told me what you're going to do, Jimmy. Are you going to be set to work in your pater's office?"

"My pater hasn't an office—now," answered Jimmy Renton ruefully. "He used to employ over thirty clerks. He doesn't need to now. The business has gone to pot."

"Jove! Are things as bad as that?" Jimmy nodded.

"But surely, if a big effort was made, the business could be put on a sound footing again?"

"It would need capital to do that," said Jimmy. "And the pater has hardly a penny to bless himself with. He was swindled right and left by his partner—a bounder called Rayner!"

"And what's happened to him—Rayner, I mean?"

"He's cleared out. Present whereabouts unknown, as they say at Scotland Yard. He left the pater absolutely in the lurch."

"The cad!" Tony Harcourt's eyes were blazing. "He wants pulverising!"

"That's just how I feel about it," said Jimmy Renton. "He'll get short shrift if ever I come across him!"

"But—but surely you've got a job of some sort?" exclaimed Harcourt, aghast.

"A job in prospective," said Jimmy. "I may get it and I may not. All depends what sort of an impression I make."

"You're not going to London?"

"No—to Burchester. My uncle used to be editor of the 'Burchester Times,' and he's given me an introduction to the present editor."

Tony Harcourt started.

"Fancy you fooling about on a provincial paper!" he exclaimed. "What are you going to be—sub-editor, reporter, or printer's devil?"

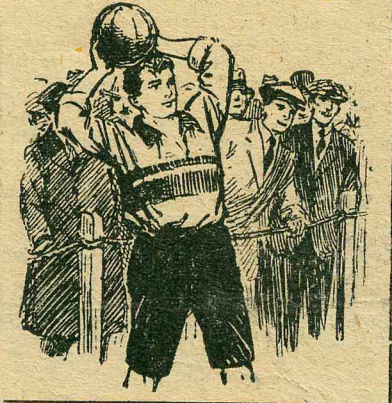
"I'll take any job they care to offer me. It will be a living, anyway."

"But I'm afraid you'll never make an editor, Jimmy."

"I don't want to. I shall be quite content if I make an editor give me a job."

"You're heart's in footer," said the captain of St. Clive's. "Pity you can't get an engagement with one of the big clubs."

"There's nothing I should like better," said Jimmy. "But I'm afraid it's impos. I can't very well approach



Jimmy Renton's last game for St. Clive's!

Aston Villa or Blackburn Rovers and offer my services as a perfectly good outside-left."

"Hardly. But you could start with a junior club, and work your way up the ladder."

"That's exactly what I shall do, if I get half a chance."

They had reached the little station by this time; and Jimmy Renton's future was still under discussion when the train rumbled in.

"Good-bye, Jimmy!" said Tony Harcourt. "And let's hear how you get on."

"Good-bye, Tony, and the best of luck!"

Jimmy Renton clambered into an empty compartment, and the captain of St. Clive's bundled his bag in after him.

Then the train moved on, and Jimmy settled himself in a corner seat, and reflected upon the happy past and the uncertain future.

It was a long run to the prosperous market-town of Burchester. And Jimmy was cramped in every limb when he reached his destination. He was hungry, too; but he decided to postpone his lunch until he had interviewed the editor of the "Burchester Times."

A friendly policeman directed him to the newspaper office. It was half-way down the High Street, and it was a more imposing building than most of its kind. For the "Burchester Times"

was a flourishing paper, with a circulation which extended through three counties.

There were two people within. One, a good-looking youngster with a mop of curly hair, was seated at a typewriter. He was operating so rapidly that Jimmy Renton half expected to see sparks fly out of the machine.

The other occupant of the office was a big, burly fellow, who looked as if he was bored with life in general, and with newspaper work in particular. He was leaning against the mantelpiece smoking a cigarette, and he directed an unpleasant scowl at the newcomer.

Jimmy Renton paused for a moment in uncertainty. He was trying to decide which of these two fellows was the editor. And presently he came to the conclusion that it was the curly-headed youth. He had heard on good authority that modern editors were not necessarily aged men with flowing beards. Many of them were mere stripplings.

"Excuse me," said Jimmy, stepping up to the curly-headed youth. "Are you the editor?"

The typist stopped short, and surveyed his questioner half in amusement, half in anger. He could not be certain whether the newcomer was really ignorant or whether he was trying to be funny.

The fellow who was standing by the mantelpiece gave vent to a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! That's the richest joke I've heard for a long time! Fancy mistaking the office-boy for the editor!"

"Dry up, Rayner!" growled the curly-headed youth. "You're only a sort of glorified office-boy yourself!"

Then, turning again to Jimmy Renton, he added:

"No, I'm not the editor. I may occupy that exalted position one of these days. At present I'm merely the editor's amanuensis."

"That's a good word," said Jimmy Renton. "I'll back it both ways."

The curly-headed youth laughed.

"I'm Desmond—Billy Desmond," he said. "And you?"

"I'm Renton, from St. Clive's."

"Oh! You've come about a job on the staff?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Then I wish you luck!" said Billy Desmond cordially.

And Jimmy Renton knew, by the heartiness of the handshake which followed, that he had found a friend.

But he knew also that he had found an enemy. The fellow called Rayner was glaring at him, and muttering something about a "beastly interloper."

"You'll never get a job on this paper," he said. "We want capable men—not silly asses!"

"Indeed!" said Jimmy. "Then what are you doing here?"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's a nasty one, Rayner!" chuckled Billy Desmond.

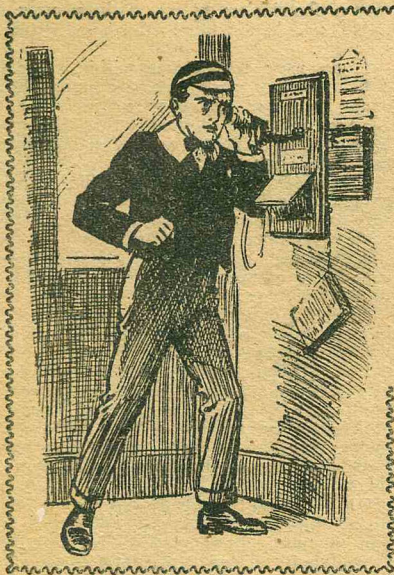
Rayner's half-smoked cigarette lay on the mantelpiece, and lounged towards Jimmy Renton.

"You cheeky young cub!" he muttered. "I'll make you sit up for that!"

Now that Rayner was directly facing him, Jimmy Renton recognised something familiar in the coarse features. For a moment he was nonplussed. And then understanding came to him in a flash.

The fellow who now confronted him was the son of the man who had swindled his father!

(A splendid, long instalment of this grand new football serial in next Wednesday's "Gem" Library.)



THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!

A Thrilling, Long, Complete
Tale of the Levisons of St.
Jim's, specially written for this
number of The GEM Library,

by

Martin Clifford.



CHAPTER 1. The Blow Falls!

LEVISON!" Tom Merry started as he looked into Study No. 9. Levison of the Fourth was there alone.

He was sitting by the window with a letter in his hand. He was not reading the letter. It was crumpled, and gripped almost convulsively in his fingers.

He looked round as his name was called, and the pallor of his face startled the junior in the doorway.

Tom Merry made a quick step into the study.

"Levison, what's the matter?"

"Nothing!" muttered Levison huskily.

"I—I mean, nothing I can tell you!"

"My dear chap," said Tom Merry quietly, "I can see that something's the matter—something jolly serious, to judge by your looks. You've had bad news?"

"Yes."

"From home?"

"Yes."

Levison turned away, with a catch in his throat. He crushed the letter almost savagely in his hand.

Tom Merry hesitated. It was easy enough to see that some terrible trouble had fallen upon Levison of the Fourth, and Tom did not like to leave him so.

In a few moments, however, Levison spoke again, and his voice was steady now.

"You came for something—what was it?"

"Only to tell you we're having a punt-about before lessons. But you won't care about that now?"

Levison smiled faintly.

"No."

"Nothing I can do?" asked Tom.

"Nothing."

"Well, I'll clear, then."

Tom Merry stepped back into the passage, wondering. But Ernest Levison called to him the next moment.

"Come in a minute!"

"Right!"

Tom re-entered the study at once.

"Shut the door!" muttered Levison.

Tom Merry closed the door, and stood waiting. Levison of the Fourth unfolded the crumpled letter, and hesitated. It was evident that he longed for counsel, for sympathy, and yet he paused. He flung the letter on the table at last.

"Read that," he said. "It's—it's

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from my father. Heaven's knows what we are going to do now!"

Tom Merry picked up the letter in silence and looked at it. He knew the hand of Levison's father, but the usually strong, firm handwriting was loose and scratchy, as if the letter had been written under the stress of a powerful emotion.

Tom Merry gave a start as he glanced at it, and his own face became a little pale.

Levison watched him eagerly as he read.

It was a hurried, wild letter, written by a man in the grip of a mortal fear. A trembling hand—the hand of a man who felt himself under the shadow of death—had traced those hurried, sprawling lines.

"My dear Son,—This letter will surprise you—will terrify you, I know. But I must warn you—I must put you on your guard. He is coming back—Dirk Power is coming home.

"I thought he was dead; I have believed him dead for years. But I have had certain news—he is coming home, and is already in England. For years I have believed him buried under the snows of Alaska."

"You knew that many years ago I was at the Yukon—that I made my fortune there. You have never heard me speak of Dirk Power. I have striven to forget even his name. I cannot tell you all now. He is my deadliest enemy, and he has come back to kill me. From what I have heard, it seems that his sufferings have partly turned his brain. He is not a man to be reasoned with; he has only one fixed idea, and that is vengeance upon me and mine. Your life and Frank's are in danger as well as my own.

"Be on your guard! If there is time I shall remove you and Frank to a place of safety. You are not safe at St. Jim's. But—but the blow may fall. If you receive a telegram from me, act on it at once.

"I can write no more.

"Your unhappy FATHER."

"Good heavens!" muttered Tom Merry.

Levison gave him a haggard look. "I—I had that letter yesterday," he said. "You can guess that I did not get much sleep last night. I—I haven't told

Frank. Good heavens! What am I to do?"

"You don't know who the man is?"

"Only that he is some enemy father must have made in those old days on the Yukon. Father made his fortune there—a gold-mine. I've always noticed that he never cares to speak about his gold-mining days. He always looked black if the subject was mentioned at home. I've thought that there was some secret, but I've never heard before the name of Dirk Power. I—I think—I am sure that my father never did him any wrong—"

Levison's voice trailed off.

Perhaps it struck him, as it could not fail to strike Tom Merry, that the letter was not that of a man whose conscience was wholly clear.

But, be that as it might, there was no doubt about its deadly earnestness.

There was a light step in the passage.

A cheery young voice called:

"Ernie!"

It was Levison minor of the Third.

"Not a word to him or—anybody!" muttered Levison hastily.

Tom Merry nodded.

The study door opened, and the fresh young face of Frank Levison looked in with a smile. The fag had a buff envelope in his hand.

"Telegram for you, Ernie," said Frank. "I thought I'd bring it up for you. What are you sticking in the study for on a fine morning like this, and lessons in ten minutes? Hallo! What's the matter?"

Levison major snatched the telegram from his brother's hand.

He tore open the envelope, his minor staring at him in surprise, and hurriedly scanned the slip within.

"What—" began Frank, in wonder.

A groan from his brother interrupted him. The telegram fluttered to the floor, and Ernest Levison sank into a seat and covered his face with his hands.

CHAPTER 2. In Flight!

FRANK LEVISON sprang to his brother's side.

The happy, careless smile of the schoolboy was gone now. His young face looked white and strained.

"Ernie, what is it?"

"Levison, old man—" muttered Tom Merry.

"Ernie—"

Levison raised his face from his hands. It was white, lined, strangely old in look. He made a gesture towards the telegram, and Frank picked it up. The message it bore was brief.

"He is coming. Fly."
That was all!
But it was enough.
It was the terrified cry of warning of a man in mortal dread.
"But—but what does it mean?" exclaimed the fag in bewilderment.
"Ernie, what—who—"
"It's from father."
"Father?"
"Yes, yes!" Levison tried to pull himself together. "We— Get your cap, Frank; we've got to go!"
"To go!" repeated Levison minor.
"From school, do you mean?"
"Yes, yes!" almost screamed Levison.
"This instant! It may be too late already! Come!"

