

"FRANK LEVISON'S FLIGHT!"

Great New School Story of the famous
Chums of St. Jim's. By Martin Clifford

The GEM 2^D

No. 792
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LIBRARY
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SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



A SHOCK FOR THE UNPOPULAR FORM-MASTER!

A practical joke which leads to serious trouble for more than one of the juniors of St. Jim's. See the Great School Story in this issue.



Your Editor Chats With His Readers.

Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" Every Monday
 "THE MAGNET" Every Monday
 "THE POPULAR" Every Tuesday
 "CHUCKLES" Every Thursday
 "THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly

My dear Chums,—Once more, after a pretty long absence, Bernard Glyn, the brilliant inventor of St. Jim's, appears again in next week's "Gem." Glyn does not come on the scene unattended. He is accompanied by an amazing invention. If you do not hear for a bit of an inventor, it is tolerably safe to assume that he is tremendously busy improving the shining midnight oil, as it were, by devising some fresh and ingenious machine for lightening labour or causing amusement. Next week's prime yarn of St. Jim's and Glyn bears a curious and very appealing title:

"GLYN'S SCAREOPHONE!"

Glyn has been busy with a vengeance. His new notion is a fair starter. It takes the form of a machine which does all manner of weird and wonderful things. I need not go into all the intricate details of its astounding make-up. The "Scareophone" acts up to its name. If the merry patent-agents are up to their business, they will be bombarding Glyn with tempting offers. The machine will shout "Murder!" and other words at command; as a burglar alarm it can claim great honour and much efficacy, and if the inventor had his due, without a doubt he would be busy raking in the shekels over his clever stunt. But matters do not turn out as Glyn had imagined. The reports of the audacious invention fly round, and Racke and Crooke hear what is happening.

PUTTING THEIR HEADS TOGETHER.

That's precisely what Racke and Crooke do, though not in the same way that young Oliver Lynn accomplished the feat in a recent yarn. There are some astounding developments in this record story. That Scareophone will long be remembered at St. Jim's, and no wonder! What's more, you will think the world of Glyn, for the part he plays. He is an inventor, and something besides.

"THE MYSTERIOUS 'X'"

Every strong man has to make a few enemies. So it is with Anthony Sharpe, the super-detective. In next Wednesday's gripping yarn of the famous sleuth we are presented with a picture of hatred without parallel. Sharpe's inveterate foe schemes to trap him, and succeeds, for the detective walks straight into the web prepared for him by the mysterious plotter, who has long cherished a hope of revenge on his adversary. The plan of the desperate man is as clever as it is daring. Anthony Sharpe is inveigled into a certain house, and there he soon finds himself utterly at the mercy of his remorseless opponent. Bound hand and foot, and gagged, the detective learns that escape is out of the question. If his friends burst into the room his doom is sealed; nothing can save him! And there would, without a doubt, have been an end of the detective if it had not been for the resourcefulness of

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Tim O'Carroll. Tim discovers what is happening, and the curtain does not ring down quite in the way the arch-scurdrel intended. It is a taut, tense, well-worked-out story, full of dramatic situations.

"A BRITISHER'S TEST!"

The "Gem" has myriads of readers in America, and they and everybody else will be keen on this story of a young Britisher's adventures in the Great Republic. There is brilliant novelty, and some considerable mystery in this fine, complete tale. The central character is a youngster who is sent for to the States by his uncle. But when he crosses the Herring Pond, and starts looking for his uncle, there is no trace of such a relative. There is nothing to be done, in the circumstances, but to make the best of what looks like a particularly bad job. It is no specially attractive thing to find yourself on your beam-ends in a strange country, even if the inhabitants do speak your language and are kindly minded. For you are a stranger, and you have to prove your mettle anywhere before there can be a chance of earning your living and making good. In this bright and extremely unusual story the victim of bad chance buckles to in grand style, and worries into success. But what about that uncle? What was he doing? Why on earth did he vanish out, and leave no address? That you will hear about in next week's topping number of the "Gem." The result shows that sometimes when anybody is most missing he is really right on the spot all the time!

DUNCAN STORM'S SERIAL.

The heroes of St. Beowulf's figure in a very dashing instalment of this gripping serial next week. They have faced perils of the direst kind, but pluck and good spirits have served them in real good stead. And then we have the redoubtable Mr. Hobbs! He is a host in himself.

THE TUCK-HAMPER.

Just remember that postcards will serve best for Tuck-Hamper entries. I have some more surprises ahead for you, so look out. The Readers' Page waxes more popular each week.

THE 'SPIDER' OF THE NORTH.

Who is the "Spider"? Keep your eye on Chat, and you will hear more about this extraordinary character. He is the central actor in the sensational new serial which will be starting shortly. It is a thrilling tale of mill-land, and will create immense excitement. Nothing quite so remarkable ever came out of the realm of the loom!

A LETTER FROM THE UNITED STATES.

My best thanks go to a chum of mine who lives in Boston, Massachusetts. He has sent me a long letter, the purport of which is that he considers the stories in the "Gem" ought to be read by every fellow in the States. On that point we are all agreed. I hope young Americans will take the hint.

ORDER IN ADVANCE.

"Gem" readers of long-standing know all about the necessity of ordering in advance. I want to urge on all new readers to do the same, otherwise they may be disappointed.

YOUR EDITOR.

The "Magnet" Limerick Competition!

NO ENTRANCE FEE REQUIRED.

FIRST PRIZE

£1-1-0

and

Consolation Prizes of 2/6 for all efforts published.

In order to win one of the above prizes all you have to do is to supply the last line of the verse given below, taking care to see that your effort bears some apt relation to the theme.

RULES GOVERNING THE "MAGNET" LIMERICK COMPETITION.

- 1.—The First Prize will be awarded to the sender of what, in the opinion of the Editor and a competent staff of adjudicators, is the best Last Line received.
- 2.—Consolation prizes of 2/6 will be awarded from week to week to those competitors whose efforts show merit.
- 3.—The coupon below entitling you to enter for this competition must be either pasted on to a postcard, in which case your last line must be written IN INK directly beneath it, or enclosed separately in an envelope with your Last Line effort attached.
- 4.—Competitor's name and full postal address must accompany every effort sent in.
- 5.—Entries must reach us not later than April 19th, 1923, and MUST NOT be enclosed with entrance forms for any other competition. They must be addressed "MAGNET Limerick No. 1," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.
- 6.—Your Editor undertakes that every effort sent in will receive careful consideration, but he will not hold himself responsible for coupons lost or mislaid, or delayed in the post. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery.
- 7.—This competition is open to all Readers of the Companion Papers, but the result each week will appear only in the "Magnet."
- 8.—It is a distinct condition of entry that your Editor's decision must be accepted as binding in all matters. Acceptance of these rules is an express condition of entry.

"MAGNET" LIMERICK COMPETITION.—No. 1

"I fear there's a burglar about,
With my rifle I'll ferret him out."

Mr. Prout did exclaim,
Then he took careful aim.

THIS EXAMPLE WILL HELP YOU.

And smashed the Head's window,
no doubt!

G.

CUT HERE.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry and Lowther; and Manners grinned.

"Nothing to cackle at!" said D'Arcy minor crossly. "We had the pointer all round."

"Oh, draw it mild," said Tom Merry. "Mr. Selby wouldn't cane you for not having any cigarettes in your pockets."

Wally grinned.

"Well, no, even Selby wouldn't go that far," he admitted. "He made out that we were making fun of him. Said that I was making faces at him behind his back."

"And you weren't?"

"Hem! I didn't expect him to turn round so suddenly," said Wally. "He spun round just like a humming-top, at the wrong moment."

"You young ass!"

"He said Manners minor was making faces, too——"

"And wasn't he?"

"Well, perhaps he was. But he said Levison minor was, and Levison minor wasn't! Were you, Franky?"

"Not at all," said Frank. "Honour bright!"

"But he caned all three!" said Wally indignantly. "Gave us two each—hard. I was going to hack his shins, but—but I didn't."

"No, I'm pretty sure you didn't," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"But we're going to pay him out," said Wally. "Don't you forget it. He's been unjust. Unjust masters ought to be stopped."

"And you want us to come along and strew the hungry churchyard with his bones?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" urged Wally. "Talk sense, even if you are in the Shell. We've got a jumping cracker——"

"What?"

"Jumping cracker. Goes bang six times with a frightful bang. If it went off suddenly under your chair when you weren't expecting it it would make you jump no end! We've got it for Selby!"

"My only hat!"

"Franky bought it the other day," said Wally. "We were thinking of springing it on Cutts of the Fifth, because he cuffed one of our chaps. But Cutts can wait—anyhow, Cutts don't matter. We're going to let Selby have it hot."

"You awful young ass!" said Tom.

"It's all cut and dried," said Wally. "Selby's going out for a walk; he often does after prep. The fire's laid in his study; and when he comes in he will put a match to it. Well, the idea is to bury the jumping cracker in his fire, and when he lights the fire he will light the cracker. When it goes bang, Selby will think it's a giddy earthquake."

The three minors chuckled in chorus.

"And he will know at once that you've done it!" roared Manners. "You young asses, do you think he won't know at once?"

"That's where you come in."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You see, we've thought it out," explained Wally. "Selby, of course, will jump to it that we've done it. But we're going to prove a strong alibi. We're going to be in the Common-room, with a lot of chaps, who will bear witness that we were there all the time Selby was out. See?"

"Then how——"

"You're going to plant the cracker in Selby's fireplace for us."

"I!" yelled Manners.

"That's it! That's the stunt!"

"Why, you—you——"

"That's the game," said Levison minor. "He can't possibly suspect a chap in the Shell, so the whole thing will never come out."

"Wrapped in mystery, you know," said Wally.

"You think I'm going to play a potty trick like that on a Form master?" howled Manners.

"You're Reggie's major——"

"You young ass!"

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Manners minor indignantly. "Didn't father tell you you were to look after me at school? Ain't you always shoving in your oar when I don't want you to? Well, shove it in now that I do want you to."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther. "Did your father expect Manners to play tricks on your Form master?"

"Well, he told him to look after me," said Reggie obstinately. "How can he look after me better than by making old Selby sit up?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're going to do it, Manners?" asked Wally.

"No!" hooted Manners. "And the best thing you can do with that cracker is to chuck it in the dust-bin."

"Catch us!" said Wally disdainfully. "Reggie, old man, your major's a funk!"

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"I'm afraid he is," assented Reggie. "I must say, Harry, I think you're disgusting me."

Manners rose from his chair and picked up a ruler. He looked as if he was about to give his young brother some brotherly correction, for his own good. The three fags backed warily to the door.

"Oh, go and eat coke, you Shell rotters!" said Wally. "We'll go along to the Fourth and ask my major. Come on, kids!"

And the three minors quitted Study No. 10 in the Shell, leaving Tom Merry and Lowther chuckling and Manners frowning.

CHAPTER 2.

Levison Major Puts His Foot Down!

"WATS!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form uttered that monosyllable with unusual emphasis. Blake and Herries and Digby grinned.

In the doorway of Study No. 6 stood the emissaries of the Third, and they had propounded their wonderful wheeze for pouring the vials of wrath upon the devoted head of Mr. Selby.

They had had no luck at all with Reggie's major. They seemed destined to have none with Wally's major.

Arthur Augustus fixed his eyeglass upon his hopeful minor with a stern look.

"Wats!" he said. "I wepeat, wats!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake & Co.

"I wefuse to lend myself to any such wascally twick!" continued the swell of St. Jim's. "I wegard it as diswepsectful in the last degwee."

"Oh, draw it mild!" urged D'Arcy minor.

"I wefuse to dwaw it mild, Wally. I cinsidah that you have been guilty of gweat diswepsect to your Form mastah, in makin' faces at him."

"But Levison minor didn't make faces!" urged Wally.

"And Levison minor got it as bad as we did."

"Pwobably he deserved it for somethin' else!"

"Very likely, I think," remarked Jack Blake.

"Fairly certain, I should say!" opined Digby.

"The more these fags are licked the better it is for them!" observed George Herries.

"Look here," hooted Wally, "are you going to stand by us, Gussy, or aren't you?"

"Certainly not. I should wegard such a twick——"

"Your major's a funk, Wally!" chuckled Reggie Manners.

"Well, I admit he's a silly ass!" said Wally. "Might have known we shouldn't get any sense in this study."

"Weally, Wally——"

"You've got a major, Frank," said Wally. "We'll try Levison of the Fourth next. He's got nerve enough for anything."

"Come on!" said Frank.

The three minors departed from Study No. 6, Wally closing the door with a bang. In the passage they found Piggott of the Third looking for them.

Piggott eyed them inquiringly with his narrow, rather cunning eyes.

"Is it all right?" he asked.

"No, it isn't," grunted Wally. "They won't take it on. We're going to ask Frank's major."

"He won't do it," said Piggott. "He's too jolly goody-goody these days."

Frank Levison's eyes gleamed.

"You smoky little cad!" he exclaimed. "It's all your fault, with you filthy cigarettes. Cut off, before I kick you."

"Kick him, anyhow," said Wally. "I never see that little beast without wanting to kick him."

Piggott of the Third backed hastily away. Piggott was not liked by Wally & Co.—or, indeed, by any of the Third. His ways were not the ways of the three minors.

"Never mind him," said Manners minor. "Come along and see Levison. Selby will be going out soon, and we've got to fix up something."

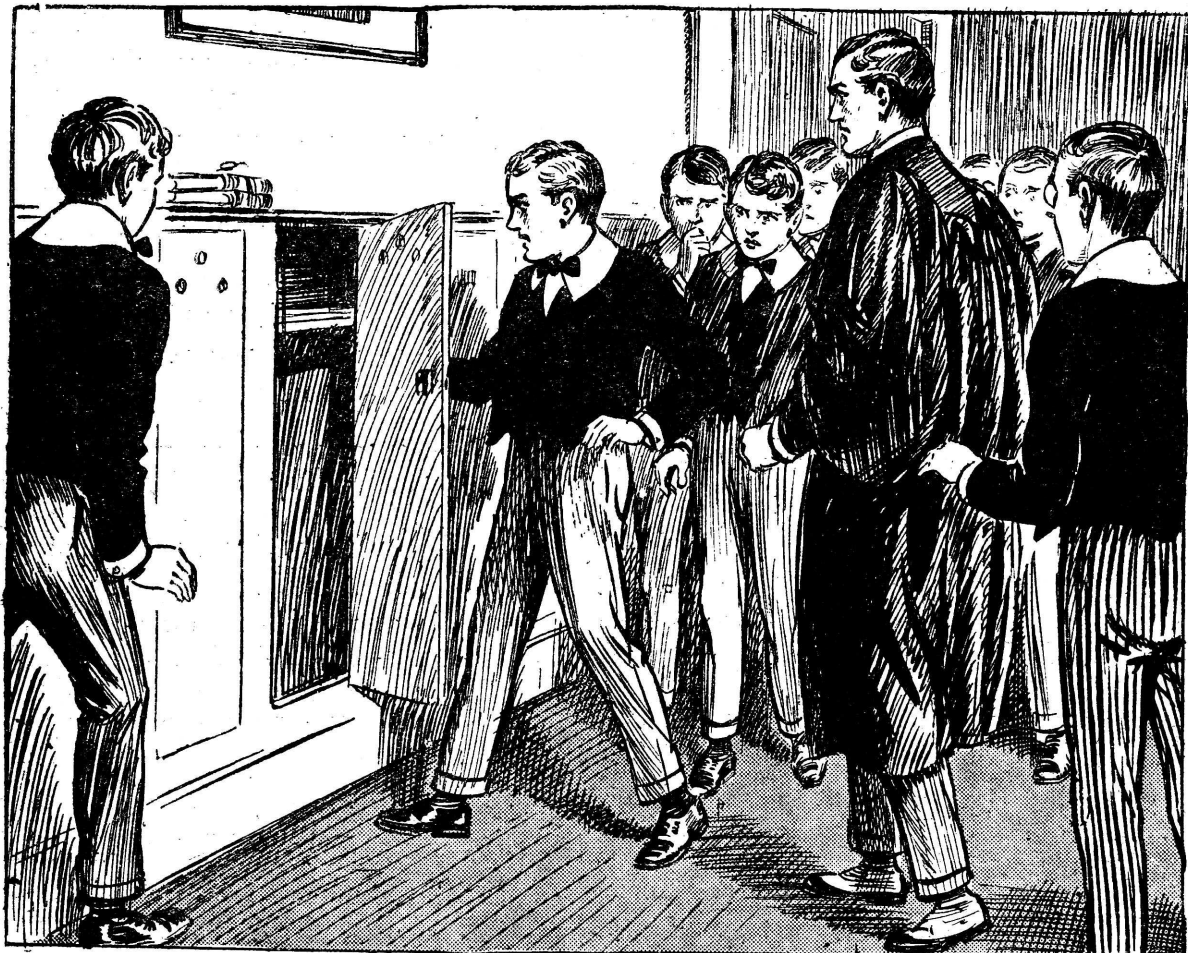
And Wally & Co. proceeded to Study No. 9 in the Fourth, which belonged to Levison, Clive, and Cardew. They found the three Fourth-Formers about to go down after finishing prep. Ralph Reckness Cardew grinned as the three fags presented themselves.