He caught his brother's arm, and dragged him from the study. Frank Levison went without a word. His brother's terror was more for Frank than for himself—even in his bewilderment the fag could see that. He yielded to the elder's guidance without a word.
"Levison!" called out Tom Merry.
Levison of the Fourth called back to him without stopping.

"You can tell the Head! Tell him we've had bad news—we've had to get home at once!"

"But you ought—"
Levison said no more; he did not even stop to listen. The St. Jim's fellows were coming in for classes as Levison dashed down the big staircase with his brother. Blake of the Fourth called to him as they ran out into the quad.

"Levison! Time to go in!"
"Bai Jove! Where is he off to?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.
"Levison, deah boy—"

But the brothers were gone.
Tom Merry ran along the passage to the window that looked upon the old quadrangle of St. Jim's.

Below he could see Levison running for the gates, still holding his brother by the arm.

"Good heavens!" muttered Tom. Taggles, the porter, was closing the gates, and he shouted to the Fourth-Former and the fag as they came breathlessly up.

"Now, then, Master Levison—"
Levison shoved him roughly aside, and ran into the road with Frank. The old porter staggered and gasped.

"Come back, you young rips!" he shouted. "You 'ear me? Jest you come in at once!"

And then Taggles blinked after the two juniors as they ran up the road in the direction of Rylcombe.

"My heye!" he muttered, in astonishment.
And the gates closed with a clang.

There was a buzz of amazement among the St. Jim's fellows who had seen Levison's flight. Tom Merry came down the stairs with a pale face. Levison had had no choice but to obey his father's warning; but Tom wondered whether he was not going from shelter into more deadly danger. The juniors poured into the class-rooms in wondering discussion; but Levison's place was vacant in the Fourth Form room that morning, and Levison minor's in the Third. And the fellows who missed them little dreamed of what was to happen ere they would see either of the brothers again.

Heedless of what the school might be thinking, heedless of everything but the terrible warning in his father's telegram, Levison major hurried on to the station. He had made no plans as yet; he did not even know whether he would head

for home. His only thought was to save Frank by putting a distance between him and the place where the mad avenger knew where to look for him. To get to the station, to take the first train, whatever its destination—that was Levison's only thought.

They panted on through the village street.
Pilcher, the chemist's boy, called out to them from the door of his shop, but Levison did not even hear.

He ran on breathlessly.
A train was puffing in the station—it had just come in. It was the local train for Wayland Junction, and it would not remain in the station more than a couple of minutes.

"Quick, Frank!" panted Levison.
They ran into the station.
There was no time to take tickets. Levison ran at once for the platform. The porter, who knew him, allowed him to pass without delay, probably supposing that he was going to meet some arrival by the train. The brothers ran on to the platform.

There were several passengers there, one of them a lithe, swarthy-complexioned man, his face sunburned and weather-stained almost to the hue of copper. Levison did not see him in his hurry; but the man's sharp black eyes turned on the two boys instantly.

"Quick, Frank!"
The train was about to move, and Levison tore open a carriage door and thrust his minor in. He followed with a jump, and dragged the door shut.

Then he spun round to look from the window.

The fear was upon him that the madman, the terrible Unknown from the Yukon, might already be at hand, and he was feverishly eager to discover whether eyes were upon him.

The brown face of the stranger on the platform arrested his glance at once. From that coppery face the black, glittering eyes scintillated at Levison. It was a glance of recognition, and Levison knew it—his likeness to his father betrayed him.

It was the man!
Levison knew it—knew it instinctively, with an icy clutch at his heart. He had only been in time; the man was already close at hand. He knew it, and he knew that the copper-faced man knew him—by his likeness to his father and by his hurried flight into the almost-moving train. But was he in time, after all?—for the man from Alaska was speeding across the platform towards the moving carriages.

"Stand back, there!"
The porter shouted.
But the copper-faced man had a door open—the door of the carriage next to Levison's.

He hurled himself in, just escaping the angry clutch of the porter, and the carriage door slammed on him.

The train rushed on out of the station. Levison sank on a seat, his heart throbbing.

"Ernie!" panted Frank. "Ernie! Buck up, old man! Even if there's danger, we're safe now!"

"Safe!" Levison gave a hollow laugh. "Safe, Frank! Heaven help us both! He is in the next carriage!"

"He—who?"
"The madman!"

CHAPTER 3. A Leap for Life!

FOR some moments the brothers sat dumb, looking at one another with white, scared faces.

There was no other passenger with them—the local train to Wayland was seldom crowded.

But it was only for a few moments that Levison allowed the chill of horror to creep over him and paralyse him.

His life was at stake—and the life of his brother! He knew it—not only from his father's warning, but from the glance of the glittering black eyes that had for a moment looked into his. In that brief glance he had read a history of hate and vengeance and deadly purpose. And the madman was in the next carriage, within a few feet of them, with murder in his heart!

"We—we can stop the train!" muttered Frank at last, between his chattering teeth.

Levison shook his head.
"Useless! Once he is close to us—"
He did not finish the sentence.
"At the next station, then—"
Wait!"

Levison put his head from the carriage window, and looked back along the train as it wound and glided along the metals.

He expected to see the coppery face looking out—to catch the savage glance of the mad eyes.

But that was not what he saw. He uttered a sharp cry.
The man from the Yukon had already crawled out of his carriage, and was making his way along to the next by the footboard.

Swaying with the motion of the train, in imminent danger every moment of being dashed down to death, the madman worked his way along, inch by inch, foot by foot.

His eyes met Levison's for a moment, and he showed his white teeth in a snarl like a wild animal.

Levison almost fell back into the carriage.
"He—he is coming!" he breathed.

He looked round frantically for a weapon. But he knew that it would be useless. Once in the powerful grasp of the madman, he knew that nothing could save him or his brother!

He crossed the carriage to the opposite window, and looked out despairingly.

To jump from the train was death, but it was death to remain. In a few minutes now, at most, the madman would be at the window. He thought of the communication-cord, but to stop the train would only hasten the tragedy.

He glanced desperately up the line. The next station was still far off. Ahead of him, a goods train was moving along on the adjoining metals in the same direction. The passenger train was overtaking it, and would pass it in a minute more.

A desperate hope leaped up in the hunted boy's heart.

In a minute more the two trains would be abreast, and then—

He turned back.
"Frank!"

"Yes, Ernie?" whispered the fag.
"Look! It's the only chance. You've got the nerve?" breathed Levison.

The fag shuddered.
He understood, and he knew that his brother spoke the truth. It was the only chance. But the risk was terrible.

"There's only a few moments to decide," said Levison hoarsely. He pressed his brother's arm. "Frank, it's the only chance now. It's that or—"
He did not need to finish.

"I'm game, Ernie!" muttered Frank, between his teeth.

No more was said.
The engine was already passing the last wagon of the goods train on the adjoining metals.

Levison flung the carriage door wide open.

The leap across was simple enough in itself, into one of the big, open waggons

of the goods train; but with both trains in motion the risk was fearful.

"You'll follow me, Frank?"

"Yes, Ernie."

The fag's voice was steady now, his face was white and set. He had summoned up all his courage for the fearful ordeal.

A moment, one moment more—

"Now!"

Levison, with set teeth, sprang, and an instant after his brother leaped.

Crash!

Levison plunged into the load of sand that half-filled the open truck, and rolled over. There was a crash beside him, and he knew that his brother was in the sand beside him.

He struggled up to his knees, half-buried in the sand, and dashed the fragments from his eyes, and stared round him dizzily.

In that brief space the passenger train had passed.

The guard's van was already passing the engine of the goods train, and from a window—the window of the carriage the brothers had quitted—a coppery face stared.

They had escaped only in time! Already the madman had climbed into the carriage they had left, to find it empty, and to stare back along the line at the victims who had eluded him.

A brown fist was shaken in the air. It was the last the juniors saw of their pursuer as the passenger train rushed on, and vanished round a curve of the metals.

Levison sank back exhausted. The reaction almost overcame him. He panted and almost sobbed, as he lay in the sand in the open truck.

Frank struggled up.

"The train's gone, Ernie; we're safe now."

"For the moment," muttered Levison. "But—but— We must get out of this, Franky. He will stop at the next station, and—"

He rose to his feet.

The goods train was moving in a leisurely way. The leap from it was difficult, but not dangerous. A minute more and the juniors were rolling down a grassy embankment, and the goods train rumbled on without them, as they lay in the grass in the sunshine, resting, to recover their strength before they resumed the flight.

CHAPTER 4. A Fearful Doom!

"I'M tired, Ernie!"

"We can rest here."

It was sunny and dusty on the wide moor. For more than an hour the fugitives had been tramping.

From the railway Levison had struck into the country, not venturing to go on towards Wayland. At a little village of half a dozen houses he had stopped to purchase a loaf and a wedge of cheese. He did not dare linger. Then the brothers tramped on across the moor. Levison was heading for Abbotsford, there to strike the railway again, but it was a long and weary trip. Half the distance had not been covered when Frank was limping heavily.

Levison glanced round from the rough track that crossed the moor, marked by wheel ruts and cycle tracks. At a little distance stood a hut he had seen before. It had sheltered a shepherd in the days before the war, when there were flocks of sheep on the moor. There were no sheep to be seen now, and the hut was deserted. The shepherd was sleeping his last sleep beneath the soil of Flanders. "We can rest here, Frank. This way, old fellow."

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They limped from the track towards the hut.

The little building contained only one room, with a single door on one side and a small window on the other. There was no glass in the window, but a heavy wooden shutter hung inside, creaking loosely in the breeze. The floor was of bare earth, and the few articles of furniture the hut had contained had long since disappeared, save for a broken stool and an old wooden box. The juniors limped into the hut, and Levison closed the door and dropped the bar into place. It was an instinctive precaution, though he thought, he hoped, that the deadly pursuer was far off their track.

Frank sank down wearily.

"Cheer up, kid!" Levison muttered. "We shall get to Abbotsford in the afternoon, and take the train there. That villain will not find us here, old chap."

He had shown Frank his father's letter now, and the fag understood.

"But father and mother and Doris!" muttered Frank. "What may be happening? What may have happened at home, Ernie?"

Levison shivered a little.

What might have happened? He did not know, and he feared the worst. But he strove to keep up a brave face to encourage his brother.

"We shall be home by the evening, Frank. I—I think—I am sure they are safe. Father would look after them first. Eat your bread and cheese, kid."

Frank ate mechanically.

Levison, as he forced himself to swallow food, kept a wary eye on the little window that gave a view of the track across the moor.

Whether the pursuer was still on the trail he did not know. He could not tell. But his vigilance was unsleeping.

A figure came in sight on the lonely track. It was a cyclist. And as Levison caught sight of it he hastily closed and fastened the little shutter.

Through a slit in the wood he watched the rider with bated breath. His heart beat almost to suffocation as he recognised a coppery face with bony, high cheek-bones, the face of the man he had never seen before that day, but who was hunting him down to his death.

The man was riding a machine too small for him awkwardly. Levison guessed that it was a stolen bicycle. His black eyes scanned the moor as he pedalled along the lonely track.

Levison's heart almost stopped beating as the rider drew nearer. Would he stop to search the shepherd's hut?

The bicycle slowed down.

"Ernie—" began Frank.

"Hush!"

"But what—"

"Hush!" breathed Levison.

His look told what his tongue could not speak. Frank, trembling in every limb, rose silently to his feet.

He joined his brother at the window, and looked through the slit in the shutter.

"He may pass!" breathed Levison.

Frank groaned.

"He's stopping!"

The cycle came to a stop, and the man from the Yukon leaped off. He leaned the machine against a tree by the track, and strode across the rough ground towards the hut. A minute more and his hand was on the door.

It did not open.

He shook at the door, the brothers listening, in dead silence, with beating hearts.

"Who is here?" called out a voice—a low, sibilant voice, that recalled to Levison's mind the hiss of a reptile.

Levison touched Frank's lips with his

fingers. But it was not necessary to caution him. The fag was dumb.