"Here's your merry minor, Ernest!" he yawned. "This means work for you—and he's brought along his pals for instruction. You'll be tutin' the whole Third Form soon, at this rate."

Levison of the Fourth greeted his minor with a nod and a smile. Frank Levison often came to Study No. 9 for help with his work, which Ernest Levison was always prepared to give.

"It's not that this time," said Frank hastily.

"Not jolly old Julius Cæsar?" asked Cardew. "Have you really got it into your head at last that all Gaul was divided



"Levison minor," said Mr. Railton sternly, "you declare that the cracker you intended to use in frightening Mr. Selby is still in your locker? Well, show it to me!" Frank Levison crossed to his locker and threw it open. The next moment a scared look came over his face. "It—it's not there, sir!" he gasped. (See page 9.)

into three parts—or was it four? Blessed if I haven't forgotten!"

"What is it, Frank?" asked Ernest Levison.

Frank hesitated. Now that he was in his major's presence he realised that his brother was not likely to take a hand in such proceedings as the fags contemplated. Indeed, the folly of that great "jape" became rather more clear to Frank's mind as he met his brother's steady eyes. But Wally of the Third hastened to explain.

Levison & Co. listened and stared. Clive looked grave, and Cardew burst into a chuckle. Levison major knitted his brows.

"You thumping young duffers!" was his comment.

"You're not going to refuse?" asked Wally.

"Yes, rather."

"You're major's a funk, Franky!" said Reggie Manners.

"No, he isn't," said Frank, at once. "Only he's got more sense than you chaps."

"Why, you cheeky young prig—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Cardew. "Why don't you take a hand, Levison? Fancy Selby's face when his fire explodes?"

Levison did not laugh, however. He crossed to the study door and closed it.

"Look here, kids," he said quietly, "you can't do this."

"Oh, can't we?" exclaimed Wally belligerently.

"No. According to your own account, you all asked for what you got, excepting Frank—"

"Selby's a beast, anyhow!" put in Reggie.

"He's not a nice man," agreed Levison of the Fourth.

"But a trick like that is a rotten one. It might do real damage."

"Let it!" said Wally recklessly.

"It would give Mr. Selby an awful shock," resumed Levison.

"That's what we want."

"I don't think you want that, if you think a bit first," suggested Levison. "I don't say I'm up against pulling his leg a bit, if you get a chance. But a wheeze like this is too thick. Suppose it sets fire to his study?"

"It wouldn't!"

"Well, it might," said Frank.

"Utter rot!" said Manners minor.

"Jam in his slippers, if you like," said Levison. "But this isn't a harmless trick; it's too thick. If it came out, you'd get a flogging all round."

"It wouldn't come out, if a Fourth Form chap did it. Selby would never think of looking in the Fourth or the Shell."

"Who bought the cracker?" asked Levison.

"Franky did."

"And do you think Selby wouldn't inquire at the shop, and find out who bought it?"

"But we're going to prove an alibi," explained Reggie.

"We're going to be on view while another chap shoves it into Selby's fireplace."

"You young ass! Do you think Selby isn't wide to that?"

exclaimed Levison. "He's just punished you—and he will find out that it's your cracker. He will know at once that you got another chap to plant it on him."

"Oh!" said Reggie.

Obviously, the three minors had not thought out the position with much thoroughness. They had been thinking chiefly of vengeance on the obnoxious Mr. Selby.

"But that's not all," resumed Levison. "You'd be brought to book, without the shadow of a doubt; but, besides that, it's too thick. You ought not to do it."

"We didn't come here for a sermon!" said Reggie sulkily.

"Then you came to the wrong study," said Cardew, shaking his head. "The chief output in this study is sermons; and Levison is the jolly old sermoniser. I have to stand it. Why shouldn't you?"

"Oh, dry up, Cardew!" said Sidney Clive. "Let Levison keep the young asses from a Head's flogging if he can."

Wally & Co. exchanged uneasy glances. The mention of a Head's flogging had a considerable effect on the exuberance of their spirits.

"Let's chuck it!" said Frank. "After all, we've got over the licking."

"That's all very well!" grumbled Reggie.

"Oh, let's chuck it!" said Wally, with a grunt. "Levison's right, if you come to that. Selby's as sharp as a razor, and he would be bound to tumble. I'm not in want of a Head's licking, for one!"

"Chuck it, if you like," said Reggie. "Anyhow, it's pretty plain that nobody's going to lend a hand, and we can't do it ourselves."

"That's sense!" said Ernest Levison. "I wish you'd promise not to do it, before you go, though."

"I promise!" said Frank, at once.

"What rot!" said Reggie.

"Bosh!" said Wally.

The three minors quitted the study. Reggie Manners and D'Arcy minor were feeling disappointed; but Frank, as a matter of fact, was rather relieved. He had not been very keen on that drastic method of making Mr. Selby "sit up."

Piggott met them on the stairs.

"Fixed it up?" he asked.

"No!" grunted Wally. "We've got a sermon from Frank's major, instead!"

Piggott sneered.

"We've chucked up the idea," said Frank Levison quietly.

"Funky!" jeered Piggott.

"If you think we're funny, you can take the cracker and plant it on Selby yourself!" said Frank angrily.

"Catch him risking it!" grinned Wally of the Third.

Wally & Co. went on their way, unheeding Piggott's scowling face; and soon afterwards they were busy in the gym, where they forgot all about Mr. Selby and his many sins. But Reuben Piggott, the black sheep of the Third, had not forgotten.

CHAPTER 3.

Alarming!

TOM MERRY & CO. were chatting in the hall downstairs when Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, came in from his evening walk. It was a cold evening, and a light rain had begun to fall. Mr. Selby, as he came in, looked cold and uncomfortable and sharp-tempered. The Terrible Three of the Shell smiled involuntarily as the Form master came in. They were thinking of the egregious proposition of Wally & Co., and the part the fags had intended Manners of the Shell to play. Mr. Selby caught the smile, and frowned. He did not like smiling faces. He was not of a happy disposition, and, like many gentlemen of unhappy dispositions, he took happy looks in others as a sort of affront to himself.

He whisked by with a frowning brow; and Monty Lowther closed one eye at his chums.

"The dear old Selby-bird looks chippy, as usual!" he murmured. "Lucky for the Third that prep's over. They would have an enjoyable time with him now!"

"Lucky for them they never got that cracker planted on him, anyhow!" remarked Tom Merry. "Selby would have raised Cain!"

"The young asses!" said Manners. "And to think that I would take a hand in a fatheaded game like that!"

"I'm glad it's all off, for their sakes," said Tom. "I hear that they asked D'Arcy major and Levison major in turn. Levison of the Fourth got them to give up the wheeze."

"Good man!" said Manners.

"Selby's rather a beast," remarked Monty Lowther. "But there are ways of dealing with beasts—and the Third Form way is a bit too drastic. I— Oh, Christopher Columbus!"

Bang!

It was a terrific report from Mr. Selby's study.

Bang!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "They've done it after all!"

Bang!

The Terrible Three rushed along to Mr. Selby's study doorway, which was open. A dozen other fellows rushed up from different directions. The terrific reports rang through the School House.

Bang!

Mr. Selby had applied a match to his fire, already laid. That was quite the usual thing; but what followed was extremely unusual.

Obviously, the jumping-cracker was there!

The explosion hurled sticks out of the grate, and chunks of coal, and cracker—living up to its name as a "jumper"—followed.

It banged and banged and banged in that manner of jumping-crackers, and Mr. Selby fairly shrieked with alarm.

For a terrible instant the Form master supposed that he was the victim of some anarchist outrage, and that it was a bomb that was bursting in his fireplace.

Bang!

The unfortunate cracker, hurled about by the force of its

own explosions, had dropped at Mr. Selby's feet, when it exploded for the fifth time. Mr. Selby jumped clear of the floor, with a fearful yell.

He came down again—in unavoidable obedience to the well-known laws of gravitation—right on the cracker!

Bang!

Shriek!

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a yell from the crowded passage. The School House juniors did not suppose that it was a bomb. They knew that it was a jape, and they apparently thought it funny.

"Here's Railton!" breathed Manners.

Mr. Railton came striding through the crowd. The School House master was looking greatly startled, as well he might.

"What—what has happened?" he exclaimed.

"Help!" shrieked Mr. Selby.

"What—what— Mr. Selby, what—"

"Help!"

The Housemaster strode into the study. The room reeked with the smell of gunpowder; on the carpet lay the wreck of the repeating-cracker. Mr. Selby leaned on the wall, and spluttered;

"Help!"

"Calm yourself, Mr. Selby!" The Housemaster spoke rather sharply. He saw at a glance what had happened, and that there was no occasion for Mr. Selby's wild alarm. He was conscious of the merriment in the passage, if the Third Form master was not.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Mr. Selby. "A—a bomb! I—it was a plot to blow me up—to blow up the House—to—"

"It was a firework!" said Mr. Railton-coldly.

"Wha-a-at?"

Mr. Railton pointed out the remnant of the firework with the toe of his boot.

"That is what has alarmed—I mean startled you, Mr. Selby. It was a firework, and seems to have been placed in your fireplace."

"Fancy Railton working all that out in his head!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Beats Sherlock Holmes—what?"

"A—a—a firework!" gasped Mr. Selby. "Ah, now I perceive! Bless my soul! It must have been placed in the grate. I applied a match— Oh dear! A trick—a dastardly trick—an infamous trick! Ow!"

"Certainly, a trick!" said Mr. Railton.

Mr. Selby recovered himself a little. He had had a great shock, and he had been scared almost out of his wits. But now that he pulled himself together he was conscious of the fact that he had displayed a fright that was unworthy of him. His face crimsoned as his glance turned on the grinning faces in the doorway.

His glance was enough to make the juniors back away. Nobody wanted to meet Mr. Selby's infuriated eye.

"Those young asses!" murmured Tom Merry. "There'll be an awful row over this!"

"Mum's the word!" said Manners hastily. "We don't want to say anything."

"Of course not."

"Better clear off, in case the merry beaks begin asking whether anybody knows anything about it!" whispered Lowther.

And the Terrible Three promptly cleared, leaving, however, a buzzing crowd of fellows discussing the startling happening. In Mr. Selby's study, the Housemaster threw wide open the window to allow the smell of gunpowder to melt away. Mr. Selby picked up the remnant of the cracker, and looked at it, and laid it on the table.

"That will be evidence against the perpetrator of this outrage!" he said, between his teeth.

"This matter must be inquired into," said Mr. Railton. "The Head must deal with this."

"Quite so."

"I cannot imagine what boy would be foolish enough, and reckless enough, to play a prank like this."

"I think I can!" said Mr. Selby sourly. "I had occasion to punish some members of my Form at preparation this evening for the most unexampled impertinence. I have very little doubt that the author of this outrage was D'Arcy minor or one of his friends."

Mr. Railton nodded slowly.

"It will be necessary to obtain the completest proof, in order to place the matter before the Head," he remarked.

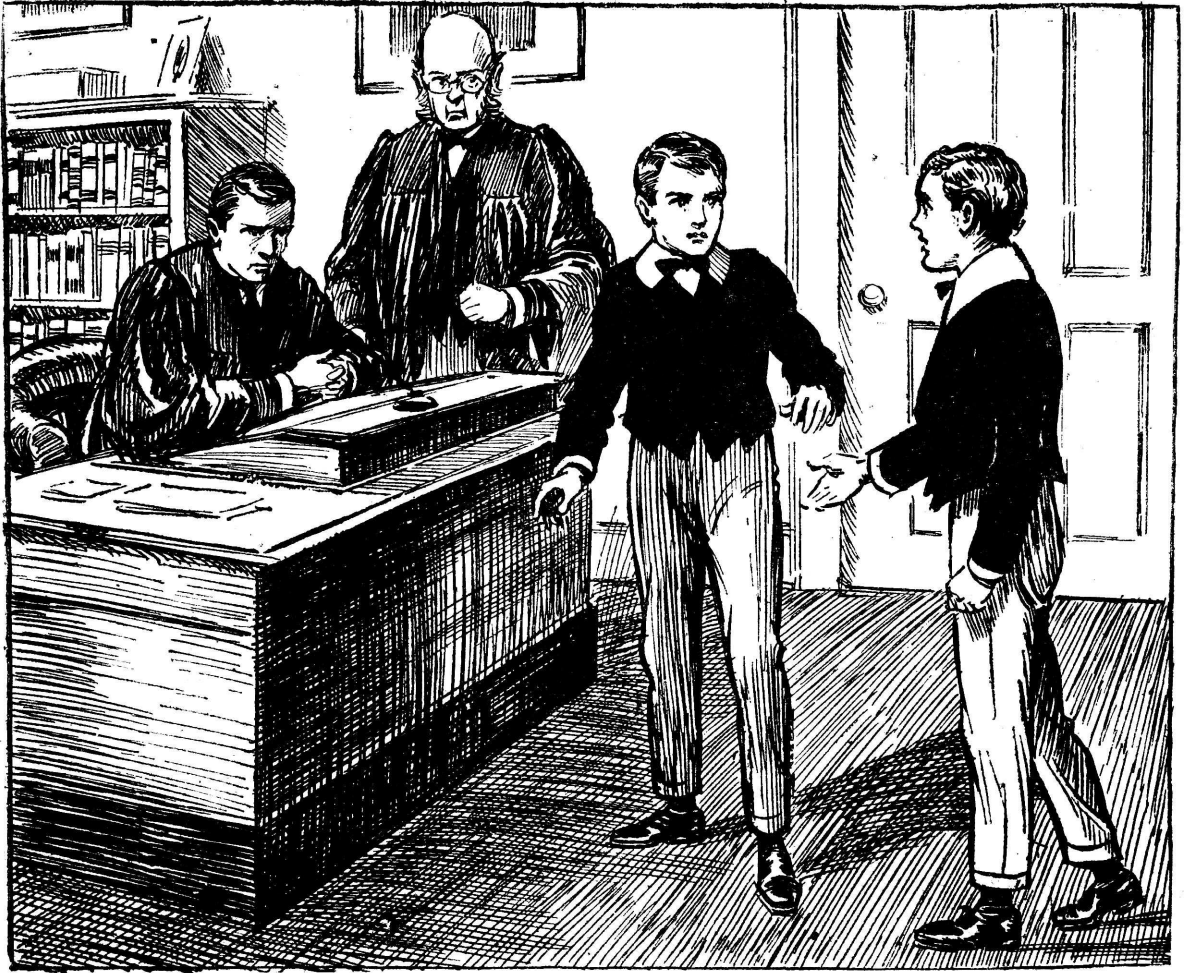
"Dr. Holmes certainly will administer a flogging."

"A very severe flogging, I trust!" said Mr. Selby. "I—I am feeling very upset—very upset indeed!"

"Doubtless it was a severe shock to you," said Mr. Railton, with some sympathy.

"I was—was startled! I fancied, for the moment, that it was a bomb!" said Mr. Selby. "I—I have never heard of such an outrage! Perhaps, Mr. Railton, you would look into the matter while I recover myself?"