The door shook again, but the bar within held it firmly enough. There was a sound of footsteps prowling round the little building outside, like the steps of some wild beast seeking its prey. The footsteps stopped outside the window. The slit in the shutter was dimmed as a shadow shut off the sunlight.

A low laugh sounded from outside—a laugh that sent the blood thrilling to the juniors' hearts.

"You are here, then! I have run you down!" came the hissing voice through the shuttered window. "You first—his sons!" And the low, fearful laugh followed again.

The shutter creaked and strained under a heavy blow from a stone. Frank reeled against the wall, his face like chalk. Levison sprang to the broken stool, and tore away one of its legs, and leaped back to the window as the shutter flew open.

The coppery face and glittering eyes looked in, and there was a gleam of steel in a brown hand.

"I have found you!"

Head and shoulders came through the little window as the madman sought to clamber into the hut.

Levison struck.

With all his strength he struck at the wretch's head with his cudgel, and there was a yell of agony from the assailant.

He rolled back from the window, and fell, still screaming.

Levison, panting, slammed the shutter again, and strove to fasten it. But the fastening was gone.

He heard his enemy scrambling to his feet, still groaning from the pain of the blow he had received. Levison expected him to renew the attack; but he did not come.

Prowling footsteps, and a muttering voice were heard, and that was all for some time.

Levison still gripped his weapon, but still the attack did not come. The junior was nerved to desperation now, and ready to fight for his life and his brother's, and he was well placed for defence. But the cunning brain of the half-insane avenger realised that well enough. He was still prowling round the hut, but did not seek to enter.

"What is he doing, Ernie?" Frank whispered at last.

Levison was watching from the slit now.

For some time he could not understand what the ruffian was doing, or his purpose. The man seemed to be backing among the dry bushes near at hand with his knife. Piles of twigs and branches fell around him. Unless it was an access of insane fury, Levison did not know what to make of it. But he understood only too soon.

Dirk Power came back towards the hut with his arms full of dry brushwood. He piled it against the wall, and returned for another supply. Again and again he came, and the pile grew high beside the hut, crammed against the wooden wall.

Levison understood at last, though he could scarcely realise the horror of it.

He did not need the scratch of the match, the smell of smoke, to tell him what his enemy designed.

It was a fine autumn day; above, the sun shone from an almost cloudless sky. The hut was dry as tinder, and the flames soared up from the mass of brushwood and licked round the wooden walls. Smoke rolled in through every crevice.

Frank rubbed his eyes.

"It's a fire, Ernie! Oh, Heaven, he is burning the hut—and us in it!" shrieked Frank.

Outside, the fire blazed and the smoke thickened. Through the heat and the smoke came the blood-curdling laugh of the madman.

A blow without shook the door, "Will you come out now?" Levison shut his teeth hard together. The wood of the wall was catching the flame; in a short time the whole building would be a mass of soaring blaze. Already the heat was scorching the imprisoned juniors.

Flames soared over the low, thatched roof, and the hatch was soon on fire. Sparks and burning thatch dropped into the hut. Frank gave a groan of utter despair.

Outside the door the avenger was waiting; they could hear him muttering as he waited. They knew that the drawn knife was in his hand; they dared not open the door. And the hut was burning round them. Thick smoke filled it now; over the hut thick columns of smoke rose against the sunny heavens. Through burnt gaps in the wall came tongues of flame, as if eager to devour their helpless victims.

CHAPTER 5.

Through Fire and Flame!

ERNEST LEVISON dashed the smoke from his eyes, and looked from the window.

A desperate hope was in his heart that help might be at hand; that he might catch sight of some human figure upon the lonely track over the moor.

But as he watched the track, through the whirls of smoke, he saw it bare and solitary, stretching away across the deserted plain.

There was no help! The hut was burning, and close by the barred door, outside, lurked the madman, knife in hand.

The burning roof was falling in piecemeal; at any minute now it might come down with a crash, burying the two hapless boys under its blazing ruins. And there was no one in sight; there was no help. Levison's eyes fell upon the stolen bicycle, leaning against the tree by the track. In the last moment of black despair a desperate hope flashed into his mind.

If he could reach it— He ran to his brother.

It was the last chance; the madman was on the other side of the hut, and could not see them drop from the window into the smoke. But they had to pass within a dozen feet of him to run for the bicycle, and then—

It was the last hope! Levison caught his brother by the arm. He did not speak; he drew him to the window, and pointed to the bicycle.

"Heaven help us!" breathed Frank. Levison lifted him from the window, and followed; the noise they made was drowned by the fierce crackling of the flames. The window-frame was bursting into blaze now; they scorched their hands without even knowing it, and rolled out into the smoke. It enveloped them, blinded them, and for a moment they were helpless. But a gust of wind eddied the smoke again, and they could see. And Levison, taking his brother's hand, ran for the bicycle.

They ran desperately, and they had almost reached the machine, when a howl behind them warned them that they were seen.

There was a rush of footsteps behind. Levison did not look back. A desperate bound carried him to the machine, and he dragged it from the tree.

His leg was over the bar in a twinkling, his foot jamming on a pedal.

"Catch hold, Frank!"

He did not need to speak. Frank caught at his shoulders, his foot on the foot-rest, as Levison drove madly at the pedals.

The bicycle spun unsteadily along the moorland track as the racing pursuer came up.

With a yell of rage Dirk Power flung himself forward to clutch at the riders as they started.

His extended finger-tips brushed Levison minor's shoulder as the bicycle gained motion and shot ahead.

The ruffian staggered forward, losing balance, and his hand struck the rear mudguard as he fell.

The bicycle reeled, and if it had capsize then all would have been over. But Levison was grinding frantically at the pedals—standing to the work, for the seat was too high for him. The bicycle righted, and ran on. How Frank kept his balance he never knew; but he kept it, and the machine fairly flew down the rough track.

Levison did not dare to look back; he drove on furiously, with the sound of heavy, pursuing footsteps behind. A stone whizzed through the air, and missed his head by a few inches. He did not heed. It was for life or death now, and he drove furiously on.

The pursuing footsteps grew fainter. Hard as he ran Dirk Power could not equal the speed of the bicycle, and the distance between pursuer and pursued lengthened out.

When he could no longer hear the footsteps, Levison spoke hurriedly.

"Look back, Frank, if you can without falling. Where is he?"

"He's stopped."

"Thank Heaven!"

"He's a good way back now," breathed Frank. "We're dropping him. Oh, keep on, Ernest!"

Levison slacked down, and his brother had to jump off, and Levison dismounted. He looked back hurriedly. The pursuer was small in the distance now, and he had stopped, breathless after his frantic rush in chase of the bicycle.

But he saw the bicycle stop, and came on again at a slow run, evidently exhausted by his efforts.

Levison was cool now. He tore open the tool-bag for a spanner, and put down the saddle as low as it would go. Frank watched him and the approaching pursuer, his heart thumping. There was still a hundred yards between them when Levison was ready to mount again.

"Ready, Frank?"

"He's coming!"

"All right now!"

The brothers remounted, Levison in the saddle now, and working at the pedals with ease. Frank held on behind, and the bicycle fairly flew along the rough track. The fag looked back, and saw the figure of the pursuer disappear behind a rise in the ground.

"We're shaking him off," he said. Levison pedalled on.

Another mile flew by, and then there was a rougher bumping on the track, and Levison saw that the front tyre was deflated. The rough ground had been too much for it. The bicycle bumped on its rim. It was harder work now, but Levison did not venture to stop. He turned from the track, and pedalled away across the grass land, heading for a line of trees that marked a ditch in the distance.

He jumped off at the ditch.

The pursuer was not in sight; he was far behind. But Levison felt that he

was following. He turned the bicycle over into the ditch, out of sight among the beds of nettles, and helped Frank across. They were now in a cultivated field on the edge of the moor.

"Come on, Frank! Keep your head low behind the hedge."

"Yes," panted Frank. They ran on.

A few minutes later they emerged into a cart-track, and then into a narrow lane. Not knowing or caring whither it led them, they tramped on, falling into a walk now.

If the pursuer followed the moorland track he would pass the spot where Levison had left it, and they were safe. And there was no clue to tell him where they had turned aside, unless he could pick up the trail in the grass. Levison hoped, and believed, that they were clear of him now.

By quiet lanes they tramped on under the setting sun, caring little whither they went so long as they placed a greater distance between themselves and their deadly foe.

Darkness had fallen when they found themselves among houses again, and Frank, limping painfully, was hanging heavily upon his brother's arm.

Levison, weary as he was, would have pressed on, but Frank was sinking with fatigue.

"After all, he must have lost the track," muttered Levison. "He has no clue to follow us across country. And we must rest. Stop here, Frank."

A light burning from the window of an inn by the roadside had decided him. He led his brother into the building, determined to obtain a brief night's rest, and to flee for his home at the earliest gleam of dawn.

CHAPTER 6.

The Horror of the Night!

A SOB broke the silence of the little room.

Levison stirred.

He had supposed his brother asleep. But Frank was wakeful, and Levison himself had not been able to close his eyes.

A candle burned in the room; Levison had left it burning. Frank had not said so, but he knew that the darkness would have added to the fag's brooding fear.

The room was a garret at the top of the inn, with a little window that looked over the street. After a hasty supper, which they could scarcely eat, the juniors had retired to their room, eyed curiously enough by the innkeeper, who suspected them of having run away from school. Once in the room, Levison locked and bolted the door, and fastened the window securely, though he told himself that there was no danger. They lay down on the bed in their clothes, without even removing their boots; secure as they hoped they were, instinct told them to be prepared for instant flight.

Yet what danger could come to them there? For hours they had lain resting, but awake, listening to the faint sounds of voices that came from below. Once Frank had started up in fear, whispering that he had heard the voice they knew—the sibilant voice of the copper-faced man who sought their lives. But Levison soothed him, and he closed his eyes again.

Had the man followed? Had he found them? It was not likely, yet Levison dreaded his coming. If he had found their refuge— Yet, even so, surely they were safe? The last sound below had died away—the sound of doors barred for the night. Levison tried to sleep,

knowing that he would awaken if there was a sound at the door of the room. But there was no sound; and he could not sleep. And that low, aching sob in the silence of the night warned him that his brother also was wakeful.

"Frank, old man," muttered Levison miserably, "try to sleep."

Frank sat up, his eyes staring almost wildly from his white face.

"I—I can't, Ernie! I can't sleep! He's near—I know he's near—"

"He's miles away, kid," whispered Levison soothingly.

"I tell you I heard his voice speaking to the landlord downstairs!" breathed Frank, with a shudder.

"It's impossible!"

Frank grasped his brother's arm suddenly.

"Ernie, the window—I heard something at the window!"

"Hush! The window's sixty feet from the street at least—"

"I heard something! Listen!"

Levison strained his ears, and a pale smile came over his face.

"It's only the telegraph-wires, Frank. I noticed they cross the street just by the window. It's the wind on the telegraph-wires you can hear. I think they're fastened to the wall outside."

"Is that all, Ernie?"

"That's all, old fellow."

Frank laid his head on the pillow, but only for a moment. He started up again.

"Ernie, look—look! I'm sure of it! It's more than the wind on the wires!"

He leaped from the bed and ran towards the window. Levison followed him quickly.

"Franky, keep calm, old chap!"

Frank tore open the window, and stared out into the night.

Far below, the street was dark and silent; in the gloom the opposite buildings could scarcely be seen.

From the gloom came the strange, eerie twang of the telegraph-wires as they stirred in the wind.

A shudder shook the boy from head to foot.

"Ernie!" His voice was almost inarticulate. "Ernie, look!"

He broke off, speechless.

Levison looked.

He saw what his brother had seen, and his brain almost reeled at the sight. What was that dark, clinging figure—clinging to the telegraph-wires, and working its way across the yawning gulf below, inch by inch, steadily towards the window?

Only a madman would have attempted such a feat. But the man was mad—sane in all other things, but mad with the thirst for vengeance!

The wires swung and twanged as he came, inch by inch, slowly but surely, towards the window where his victims stood gazing at him with eyes dilated by terror.

"Oh, Heaven!" muttered Levison.

Closer and closer, as the boys stood frozen at the window, and watched with starting eyes.

Levison came to himself suddenly. He caught Frank by the arm.

"Come!"

"Quick—quick!" breathed Frank.

They ran across the room to the door; it was unlocked in a second. Outside was blackness.

They stumbled rather than ran down the stairs. A voice came from the darkness—a sleepy voice, calling in alarm at the sound of hurried footsteps at an hour past midnight. They did not heed.

They found themselves at the street door at last. It was barred and chained,

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and Levison fumbled furiously with the chain.

By that time, he knew, the madman was climbing in at the window of the room they had left; every second he feared to hear steps in the darkness on the stairs.

He dragged the chain loose, he dragged back the bolts. The heavy inn door swung open. A voice called again as they ran out into the night.

Levison glanced up towards the stars.

Against the sky stretched the telegraph-wires—but there was no clinging figure to be seen now. He was within the house—in the room they had fled from, raging to find that his prey had escaped him again. In a few moments he—

"Fly!" panted Frank.

A bright spot in the darkness caught Levison's glance; like a huge eye of some wild animal that glared from the gloom. It was the lamp of a motor-cycle, standing at the corner of the inn unattended. He could guess that it belonged to Dirk Power—that it had borne the madman in his unrelenting hunt for his victims.

Levison did not stop to think; he ran towards it. He was not even sure that it

blackness ahead; houses, trees, rose like shadows and vanished. The road was clear. Levison drove recklessly, the machine throbbing under him. Faster and faster—faster and faster. Hedges and trees fleeing by, half-seen in the hurry and the gloom. The wind was rising, it tore in their faces as they dashed on, unheeded.

Frank was watching the road behind—black, swallowed up in darkness. He shivered, as out of the darkness came two eyes of light—the head-lights of a car. Was it pursuit? Fascinated, he watched the piercing head-lights as they drew closer and closer.

Was it pursuit? He knew that it was, and he cried out to his brother,

"Ernie! He is coming—"

The motor-cycle leaped forward with renewed speed. One fleeting glance behind was enough for Levison. He was going all out now, but still the piercing head-lights gained. Hedges lined the road, with wide stretches of country behind them. A dim, huge shape loomed up beyond a hedge, like some ghostly giant raising his arms to the shadowy sky; a sound came from it like a murmuring whisper. It was a windmill, straining in the rising wind. A cloud rolled away, and bright stars gleamed down on the road, and at the same time there came a sudden throttling sound, and the motor-cycle slowed down. A bitter exclamation broke from Levison.

"Ernie, what—"

"A breakdown!" said Levison between his teeth. "Jump off!"

The motor-cycle went whirling into the road as the juniors leaped off. Levison dragged Frank through a gap in the hedge. In the bitterness of his heart he hoped that the pursuing car would crash into the fallen cycle and overturn. But there was a jamming on of brakes in the road. The head-lights came to a halt. A voice yelled from the gloom—they could not catch the words, but they knew the tones. It was Dirk Power, the madman from the Yukon, and he had run them down at last!

CHAPTER 7.

On the Windmill!

A SKY spangled with stars glimmered over the fugitives now; ghostly light lay on the fields and hedges, broken with shadows. The hapless fugitives stumbled through the rough grass.

Levison had hoped to escape—to hide—in the darkness, but the rolling away of the clouds defeated that hope. In the bright starlight surrounding objects stood out with greater and greater clearness. In the road beyond the hedge the great car had stopped, and they heard the sound of a crashing in the hedge behind them. The pursuer was already bursting into the field on their track.

Frank stumbled and almost fell.

Levison drew him on.

Close ahead of them was the giant shape they had dimly seen from the road—the windmill, with its heavy sails turning slowly in the rising wind. There was no light from the mill, no light from any habitation near.

The mill stood on rising ground. They stumbled on up the acclivity, vague sounds behind telling of relentless pursuit. There was no other shelter. Levison intended to clamour at the mill for admittance, for protection.

It was the only hope. But as he reached the building, half-carrying his brother, he found the door swing open in the wind. The place was dark, silent, tenanted. Moss covered the old stones, hichens grew on the walls, the weeds were

(Continued on page 12.)

NOTE!

This issue of The "Gem" Library should contain a

FREE FOOTBALL ANNUAL PICTORIAL SUPPLEMENT.

This supplement is inset loose, and if your copy by any chance does not contain it see your newsagent about it.—Ed.

was his enemy's, but life was in the balance, and he did not pause. He was only thankful that he had driven a motor-cycle before, and knew how to handle it. He ran it into the street. A coat and a bag lay loose on the carrier. He pitched them off.

"Frank, you understand—"

"Yes, yes!"

"Bear a hand!"

Gug-gug-gug!

Would he get started before the madman appeared? There was a buzz of startled voices from the inn and the barking of a dog.

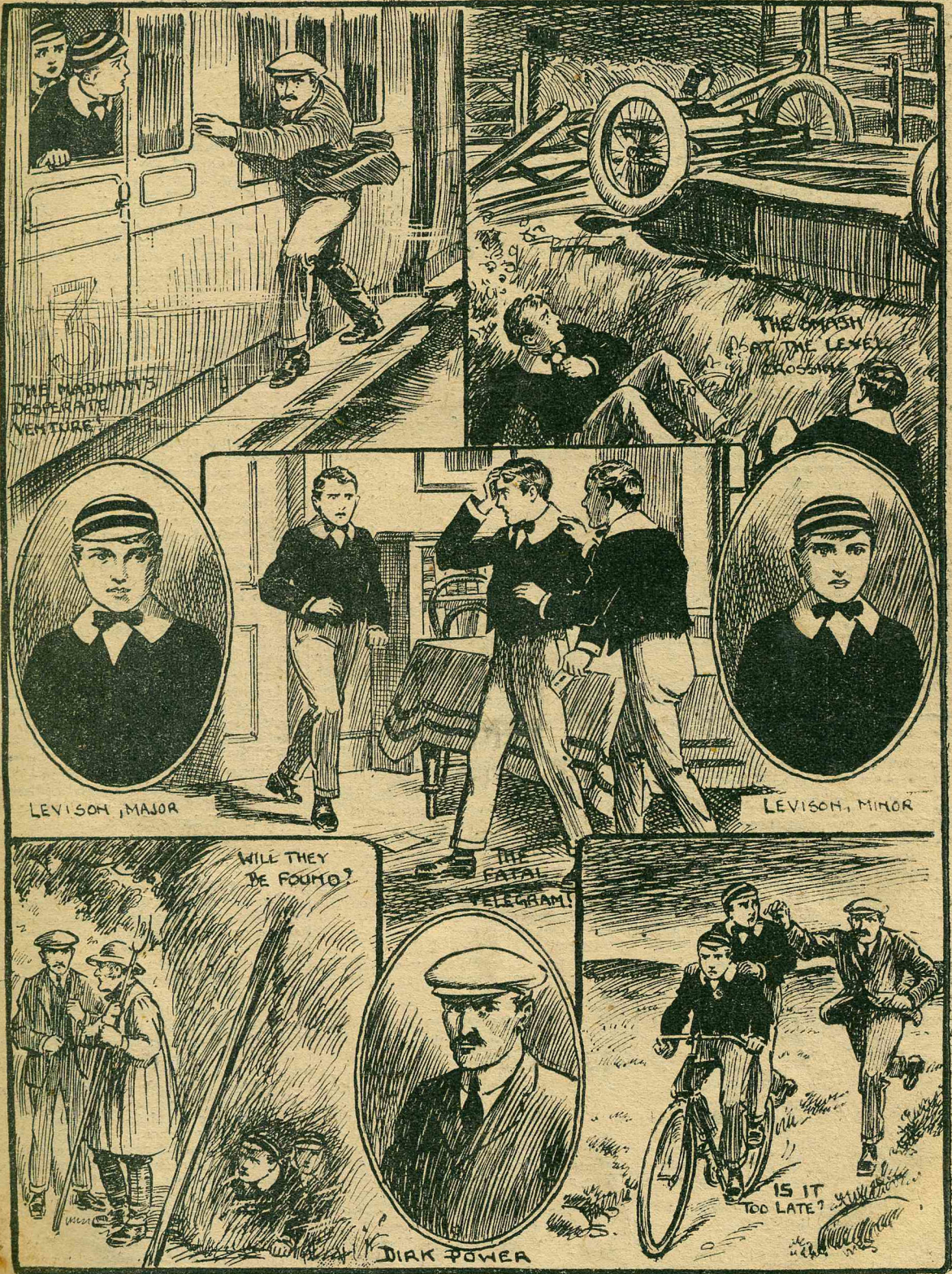
Gug-gug-gug! snorted the engine. Gug-gug-gug!

Footsteps! Footsteps!

Levison ran the cycle along, Frank on the carrier. He threw himself into the saddle.

Zip, zip! A yell behind—a yell of rage and baffled hate—and rapid footsteps in pursuit. It was still touch and go. A dark figure loomed up behind, but the motor-cycle, as if suddenly endowed with life, leaped forward.

The glaring lamp stared through the



STIRRING SCENES FROM THE STORY.

thick up to the threshold, and over it. The mill was deserted. It had long been deserted, and was tumbling to ruin.

There was no help there. Levison plunged into the blackness within, and swung shut the low door. Frank reeled away, panting. Levison groped wildly for a fastening. There was a heavy old lock, the rusty key, of a huge size, was in it; but as Levison strove to turn it, it refused to move—it was rusted in the lock.

Footsteps rang from the night. The madman was closing in on their refuge.

Levison, with panting breath, strained to turn the key. He bruised his hands, and there was a loud crack as the key suddenly turned at last.

The next moment, as it seemed, there came a crash at the low door. But the heavy lock held.

Crash!

The savage voice of the madman was heard without; it was like the yell of a tiger baffled of its prey.

Levison reeled against the door exhausted.

Crash, crash!

A heavy stone was beating on the outside of the door, and it shook and groaned; but it gave no sign of yielding.

The brothers listened with throbbing hearts to the battering of the stone.

If the door gave—

Levison fumbled for a match, and struck it. Dim shapes of huge, trailing cobwebs surrounded him. A fluttering bat blinked at him from the shadows. He caught Frank by the arm and hurried him towards the narrow stair.

"Careful, Frank!" he muttered, as he groped his way upward in the darkness. "The steps are loose."

Crash, crash!

The madman was still beating furiously at the door, though in vain. Feeling their way, striking matches at intervals, the juniors pressed on to the summit of the stair. In the little chamber above a broken window admitted the starlight.

Levison looked from the window.

Across the field, in the road beyond the hedge, he could see the head-lights of the halted car still glaring. Below sounded the crashing of the stone on the unyielding door.

The din below ceased suddenly.

Dirk Power had realised that he could not force his way into the mill. Dimly the schoolboys above caught his hovering shadow as he prowled round the mill in search of another entrance. But there was no lower window, and the fugitives breathed more freely.

"We are safe!" whispered Frank.

"Safe—for the present!"

They still watched.

Shadowy, like a phantom in the starlight, the sails of the windmill turned, sweeping past the little window like the wings of some huge bird. Creaking and groaning, the old mill-wheel turned.

Still the black shadow prowled below. Hope dawned once more in the breasts of the hunted fugitives.

When dawn came they would be safe—and dawn was coming. Then there would be help.

The lurking shadow below stopped at last: the glittering black eyes looked up at the faces at the window. A savage first was shaken, a yell rang out threateningly.

Frank clutched his brother's arm suddenly.

"Ernie! What—what is he doing?"

Levison caught his breath.

The huge, heavy sail, sweeping slowly up towards the little window, passed the madman, and he clutched at it. He missed his grasp, and fell back on the ground.

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He had missed, but his intention was only too clear.

He knew, as they knew, that when dawn flushed in the sky, and the labourers appeared in the fields, there would be help for the fugitives, and, with desperate recklessness, he intended to trust himself to the rising sail, and thus reach the window where they stood.

The whirling wings passed near enough to the window; the wind of them blew on the faces of the juniors.

He scrambled to his feet, and waited.

Again he leaped as a sail passed him, and this time his hold was good. He clung on, and rose with the whirl of the windmill.

His weight slackened its speed; but he was rising—slowly, slowly, but sure.

Frank gave a groan of despair.