"That was my intention," said the Housemaster. "As



"You say, Levison, that your minor had two keys belonging to his locker," said Mr. Railton, "and that he must have lost one which was picked up and used to obtain possession of the cracker in his locker?" "That's what must have happened, sir!" Frank's face grew white. "But I—I haven't lost a key, Ernie," he faltered. (See page 10.)

your suspicions turn upon D'Arcy minor, I will call the boy to my study and question him. I will send you a message when a discovery is made."

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Mr. Selby.

Mr. Railton left the study to inquire into the matter. His look boded little good to the culprit when the discovery was made—as the Housemaster did not doubt that it would be made, in a very short time!

CHAPTER 4.

Mr. Railton Inquires!

"YOU young ass!" "Hullo, what's biting you?" asked Wally of the Third affably.

The Terrible Three had looked for Wally & Co. at once after leaving the vicinity of Mr. Selby's study. They had no doubt, of course, that the fags had carried out their little scheme for making Mr. Selby "sit up," and they charitably desired to put Wally & Co. on their guard—the matter being a much more serious one than the heroes of the Third imagined.

The three minors were found in the Third Form room, with a dozen other fags. They did not look at all troubled in their minds. Indeed, they were apparently in a merry mood, improving the shining hour by hurling ink-balls at Jameson and Frayne and Hobbs and other members of their Form while they waited for bed-time.

"You awful young ass!" repeated Tom Merry. "We've looked in to give you the tip. Look out!"

"What's up?" asked Wally, with a stare.

"Selby is!" grinned Monty Lowther. "I suppose you expected a row, didn't you?"

"Blessed if I did," said Wally. "I thought old Selby was done with us for this evening."

"So he was, if you'd done with him," said Manners

grimly. "Now you're for it if it comes out, and it's bound to. Mind what you say when they begin to inquire."

"Look here," exclaimed Wally warmly, "what are you driving at? We've done nothing that I know of."

"Cut it out!" grunted Manners. "Didn't you hear the row in Selby's study when the cracker went off?"

D'Arcy minor gave a jump.

"The cracker? You mean to say—"

"Of course I didn't!" howled Tom Merry.

"We chucked up the idea after Levison major jawed us. Didn't we, Reggie?"

"We jolly well did!" said Reggie.

"Then you had no hand in it, Reggie?" exclaimed Manners, in great relief.

"No fear!"

"I'm glad of that."

Wally of the Third whistled.

"So the cracker was planted on Selby after all!" he said. "Serves him right, of course. Frank, you young ass—"

"Hullo!" said Levison minor.

"What did you do it for?" demanded Wally. "You know we agreed to chuck it—you suggested it yourself. You promised your major, too; I heard you."

"I heard him, too," said Reggie. "I don't believe in breaking promises. It's mean, young Levison."

"Not at all the thing," said Wally with a shake of the head. "I'm really shocked at you, Franky."

Frank Levison was crimson.

"You silly owl!" he exclaimed. "Do you think I'd break a promise—especially a promise to my major?"

"Well, you did, then," said Reggie. "I heard you promise not to put the cracker into Selby's fire."

"And I never did, either!" exclaimed Frank.

"You didn't?" yelled Wally.

"No, I didn't."
 "Then who did?" exclaimed Tom Merry blankly.
 "How should I know? Somebody else has been playing a jape on Selby, I suppose. It jolly well wasn't my cracker," said Levison minor hotly. "I put mine back in my locker, and it's there now."

"Oh, good!" said Tom. "Of—of course—we thought—after what you said in our study—"
 "Some other merry joker after Selby's scalp," said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "I suppose nobody in the Third loves him very much. Queer that the jolly japer should have hit on the same wheeze as these kids."

"Who are you calling kids?" bawled Wally.
 "Whom, dear child, whom!" urged Monty Lowther gently. "If you muck up your cases like that when Selby hears you—"

"Oh, don't give us any Shell swank!" growled D'Arcy minor. "My only Aunt Jane! Here comes Gussy to jaw."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the Third Form room hurriedly. There was excitement in his aristocratic countenance.

"Wally, you young wascal——" he exclaimed breathlessly.
 "Don't you begin, Gus!" implored Wally.

"You uttah young wascallion!" exclaimed Gussy hotly. "There has been a feahful explosion of fireworks in Mr. Selby's study——"

"Ancient!" said Wally.

"What?"
 "We've had all that from these Shell-fish. We hadn't anything to do with it. Some other giddy japer."

"Bai Jove!"
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon his minor doubtfully. Wally's word was as good as gold, and his major knew it; but his statement was unexpected and surprising.

"I twust Mr. Selby will believe that!" he said.
 "Hush—here comes Railton!" murmured Levison minor.
 The School House master entered the Third Form room. There was deep silence among the fags.

Mr. Railton glanced at the Shell fellows and at Arthur Augustus. He did not address them, however, but fixed his eyes upon D'Arcy minor. Wally of the Third met his eyes calmly. At that moment he was glad from the very bottom of his heart that he had taken Ernest Levison's advice and "chucked" that wonderful scheme of vengeance upon Mr. Selby.

"D'Arcy minor."
 "Yes, sir."

"Did you place a firework in Mr. Selby's study grate while he was out of doors this evening?"

"No, sir."
 "Do you know who did so?"
 "No, sir. Didn't know it had been done at all till these chaps came in and said so."

"I trust you are speaking the truth, D'Arcy minor," said Mr. Railton, with a searching look at the fag.

"Your twust is well-placed, Mr. Wailton," said Arthur Augustus, with calm dignity.

"What?"
 "It is uttably imposs, sir, for my young bwothah to have told you an untwuth."

"I did not ask for your opinion, D'Arcy."
 "No, sir, but I assuah you——"

"You will take a hundred lines, D'Arcy, for impertinence."
 "Bai Jove!"

The Form-room door reopened, and Levison of the Fourth came hurriedly in—so hurriedly for a moment he did not notice the presence of the Housemaster.

"Frank, you young ass—— Oh, ah! I—I didn't see you, sir!" stammered Levison in confusion.

Mr. Railton smiled grimly.

"There is some reason, I presume, why the elder brothers of D'Arcy minor, Levison minor, and Manners minor are all gathered in this room at the same time, just after the outrage in Mr. Selby's study," he said. "I must ask you boys whether you were parties to this outrage?"

"Certainly not, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"Were you aware that it was contemplated?"
 The juniors exchanged uncomfortable glances. They did not speak.

"Your silence is sufficient answer," said the Housemaster dryly. "This is a serious matter. It is serious enough in a foolish fag of the Third Form, but in boys belonging to the Fourth Form and the Shell——"

"You—you see, sir——" stammered Tom.
 "I think I do, Merry. Levison, what were you about to say to your brother when you came in?"

"I—I—I——" stammered Levison.

"Ernest had nothing to do with it, sir!" exclaimed Frank Levison at once. "I—I will tell you what happened, sir."

"You may go on, Levison minor."
 Frank, in faltering accents, went on. There was evidently nothing for it but a clean breast of what the fags had intended: it was the only way of clearing everybody concerned of having had a hand in the actual occurrence.

"We—we were wild with Mr. Selby, sir, for—for licking us," stammered Frank. "We—we did think of putting a cracker in his fireplace. We—we asked Manners to lend a hand, because he's Reggie's major——"

"And he consented?"
 "No, sir. He—he called us names, and told us to chuck it."

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton, rather taken a-back.

"That's all I know about the matter, sir," said Manners quietly. "I thought they had dropped it; and so they had, I believe."

"Certainly they had!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "They came and asked me next, and I pointed out to Wally that it was vevy diswespectful, and ordahed him to give up the ideah. I twust that my young bwothah can be weliud upon to do as I tell him."

Wally made a grimace; but it was no time for telling Arthur Augustus what he thought of him.

"And that is all you knew of the matter, D'Arcy?"
 "Certainly, sir! You can hardly suppose that I should have a hand in such a wotten sillay twick!" said the swell of the Fourth, with dignity.

"And you, Levison?"
 "They asked me, sir," said Levison of the Fourth. "I talked them over, and they gave up the ideah."

"That certainly was a very sensible proceeding on your part," said Mr. Railton. "But it appears that they deceived you, Levison, since the outrage has taken place after all."

"These kids say they had no hand in it, sir," said Tom Merry.

"We never even knew——" began Wally.
 "I promised my brother," said Frank proudly. "Ernest knows I wouldn't break my word to him."

"You three juniors certainly seem to have acted very judiciously," said Mr. Railton approvingly. "You dissuaded these foolish lads, and supposed that they had given up their reckless scheme. That was your duty, as their elder brothers; and I am satisfied that you did your duty. But it is obvious that one, at least, of these Third Form boys was deceiving you. In whose possession was the cracker when this foolish scheme was mooted?"

"Mine, sir!" said Frank, at once.

"Then you——"
 "But I've still got it, sir!" said Frank.

"The cracker is still in your possession?"
 "Yes, sir. I put it back in my locker, and it's still there."

It was some fellow who had another cracker who played this trick on Mr. Selby. We don't know anything about it."

Levison major looked relieved. It was pretty clear that he had rushed to the Third Form room with a doubtful mind.

"This is very extraordinary," said Mr. Railton, eyeing the fags. "That two parties should lay the same scheme, on the same evening——"

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“Might have heard us speaking about it, sir,” said Wally diffidently. “Lots of fellows might have heard us, and got the idea.”

“Possibly!” said Mr. Railton dryly. “I should not punish you for mooted this foolish scheme, as better thoughts prevailed and you gave it up. But the truth must be established. Levison minor, you declare that the cracker you intended to use is still in your possession?”

“In my locker, sir.”

“Open your locker and show it to me.”

“Certainly, sir.”

Levison minor crossed to his locker and threw it open. The next moment a scared look came over his face.

“Well?” said Mr. Railton grimly. “Hand me the cracker, Levison minor.”

Frank caught his breath.

“It—it’s not there, sir!”

CHAPTER 5.

A Shock For Levison!

“NOT there!”

Tom Merry & Co. repeated the words blankly. In full confidence, they had waited for the production of the cracker, which would establish the innocence of the three minors. Levison minor’s manner had been candid sincerity itself.

Mr. Railton’s face hardened.

“The cracker is not there, Levison minor?” he asked.

“N-n-no, sir!”

“Where is it?”

“I—I don’t know!” faltered Frank.

“Does anyone but yourself use that locker?”

“No, sir.”

“Doubtless you did not expect to be asked to produce the firework, Levison minor, in support of your statements,” said the Housemaster. “You no longer maintain, I presume, that it was not your cracker that was put in Mr. Selby’s fireplace?”

“I—I—I don’t know—I—I left it there!” stammered Frank, his face growing crimson. “I—I—”

“You awful young ass!” breathed Wally.

He did not intend Frank to hear the words. But the fag caught them, and swung round on D’Arcy minor hotly.

“Do you think I did it?” he panted. “Do you think I’ve been telling Mr. Railton lies?”

Wally did not answer. Reggie’s look showed plainly enough what he thought. Frank turned his crimson face towards the Housemaster.

“Bai Jove!” murmured Arthur Augustus, in great distress. Levison of the Fourth suppressed a groan.

“Follow me, Levison minor!” said Mr. Railton.

“I—I assure you, sir—”

“Follow me!”

With a troubled face, Levison minor followed Mr. Railton from the Form-room.

“Well, my hat!” said Tom Merry. “So—so it was young Levison, after all! I—I must say I thought he’d rather take a licking than tell a lie!”

“I—I think he was telling the truth,” stammered Levison of the Fourth. “Somebody else may have taken his cracker.”

“May have!” murmured Manners.

“Cut it out!” said Reggie Manners. “You saw young Levison unlock his locker when he opened it, I suppose.”

“Do the lockers here lock?” asked Tom Merry. “Fag lockers generally have the locks busted, when they have locks at all.”

“Levison minor’s so jolly careful!” said Wally dismally. “I don’t believe there’s another locker in the room that locks. But Frank’s does.”

“He mended the lock himself, soon after he came,” put in Joe Frayne. “I remember going with him to get the keys made. He had two made in case he lost one. He’s too jolly careful!”

Levison of the Fourth was quite pale. His confidence in his young brother was as firm as if founded on a rock. But it had received a staggering blow now. Frank had promised him to give up the wild scheme of vengeance upon Mr. Selby. The locker had been locked—all the juniors and fags had seen Frank unlock it to take out the cracker. Certainly it looked as if Frank had not only lied in the most barefaced manner to the Housemaster; but had broken his promise to his brother. And he need not have promised—Wally and Reggie had declined to do so, from a lofty feeling of independence. Frank had done so, of his own accord—and now—

“This is rotten!” muttered Tom Merry. “But—but—Have you kids been with young Levison all the time? That would be a point! Where did you go after seeing us in the study?”

“The uttah young asses came to see me,” said Arthur Augustus.

“And then me,” said Levison. “After that—”

“We went to the gym,” said Wally. “We had some boxing

with young Frayne and Hobbs and Jameson. Then I went to see Tompkins of the Fourth. He’s got a pocket-knife to sell.”

“And you, Reggie?” asked Manners.

“I went along with Frayne,” said Manners minor. “We came back here.”

“My minor with you?” asked Levison eagerly.

“No. He came in later—when Wally came back. But he wasn’t out of my sight more than ten minutes,” said Reggie, reflecting.

“Had he the cracker about with him then?”

“Blessed if I know! He said he’d put it back in his locker—Wally and I waited for him while he cut into the Form-room with it, didn’t we, Wally?”

“We did,” said Wally. “We thought he had put it away before he went to the gym with us.”

“Then he might have been to Selby’s study with it without you kids knowing?” asked Tom Merry.

“He might,” said Wally. “We weren’t watching the chap. Of course, he did it, poor old Frank! But I’m dashed if I didn’t think he was telling the truth, till he opened the locker!”

“He was telling the truth!” exclaimed Levison of the Fourth. “Somebody else must have got at the locker.”

“How could they? It was locked.”

Ernest Levison turned to Frayne.

“You say my young brother had two keys made, in case he lost one?”

“I know he did,” said Frayne. “I was with him.”

“Do you know whether he’s lost one?”

“Oh!” exclaimed Tom Merry. “That would be it! Of course, the young ass lost a key, and some young cad found it, and—”

“That’s it, of course!” said Levison. “I was a fool to think anything else for a second! I’m going to explain that to Railton.”

He hurried away. The other juniors followed him more slowly from the Third Form room. They were feeling relieved, but doubtful.

“I—I suppose Levison’s hit it?” said Manners.

“Bai Jove! I twust so.”

“If young Levison’s really lost a key—” said Tom.

“If!” murmured Lowther.

“You don’t think so, Monty?”

“Well, Levison minor is the only chap in the Third who’s careful enough to keep his locker in order. A chap who’s so jolly careful as that, isn’t likely to strew his keys about the school.”

“Bai Jove! That is vewy cowwect!” said Arthur Augustus dismally. “I weally feah that it looks as if young Levison has been tellin’ whoppahs. It does not mattah much about fwightenin’ old Selby, but it is wotten to tell lies about it.”

“Let’s hope for the best,” said Tom. “Levison will be able to tell us. He’s gone to Railton’s study.”

And the juniors waited in the passage for Levison, Blake, and Herries and Dig and several other fellows joining them there. The affair in Mr. Selby’s study was the talk of the School House now.

Levison of the Fourth, nothing doubting that he was on the right track, and ashamed of having doubted his brother for a moment, had fairly flown to the Housemaster’s study. He barely stopped to knock before he burst into the room, panting for breath.

Mr. Selby was there with the Housemaster. Frank was standing before the two masters with crimson cheeks. All eyes were turned on Ernest Levison at once as he burst in.

“Levison!” exclaimed Mr. Railton angrily.

“Excuse me, sir,” panted Levison, “I can tell you about it—”

“If you have anything to say—”

Frank gave his brother a hopeful, grateful look. If anybody could help him now, it was his brother; he felt that. And he fully expected Ernest’s faith in him to be unshaken, in spite of the look of things. Nothing, certainly, would ever have shaken his faith in Levison of the Fourth.

“Somebody had been at Frank’s locker, sir!” gasped Levison.

“Nonsense!” snapped Mr. Selby.

“But, sir—”

“Utter nonsense!”

“Pray allow Levison to speak, Mr. Selby!” said the Housemaster. “Our only desire is to get at the actual facts. Levison is bound to state anything he knows.”

Mr. Selby expressed an angry grunt. He was rather eager for a victim than for conclusive evidence. However, he could not venture to say so to the Housemaster, so he held his peace.

“Now, Levison, you are aware that your brother unlocked his locker to take out the cracker?” said Mr. Railton. “It was not there, and it was apparently impossible for anyone else to have taken it out. You are aware of that?”

“Yes, sir. But Frank had two keys to the locker,” said

Levison eagerly. "I've just heard so from Frayne, who's willing to witness that there were two keys. Frank must have lost one."

"You suggest that some person found the lost key, and opened your brother's locker to remove the cracker?"

"That's what must have happened, sir."

Frank's face grew white.

"I—I haven't lost a key, Ernie!" he faltered.

"Wha-a-at?"

Levison of the Fourth fairly staggered. That was about the last thing he had expected to hear. Mr. Selby smiled sourly.

"You—you haven't lost a key?" stuttered Levison.

"N-no!"

"Then how could anybody have opened your locker?"

"I—I don't know."

"Oh!" gasped Levison.

The utter dismay in Levison's face touched even Mr. Selby a little. It was so clear that the Fourth-Former had rushed there breathlessly to clear his brother, as he had supposed, only to learn that his guilt was beyond doubt.

"Your faith in your brother's sense of honour appears to have been misplaced, Levison," said Mr. Selby, not unkindly for him. "You had better go."

Levison of the Fourth went, without another word, and without a look at his brother. Frank's glance followed him, and his head drooped. Before the masters who were to judge him, he had held his head proudly erect; but it was lowered now.

"Ernest doesn't believe me!"

That was the thought in the unhappy fag's mind—a thought that was crushing, overwhelming. If his brother did not believe him, who else was likely to do so? The plainest, clearest evidence would never have shaken his faith in Ernest; but Ernest's faith in him was shaken—more than shaken—it was gone. At that moment the severest punishment from the headmaster could not have made Frank suffer more.

Levison hurried away. He was passing the group of juniors at the corner of the passage without speaking when Tom Merry caught his arm.

"Tell us——" he began.

"There's nothing to tell," said Levison huskily. "He—he hadn't lost a key. He said so. That's all!"

He hurried on, the juniors no longer seeking to detain him.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

In silence the group broke up. There was nothing more to be said. Levison minor had lied, and his brother knew it. That was enough!

CHAPTER 6.

Major and Minor.

LEVISON minor stood in Mr. Railton's study, still, silent, as if rooted to the floor. He hardly heard the words of the Housemaster; they were like an irritating buzz in his ears. His thoughts were with his brother.

"Levison minor, give me your attention!" snapped Mr. Railton.

Frank made an effort.

"Yes, sir," he said dazedly.

"Do you now confess what you have done?"

"I—I haven't done anything, sir."

"You deny having placed the cracker in your Form master's fire?"

"I deny it, sir!"

"You do not deny that the cracker was your property?"

"I—I suppose it was, sir."

"There are two keys to your locker, both of which are in your possession?"

"Yes, sir."

"The locker cannot be opened without a key?"

"No, sir."

"You declare that you placed the cracker in the locker after your brother had persuaded you to give up your scheme?"

"Yes, sir."

"Locking it?"

"The locker fastens when it shuts, sir. It snaps locked."

"And it was fastened when you opened it in the Form-room in my presence?"

"Yes, sir," said Frank heavily. "You saw me use the key."

"I did! After this, Levison minor, you dare to assert that you were not guilty of the outrage in Mr. Selby's study?"

"Yes, sir," said Frank miserably. "I don't understand it. But I've only told you the truth."

"You are aware that you have stated an impossibility?" said Mr. Railton, with much patience.

"I—I know it looks like it, sir."

Mr. Selby broke in. Patience was not in his line, not at all, and really this seemed like carrying patience to the point of absurdity.

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"Mr. Railton, I have never seen a case so clear. Are we not wasting time listening to this wretched boy's falsehoods?"

"I fear so!" said Mr. Railton, with a sigh. "I had a better opinion of Levison minor. My boy, for the last time, I appeal to you to tell the truth!"

"I've done so, sir."

"You must be aware, Levison minor, that, serious as your act was, it is a much more serious matter to tell a series of deliberate untruths to your Housemaster? That is unpardonable."

"I—I haven't, sir! I—I know I'm going to be flogged," said Frank, with a white face. "I don't care! Ernie thinks I'm a liar, and—and I don't care for anything else." His voice broke.

Mr. Railton looked at him very curiously.

"You have given pain to your brother, Levison minor—you can see that. For his sake, if for no other reason, you should withdraw this tissue of falsehoods before it is too late."

"I can't tell you anything else, sir," said Frank brokenly. "I've told you all I know. I can't do anything more."

Mr. Railton compressed his lips. He was deeply angry, yet there was something in the fag's white, harassed face that touched him strangely. The painful silence in the study was broken by Mr. Selby.

"It seems useless to speak to this boy, Mr. Railton. The matter can only be referred to the Head now."

"Quite so. Levison minor, you understand that I shall place this matter before Dr. Holmes in the morning, and that there is no doubt whatever that your headmaster will administer a severe flogging."

"I—I suppose so, sir," faltered Frank.

"I recommend you, Levison minor, to tell the truth when you come before your headmaster," said Mr. Railton dryly.

"You may go now."

Frank Levison went with dragging steps from the study. The contempt in Mr. Railton's face was a shock to him. Of Mr. Selby's angry scorn he thought nothing. He did not expect justice from that hasty and sour gentleman. But even Mr. Railton's opinion did not matter so much to him as his brother's. Ernest did not believe him. It was almost impossible that his statements could be believed, as matters stood; even to himself it was obvious that what he had stated verged on the impossible. Yet he had expected Ernest's faith in his word to remain unshaken. He had taken that much for granted, somehow.

He stood for some minutes in the corridor, trying to think it out; and he made his way at last to the Fourth Form passage. Blake & Co. were talking in a group there, and they looked compassionately at Frank's white face as he passed. The fag passed on without heeding them—almost without seeing them. He stopped at Study No. 9, and tapped and opened the door timidly.

"Hallo, here's the jolly old anarchist," said Ralph Reckness Cardew. "Trot in, young Trotsky!"

But even Cardew became grave as he saw Frank's face more clearly. That cheery young face looked years older.

"Keep your pecker up, kid," he said. "It's a floggin' now you're bowled out; but, dash it all, you needn't look like that over a floggin'. The Head will go easy on a kid like you."

"Keep smiling, old scout!" said Clive encouragingly.

Levison of the Fourth did not speak. His brow was black and gloomy. Frank's lips quivered in a smile.

"I'm not afraid of a flogging," he said. "I could stand that. I don't care about the flogging."

"Then what's worryin' you?" asked Cardew.

"I didn't do it!"

"Oh gad!"

"Ernie!" muttered Frank.

Cardew and Clive exchanged a queer glance, and silently quitted Study No. 9 together. They realised that the brothers had better be left to themselves just then.

Frank stood with his eyes fixed on his major's gloomy face. Ernest Levison seemed plunged in the deepest dejection.

"Ernie! I never did it."

"Don't!" muttered Levison.

"Ernie! You can't take my word?"

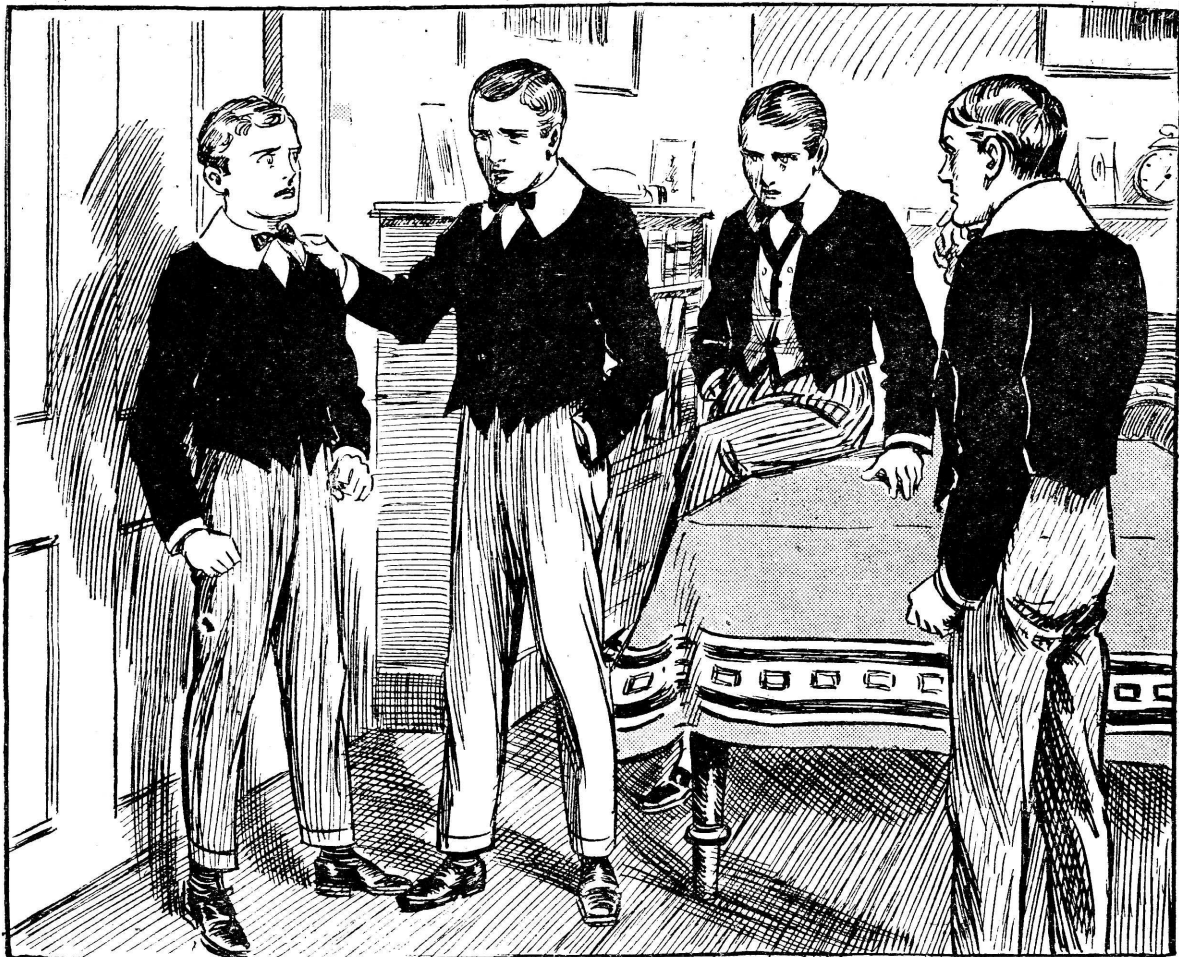
Levison of the Fourth made an irritated movement.

"Don't be a young ass, Frank! You know you did it and I know you did it and everybody knows you did it! What's the good of talking?"

"Oh!" gasped Frank.

"The thing itself doesn't matter," went on Levison. "It was a rotten trick, as I told you. But that's nothing. But you promised me not to do it, and you've broken your promise. You lied to Mr. Railton in a barefaced way that even a young rotter like Piggott would be ashamed of. I can't imagine what's come over you. Any number of floggings would be better than lying like that. What's come over you, Frank? I'd never have believed you could do it."

"Ernie!" groaned Frank miserably.



"Keep smiling, Frank, old scout," said Clive encouragingly. Levison of the Fourth did not speak. His brow was black and gloomy. Frank's lips quivered in a smile. "I'm not afraid of a flogging," he said; "but what's worrying me is that I'm going to be punished for something I haven't done!" Ernest Levison looked at his minor in surprise. (See page 10.)

"What's the good of keeping it up?" demanded his brother. "I don't care a thump what you did to old Selby, bother him! What hits me hard is your telling awful lies like that. I couldn't have believed it if I hadn't heard you. Surely you haven't come here to keep it up to me when you know I know the facts."

Frank gazed at his brother without speaking. Every word was like a dagger to his heart.

"Are you still denying it?" demanded Levison.

"Yes," breathed Frank.

"You want it to be believed that somebody unknown took a cracker out of your locker, that was locked up at the time, when you had the keys in your pocket?"

Frank panted.

Put like that, there was no answer to be made. How could he expect even his brother to believe him?

Indeed, for a dizzy moment or two Frank wondered whether he was losing his own senses—whether, in some moment of aberration, he had played that trick on Mr. Selby and forgotten all about it afterwards.

"Well?" growled Levison.

"You—you think I'm lying to you, Ernie—to you?" said Frank in a husky whisper.

"Don't be a young ass!"

Frank did not answer that. He turned to the door.

Levison of the Fourth made a step forward.

"Frank! You'll have to go before the Head! Tell him the truth! For goodness' sake don't keep this up to the Head! I can't imagine what's come over you. It beats me hollow! But for mercy's sake stop this fooling when you come before Dr. Holmes, and own up like a man!"

Frank did not speak. He left the study with a colourless face. Levison of the Fourth was left alone in a black and bitter mood.

CHAPTER 7.

The Flight of Frank Levison.

CLANG! Clang!
The rising-bell rang out over St. Jim's in the sunny morning.

In the Fourth Form dormitory Ernest Levison turned out of bed at the first clang of the bell.

He looked tired and worn. He had slept badly enough during the night. He was the first down of his Form that morning.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cast a sympathetic glance after him as he went.

"Poor old Levison is takin' this wathah hard!" he remarked.

"Well, his minor's going to be flogged!" remarked Blake. "Jolly glad I haven't a minor here."

"Yaas, I should feel vewy wotten if Wally was goin' to be flogged," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I am vewy glad he obeyed my ordahs and gave up that wotten jape on his Form mastah. Othahwise, he would be for it as well as young Levison."

"I suppose it's a cert that young Levison did it?" remarked Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Seems pretty clear," said Clive. "I can't understand his denying it. I thought that kid was as straight as a string."

"The evidence couldn't be much clearer," said Wildrake. "I guess, though, that I'm surprised at young Levison lying about it. A flogging isn't so jolly serious as all that."

"I suppose the young ass was fwightened at what he had done, and denied it without stoppin' to think," said Arthur Augustus. "Pwobably he does not realise how sewious it is to woll out whoppahs like that. It will make it vewy much worse foah him when he comes befoah the Head this mornin'. I twust he will own up to the twuth."

"Better for him if he does!" grunted Herries.

"The truth," yawned Cardew. "Jolly old Pontius Pilate asked 'What is truth?'"

Arthur Augustus extracted his eyeglass from his waistcoat-pocket, adjusted it in his noble eye, and regarded Cardew.

"Do you mean that wemark, Cardew, that you think Levison minor is tellin' the twuth in this mattah?"

"Why not?" asked Cardew.

"It is imposs."

"Isn't life full of impossibilities?" asked Cardew. "This giddy universe is a queer place, Gussy; and you're not the only queer thing in it."

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

Cardew smiled and strolled out of the dormitory.

"Silly ass!" commented Digby.

His comment was echoed by others. It was like Ralph Reckness Cardew to set himself up against the general opinion; that really was just what was to be expected of Cardew.

Levison of the Fourth was waiting near the Third Form dormitory for the fags to come out. He wanted to see his brother and speak to him, and urge him once more to own up to the truth when he came before the Head after prayers. Wally and Reggie were the first out of the Third, and Levison called to them.

"Frank up yet?"

"Frank!" repeated Wally of the Third. "Gone down long ago."

"He was out before rising-bell," said Reggie Manners. "Anyhow, his bed was empty when we turned out."

"Oh!" said Levison.

He was not surprised that his minor had found sleep difficult in the circumstances. He hurried downstairs to look for Frank out of the House. Levison minor was not to be seen in the quadrangle, however, and the Fourth-Former looked for him in vain.

Levison was very moody when he came in to breakfast. It seemed to him that his brother was intentionally avoiding him.

What had come over Frank?

Levison glanced over the Third Form table when he came into the dining-hall. His brother was not there.

Apparently Frank had forgotten breakfast-time.

Mr. Selby, looking very cross, was seated at the head of the Third table. He had noted Levison minor's absence, and doubtless made a mental note on the subject. Breakfast over, Levison of the Fourth joined D'Arcy minor in the hall outside.