"Frank," Levison whispered huskily, "what he can do we can do! The sail will be close in a few seconds—the nearer one; it will take us down while the other brings him up!"

Frank shuddered.

But he set his lips firmly. It was the only chance of escape, terrible as it was.

The nearer sail was close to the little window, drawing closer slowly. On the next wing to it clung the madman, rising.

"Now, Frank!"

With desperate nerve the juniors clambered out of the little window, and prepared to clutch at the passing sail.

Closer and closer—

"Now!"

They sprang, and clutched; and the next moment they were sweeping towards the earth, hardly knowing whether they were holding on or falling. Their weight accelerated the movement; for the moment they appeared to be shooting towards the ground.

But they were holding on.

As the madman rose up towards the high window the two juniors swept to the ground, and sprang off as the sail reached its lowest point.

They rolled breathlessly in the weeds. From above sounded a panting yell of fury.

Levison scrambled to his feet.

There was not a second to lose. For the madman had seen the desperate escape, and he did not leap at the window. He was sweeping round on the windmill, and in a few moments—

Levison dragged Frank to his feet.

"Run!"

They tore away as the windmill sails swept round and brought their enemy to earth.

CHAPTER 8.

In Touch with Death!

"ERNE—the car!"

"The car!" Levison panted.

It was into Frank's mind that the thought of it had flashed as the fugitives raced across the field.

In the road the glaring head-lights shone through the hedge—now like beacons of hope to the hunted juniors.

The madman was still spinning downward on the windmill as the juniors panted towards the road and the car.

"Get in, Frank!"

Levison sprang into the driver's seat.

Would he have time? Already the footsteps of the pursuer were close to the hedge. He had divined their intentions, and was racing desperately to the road.

The car moved forward.

From the hedge came a wild, springing figure; it landed in the road, only a yard behind the moving car.

Before the car could gather speed the springing figure was upon it behind, clutching hold.

Frank Levison uttered a cry as the

coppery face looked over the back of the open car and he saw the clutching hands.

Hardly knowing what he did, he drove his fist furiously full into the savage face.

The head disappeared; one of the hands was loosened. But the other held on, the madman dragging behind the car as it increased its speed.

Frank tore at the hand, loosening it finger by finger, twisting the fingers back with savage energy.

The clutching hand disappeared.

He looked back. In the starlight a dark figure was sprawling in the road; the madman had dropped behind.

The car raced on.

Frank sank sobbing on the seat, almost overcome by the horror of that narrow escape.

Levison glanced over his shoulder as he held the steering-wheel.

"Frank—"

"He—he caught on, Ernest; but he's dropped now. We are safe—safe at last!"

Levison drove on furiously.

The road ahead wound like a white ribbon in the starlight, at that hour deserted and solitary.

The fear was in Levison's heart that the madman was not yet shaken off. If he succeeded in getting the motor-cycle into order, he was certain to hang on the track of the fleeting car.

Levison, as he rushed on, listened painfully for the sound of pursuit; but silence hung over the shadowed countryside.

The road raced and vanished under the whirling wheels. Mile after mile fled beneath them.

But Levison did not pause.

At every instant he feared to hear the throb of the motor-cycle; he dared not slacken speed.

The clouds had thickened again, and the darkness enwrapped the sky and the earth, the brilliant head-lights of the car streaming ahead through the blackness.

A red light suddenly winked and glimmered ahead in the middle of the road.

"Ernie!" shouted Frank, as he caught the red gleam.

For the moment he supposed that it was the rear light of a cycle or a car ahead on the road, and only swerved a little to the right.

Then he understood.

He caught the lighted window of a signal-box.

It was a level-crossing, and the gates were closed across the road. The red light was a lantern that burned on the gate to give warning that the road was blocked.

Levison jammed on the brakes desperately.

But it was too late. The car swept on, and there was a terrific crash, and the next moment the car was on its side in a ditch. Levison was flung into a hedge. Where was Frank?

"Frank! Frank!" he panted, as he scrambled in the hedge.

"Ernie!"

The fag was in the ditch, deep in mud and nettles. Had the car struck the gates at full-speed nothing could have saved the lives of its occupants; but the brakes had almost done their work. The two juniors had been pitched out as it overturned. The car lay half in the ditch, one of the gates hung broken from its hinges. Levison scrambled down to his brother.

"Frank, are you hurt?"

The fag gasped.

"I—I think not. Only a shock."

There was a shout from the signal-box. Levison did not reply or heed. He stared back along the road.

Dimly in the distance glimmered a moving light.

Faintly from afar came the throb of a motor. Was it the madman, still in pursuit? Levison did not know, but he feared. He grasped his brother and dragged him to his feet.

"This way, Frank!"

They plunged through the hedge into a ploughed field beyond.

There was no time to be lost. The signalman was dashing from his cabin, and for a moment Levison thought of him—of claiming refuge with him. But of what avail would his protection be against a madman armed and desperate? Safety lay only in flight, and Levison panted on across the field, still holding his brother by the arm.

The field was crossed, and another, and another. They came into a lane, and trudged on, the desperate flight falling into a walk now, as weariness grew upon them.

Levison listened, and looked back.

They were far from the level-crossing where the wreck of the car lay. Surely even Dirk Power, with all his insane cunning, could never track them now in the darkness.

But they tramped on.

The night was growing old. The stars paled before the approach of dawn. Still they trudged on, with heavy, aching limbs. Frank gave a low moan at last, and leaned heavily on his brother.

"Ernie, I—I can't—I can't go farther!"

Levison stopped.

Around them was the brooding silence and loneliness of the deserted country; there was no habitation in sight. Surely they were safe now! Surely even their deadly enemy had lost the track! A fence divided them from a field in which a haystack rose dimly to the view.

"We'll stop here, Frank. We can sleep in the hay," muttered Levison. "It will hide us, and even if he follows—"

He said no more.

He helped the stumbling boy across the fence, and followed him. A few minutes more and they were amid the hay, buried from sight, and sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion.

How long that dead sleep lasted Ernest Levison did not know.

He awoke suddenly, with a sound of voices in his ears. Through the hay that covered him came a warm glow of the sun. He knew that it was day. For the moment he did not realise where he was. He fancied himself in his bed in the dormitory at St. Jim's. But recollection came with the voice that reached his ears, and with recollection, caution. He lay silent in the hay, scarcely breathing, for he knew the voice that was speaking close at hand.

It was the voice of Dirk Power. Within six feet of him, as he lay hidden in the hay, stood the madman who sought his life.

CHAPTER 9.

In the Madman's Grasp.

LEVISON hardly breathed.

It seemed like some fearful dream to him as he lay, the sun warming through the loose hay above him and around him, and close at hand, yet unseen, the man who was seeking him. The voice was in his ears. He did not catch the words at first, as he listened dazedly. Frank, close by his side, was still breathing steadily. Levison prayed that he would not awaken. A word, an incautious

movement, would betray them to death without hope.

Levison moved his head slightly. He found that he could see through the loose hay that screened him. The juniors had crept in where a quantity of hay had been removed from the stack. In the sheltered opening loose hay was piled, and in this they lay hidden. Close by the opening—a dark shadow in the sunlight—stood a lithe form the junior had learned to know well—Dirk Power. The coppery face was turned away, as the man was speaking. A little farther off stood a labourer in a smock-frock, of whom the man from the Yukon was evidently making inquiries.

Levison marvelled as he listened. No trace of madness was there now in the manner or the voice of the man who was hunting them down to death; no hint that could alarm the countryman to whom he was speaking. He was quiet, normal, self-possessed. But the junior knew the fury that would awaken instantly if the ruffian should sight his victims. The presence of that gnarled old labourer would be no protection; the knife would be at their throats.

And Frank still slept, unconscious of his peril.

The old countryman stood leaning on his pitchfork as he answered in slow, stolid tones the queries of the copper-complexioned stranger. His voice came with a slow drawl to Levison's ears.

"I ain't seed 'un."

"Two boys." It was the man from the Yukon speaking again. "They have run away from school. I am searching for them."

Levison compressed his lips.

It was a cunning explanation—to throw dust in the eyes of those of whom the relentless pursuer made his inquiries. The old man shook his head slowly.

"I ain't seed 'un," he repeated.

"P'raps my mate 'ave seed 'un. Hi, George!"

A farm cart lumbered across the grass towards the stack, evidently for a load of hay.

Levison trembled.

If the labourers began to load the cart from the stack discovery was certain, and that was evidently their intention. If the man from the Yukon was still there when they began to turn the hay—a thrill ran through his limbs, his heart was throbbing so loudly that he feared the man standing so near to him would hear. But the coppery face was not turned in his direction.

He strove to still the wild beating of his heart, and listened. Frank's breathing, in his sleep, was low and irregular. Levison prayed that he would not stir.

The man from the Yukon moved a few paces farther off, to speak to the farmer's man in the cart. Levison heard their voices, but he could not now distinguish the words. The old man was still leaning on his pitchfork, in no hurry to begin his task. The moments crawled by on leaden wings. How long was this to last?

The talk was still going on by the side of the cart, the old man looking on, when a red-faced, broad-shouldered man in gaiters came up, with a heavy riding-whip in his hand. It was evidently the farmer. He broke in rather sharply, and the man from the Yukon turned to him to explain. Levison saw his face now, and he marvelled again. It was dark, and the eyes were evil; but it was calm, composed. Levison wondered for a moment whether the fearful events of the night had been a dream. In the presence of the farmer and his men the madman was holding himself under rigid control, and plainly they had no suspicion of him.

"The boys haven't been seen here, sir," said the farmer sharply. "Sorry we can't help you. Get to work on that hay, Peter!"

The old fellow with the pitchfork turned to his task at once, and the gleaming prongs were thrust in only a foot from Levison as he lay.

Frank started, and awoke.

"Ernie!"

Old Peter started back with an ejaculation as he heard the sudden voice.

Levison groaned.

All was lost now; but there was protection in the presence of the farmer and his labourers. Levison leaped out of the hay and ran towards the big, red-faced man, who stared at him blankly.

"Help!" panted Levison.

Dirk Power made a sudden movement.

But it was only for a second that he almost betrayed himself; the next he was calm again, with a terrible calmness. With a depth of half-insane cunning that was almost unearthly he was playing his part—till his hour came. He checked himself in time.

Frank struggled out of the hay, and joined his brother. The sight of Dirk Power's coppery face sent ice to his heart. He clung to his brother's arm in terror. Levison had caught the astonished farmer's sleeve.

"Help!"

He had expected a spring from the madman. He had not counted on his cunning.

The man from the Yukon stood still.

"So you are here!" he exclaimed.

"My dear boys, I have been searching for you ever since you ran away from school."

Levison stared at him.

Was this the madman?

Was it a dream?

"So you've been hiding in my hay, you young rascals!" exclaimed the farmer angrily.

"Help!" breathed Levison, catching again at the farmer's arm, as he jerked it away. "That man is mad! He is a murderer—"

"What?"

"He is seeking our lives—"

The man from the Yukon laughed lightly.

"Do not talk such folly, my boy," he said. "I am here to take you back to school. Can you lend me a trap, sir, to drive to the nearest station? I will pay liberally for it."

"I'm sending a man into the village now," said the farmer. "He can give you a lift with the boys, if you like."

"Thank you!"

Frank Levison gave a shriek.

"You will not send us with him, sir! I tell you he is mad! He has tried to kill us—"

"Nonsense!" said the farmer, frowning. "Don't tell me such tales! You must go with the gentleman, and be thankful that I don't lay my whip round you for sleeping in my hay!"

"We will not! Help!" shrieked Frank.

Levison caught his brother's arm, and broke into a run across the field. In a moment the farmer's grasp was on their collars. The man from the Yukon did not stir. He was playing his part to perfection—with a madman's cunning—till his victims should be helplessly in his power.

"This way for you, you young rascals!" grunted the farmer.

A trap had halted by the low fence; the farmer swung the helpless juniors over it into the trap. The man from the Yukon followed them, and sat beside the driver.

"Drive to the station, Harry," said the farmer.

And the trap rattled off down the lane, with the two juniors lying in the bottom of it, the man from the Yukon watching them like a cat, ready to seize them if they attempted to leap out. Frank sat down, almost fainting, as he realised that he was at last helpless in the power of the madman.