"Have you seen Frank?" he asked.

Wally shook his head.

"He cut prayers," he said. "He's cut brekker, too. Blessed if I can understand your minor these days."

"Levison!" It was Mr. Railton's voice, and Levison of the Fourth spun round.

"Yes, sir?"

"Do you know where your brother is?"

"No, sir! I've been looking for him!"

"Were you aware that he had any intention of leaving the school?"

Ernest Levison staggered.

"Leaving the school!" he stuttered.

"You knew nothing of it?"

"Good heavens!" panted Levison. "No! Has he—"

"He cannot be found within the precincts of the school," said Mr. Railton. "A letter has arrived for you, Levison, with the Wayland postmark, in your brother's hand. Levison minor must have been in Wayland last night to post it. Dr. Holmes desired you to open this letter in his presence. You will follow me to his study."

Like a fellow in a dream, Levison major followed the Housemaster. There was a buzz of excitement among the fellows who heard Mr. Railton's words. In a few minutes it was known all over St. Jim's that Levison minor had run away from school.

Levison, looking dazed, followed Mr. Railton into the Head's study. Dr. Holmes was frowning grimly. He held a letter in his hand, as yet unopened. Evidently the letter for Ernest Levison.

"I presume that you know nothing of your brother's movements, Levison?" the Head asked quietly.

"No, sir! He—he can't have run away!" gasped Levison.

"It's impossible, sir! There's nowhere for him to go, sir! He can't go home—it's shut up while my people are away! He can't have gone, sir!"

"Kindly open that letter, Levison. It may throw some light on this subject."

Levison mechanically opened the letter. His brain was in a whirl.

"You may read it, and then pass it to me," said the Head.

Levison read the letter dazedly.

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"Dear Ernie,—I'm posting this in Wayland. I'm going. It's not the flogging—I don't care about that. Mr. Railton thinks I've told him lies. You think the same. You think I played that trick on Mr. Selby after promising you I wouldn't. Ernie, old man, I wouldn't break a promise to you—I'd be cut to pieces first. I wouldn't mind the flogging—that's nothing. But everybody thinks me a rotten liar—you think so, too, Ernie. I can't face the fellows after that. I don't know how it happened, but I swear that I left the cracker locked up, and don't know how it was got at afterwards. You used to take my word, Ernie. Can't you take it now?"

"I don't know where I shall go, but I'm not coming back to St. Jim's. I don't care what happens now.—FRANK."

Ernest Levison read that letter with his eyes blurred with tears. There was truth in every line of it, impossible as it seemed. It was borne in upon Levison's mind that the truth was written there.

"You may give me the letter, Levison."

Dr. Holmes read what was written, and passed the letter to Mr. Railton. The Housemaster's expression was strange, as he read. There were stains of tears on the incoherent missive; he could guess the mood of the fag when it was written.

"You may go, Levison," said Dr. Holmes gently. "You may take the letter, my boy."

Ernest Levison went blindly from the study.

"Mr. Railton, as this unhappy boy is in your House, doubtless you will take the necessary steps—"

"I will go to Wayland at once," said Mr. Railton. "I have no doubt that I shall find the boy easily enough and return with him to the school. If the evidence was not so absolutely clear, sir, I should be disposed to think—"

The Housemaster paused.

"From what you have stated to me, Mr. Railton, it appears indubitable that Levison minor was guilty of the outrage in Mr. Selby's study."

"I have no doubt of it, sir. He was convicted on his own statements. Yet—" Mr. Railton shook his head dubiously. "However, that matter can be gone into when the boy is here again. I will not lose a moment."

Five minutes later Mr. Railton was in the Head's car speeding towards Wayland Junction. St. Jim's went into classes that morning in a state of buzzing excitement.

CHAPTER 8.

Cardew Takes a Hand.

TOM MERRY & CO. had only one topic after lessons that morning. It was the flight of Levison minor of the Third.

Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers, as a rule, had an attitude of lofty indifference towards such small fry as the Third. But Levison minor had succeeded in getting into the limelight now, with a vengeance. Even the Fifth and Sixth condescended to take note of his unimportant existence, in these startling circumstances.

Mr. Railton had returned from Wayland alone! He had left St. Jim's again after lunch for an unknown destination. All the school knew that he was going in search of the vanished fag, and wondered whether he would find him.

Levison of the Fourth looked haggard and worn that day. His brother was hardly out of his thoughts for a moment. Where was Frank was the thought that harassed him. He could not have gone home. Mrs. Levison had been ordered south for her health, and Levison's father and sister had gone abroad with her. The Levison home was shut up till the end of the term. Frank could not have gone there. Apparently he had not gone to any relation, either. It was known that the Head had telephoned to several connections of the Levisons, and had received negative replies.

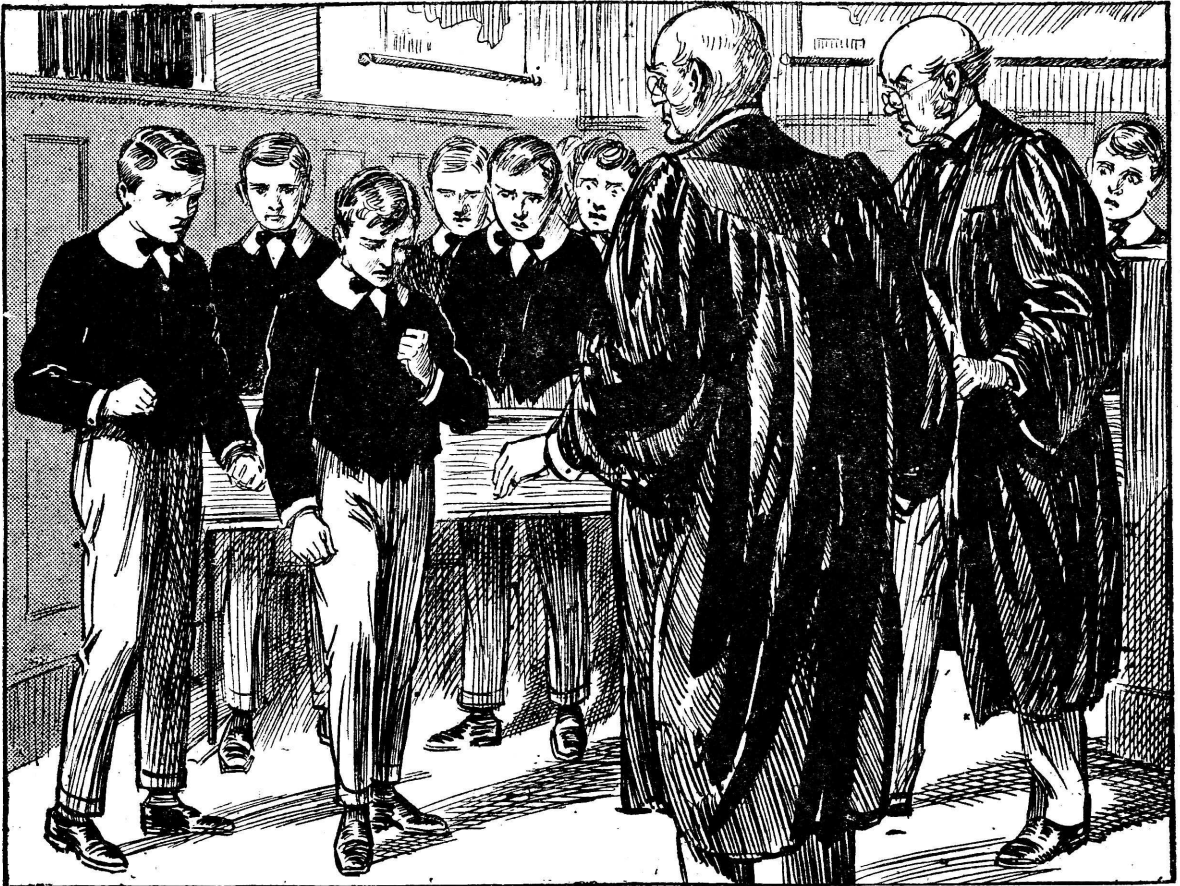
Where was he?

In utter distress the hapless fag had run away—thinking and probably caring nothing of what lay before him. It was not the impending flogging that had driven him; it was the general contempt that had fallen upon him; above all, his brother's want of faith in him. That had been the last straw. All else he could and would have faced, but his brother's disbelief had been the finishing blow. Levison of the Fourth realised that now with bitter clearness. For whatever happened to Frank, he held himself responsible.

For that despairing letter from the unhappy fag had cleared his mind. Frank would never have written that—he could not have written it—with a lie upon his lips. Somehow—Levison could not even guess how—Frank had been innocent of what was laid to his charge. Impossible as it had seemed, Frank had been telling the truth. Levison of the Fourth believed that now.

Even Mr. Selby was staggered. He had seen Frank's letter, and it had roused a doubt even in his bitter, sour mind.

Tom Merry & Co. discussed the matter in amazement. To believe what was apparently impossible was difficult. Yet



"Well, Piggott," said the Head, "I'll ask you for the last time. Did you or did you not put that cracker into Mr. Selby's fireplace?" "I—I—I," moaned Piggott. "I—I—I never meant any harm, sir. It was—was D'Arcy minor's idea in the first place—and Levison minor told me—he—he said if I wasn't a funk I could take the cracker and—do it myself." Dr. Holmes' brow was very grim. The wretched fag shrunk under the Head's glance. (See page 17.)

to believe that Frank Levison had written that despairing letter in a mood of deceit was still more difficult. The day passed without news of the missing fag.

"It beats me hollow, deah boys!" confessed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That lettah weads like the fwozen twuth, and yet—"

"And yet Levison minor did it!" said Manners.

"Yaas. It's a vegular puzzle."

"Levison believes in his minor now," remarked Clive.

"Then how does he account for the cracker getting out of the locker?" asked Tom Merry.

"He doesn't account for it."

"That's hardly good enough!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"And yet—"

"I—I—I suppose Levison minah's lockah couldn't have been burgled, could it?" said Arthur Augustus dubiously.

"Not without leaving a trace of it," said Tom; "and I think nearly everybody in the School House has looked at the lock. There's no sign whatever of its having been forced."

"It was opened with a key," said Blake.

"And Levison minah has the key—both the keys!" said D'Arcy. "Weally, I begin to think that the young ass is off his wockah. Pewwaps he did it and forgot all about it."

"Rats!"

"Perhaps he didn't do it!" remarked Ralph Reckness Cardew, joining the group of juniors who were discussing the matter in the Common-room after tea.

"If he didn't, who did?" asked Tom.

"That isn't the question. Never mind who's guilty, if Levison minor is innocent," said Cardew. "Not that there's much guilt in the matter; old Selby asked for what he got. If he'd been blown through the roof I fancy there would have been lots of dry eyes afterwards."

"That's not the point," said Tom Merry. "Bother Selby! Blow him! The real question is—whether Levison minor was telling a stack of awful lies that even Trimble would have jibbed at?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Quite so, my beloved 'earers," said Cardew. "That is the jolly old point; I've been looking into it."

"Fat lot of good your looking into it!" grunted Blake.

Cardew smiled.

"You don't mean to say that you've found out anything, Cardew?" exclaimed Talbot of the Shell.

"Dear men," yawned Cardew, "while you've been exercisin' your chins all the jolly old day I've been puttin' in the brain work. Equal division of labour, you know. I never believed from the beginnin' that Frank was tellin' lies. I know a liar when I see one—I've been there."

"Weally, Cardew—"

"And why should you think Frank was telling the truth, when we all believe he wasn't?" demanded Herries warmly.

"That was the reason, old bean," said Cardew calmly.

"Have you ever read Ibsen?"

"Blow Ibsen! Who's Ibsen?"

"A jolly old johnny who mentions, among other profound truths, that the majority is always in the wrong," drawled Cardew. "Lookin' around me, I saw that everybody was of the same opinion. Naturally, I concluded that that opinion was incorrect. You follow my reasonin'?"

"You uttah ass—"

"Fathead!"

"Cheeky ass!"

"Thanks, dear men! When you've finished complimenting me I'll mention what I've discovered, if you're interested."

"You've discovered something?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Oh, yes! I've had a delightful conversation with some hopeful members of the Third Form," yawned Cardew. "D'Arcy minor and Reggie Manners and Frayne, and other delightful youths. They've been tellin' me all about their boxin' in the gym last evenin'."

"What the thump has that to do with the matter?" demanded Clive.

"Lots! You see, Levison minor was a member of the jolly old boxin' party."

"That's already known, if it matters," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! And I fail to see how it mattahs in the least."

(Continued on page 16.)

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EDITORIAL!

By Eric Kildare.

THIS issue of the "St. Jim's News," as I am given to understand, has already been announced by Tom Merry, is a special one produced by members of the Sixth Form. Although I have on several occasions written articles for the paper, this is the first time that I have ever had the pleasure of addressing myself to you personally, readers of the "St. Jim's News," and I must say that I am glad to be afforded this opportunity of doing so.

At the same time I am free to admit that I did not at first take kindly to the suggestion that I should act as editor of a junior paper. Contributing an occasional article for the paper is one thing, but making myself directly responsible for a complete issue is a fairly large order.

It's not a matter of personal dignity, or anything of that kind. The difficulty is that everything that carries my name is regarded as more or less official, by virtue of my office as captain of the school, and I have to be very careful with regard to any kind of activity that can be said to either violate tradition or establish precedent.

However, I consulted Mr. Railton on the subject, and as he raised no objection to the project, I signified my willingness to accede to Merry's request, and this issue is the result.

With reference to the contributors, I have done my best to secure a thoroughly representative set of writers. The two-column article has been entrusted to Darrell, though I cannot say that I altogether approve of his choice of subject.

Knox was very anxious that I should accept his contribution. I suppose it is intended to be funny, but I have a pretty shrewd idea that more of spite than of railleury went to the penning of it. I showed it to Tom Merry before passing it for publication, and as your own editor did not appear to be at all offended at the tone of it—indeed, he seemed to be quite amused—I decided to let it go. One can only assume that Knox really imagines that he has some grounds for the attitude that he adopts towards the Lower School, and which he has so characteristically exemplified in his article.

The rest of the contributors had to be coaxed into doing their part. Monteith was very reluctant, but I was particularly anxious that he should bear a hand, for I felt that the issue would be incomplete without some representative of the New House.

Anyway, there it is. And now this task is completed with the penning of these lines, possibly I may be permitted to go on with some of my own work, which inevitably has had to be held up.

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"DON'T!" in the NEW HOUSE.

By James Monteith.

WHEN I wrote my last article for the "News" I made a solemn vow that it should be the last I ever wrote, and that I wouldn't be coaxed into doing another by all the juniors in the Lower School. I also determined that the next person indiscreet enough to suggest such a thing should be afforded good and sufficient cause for regretting his temerity. Of course, at that time I hadn't the faintest reason for supposing that that "next person" would be Kildare himself, and if anybody had hinted such a thing I should have deemed him a fit candidate for the constituency of Colney Hatch.

Even now I don't quite realise the state of affairs. The skipper of St. Jim's editing a junior rag and jollyng seniors into contributing! One cannot be surprised at discovering juniors to be thoughtless enough to imagine that a prefect has a nice cushy time of it, but one might have supposed that the captain of the school would appreciate that fact that the head of a House has quite enough to occupy his time and worry him into grey-headedness in the ordinary course of his duties.

It only goes to prove something that I've contended over and over again—that it's a much easier task to skipper the whole school than to hold the reins over here in the New House.

Of course, it isn't the House that creates the trouble.

It's Ratty who acts as the fly in the ointment. You have perhaps heard of the old admiral of whom it was said that "he was weaned on spit and polish, he was reared on stick and string"? Well, that's Ratty all over. Rules and regulations! Regulations and rules!

He evolves a new set of rules for the maintenance of order in the House nearly every day of his life. I believe he sometimes sits up half the night compiling long lists of "Don'ts." Then he writes 'em out in his horrible crabbed caligraphy, and sends for me to put 'em into force.

It gives a fellow the creeping horrors. Here's to-day's list, which I will copy out for your entertainment before putting the paper into the coal-scuttle for my fag to light the fire with to-morrow morning.

JUNIORS MUST NOT—

Slide down the banisters; play musical instruments in their studies; walk about the corridors with boots on; cook fish over Common-room or study fires; wear vividly coloured neckwear and half-hose; sing musical songs in the music-room; loiter in the quadrangle of the School House. (I fancy the School House fellows would see to that matter without help from Ratty.)

MY VIEW.

By Gerald Knox.

SO those young fiends in the Lower School have had the cheek to ask the Sixth to run their fool kids' paper for them, have they? If Kildare had done the right thing he'd have sent the prefects in among them, armed with the whippiest ashplants obtainable, and taught them a lesson they wouldn't forget in a hurry. I'd have been only too pleased to do my share towards it—and a bit over! There are several little accounts outstanding against the young brutes, and I'm only biding my time for an opportunity to present itself, in order to pay them off in full. You believe me, my time will come, and when it does I'll guarantee to make those little brats suffer.

I've got a choice collection of canes stored away in my cupboard, in readiness for that time. I'm no believer in the principle of molly-coddling kids. Plenty of hard knocks is the finest medicine in the world for fags, and if I had my way they'd get them, too. Half a dozen lickings a day, with two or three extra ones if they showed any signs of cheek, would do them the world of good. That's what they need.

I can't understand what the Sixth are thinking of to let matters be as they are. Why, things have got to such a pitch that a junior's word is regarded with the same importance as a senior's. If a chap accuses one of the young brats of any offence, the heaks even expect proof—from prefects at that!

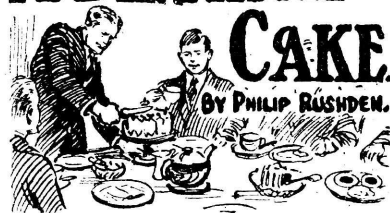
Time after time I've gone to the trouble of ferreting out something that ought to have gained the sack for at least one of the little brutes, and then they've wriggled out of it by telling lies that have made it look as though I was in the wrong. They've even gone to the length of laying traps for me, and if I wasn't a pretty cute sort of individual, and of a mild, inoffensive nature at that, I might have committed myself over and over again.

But my time will come all right. One of these days I'll catch one of them tripping, and then we'll see who has the last laugh. It'll mean somebody packing up their traps for home. The day that I see Tom Merry, Blake, D'Arcy, Talbot, or Cardew packing his box in readiness for a hasty departure, with a flogging thrown in to occupy his last hours at the school, will be the happiest of my life.

Depend upon it that if I ever get an opportunity to bring about such an event, I shan't neglect it. I dream about it at night sometimes, and the only thing that makes life at St. Jim's bearable is the hope of making it a reality!

A BIRTHDAY CAKE.

BY PHILIP RUSHDEN.



I haven't the faintest idea why Kildare should have selected me as a contributor, for I really can't claim to be possessed of any special qualifications for the job. I've never tried my hand at any form of journalism before, and I am confident that I'm going to make a miserable mess of this attempt. Anyway, you must not treat me too harshly.

The skipper ought to have given Darrell the run of this column. Derry seems to enjoy this kind of stunt, and he's very welcome to my share in it.

I offered the job to Baker, but he just grinned at the suggestion.

"Don't be silly, old chap," he said. "You have the ability for several things, surely—"

"But I'm no blessed good at this kind of thing," I said.

"Oh, go ahead and have a try," Baker replied callously. "You never know what you can do till you try."

"Perhaps not," I conceded; "but I've got a pretty good idea of what I can't do, and that is to contribute to this piffing rag!"

He simply went on grinning.

"Very well," I resumed, a trifle nettled; "I shall tell them that story of you and the birthday cake."

What is more, I am going to do it, in spite of all his protests.

It happened a few weeks ago. It was Baker's birthday, and he'd got a big hamper from home, the most attractive item of which was a huge iced birthday cake. The blessed thing weighed pounds. There was only the icing visible, the rest of it being wrapped up in thick coloured paper, and on the strength of the outfit, Baker decided to have a tea-party. He made a lot of preparations, and borrowed my fag and Darrell's to help in the cooking and all that sort of thing. On the great day Kildare, Monteith, Darrell, Jones, and two or three more of us duly turned up, and made the best of our opportunities.

Of course, the cake was the "big noise" in the feast. We kept looking at it all through the feed—which we went at like a crowd of Lower School kids—keeping a corner reserved for it, in spite of the blandishments of fried sausages, ham, jellies, trifle, and so on.

At last came the great moment. Baker lifted his knife, and Darrell announced gravely that "The bride is now about to cut the cake!"

But the "bride" did NOT cut the cake! He tried! I give him full credit for that. He tried very hard indeed—but the cake was harder. It was, indeed, incredibly hard. An electric drill might have made some impression, but an ordinary cake-knife wasn't in the running. It transpired, when the ornamental trimming was removed, that the "cake" was one of those ingenious affairs used as window decorations by confectioners, and had been included in the hamper by Baker's sister, who, I imagine, is something of a japer. No wonder it was so heavy.

Anyway, Baker didn't return the cake to his sister. He believes in the old proverb, "A still tongue makes a wise head."

Possibly, when he reads this, Baker may regret that he declined to undertake the task of writing this column for me.

COMING SOON!

A Grand New Serial, entitled:

"THE SPIDER OF THE NORTH!"

KEEP A SHARP LOOK OUT FOR IT!

The SIXTH FORM SOCIETY.

BY GEORGE DARRELL.



I SUPPOSE that the Sixth ought to regard it as a magnificent compliment that they should be deemed worthy of having an issue of this marvellous publication all to themselves. And yet, judging by the remarks that were passed when the skipper announced the fact at a meeting of the Sixth Form Society, they were singularly unappreciative. Mind you, not that I share in the general opinion. Far from it, for, to tell you the truth, I rather enjoy spreading myself out in its pages, and I have never refused a request for an article.

What I like about the "News" is that it's such a delightfully irresponsible little rag. One can say the most indiscreet things without the risk of being hauled over the coals for it. Now, the school magazine, which is run principally by the Sixth, is an entirely different kettle of fish. (Between ourselves, it's a deadly dreary affair, governed by precedent, and with the hand of hoary-headed tradition lying heavily on its pages.)

As regards this Sixth Form issue of the "News," I am perfectly well aware of the reason that the Sixth were against the project. In a way, it was a little tactless of the skipper to bring the matter forward at a meeting of the Sixth Society, considering that the "News" has always been in pretty bad odour among members on account of the article by young Levison in which he described how he hid behind the panelling and watched the proceedings through a hole in the moulding. But Eric told me afterwards that he'd forgotten that affair at the moment, otherwise he would have broached the subject at a prefect's meeting in preference.

However, all that is past and done with, and there is no chance of a similar incident occurring, as the hole in the panelling has since been carefully plugged. As a matter of fact, I am not at all sorry, personally, that the article did appear, as it affected a much-needed reform with regard to the proceedings of the society.

INITIATIONS.

The meeting of which Levison was a witness, and at which he stated—quite accurately—that the members sat about in an indescribably bored state behind a locked door, was an example of the kind of thing that too slavish an adherence to tradition is likely to cause.

The society has been in existence for fifty years—possibly much longer, but, at any rate the books of records, handed down from president to president, extend back to 1875—and a good deal of tedious and perfectly futile ritual has been grafted on to the original proceedings during that time. The initiation ceremony, for instance, which used to be very short and simple, has been developed into a most formidable ordeal, without—in my opinion, at least—any corresponding gain in impressiveness. Indeed, it has lost thereby a good deal of its original dignity, for some of the present ceremony does not fall far short of actual "ragging," and, at that, not the healthy horseplay of the Lower School, but that kind of foolery that might afford opportunities to a malicious nature for making the proceedings decidedly unpleasant for an unwary novice. Of course, under the control of a decent, fair-minded president that kind of abuse would be sternly suppressed, but the society might not always enjoy the benefit of a presidency like that of Kildare's. Other parts of the proceedings are frankly and definitely absurd. What, for instance, can

justify the asking of idiotic questions, and solemnly recording the equally absurd answers in the records? These questions are never twice the same, so there can be no harm in my exemplifying those that were put to me upon initiation. They were: "What is the difference in weight between a sleeping dormouse, two inches long exclusive of its tail, and the same dormouse when awake?" and "What would be the effect upon the Bank rate of an authentic report of the birth of a litter of kittens with their eyes open?"

It is possible that some day there may arise a governing body sensible and courageous enough to prune away these absurdities and resort to the simple and adequate ceremony that satisfied the founders of the society.

NEW RULES.

Of course, it has been absolutely necessary to add rules from time to time in order to cope with circumstances unforeseen when the society first came into being, but I do think that any rules that have been made in an emergency, or to meet purely temporary difficulties and emergencies, ought to be repealed as soon as the need for them has passed. Such a rule was indirectly responsible for Levison's article. It appears that at one time in the history of the society there was a good deal of slackness among the members, and it was no uncommon thing for weeks to go by without a meeting being held, and that even when one was convened it was attended by only a small percentage of the members. In order to remedy this state of affairs, the governing body made a rule that there should be a meeting at least once every week, no matter what the circumstances, and that every member must be present. This achieved the very definite result of revitalising the society, and was no doubt invaluable and essential—at the time. But, unfortunately, once on the statute book, that rule became sanctified by tradition, and immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. Instead of being served by its rules, the society became the slave of them, and with such rules it was indeed slavery. Because of that regulation, the need for which has long since passed, the society has solemnly met once every week, oftentimes upon occasions when there was not the slightest necessity for a meeting, and nothing to occupy them when they were there.

THANKS TO LEVISON.

Owing to Levison witnessing such a meeting and writing an account of it, the present governing body had their eyes opened to the absurdity of the thing, with the result that the rule has now been repealed, together with several more of an equally futile character. So I, for one, bear no malice to Levison. At the same time, he must not look for any thanks. Like all people who achieve much-needed reform, he is more likely to be abused than blessed by the people he benefits.



The initiation ceremonies do not fall short of actual ragging.



"The things that you fail to see, old bean, are like the sands of the sea, or the speeches of a political wizard—numberless and without limit."

"Weally, Cardew—"

"It occurred to my feeble mind," resumed Cardew, "that durin' these boxin' stunts the fags would take their jackets off. Inquirin' into the matter, I found that they did. While Levison minor and the rest were understudyin' Roland Todd, young Levison's jacket was hangin' on a peg. Lots of the Third were standin' round watchin' the boxin'. Accordin' to D'Arcy minor, Frank had a key-ring that he kept his keys on—careful young gentleman, you know, who really puts us to the blush. I'm always losin' keys an' things. Gussy's always losin' things—includin' his wits, which he lost quite early in his career—"

"You uttah ass—"

"Puttin' the matter through the processes of my powerful intellect," resumed Cardew, "it came into my mind that one of the fags standin' round the boxers slipped his hand into Levison minor's jacket and pinched his keys. He kept them in a jacket-pocket, accordin' to D'Arcy minor—the man who knows."

"Bai Jove!"

"Havin' elucidated the giddy mystery up to this point," continued Cardew, upon whom all eyes were fixed now, "I proceeded with the case, as Ferrers Locke would put it, and nailed the jolly old guilty party. I found Third Form conversation rather a bore; but in the interests of friendship, I felt bound to stand it."

"You've found out—" stammered Tom Merry.

The juniors simply stared at Cardew. That the lazy, slacking dandy of the Fourth had cleared up the mystery by his own efforts while the rest of the fellows were simply "exercising their chins," as he expressed it, was astounding.

"Are you pulling our leg?" grunted Blake gruffly.

"Not at all, old bean. Pullin' legs is a bore. I'll give you chapter and verse if you like, same as jolly old Sherlock Holmes at the end of the story. Havin' worked it out to my own giddy satisfaction that Franky's bunch of keys had been borrowed from his jacket-pocket while he was doin' tremendous boxin' stunts, I proceeded to make exhaustive inquiries as to who was on the scene when the boxin' started—and didn't remain on the scene the whole time."

A Great Treat Coming Soon!

"The Spider of the North!"

By DAVID GOODWIN.

A Thrilling and Dramatic Story of a Millhand's Great Pluck and Endurance.

A Tale of Endless Thrills and Breathless Situations.

LOOK OUT FOR THE OPENING
INSTALMENT!

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom.

"Derivin' information from various sources in the Third, I found that Piggott was in the crowd watchin' the boxin' when it started," yawned Cardew. "Smoky little beast, Piggott—horrid little waster, who was caned last night by Mr. Selby for havin' smokes about him. Piggott's not generally interested in boxin', or any other manly pursuit—boxin' is a manly pursuit, I believe—"

"Go on, you ass!" exclaimed Clive.

"Certainly. But Piggott, though as a rule distinctly uninterested in boxin', was watchin' the deeds of derring-do in the gym for a little while. Not all the while. He strolled away. He was noticed to rejoin the merry circle later, shortly before the boxin' finished. That's all."

"Bai Jove!"

"Puttin' two and two together—you know my gift for mathematics—I concluded that the esteemed Piggott borrowed Franky's keys from his jacket, went away and bagged the cracker from Franky's locker, and came back and replaced the keys," yawned Cardew. "Piggott's the jolly old criminal! How's that for Sherlock Holmes?"

"My hat! It looks jolly likely!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Have you told Levison of the Fourth?"

"Yes. I gave him the first tip."

"What is he doing about it?" asked Blake.

"Killin' Piggott, I think."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Well, he rushed off to look for Piggott of the Third; and judgin' by his look, I fancy Piggott's life isn't worth much," yawned Cardew. "If he finishes Piggott, I suggest that we all rally round and help him hide the body. Nobody will miss a horrid little cad like Piggott; and if the body's shoved away in one of Gussy's hatboxes, there needn't be any bother about an inquest—"

"You widiculous ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! We'd better go and look for Levison, you fellows, and westwain him; he will pwobably be in a feaful wage."

"He looked it," assented Cardew.

There was a rush of Tom Merry & Co. out of the Common-room. Ralph Reckness Cardew gazed after them and yawned deeply.

CHAPTER 9.

At Last.

"YOW! Ow! Help! Yooop! Help!"

The voice of Piggott of the Third rang far beyond the limits of the Third Form room.

Tom Merry & Co. did not need guiding to Levison. Piggott's frantic yells were sufficient guide. The chums of the School House burst into the Third Form room. It was nearly time for evening prep, and most of the Third were there. Wally & Co. stood round in an amazed circle—watching Levison of the Fourth, Piggott was squirming, wriggling, and raving in Levison's grip.

"Yow-ow-ow! Help, you cads! Back up!" shrieked Piggott.

"Look here, Levison major—" began Wally.

Thump, thump, thump!

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!"

"Chuck it!" roared D'Arcy minor. "Give Piggy a chance to speak. He's a little beast; but give him a chance!"

Thump, thump!

"Bai Jove! Dwaw it mild, Levison!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in alarm.

Wally stared at the newcomers.

"You fellows know anything about this?" he asked.

"Levison says that Piggott planted that cracker on Selby last night—"

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"If he did, he's asked for that, and more!" said Wally.

"Not that it matters about Selby; but poor old Frank—"

"Help!" yelled Piggott. "Rescue!"

"Own up, you young scoundrel!" shouted Levison of the Fourth. "By gad, I'll thrash you till you can't crawl! I'll—"

"Yooop! Yow! Help!"

"Levison—" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaroooh! Help!"

"Boys!"

It was the Head's voice. Dr. Holmes came sweeping into the Third Form room, majestic in his wrath. Mr. Selby followed him in.

"Levison!" thundered the Head. "Release that boy at once! How dare you treat a younger boy in that ruffianly manner? How dare you, sir?"

"I—I— He—he—" stammered Levison.

Even then, at the Head's command, he did not release Reuben Piggott. But Clive and Tom Merry seized his arms and jerked him away from the yelling fag.

"Chuck it, you ass!" breathed Clive.