Ernest Levison sat up dizzily. The presence of the trap-driver was some protection; but, far behind now, the farmer and his men were busy with the hay, and they dropped out of sight. And then the man from Yukon fastened a sudden grasp upon the driver by his side, and snatched the reins from him.

The man uttered a startled exclamation—he had no time for more. In the powerful grasp of the madman he was torn from his seat and hurled into the ditch beside the road. He crashed there, half-stunned, and the startled horse leaped forward unheeded, the reins dangling over its back, as the madman turned upon his victims.

CHAPTER 2, At Last!

CLATTER, clatter, clatter! Crash! The hoofs of the frightened horse beat a tattoo on the hard road as the trap raced on.

The copper-faced man did not even glance at the galloping horse. What happened to the trap, which swayed and jolted wildly on the rough road, he did not care—or think. His glittering eyes were fixed upon the two juniors in the vehicle, and his lips opened, showing his white teeth in a snarl.

"At last!" The man from the Yukon muttered the words. "At last! You first—then the others!"

His hand groped under his coat. Levison knew that it was groping for a weapon, and for a second a mist swam before his eyes. A minute more—

Clatter, clatter!
Crash!

The runaway horse was dashing round a turn in the lane, and one wheel of the trap plunged over the raised grassy path that bordered the roadway. The vehicle lurched to one side, for a second it spun on one wheel, and it seemed that it must overturn.

It righted again, with a crash, and rushed on; but as it reeled the man from the Yukon had plunged over and fallen in the trap, his hand still under his coat in search of the hidden knife.

He fell across Frank Levison, taken by surprise, and helpless for the moment.

In that moment Levison acted. As the trap righted and rushed on, the Fourth-Former of St. Jim's flung himself upon the fallen ruffian.

His knees came down with a thud in the man's back, and there was a scream of pain from Dirk Power.

A lurch of the leaping trap almost hurled them out, and Levison caught at the side to save himself. But the madman had no hold, and he slid back, his head and shoulders over the dusty road behind.

It was Levison's chance.

He grasped the ruffian's legs, and pushed with all his strength, and the ruffian slid helplessly out of the back of the vehicle and rolled in the dust behind.

Levison almost followed him in his effort, but he caught hold again, and just saved himself from falling.

The horse was galloping on. In a cloud of dust the trap bore down the lane, leaving the half-stunned ruffian lying in the dust.

Levison dropped into the driver's seat, and made an effort to reach the flying reins.

But it was in vain.
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They were tangled now round the horse's neck, looping before him, in imminent peril every moment of catching in his galloping legs and sending him sprawling.

"Hold on, Frank!" panted Levison. He could not control the horse.

The juniors could only hold on and wait—wait till the animal was exhausted, or until some obstacle stopped its wild career.

Zip, zip, zip!
Ernest Levison glanced back.

Far behind, out of sight among the hedges, a motor-cycle was speeding. The madman was remounted, and was in pursuit again. Crash!

A wheel of the trap caught in a thicket as the maddened horse swept round a corner, and the vehicle swayed and rocked. Frank Levison was tossed from it into the thicket like a ball from a racket. Levison did not stop to think. He leaped from the trap after his brother, and rolled among the green brambles.

Clatter, clatter!
The pause had been only momentary, while the maddened horse dragged the trap free. A few moments more, and it was tearing on again. Horse and vehicle vanished round a curve of the road, though the incessant tattoo of the frantic hoofs was still clearly to be heard.

"Frank!"
The fag lay half-fainting in the brambles. Levison bent by his side.

"Hush!" he breathed.
The motor-cycle swept along the road. Levison peered from the thicket.

If the man stopped—

He saw the coppery face, the glittering black eyes, the hard cheekbones, the savage face of the pursuer, but it passed like an evil vision. The motor-cycle swept on in pursuit of the runaway trap, passed, and vanished, the madman little dreaming that his victims were no longer in the vehicle, and that he was leaving them behind as he tore onward.

Levison gave almost a sob of relief. Every instant was taking the madman farther and farther from the victims he was seeking. The sound of the engine died away at last.

Frank struggled up.
"Ernie, he's gone!"

"Gone," breathed Levison—"gone! Thank Heaven! We are safe now, Franky—safe from him!"

He listened.

There was a rumble on the road—the rumble of a heavy motor-vehicle—in the direction in which the madman had disappeared. For a moment Levison's heart was like ice in his breast. But the next he realised that it was not his deadly enemy returning. A huge vehicle loomed up on the road; it was a motor-omnibus.

Levison caught his brother by the arm. "Come on, Frank!"

He almost dragged the fag into the road. He knew the Lantham omnibus—he was twenty miles from St. Jim's. He waved his hand to the driver. Two or three passengers on top stared down curiously at the dishevelled, white-faced boys standing in the road.

The driver slowed down.
Levison and Frank clambered upon the huge vehicle, and it rolled on again towards Lantham.

They were safe—safe at last!

Somewhere in the dusty distance the madman was still seeking them. Doubtless by this time he had overtaken the runaway trap, and discovered that it was empty of his victims. Doubtless he was trying back along the road in search of them. But the motor-bus was rolling swiftly on its way, and the first houses of Lantham appeared in sight by the roadside.

Levison's heart leaped as they rolled into a busy street. The vehicle stopped, and they alighted. At the corner stood the post-office, and Levison drew his brother inside the building. They were safe, for the moment at least, and his first thought was to get into touch with his father by the telephone. Levison minor watched the street through the glass door, while his brother entered the telephone-box.

It was a long time before Levison major was through. Frank watched the street.

The zip, zip, zip of a motor-cycle came through the glass doors, and the fag started convulsively. Was it the same? Had the man from Alaska followed them to Lantham? Keeping back out of sight, the terrified fag watched through a corner of the glass. A motor-cycle swept on up the street, and he caught a glimpse of a coppery face and black eyes. The evil vision passed, the hoot of the motor-cycle died away up the street. The pursuer had come and gone.

A hand fell on Frank's arm. He started, and turned. It was his brother. Levison read the fag's face.

"You've seen him?"

"He passed—a few minutes ago!" breathed Frank.

Levison set his teeth.

"You got through to home?" whispered Frank.

"Yes"

"And father—"

"He had left a message for us. He is gone. We are to find him and join him on the coast. We are to make for Rockhaven. Father will be there with a motor-boat."

"Rockhaven? That is twenty miles from—"

"We've got to get there."

Frank shivered.

"Wait here for me, Frank!" muttered Levison. "I can get a taxi here. We had better clear clear of the station. He may be there, watching for us. Wait!"

Levison disappeared through the swing doors. Frank made a movement to follow him, but stopped. With throbbing heart, he waited for his brother's return.

Five minutes later a closed taxicab drew up outside the post-office. Frank was watching. From the window of the cab his brother's hand waved to him.

He ran down the steps, and in a moment was in the taxi beside his brother.

Levison uttered a brief word to the chauffeur.

"Rockhaven—as fast as you can go!"

The taxi buzzed.

From the little window at the back Levison watched the street as the car whizzed out of Lantham.

He caught a glimpse of a lithe figure, a coppery face. It was Dirk Power, on foot now, peering at the passers as he came up the street. They had escaped only in time.

The face vanished. The taxi was speeding along a country road now. Lantham and the enemy were left behind.

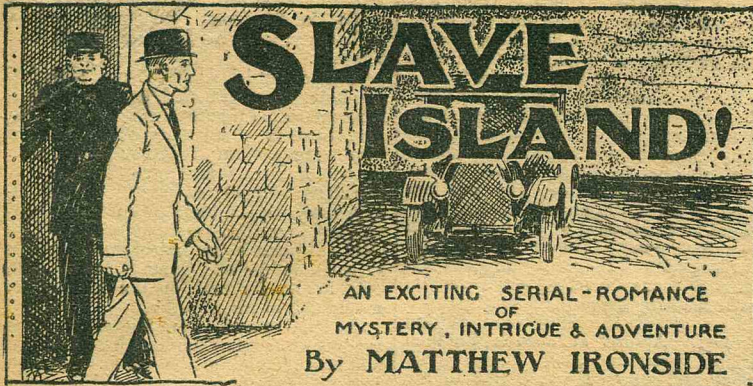
Levison sank down in the seat.

Trees and hedges fled by. He listened, but there was no sound of pursuit. Had the relentless pursuer been thrown off the track at last? He hoped, but he feared. Every wheel on the road, every whisper of the wind in the trees, was a sound of terror to the boys who were fleeing for their lives.

THE END.

Another breathlessly exciting story next Wednesday, entitled: "FLEEING FROM FATE!" By Martin Clifford. Don't miss next week's "GEM" Library, which also contains part 2 of the grand Free Football Supplement.

THE FIRST INSTALMENT.



CHAPTER 1.

Free—Strange Plans—The Millionaire's Vow.

THE great iron gates of Bleakmoor Convict Prison were unlocked and flung open, and a warder stood aside for the man who had served his sentence to pass out.

"S'long Seventy-One!" he said, not unkindly. "Hope you won't come our way again!"

The tall, pale-faced man, who until this moment had been merely a number and lost to the free world, turned away curtly and ignored him. Then a curious thing happened.

The released convict clapped his hands, and from out of the early morning mist that clung about the bleak, grey prison glided a magnificent Rolls-Royce, which pulled up before him with a slight skidding of its tyres.

The warder's jaw dropped, and his eyes widened in blank amazement. A uniformed attendant, who had been seated beside the stiff-backed chauffeur, sprang down, threw open the door, and stepped back deferentially for ex-Convict 71 to enter the car. In another moment both he and the servant had taken their places, and the car had disappeared over the brow of the long, steep hill leading down to Bleakmoor Village.

"Well, may I be blowed!" the warder gasped, pushing back his peaked cap and scratching his head. "If that don't take the bun!"

He slammed the gates and locked them, then made his way across the exercise yard and into the prison, to discuss the amazing incident with his fellow-guard. Meanwhile, the car proceeded on its way, and in half an hour was over the border into Somerset, where the sun shone and the birds were singing, though the welcome change of surroundings seemed to have no effect on the man who had just left prison. He sat as still and silent as a Sphinx, his face set harshly, and his inscrutable eyes fixed unseeingly before him.

At length the car swung into a private road that led to the gates of what was plainly a great mansion.

A sharp "honking" of the horn brought out the lodgekeeper, who let the automobile pass through into the extensive gardens. It travelled along a winding drive, and finally came in sight of the house itself; or, rather, it would be more correct to say "castle."

For it was that—a fine old pile of grey stone, with battlements, gables, and turrets that reminded one of the old feudal days. It was almost covered with ivy, and, judging by its architecture, must have dated back at least two hun-

dred years. The Rolls-Royce had to pass over a drawbridge to reach the steps, a deep moat, now dry and full of dank weeds, surrounding the building.

The approach of the car was evidently heard by those within the castle's walls. The front door was opened, and an aged butler came out on to the steps to meet the released prisoner as he alighted and mounted them.

"Welcome home, Mr. Jasper!" he cried, his eyes suspiciously bright and his quavering voice husky. And he was probably disappointed at the response he received.

Jasper Standish—that was the convict's name—shot at him a cold, almost contemptuous glance, and, pushing past him, shook hands with another elderly man who stood in the gloomy hall, and who was the typical family lawyer in appearance.

"You have engaged a valet for me, Ames?" the strange master of the house demanded, in a curiously harsh voice.

"Yes, Mr. Jasper, and he has secured a supply of—ahem!—ready-made clothing he judged would be suitable."

"Humph! Anything ought to be better than these," Jasper Standish remarked bitterly, glancing down at his suit, which was of a fashion quite ten years old. "Ah, is this he!" his eyes fixing themselves upon a reserved-looking, clean-shaven man who had stepped forward from amongst the other servants who hovered about the hall.

"Yes, sir. John Williams is his name."

"And the yacht I instructed you to purchase and fit out when you were granted an interview with me six months ago?"

"It lies off Sheerness, Mr. Jasper, a splendid vessel called the Sea Urchin, of just over a thousand tons. It cost—"

"No matter what it cost! Is it ready for an immediate voyage, if I deem it necessary. Officers, crew, and the like all complete?"