"Levison! I shall punish you in the severest possible manner for this—this ruffianly outbreak—"

"I'll smash him!" shouted Levison.
 "What? What?"
 "The boy is mad!" ejaculated Mr. Selby.
 "He did it!" yelled Levison, beside himself with rage.
 "What? He did what?"
 "He put that cracker in your fireplace, and let my brother take the blame for it!" roared Levison.
 "Bless my soul!" said the Head. "Is this true? If you can prove your statement, Levison—"
 "I—I—I didn't!" wailed Piggott. "I—I—I never knew there was a cracker! I never heard of it—"
 "That's a whopper!" broke in Wally of the Third promptly.
 "You were talking it over with us, young Piggott, and you called us funks because we gave up the stunt."
 "I—I—"
 "Levison! What proof have you to offer?" said the Head, making D'Arcy minor a sign to be silent.
 "Piggott took Frank's keys from his pocket, while he had his jacket off, boxing in the gym last evening!" panted Levison. "He put them back before the boxing finished, and Frank never knew they'd been taken."

Piggott's jaw dropped.
 As Levison of the Fourth made that accusation the wretched fag seemed to forget even the hefty thumping he had just received in his terror at being denounced to the Head.

"I—I—" he stammered.
 "Frank had his keys in his jacket pocket, and hung his jacket on a peg while the boxing went on!" panted Levison. "It lasted half an hour or more. Piggott was there at the start, then he went, and he came back later. All the Third knew it."

"That's true!" said Manners minor. "I wondered at seeing him there; he doesn't care for boxing."

"He wouldn't take a hand, either," said Frayne.

"Catch him!" grunted Wally.
 "My hat! That's what Cardew was asking us all those questions for!" murmured Hobbs. "He's bowled Piggy out."

"Piggott!" said the Head sternly.
 The wretched fag shrank from the Head's steady, penetrating eyes. He leaned back on a desk, gasping.

"Piggott! Do you admit this?"
 "Oh, no, sir!" mumbled Piggott. "I—I—"
 "Let him account for his time, sir, while he was out of the gym," exclaimed Levison.

"You may leave this to me, Levison. Piggott, it appears that you remained watching your Form-fellows boxing for some time, and then left the gymnasium, returning later."

"No, sir! I—I mean, yes!" gasped Piggott, remembering—almost in time—that a crowd of witnesses stood round him.

"Do you mean 'Yes,' or 'No'?" asked the Head, his voice growing deeper and sterner.

"Yes, sir!" panted Piggott.
 "Where did you go when you left the gymnasium?"
 "I came back to the Form-room, sir."

"Was anyone here?"
 "Yes, sir; two or three fellows."
 The Head looked round.

"Which of you boys were present when Piggott came into the Form-room while the boxing was going on in the gymnasium?"

"There was no answer."
 "Was anyone present?"
 Silence.

"Your statement appears to be incorrect, Piggott," said the Head. "There was no one, apparently, in the Form-room when you came back. You had, therefore, an opportunity of going to Levison minor's locker unseen."

Piggott licked his dry lips.
 "I—I thought some of the fellows were here, sir—" he stammered.

"You can scarcely have thought they were here if they were not here, Piggott. I warn you to keep to the truth."

"All the Third were in the gym, sir," said D'Arcy minor. "It was rather a big affair, sir—us against the New House chaps—"

The Head smiled slightly.
 "Quite so, D'Arcy minor. How long did you stay in the Form-room, Piggott, after you returned to it?"

"All the time, sir!" gasped Piggott. "I—I never left it again till I went straight back to the gym."

"If that statement is true, Piggott, certainly you cannot have placed the cracker in Mr. Selby's study," said the Head. "We shall proceed to ascertain—"

"It's not true!" exclaimed Jameson of the Third wrathfully. "You awful rotter, Piggy—"

"Moderate your words, Jameson, please. Kindly tell me how you know that the statement is not true."

"Because I came to the Form-room, sir," said Jameson. "I had lines to do for Mr. Rateliff, and I had to leave the boxing before the other fellows, to do them. Piggott wasn't here when I came in."

The Head's brow grew very stern.

The hapless Piggott had a hunted look on his thin, sly face now. He was known in the Third as a dealer in falsehood of unusual skill; but he had no time to prepare his story.

"Piggott, you have spoken untruthfully," said the Head. "For the last time. I warn you to give me a true account of your proceedings last evening."

"I—I—I—"
 The wretched fag's voice died away. It was futile to invent another story to take the place of the first.

"Well, Piggott?"
 Mr. Selby's brow was like thunder. He had no further doubt as to the author of the "outrage" in his study.

"I—I—I—" moaned Piggott. "I—I—I never meant any harm, sir. It was—was D'Arcy minor's idea in the first place—and—and Levison minor told me—he—he said if I wasn't a funk I could take the cracker and—and do it myself—and—and—"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.
 Dr. Holmes' brow was very grim. The wretched fag seemed to shrink and grow smaller under the Head's glance.

"Mr. Selby," said the Head, "Piggott has confessed, and I leave him in your hands. Levison minor is perfectly cleared; I am only sorry that the discovery was not made sooner. Someone appears to have made an investigation with success—"

"It was Cardew, sir," said Levison. "He found it out."
 "Then very much credit is due to Cardew," said the Head. "Piggott, you have acted very wickedly—not so much in playing a reckless and disrespectful prank upon your Form master, as in allowing—and, I fear, contriving—the blame to fall upon another boy. I trust that the punishment you will receive from Mr. Selby will impress upon your mind that honesty is the best policy."

And the Head swept out of the Third Form room. Tom Merry & Co. followed—and Piggott of the Third remained in the hands of Mr. Selby to be dealt with. There was no doubt that he would be dealt with with sufficient severity.

And, to judge by the fearful howls that rang out in the Third Form room later, Mr. Selby was laying it on remarkably well.

Levison of the Fourth was expected to look merry and bright after the discovery that had been made. But he did not. His remorse for having doubted his minor was keen and deep, and his anxiety for him was great. Another day had passed, and there was no news of Frank Levison.

Wally & Co. of the Third looked worried and glum. Tom Merry & Co. were worried, too. But Levison of the Fourth was utterly downcast and dismayed.

Where was Frank?
 It had been learned that he had boarded the express at Wayland Junction on the night when he had run away from school. Nothing further could be learned of him. There was some vague news that a boy answering to his description had been seen leaving the train at a station in Kent. But that vague clue led to nothing.

Another day passed—and another!
 It was known that, in the circumstances, Frank was to be forgiven for his act in running away from school; there was no reason why he should not return to St. Jim's—if he only knew! But he did not, and could not know; and, either he was in hiding, or—as the juniors began to whisper—something had happened to him. Levison of the Fourth went about the school looking like a ghost in these days of black anxiety.

When news came, it came suddenly. Levison was called into the Head's study one morning. He went with a beating heart. Dr. Holmes gave him a kind glance, touched by the signs of bitter distress in the junior's face.

"There is news, sir?" Levison panted.
 "I am glad to say yes, Levison," said Dr. Holmes kindly. "I have received a telegram from Greyfriars School, in Kent—"

"Greyfriars!" exclaimed Levison in amazement.
 "Yes. It appears that your brother was found by some boys belonging to that school—"

"He—he is hurt, sir?"
 "He is ill," said the Head gently. "He is being taken care of at Greyfriars, Levison. If you wish, you may join him there, and return to St. Jim's with him when he is recovered. Dr. Locke, of Greyfriars, will be glad if you care to do so."

"If!" gasped Levison. "May I—may I go at once, sir?"
 "Immediately."

Levison almost bolted from the Head's study. Ten minutes later Tom Merry & Co. and a crowd of other fellows were seeing Levison of the Fourth off for Greyfriars—to find his minor there and to bring him back to St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Make a note of the title of next week's rollicking fine story of St. Jim's, entitled "GLYN'S SCAREOPHONE!")

By Martin Clifford. You will vote it as being the finest story you have read.)

A Great Story of the Adventurous West!



THE HOLD-UP!

BY CAPTAIN MALCOLM ARNOLD.

A Thrilling Story of Highway Robbery, featuring Dave Elton—whose pluck and resource saves the situation.

CHAPTER 1.

Waylai

THE lariat fell smoothly over Ranger Dave Elton's broad shoulders, and jerked him out of the half-dream that he had been riding in. As the stout cord tightened, the young ranger made an effort to reach for his pistol-holster; but as his fingers touched the butt of his weapon, the lariat was jerked swiftly, and the tall, uniformed figure came headlong out of the saddle to fall sideways on the rough track.

Flim, his horse, gave vent to a swift whinney, and jerked round to glance at his fallen master. From behind the clump of boulders a couple of rough-garbed figures appeared.

Around the lower parts of their faces they had tied handkerchiefs, so that only their eyes were revealed.

"Quick, get him!" a harsh voice snapped.

The man on the right who had cast the lariat was leaning back, putting all his weight on the taut thong. His companion made a scrambling rush across the boulders, and as he did so the ranger's horse neighed again, then turned with a clattering of hoofs, and went galloping down the lonely mountain trail.

An oath broke out from the taller of the twain, and, drawing a revolver, he took a couple of shots at the animal. One of the bullets grazed Flim's flank, bringing a quick, shrill squeal of pain from the animal, then another leap saw it round the bend of the tortuous path.

Half-stunned with his fall, Ranger Dave Elton made another effort to free himself from the stout lariat, just as the shorter man of the twain flung himself on to the prostrate ranger.

With his arms pinioned to his sides, Dave Elton had little chance against that savage opponent. A fierce blow from a huge fist landed on his cheek, flooring him again, then the burly antagonist flung himself on the wiry ranger's chest, and gripped at Dave's throat.

"This is where we stop your monkeying around, Mr. Ranger!" the harsh voice snarled.

Dave made a quick effort to throw his opponent, gathering his legs under him, and trying to force an arch; but the other man wrapped his stout limbs around the straining figure, and his powerful fingers tightened on the muscular throat.

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Drawing a short length of iron tube bound with string from his pocket, the masked man brought it down hard on Dave's temple, a murderous, numbing blow.

With a strangled moan the uniformed figure stiffened and lay still.

Dave's next sensations were the feel of stout cord around his wrists and ankles, and the steady sway of an animal carrying him forward. His head was resting against the animal's neck, and he could feel by the tug and lift of the forefeet that they were climbing, climbing steadily up a rough track.

His legs had been bound under the animal's body, and his hands, tied in front of him, were held in position by another length of thong. A sack had been slipped over his head and shoulder, and as he breathed he could feel the fret of the rough packing against his lips and nostrils.

As his brain cleared other sounds came to him; the tapping of unshod hoofs, and occasionally the murmur of voices. Once a whip cracked on the flank of the animal that was carrying him, and the creature quickened its pace, stumbling over a rough section of ground.

A feeling of dull dismay came over the young ranger as he lay there pinioned and helpless.

He had been sent on special duty to Filther Gap, and the chief ranger at headquarters had warned him of what he might expect to encounter. Filther Gap was a hot-bed of unruly spirits, and a certain gang had been at work there molesting the peaceful lumbermen and raiding the small townships.

A week ago the report had come through that two men had held up the wages wagon on its way from railroad to the lumber-camp at Black Falls. Ten thousand dollars had been stolen, and the man in charge of the wagon had received a shot through his shoulder.

"I'd have sent MacDermott, but we can't spare him just now," the chief had commented. "The president of the lumber company is raising merry delight, and I figure it out that you'll have to set off straight away, Elton. Just nose about a piece and see what you can find. I dare say it'll be a bit too big for you to handle, and if so you can make a report in here, and I'll send you someone else along."

It was that last speech on the part of his superior that had rankled in Ranger Dave Elton's heart. It was true that he was very new to the service; he had only joined that a brief three months

before. He was a young Britisher, who had landed in Canada shortly after the war with the idea of taking up farming, but somehow or other the life had not appealed to him, so he had drifted down over the border into the States, and had joined the U.S.A. Forest Service.

He had been born and bred among the woody hills of Devon, and he found now that his boyhood training there stood him in good stead. Yet it was true that he had a lot to learn, for these long tracks of great forest land were different from anything he had ever imagined, and the life was also new and strange to him.

So far, his principal duties had been fighting fire, keeping lonely watch on some distant hill for the first signs of smoke and flame; for forest fire fighting is the rangers' chief duty. That, and seeing to the preservation of the wild game, and keeping out the ever-pressing grazers and their cattle, had filled his time up until now.

When he had left Black Falls that morning, the manager of the lumber company had given him a word of advice and warning.

"The pay wagon goes off this afternoon, Mr. Ranger," he had said, "and I'm sending a couple of armed men with it. There was talk up at the saloon last night that Red and his gang were not content with that last haul of theirs, and were figurin' out to have another hold-up. If you can find yourself somewhere round the river trail to-morrow morning, I'd be obliged. There's twenty thousand dollars comin' through this time, and it's a mighty big sum for them skunks to collar."

"When will your wagon reach the river trail?" Ranger Dave had asked.

"About an hour after sun-up," came the reply. "Bill starts from Raeburn Station an hour before dawn, and he'll travel fast."

Dave had set off for the river trail, making for it by way of the lonely track that ran up through the great, tree-clad hills. He had intended to work his way back over the divide to the banks of the wide stream.

He had never met Red, although the man was known by sight in the little township of Black Falls. A burly, pock-marked ruffian who was suspected to have more than a dash of Indian blood in him. There were five or six men in his gang, miscreants who had gathered under his banner thanks to Red's formidable reputation.

For a long time the lumber company and the inhabitants of Black Falls had

suffered from a series of blackmailing demands on the part of Red and his gang.

Twice he had started a fire, in order to make the lumber company realise their position, and hundreds of pounds' worth of valuable timber had been destroyed before the blaze was mastered.

Lonely farmsteads had been held up, and their owners forced to pay ransom to save their crops and cattle. The gang had become a menace and a danger to the entire district, and the lonely hills on which they had their hiding-place had been searched again and again by posses under the sheriff, without success.

There was no doubt in Dave Elton's heart now as to who his captors were. He had walked foolishly into the hands of some of Red's gang, and had paid the penalty.

A surge of rage ran through the captive as he lay in his uneasy pose, half-smothered in the folds of the sacking. He had been trapped, and had not even been able to put up the slightest resemblance to a fight.

What would headquarters say when they heard about it? The shame of having to make that report to the eagle-eyed head ranger came down on him then, and he writhed inwardly.

He commenced to tug at his bonds in a futile effort to free himself, but the rough hide cords only tightened around his swollen ankles and wrists.

Presently the creature who was carrying him was turned sharply to the left, and he heard the crisp crackle of dried cones and twigs underfoot. Evidently they had left the cleared track, and were heading through the trees.

They were still climbing, climbing steadily, and another long hour passed before the panting beast came to a halt and rough hands seized on the muffled ranger, untying him and half-leading, half-carrying him across a stretch of turf.

A push sent him reeling forward, and he tripped over a rough board, falling heavily on the beaten earth floor. Someone untied the slip of sacking, and he was jerked into a sitting position.

He was in a shed of some sort, and an oil-lamp had been lighted that was suspended from a beam in the roof. As his eyes grew accustomed to the light he picked out the burly figures of his captors.

There were four men in the shed, all of them wearing the knotted handkerchief over the lower part of their faces; an unsavoury, savage-looking gang.

The man who had removed the sacking, a lean, wiry, stunted shape, fixed his narrow black eyes on the ranger and laughed, revealing a mouthful of yellow teeth.

"You scare stiff, eh? You gotta be wind-up! Fine ranger-man you, eh?"

The broken accent indicated the man's nationality, as did the olive skin and black eyes.

"Shut your trap, Guiseppe!" a deep voice drawled; and Dave blinked towards the new speaker.

He was a gigantic man, well over six-feet-two, and burly with it. He was a trifle better dressed than the others, and there was an air of command about him that indicated who he was. The lank black hair lying low over the forehead, the hammer-shaped head, and the curiously dull, snake-like eyes, characteristic of the half-caste Indian, gave Dave the right clue. It was Red, the leader of the desperadoes.

The rest of the gang backed away, and the sleek-haired Red crossed to where Dave was seated.

"Headquarters must have gone mad when they sent a baby-boy like you up along here!" he remarked, in a level, cold tone. "What did they send you to catch, anyway—butterflies?"

Dave's freckled face hardened, and his blue English eyes lighted up.

"Not butterflies, exactly, Red," he returned. "An insect of another kind. 'Beetles,' they call them in my country; but over here they name them 'bugs'!"