"Yes. It could put to sea to-day if you wished."

"One more question. What of the man whom I mentioned to you as likely to be here to meet me this morning?"

"If you mean the Dutchman, Peter van Lardent, sir," the old solicitor answered, "he is waiting at the moment in the library."

Jasper Standish nodded curtly, turned towards the staircase, and beckoned to the valet. As soon as the man had shown him to his room, Standish swung round upon him.

"You are aware, of course, that I have just stepped from one of his Majesty's prisons?" he queried coldly.

The valet looked uncomfortable.

"Well, sir, I—I could not help hearing rumours," he stammered, "but—"

"As you are to be my personal servant, and will soon be travelling half across the world with me," Standish said, with a silencing motion of his hand, "it will be as well for us to understand each other. I have spent ten years in Bleakmoor for another's crime, which I voluntarily took upon my shoulders. I tell you this as, if you thought otherwise, you might be apt to treat me with a lack of respect. In that case you would be seeking a new situation, I a new valet. You understand? Now, John, try to make me look and feel like a human being."

The man was a good servant, and did his best, and at the end of half an hour Jasper Standish looked a very different man. The stubble was gone from his chin and upper lip, what little hair the prison barber had left him was brushed and neatly parted, and he was wearing a dark grey lounge suit that fitted him well in spite of it not having been made to measure.

He had been striking-looking before, but he was doubly so now. He was really only thirty-four, though suffering and the hardships of prison life had aged him, and he looked nearer forty. His face was pale, his lips thin and prone to curl in a disdainful sneer, though they had smiled often enough ere the grim, grey walls of Bleakmoor had enveloped him ten years ago. But his eyes were the most arresting feature of his face.

They were dark and hard and curiously bright, and went well with his stern, forbidding expression. In a few words, he was a man with whom life had gone badly, souring and embittering him.

He went straight to the library, opening the door sharply, and surprising an ill-dressed man of the seafaring class sprawling in an easy-chair, with a cigar in his mouth, and his heavy boots upon the table.

The fellow hastily jerked down his feet and tossed the cigar into the grate. On his heavy, black-bearded face was a sheepish expression that reminded one of a mongrel cur that had been caught by its master up to some mischief and expected chastisement. Though that was simply because he instinctively realised Standish's powerful personality and dominating will and bowed before them.

Until his release a few weeks ago he had been a fellow-prisoner of the owner of the castle, was in prison for robbery with violence, and could be a dangerous and murderous ruffian when he liked.

"You appear to have made yourself at home, my friend," Standish said, in a tone that was like the lash of a thong. "It will be as well to remember that we are not just numbers now and on an equal standing. So you did not forget the date of my release!"

A cunning look leapt into the seaman's little, pig-like eyes.

"Nod likely, mynheer!" he grunted, with a pronounced Dutch accent. "A thousand pounds are nod every day earned. Und haf you nod bromised me such a sum if I to the owner of Slave Island take you?"

Jasper Standish sank into a chair facing him, and leant forward with an eager light in his eyes.

"Then you still cling to the strange story you mumbled to me in bits whilst we slaved together in the quarries?" demanded he.

"Jah! Id is true, ev'ry vord of id, mynheer! I, Peter van Lardent, swear it! T'is island lies somewhere in the Pacific, and is beopled by slaves, as I you told—slaves who work beneath the lashes of the owner's overseers on the banana plantations and at oder industries, und make for him many, many thousands of pounds in von year—jah!

T'ere are to be found people of ev'ry nationality—Engleesh, French, Shermans, half-castes, negroes, and Dutchmen like meinsel, and't it?"

"It is a tall story!" Jasper Standish objected, shaking his head. "How do you suggest such a colony was originated, and how is it the place is not visited by civilised people—the crews of a few cruisers or other war vessels, for instance—who would seek to put a stop to the slavery and injustice that goes on there?"

The Dutchman slowly shook his head. "All I can say, mynheer, iss that id is out—far out—the usual course of ships, und from the sea appears shust a stretch of barren rocks, for vith t'em id is surrounded," he said. "I found meinsel there after being shipwrecked nod far away, und floating near on some wreckage, on which I had fallen into unconsciousness. Until the man who owns the island took a fancy to me—b'raps because I Dutch vass, like himself, und knew of the outside world—I vass made to work on the plantations vid cuts from a vhip for pay. Do you still dispelieve? T'en look!"

He came sharply to his feet, and before Jasper Standish quite realised what he was intending to do, had dragged both his jersey and shirt over his head, displaying his bare back. As the eyes of the released convict fell upon it he could not suppress a low cry of horror and surprise.

Peter van Lardent's back was a mass of ugly red scars—scars from wounds that had bitten so deep that the tell-tale marks would remain there until his dying day.

"The day after I was put to work an overseer struck me vith his vhip," he said, as he redonned and rearranged his clothing. "I knocked him down, und, as punishment, vass almost to death beaten! Do you vant tunder proof of mein story?"

"No!" Jasper Standish answered, and there was something very like exultation in his dark eyes. "I no longer doubt your word, Van Lardent. Now, you told me that the owner of this place goes to Thursday Island for three months every year?"

"Jah. Id iss so. T'ere he haf an office, und poses as a middleman who sells bananas und oder t'ings of commercial value. He t'is does because he dare nod led the source of his supply become known, you understand. T'is iss method of disposing of the products of his slave island."

"It is ingenious!" Standish murmured. "You never told me, I think, how you contrived to escape."

"Von day Hans Meppel—the man who runs the island—made of me an overseer, vith pay und petter food und quarters. But, even so, id vass leedte petter t'an slavery, and I determined the dust of the place I off mein feet vould shake shust as soon as I could. At last I got vell into Meppel's confidence, und, for mein own ends, made meinsel of much assistance to him. He arranged to Thursday Island to dake me on von of his trips. Id vass vhat I had been vorking for, und vhen t'ere I the slip gave him. A tramp steamer vass shust leaving, und I meinsel stowed away on board after a long swim. It brought me to England, vhere I fell foul of your police, und vass to Bleakmoor Prison sent."

For several seconds Jasper Standish seemed thoughtful, then he asked:

"Did Hans Meppel have a stated period for going to Thursday Island to attend to his exporting business?"

"Jah. Und if we left England at vonce ve should find him t'ere vhen ve arrive."

"Then be ready to sail from Sheerness on the morning of Thursday next—three

days from now. Remember that, if your story proves true, you will receive from me one thousand pounds. You had better take this ten-pound note to cover travelling expenses and the like, and to buy yourself any odds and ends you need to take with you on the voyage."

Peter van Lardent eagerly snatched up the rustling banknote, got upon his feet, and shuffled towards the door. As he reached it he paused and turned, a look of curiosity in his small, evil eyes.

"May I ask, mynheer, vhy you are vaiting to meet t'is man?" he queried. "That is no business of yours, and need not concern you!" Jasper Standish retorted coldly. "Be ready to join my yatch at Sheerness on Thursday. As you go out, send my servant to me."

With a grunt the Dutchman quitted the room. Almost at once a footman made his appearance.

"Tell Mr. Ames I would like to see him!" Standish ordered.

The flunky bowed and withdrew, and presently the old lawyer entered the room, carrying several account-books and a deed-box. Standish waved his hand impatiently as the old man laid the books on the table, and would have opened them.

"I do not wish to go into details to-day, Ames," he objected, "though I do not doubt that you have everything in connection with the estate and my private fortune ready for my inspection. Just tell me roughly what I am worth. My means must have accumulated whilst I was in that purgatory upon earth."

Solicitor Ames pursed his lips, and thoughtfully wrinkled his brow.

"In hard cash and easily-negotiable securitise you have approximately one million pounds sterling, Mr. Jasper," he said at length. "Then there are other investments and assets which would total well over as much again."

"So I am doubly a millionaire," Jasper Standish murmured, though without the least show of elation. "Well, Ames, as I told you at our interview in the prison six months ago, I mean to live only for revenge—revenge upon the black-hearted cur who betrayed me, and callously left my wife and child to starve and die!"

His eyes were blazing like living coals, and his hands had clenched until the knuckles gleamed out white through the flesh. But he quickly recovered his mask of cold self-composure.

"And I will have that revenge, Ames," he said quietly, but with a terrible purpose in his eyes and voice. "I will have it, if to obtain it I have to spend every penny of the two million sterling I am worth!"

CHAPTER 2.

Thursday Island—The Story of the Past—The Compact.

NIGHT had fallen over Thursday Island, and on the beach, where many pearling luggers were moored, all was still, though up at a shanty known as "Pete's" there was noise enough.

The saloon was particularly full, and drinks were flowing freely. All sorts and conditions of men were there—Malays, Chinamen, Japs, and whites; the latter of whom were made up of almost every breed and nationality under the sun.

The place reeked of the poisonous liquid the saloon proprietor sold as whisky, and was like a furnace. What little breeze there was came in off the water, and was heavy with the stench of beach-scatterings and the odour of poogietubs.

This undesirable condition of things was encountered by two men in white ducks who, in a small boat, put off from the brilliantly-lighted yacht lying some distance away over the phosphorescent

sea, and presently entered the shanty. They were Jasper Standish, the mysterious ex-convict who owned a castle in Somerset and was twice a millionaire, and his hireling, Peter van Lardent.

"Make inquiries and let us get out of this hole," Standish said, holding a handkerchief to his mouth and nostrils. And Van Lardent shuffled over to two men who were arguing together in his own tongue, and conversed with them.

"Hans Meppel iss here," the Dutchman said, with a trace of excitement, as he rejoined his companion. "The t'ousand pounds you haf bromised me iss as goot as mein! Come! Id late iss, but, as he iss nod in the saloon, he should still at his office be."

He led the way from the saloon, and conducted Jasper Standish to an isolated building farther up the beach. Over it, on a white signboard that could be dimly made out in the gloom, appeared: "HANS MEPPEL, EXPORT MERCHANT," in bold, black letters, and a light burned in the window.

Standish thrust open the door, after giving the merest suggestion of a knock, and entered, the Dutchman at his heels; and a herculean man, who was seated before a table littered with bills of lading and other business documents, looked up sharply.

He was the proprietor of the strange business that was run upon slavery—Meppel himself—and Jasper Standish thought he had never seen a more cruel and domineering-looking man. He must have been quite six feet six, when on his feet, and was proportionately broad, and as muscular as a trained wrestler. His beard, which was tinged with grey, reached almost to his waist, his nose was large and hooked, and his eyes glared at them from beneath bushy, overhanging brows. He wore a red flannel shirt, open at the neck, and a wide-brimmed slouch hat, and in his belt was a knife and a brace of revolvers.

"Vhat do you vant?" he demanded morosely. Then, as he caught sight of Standish's companion: "Van Lardent! You!"

With an agility surprising in one of his bulk, Hans Meppel leapt from his chair, sprang at the door, and, slamming it, stood with his back against it. In the twinkling of an eye his revolvers were out and levelled at the two men from England.

"You dog!" he rasped, his blazing eyes on his fellow-countryman. "Vhat game iss this? You haf given me away, eh? By Heafen, if id iss so, neither of you leaf t'is place alive!"

"Put down your weapons, Hans Meppel," Standish requested, in his coldest tones. "We both know of Slave Island, it is true. But we wish it to flourish, as it flourishes now—on slavery. At least, I do. Sit down, and I will tell you vhy."

Hans Meppel slowly lowered his weapons, his eyes studying the well-dressed Britisher questioningly, suspiciously. He dragged a chair near him and seated himself in it, resting his automatic-pistols on his knees.

"Vell!" he demanded.

"I am going to begin my explanation by telling you as briefly as possible a true story," Standish said. "Just over ten years ago two young men worked in a certain London merchant's office, and one of them forged his employer's name for no less a sum than seven thousand pounds."

"Tch, tch! Vhat iss t'is to me?" Meppel growled, though he looked interested.

"You will understand in a moment," the Englishman answered. "Listen!

On the eve of the forgery being discovered, the clerk who was guilty of it found that an uncle in New Zealand had died and left him just over fifty thousand pounds and an estate in the country. He knew that on the morrow his crime must be brought home to him, unless he could find someone else to saddle it upon. He knew, too, that his employer was a stern, unbending man who would accept no compromise and prosecute him. Even the full return of the money would not save him. His employer would consider he was compounding a felony to shield him, and would send him to gaol and take his chance of getting his money back afterwards. You follow me?"

The Dutchman nodded his ponderous head.

"Now, this was what he did," Standish went on, his always stern face growing even harder as he spoke. "He happened to be aware that the other clerk was at the time ready almost to sell his soul for money. This man's wife was threatened with the most deadly of all diseases—consumption—and only a long stay in clear, fresh air could save her life. He wanted to send her and their baby girl—a child of four—on a long sea voyage, but, on his slender salary, it was hard enough to live, let alone contemplate an expense such as this. He felt that he would have to see her grow thinner and more ill day by day and eventually die, until the other man—the forger—suggested a way out. Would he confess to the crime he had committed? With his newly-acquired wealth the thought of prison was hideous, maddening. If his fellow-clerk would do this and suffer in his stead, he would send his wife on the long sea voyage, and give her ten thousand pounds into the bargain!"

"Und t'is vass arranged between t'em?" Meppel asked, stroking his long beard.

"Yes," Standish replied, his hands clenching. "The man with the sick wife vowed he was the forger, and was sent to Bleakmoor Prison, where he slaved in the quarries for ten long, soul-killing years. And now comes the end of the story. The real forger—the man who had shifted the responsibility of his crime on to the shoulders of his fellow-worker—was a heartless cur. He went back on his word. He gave the wife of the man who was in prison precisely—nothing. What became of the child was never known. Probably, it died from privation and want, as the woman died in an East End garret."

"Vhy do you to me come und tell me t'is?" Meppel asked.

Standish, who had seated himself on the edge of the table whilst he had been speaking, leant forward, his dark eyes burning with a fire born of suppressed hatred.

"Because I was the man with the sick wife. It was I who dragged out ten years in prison, only to learn my wife had been callously abandoned to her fate and was dead, as no doubt is the child," he said, in a voice that quivered with a fierce passion; "and I mean to exact a just yet terrible vengeance, which I hope to bring about through you, Meppel."

"But how?"

"I mean to repay my ten years of slavery in a British prison by sending the son of the man who betrayed me to lifelong slavery on this island you own!" said Jasper Standish answered. "I shall strike at the father through the boy."

"But supposing I object?" Meppel sneered.

"You will not, when you hear the terms I offer you," was the reply. "I was a clerk in that office only because my

father had objected to my marriage with the lady who was my wife, she being of humble parentage. He had cut me off without even the proverbial shilling, but before he died he relented, and made a new will, leaving me all he possessed. He was very rich, and when I stepped from prison a few months ago I found myself a millionaire. Go to England, or send agents, kidnap the son of my enemy and take him to your island, and I will give you five thousand pounds down, and meet all expenses in connection with your mission, and afterwards allow you one thousand pounds each year that I am given proof the boy lives. Do you agree?"

Hans Meppel's eyes glistened with greed.

"Jah!" he said. "Tell me who the lad iss und where I can find him, und I your man am!"

"The name of the man who tricked me and left my wife and child to die whilst he had every luxury is Richard

men to help me, mynheer," Hans Meppel answered, chuckling and rubbing his great hands as he thought again of the promised reward.

The Lost Island of the Harmers—The Gripping Hands.

FOR a lad who had just arrived home from school on his summer holidays Dick Harmer looked particularly glum.

Two things worried him. Firstly, he had made a mistake in a letter he had sent to his father, and mentioned the 16th as the date he would arrive by the evening train at Beech Marshes, whilst, as he had realised now, to-day was the 15th—a fact that accounted for there being no conveyance of any sort at the station to meet him.

His home was quite eight miles away, over open fields and through a densely-wooded forest; and as the night was moonless and as black as pitch, he stood



With an agility surprising in one of his bulk, Hans Meppel leapt from his chair, sprang at the door, and, slamming it, stood with his back against it. (See page 16.)

Harmer, and he lives at a house called Inverstreathy Grange, at Beech Marshes, a lonely spot in Essex, England. His son will be about sixteen now, and is also named Richard. He is doubtless at some public school, but could be abducted from there as easily as from his home."

"Und when ve get him und he is on the island—"

"Work him as hard as you please! Let him suffer as I suffered—feel the lash of your overseers' whips as often as you like; and although I shall take care not to divulge his whereabouts, I shall let his father know what is happening to him!"

He laughed in a manner that was not good to hear.

"It will be a revenge such as I have dreamed of since I knew how Richard Harmer had duped me," he said. "Remember this, the boy must live—as a slave. You are not to kill him or let him die from any unnatural cause. In the event of his death the thousand per annum would cease. When will you start for England?"

"Shust as soon as I can make my plans and get together some trustworthy

an excellent chance of losing himself ere he covered the distance. But this was nothing as compared with the other trouble that had come into his hitherto care-free life.

He had spent his last term at the dear old school. His father had written him a week ago, giving him his full confidence, and confessing that he stood on the 'brink of ruin. Unfortunate investments had gravely lessened his means, and in plunging on the Stock Exchange to retrieve his fortunes he had only got deeper into the mire. Then had come his last hope, which he had put to the test only to have shattered.

Fifty years back Dick's great-grandfather, a wealthy sea captain, had discovered an island somewhere in the South Pacific which he found uninhabited, but on which were signs of rich veins of silver.

He had been very reticent, but dropped a hint to certain relatives then alive that he had secured a lease of it from a Government he had not named. He had remained in England only long enough to fit out an expedition to return to his property and work the mines there; and on June 10th, 1870, had set sail in

a schooner, the Seagull, with that object in view.

From that day to the present he was not heard of again, and it was presumed at length that the vessel must have foundered with all hands. The whereabouts of the island, too, remained a mystery, though there was a slender clue to identify it. The old man had mentioned a giant rock upon it which reared itself fifty feet towards the sky, and was shaped like a gigantic sphinx.

Thinking of the silver on the island, and ready to grasp at the slightest chance of saving himself and his son from poverty, Dick's father had a year ago chartered a vessel and gone in search of it. But after months of fruitless cruising in the South Seas he had now returned, disappointed and even more financially embarrassed.

Dick, who was a handsome, fair-haired lad of just on sixteen, was hit hard by knowing he would not return to St. Kit's—his school; but even more keenly was he hurt by the thought of his father meeting with such misfortunes.

His luck stood by him on his long tramp, and some two hours after he left the little out-of-the-way railway-station he reached the gates of the fine old house he had known from early childhood. He sighed deeply as he stepped on to the drive, realising that soon it would be his and his dad's home no longer—that it would have to be sold, and everything in it come under the auctioneer's hammer.

The lad had taken some half-dozen steps towards the house when he suddenly stumbled over a bulky object which lay in his path.

"My hat! What's this?" he muttered, striking a match; then he uttered a low, alarmed cry, for the flickering light had fallen upon the prostrate figure of a man in evening dress—his father!

Richard Harmer's eyes were closed, and his face was so ghastly that, with a thrill of horror, Dick asked himself if he were dead.

As he stood momentarily transfixed with the shock of his discovery, the match burned down to his fingers, causing him to drop it quickly and he once again plunged into impenetrable darkness.

He struck another, pulling himself together. Next moment he was on his knees beside the motionless form on the gravel. But before he could learn what ailed his father a startling thing happened.

Two lean, yellowish-brown arms darted over the boy's shoulders from behind, and a pair of merciless hands clasped themselves about his throat.

As, struggling frantically and choking for breath, he was dragged backwards, he heard low, guttural voices speaking in a tongue that was strange to him.

(To be continued.)

THE EDITOR'S CHAT.

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers.
Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Next Wednesday's Great Number.

This splendid issue of the GEM Library will be followed up next week by another Bumper Number, which, besides its splendid programme of stories, will contain the second part of the great

FREE FOOTBALL ANNUAL,

which contains many beautifully-reproduced photographs, and is packed with interesting football information of every kind.

The long, complete story to follow up "The Shadow of the Past!" is entitled:

"FLEEING FROM FATE!" By Martin Clifford.

Packed with breathless incident and exciting adventure, it relates how the Levison brothers join their father, and continue their flight for life before the insensate fury of the madman, Dirk Power. This time, however, they are accompanied by a party of sturdy St. Jim's juniors, who share the perils and excitements of a trip across the world. No one should miss this great story under any circumstances.

There is also another grand instalment of

"RENTON OF THE ROVERS!" By Paul Masters,

in which Jimmy Renton makes a good start in his task of carving out a career for himself. Incidentally, he gets a grand opportunity of indulging his passion for football into the bargain.

Another magnificent instalment of

"SLAVE ISLAND!" By Matthew Ironside,

will rivet my readers' attention on this fascinating story, for which I predict an overwhelming success. Then the popular page, known as

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER,"

will again make its appearance, with half-crown cash prizes awarded for every paragraph published.

The next great feature is No. 2 of our grand new

"MISSING LETTERS" COMPETITION,

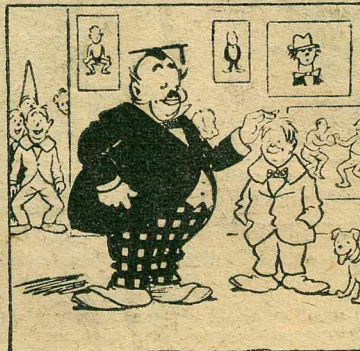
with its valuable cash prizes. This provides unlimited interest and amusement, with the chance of winning a splendid cash prize. Lastly comes

"THE EDITOR'S CHAT,"

in which I hope to find more space in which to talk to my readers than I have been able to spare this week. The difficulty is to find space for all the good things I have up my sleeve for future issues of the GEM Library.

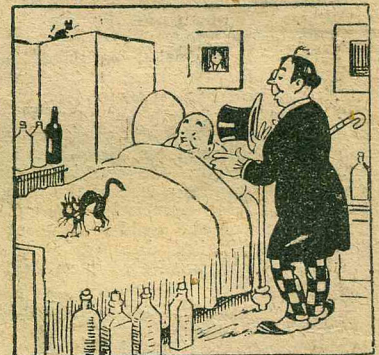
Your Editor

CURED NOW!



Master: "Before you were ill your name was Hogg, was it not?"
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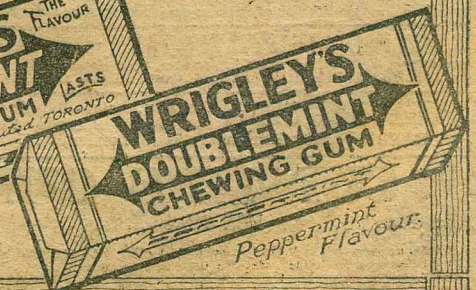
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1,000,000 HAIR BEAUTY FREE TRIAL OUTFITS.

FROM time immemorial superstition has been rife and the most commonly accepted symbol of Good Luck has been the Horseshoe. However, there is a new symbol of Good Luck nowadays for all, both men and women, who are afflicted with Hair Trouble in any shape or form. It is one which implies the restoration of Hair Health and Beauty, and the cultivation of abundant, radiantly beautiful tresses, which evoke the admiration of all and the envy of not a few.

The new "Good Luck for the Hair" symbol takes the tangible form of Edwards' Harlene for the Hair—a potent liquid which has been proved to be the Elixir of Life for the Hair. No mystic movements are involved beyond those of the World Famous "Harlene Hair-Drill."

FREE TO ALL.



3. Free Bottle of "Uzon"—an exquisite Brilliantine that gives the hair a glorious lustre and radiance, and is especially beneficial in cases where the scalp is inclined to be "dry."

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CONTENTS OF HAIR BEAUTY FREE TRIAL

OUTFITS.

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1. Free trial bottle of "Harlene," a wonderful liquid tonic preparation that promotes healthy and beautiful hair growth.

2. Free "Cremex" Shampoo Powder, the finest, purest, and most soothing hair and scalp cleanser which prepares the head for "Hair-Drill."

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FREE "HARLENE" COUPON.

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Dear Sirs,—Please send me your Free "Harlene" Four-Fold Hair-Growing Outfit as described above. I enclose 4d. in stamps for postage and packing of parcel.

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