For a pinioned youth to flash such a remark at the burly leader of the gang was an unheard of happening. The wizened man with the piece of sacking whipped round, and made as though to throw himself on Dave.

Red stretched a long arm out and caught Guiseppe by the shoulder, swinging him back against the side of the hut.

"Quit it, I tell you! I guess I can handle this guy. You beat it, all of you. Get along!"

He flung a nod towards the door, and one by one the trio of masked shapes slouched out into the darkness. Red thrust the door to with a flick of his foot, then turned and looked down at his captive again.

"You've got nerve all right," he said slowly. "Pity you hadn't more sense. But mebbe that'll be knocked into you presently!"

He removed his handkerchief from around his face, revealing a swarthy, clean-cut visage, with a hard, wolf jaw. The high cheek-bones, the thin nose, and cruel lips indicated the nature of the man.

"I needed you, ranger, otherwise I wouldn't have troubled to have you lariat. My men had their guns on you all the way from Black Falls; but we don't kill chickens—not if we can make better use of 'em!"

He drew an empty packing-case forward, and seated himself on it, staring across at the tanned, bruised face.

"The Forest Service must have been mighty hard-up for men when they allowed you to join," he commented contemptuously, "and I'm goin' to teach 'em a lesson. They'll have to send men along here in future, not boys like you!"

It was hard to have to sit there, pinioned and motionless, listening to that cold, contemptuous voice, and it was worse to know deep down that Red was speaking the truth.

Dave had been captured in the most ridiculous way. As he sat in silence for a moment under the cold eyes of Red, a grim resolve came into the youngster's heart.

By hook or by crook, he would prove to this sneering ruffian that, foolish though he had been, he had brains enough to get the better of him in the long run.

"Manager Miles was talkin' to you before you let out," Red went on. "I suppose he was tellin' you something about the pay wagon?"

The mere fact that Red knew about that interview between the ranger and the manager indicated that he had a trustworthy spy in the township.

"I don't propose to tell you what the subject of our conversation was," Dave returned.

The evil face widened into a grin. "Mebbe you'll talk presently, when I want you to," said Red. "But I happen to know I'm right. Manager Miles must have given you a line on the track that the pay wagon was goin' to take when it came back, and that's what you've got to tell me, ranger. Was it the forest trail or the river road?"

Dave's strong jaw tightened.

"You'll wait a long while before I tell you, Red!" he retorted.

The powerful figure leaned a trifle closer to him.

"You've got a mighty strong chirp for a chicken," he said. "We'll see how long it'll last!" The thin black brows drew together in a hard frown. "I figure on gettin' that twenty thousand dollars to-morrow morning—and you're going to help me do it," he added. "It's my last stake round about here, and I want it to be a dandy one!"

A thin laugh sounded.

"You're going to tell me which way the wagon comes—and you're goin' to stop it, Mister Ranger!" the cool voice went on. "I know there's two armed men travellin' with it, and they've got orders to shoot at sight. But they won't dare draw a weapon on a ranger, and that's why I've brought you here."

Dave stared at the dark face in front of him.

"You're going to get me to hold up the wagon?" he returned. "Then I wish you luck of your job, you Indian skunk!"

He had heard that Red was very sensitive over that streak of native blood, and he spoke the words deliberately, hoping to rouse the rascal. He succeeded, for, with an angry exclamation, Red leaped to his feet and leaned over Dave, his long fingers crooking, his face a mask of diabolical hate.

"I'll strangle you!"

"Yes, I suppose you will. That's the sort of job you're best at. Did you every try and tackle a man who had his hands free, you white-livered coward?"

The crooked fingers were already twitching at Dave's throat, and he could feel the hot, angry breath from the huge lungs; but his cold-voiced words had stung Red, and, with an angry snarl, the burly figure leaped back and flung the door wide.

"Here, you—quick, Guiseppe! Jake! Come along here—quick!"

Hurrying footfalls sounded, and a group appeared in front of the shed.

"Bring that skunk out!" Red hissed, through his set teeth. "He wants a fight, and he's going to get it! Bring him out—quick!"

Guiseppe lunged for Dave, followed by another man, and they jerked the ranger to his feet, one of them untying the bonds around his ankles. Then he was hustled out into the clear space in front of the shed, and while they untied his wrists he took a quiet glance around.

On three sides arose great, bleak cliffs, fringed at the top with tall pines. A fire was blazing under the shelter of one of the cliffs, and to the left was a rugged stretch of broken ground which fell sharply into a valley.

Overhead the stars were like diamonds in the sky, and Dave could hear faintly the tinkle of a waterfall close by.

Guiseppe had untied the cord around the ranger's wrists, and he flicked the loosened ends in Dave's face now.

"You gonna fight, eh? That's where you get your back broke in quick time!"

Dave filled his lungs with a deep breath of the cool, crisp night air as he chafed his numbed wrists, stamping on the ground to restore the circulation to his cramped limbs.

The massive figure of Red was standing on the right of the fire, and the huge ruffian had stripped himself to the waist, revealing the deep chest and massive torso.

One of the gang was talking to him now, and presently the burly leader pushed the fellow aside, stretching his powerful arms over his head.

"You can that stuff, Jem!" he harshed. "That white-faced skunk said I was afeared to meet him man to man! I'm goin' to beat him to a jelly right now!"

Guiseppe thrust his hand into the small of Dave's back, and gave him a fierce push.

"You getta what's comin' to you in a minute!" Guiseppe grated. "He beatta you up good and plenty, then he getta you to do what he tella you after!"

Dave began to undress then, slipping out of his uniform and rolling up the sleeves of his shirt. No matter what might happen now, he would have had an opportunity of getting his own back. He was not afraid of them, or their great, hulking leader.

In front of the fire stood the gigantic half-caste, and Dave, ready for the contest now, stepped across the space and fell into his guard.

CHAPTER 2.

A Gruelling Battle!

THE first vicious rush of Red swept Dave almost off his feet, and the towering man flung an arm round the tough, well-knit youngster and tried to bring him to the ground. That was always Red's method of rough-and-tumble attack. He relied on his immense weight and strength and savage fury.

In many a grimy saloon this attack had proved successful, and not a few unfortunate challengers had had their backs broken in the deadly struggle that followed.

But Dave Elton was not to be caught by that wild-bull method.

The course of physical training that he had gone through at Aldershot had taught him many things, and before Red could fix that powerful lock Dave had made his counter-attack.

He swung round sharply, dipping under the huge arm, then next moment his fingers tightened round Red's wrist, and Dave wedged his shoulder under the powerful armpit. There was a wrench and a swift, downward heave. That one-arm throw is a well-known ju-jitsu trick, and, when it is carried out correctly, it makes a perfect response to a hooligan attack.

Before he was aware of what had happened, Red's huge feet had left the ground, and he was flung clean over Dave's half-bent body, to land on his back with a thud on the turf, rolling over as Dave loosened his hold on the stout wrist.

A howl of utter dismay broke from the gang of desperadoes, and Guiseppe leaped forward, cat-like, his hand reaching for his belt. Quick as a flash the heavy knife was drawn and poised, but the harsh voice of Red rang out sharply.

"Quit that, Guiseppe! Quit it! Do you hear me?"

The slinking Italian stopped dead, as the burly figure of his leader arose to his feet. Red's face was a mask of savage fury now, as he waved his subordinate aside.

"This is my job, and I'm going to finish it!" he snarled.

Again he came on, with another of his furious rushes, and aimed a wild blow at his opponent. A hurricane of punches followed, Red striking out savagely, blindly, at the quick-moving, lithe figure in front of him.

They fought all round the fire, Red snarling and swearing, Dave silent. Again and again Red's heavy fists took toll, and Dave was sick and dazed, as he fought desperately to cover himself.

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He was giving away stones in weight, inches in height, and he fought always on the retreat, moving round and round that great, blazing fire. Their shadows danced and flickered over the rough ground, and the gang stood silent again, watching the amazing struggle.

One terrific swing of that herculean giant had laid open one side of Dave's cheek, where those hard knuckles had lashed the young flesh. The blood was pouring down on his shoulder and over his white chest, but his defence never wavered, and two-thirds of those wild swings were evaded.

The great chest of Red began to heave and pant, and Dave saw those quick signs of departing strength. Another shattering punch from Red caught Dave full in the chest, sending him staggering back almost into the fire, and with a howl of triumph the fury-filled half-caste lunged in to deliver another terrible blow.

Dave felt the hot flicker of the flame behind him, and knew what the murderous ruffian was aiming at.

As Red measured his distance, Dave timed a punch, and, putting all his power behind his effort, he lunged out, driving his left fist full into the heavy, sweating face of his opponent.

Red's great arm swung out, but Dave's fist got home first. Full on the cruel mouth it landed, bringing Red to a halt. Then Dave began to fight back, moving with lightning-like speed, measuring each blow and landing it with telling effect.

Punch after punch followed in quick succession, and the swaying, tottering giant fought blindly at his wiry antagonist.

An upper-cut landed on Red's throat, making him rock on his heels, and, dropping back a pace, Dave steadied himself, then, as Red swung forward again, the young ranger delivered his final drive.

His fist crashed through Red's guard and landed over the heart—a jarring, shattering concussion. The great half-caste reeled sideways, clawed at the earth for a moment, then went down as a tree falls, his body writhing in agony, his hard, rough hands gripping at his side.

Dave heard a howl of fury from the watchers, and saw the gang leap forward.

With a quick snatch the youngster drew a flaming brand from the heart of the blaze, and, leaping over Red's groaning form, Ranger Dave Elton charged upon the gang of cut-throats. One lanky rascal was smote across the throat with the flaring torch, and went down shrieking with agony.

Guiseppe's lean, monkey visage appeared for a moment, and Dave lashed out at it with his left fist, getting the blow home on the scraggy neck just below the ear.

As Guiseppe fell he struck up at Dave, and the youngster felt the hot stab of pain as a dagger gashed his forearm. Then two other men of the gang flung themselves headlong on the ranger, and bore him to the earth.

Dave fought blindly, savagely, and almost freed himself; but, as he half rose to his feet, Quiseppe reached out and caught Ranger Dave by the ankle, jerking him down on his face.

A hurricane of blows rained on to the prostrate youngster, savage, furious punches, and, bruised and battered and stunned, Dave Elton lay helpless, while the snarling pack secured him, cursing as they worked.

Dave was carried face downwards across the rough ground, and, more dead than alive, was tied to a tree. A rope was slipped under his shoulder, the loose end thrown over a bough, and he was hauled to his feet.

Guiseppe, who was accountable for this

new act of torture, lashed him up into position, so that Dave could only just touch the ground. The ranger's head was hanging on his chest and his body was limp as he swayed at the end of the cord.

"By-and-by we fix you higher up and give you longer drop," the olive-skinned wretch yelled to the half-unconscious ear. They left him then, going back to the fire and joining Red, a very sick man now, for that terrific drive over the heart had found his weak spot.

A long, grim ordeal began for Dave Elton. His assailants had kicked and battered him as the beasts they were, and his whole body was one long ache. The bonds they had secured him with were bound round and round his body so that he could not move. Every breath he took sent a hot stab of pain through him.

Gradually the agony of that pose he was in began to tell. The time came when the cord under his shoulders was like a red-hot band, tugging at him. His numb feet could not support his weight, and with every wave of faintness his knees gave way beneath him, only to be forced into use again, as the terrible agony of the taut rope on his straining shoulders jarred him into fresh effort.

And so, strung up and helpless, the tortured man watched the steady march of the stars across the sky with half-glazed eyes, until at last the sounds of voices and the thud of horses' hoofs brought him back to the world again.

The gang were on the move, and presently the huge figure of Red astride of a pony came riding up to the tree. Dave raised his head defiantly, and the leader of the desperadoes laughed.

"Ain't dead yet, then, Mister Ranger?" his harsh voice grated. "Waal, I guess you ain't slept much."

He turned and barked out a word of command, and someone leaped out and loosened the lariat. Dave Elton crumpled up in a heap on the ground and lay there for a moment. Then a rough hand jerked him to his feet, and he was carried across to a pack-horse, and flung up on to the broad back.

His ankles were lashed under the animal, and Guiseppe, climbing on to the saddle of the pony in front of the pack-animal, took the bridle in his clawlike fist. The long line of mounted figures filed slowly out of the hollow in the hills and commenced a long descent through the dark trees.

Dave swayed to and fro with every jolt of his mount, but gradually the keen air and the exercise, slight though it was, banished the numbness from his tortured limbs.

They filed through a gap in the hills where great, black boulders thrust their towering shadows upwards, picked their way across a reed-grown swamp, and finally emerged on the low bank of the river. They found a ford and crossed it, then headed to the right, and at last Red gave the signal to dismount.

They were on the edge of a fringe of trees, with a huge cluster of redstone boulders on the left.

Dawn was beginning to spread its great fingers out from the east, and Dave saw the long stretch of level roadway running past the trees and on down the slope.

Red came striding across to the bound figure, and, stooping, cut the cords that held his ankles together, and lifted the ranger to the ground. Guiseppe took the pack-horse and led it away, following the other animals into a cluster of boulders.

Another of the gang came up, and Dave saw that the fellow was carrying his uniform jacket and wideawake. At a signal from Red the man severed the



Dave swung round sharply, dipping under his powerful adversary's arm; then next moment his fingers tightened round Red's wrist, and his shoulder wedged under the powerful armpit. He gave a wrench and a swift downward heave, and Red's huge feet left the ground, and he went flying over Dave's half-bent body to land on his back with a thud.

remaining bonds, and Dave shook himself free.

With a quiet, significant gesture Red drew an automatic from his shirt and held it flat in his huge palm.

CHAPTER 3.

A Plot that Failed!

JUST listen to me, ranger," he began. "This is where the real business starts."

Dave's dirt-grimed face was turned towards the speaker, but he made no reply.

"Jake here will help you to spruce yourself up," Red went on. "There's plenty of water in the river; enough to make yourself fine and smart, as a good ranger should be!"

He guffawed at his own jest, then his dark face hardened.

"If you want to get out of this alive you got to obey orders. Soon as I give you the word you're goin' to sit out by the road there on that tree-trunk."

He indicated a stump some thirty or forty yards away from the boulders. It was on the edge of the trail, and could be seen for some distance on either side.

"When the pay-wagon comes along you've got to stop it. Just stand up and hold out your hand. They'll recognise you and won't suspect anything. They'll

be settin' a hot pace along the trail, and we don't want to take any chances."

Dave Elton's brain was still hazy, but he could see the underlying idea behind the plan. Red and his men would hide in the clump of rocks and in the fringe of trees just beyond the track. The driver of the pay-wagon, catching sight of the uniformed figure of the ranger, would have no suspicion, and at Dave's signal he would check his animals, giving Red and his dastardly associates a chance to slip out and cover the armed guard.

"Take him along, Jake, and help him to wash and dress up. He—he needs it!"

The man addressed as Jake hooked a long Colt out of his belt and thrust the muzzle into Dave's back.

"Get a move on!" he harshed. And the shirt-sleeved, battered figure stumbled off down the bank to the edge of the river.

The ice-cold water stung his cheek and bruises, but it did him good, and he drank deeply with his lips to the flood before rising again. Then Jake handed him the tunic, and Dave slipped into it, buttoning it across his broad chest. Then the stetson was slipped over his bruised forehead, and Jake, Colt in hand, stepped back to admire the effect.

"You'll pass, and, by gee, you're some tough guy! 'Tain't everybody'd be on their legs now after what you went through."

Red was waiting for them under the boulders, and the heavy, broad face

hardened as he looked at the slim, uniformed figure.

"Just get this right, ranger," he said. "I'm goin' to lie right here, and I'll have my gun ready on you. If the wagon don't stop I shoot you! I figure not to miss much at ten yards!"

He jerked his head towards the clump.

"You sit there till you see the wagon comin'. When it comes round the bend you got to get up and signal to 'em. Now go, get on your perch!"

Dave turned and walked quietly across the road, halting beside the stump. He saw the bulky figure of Red slip out of sight in among the boulders until only the hammer-shaped head was visible between the edge of two boulders. From where he was concealed he had a full view of the ranger, and Dave saw the muscular hand, with the automatic resting between the ragged edges.

To the right, where the fringe of trees ran, he could see the other kneeling shapes. Guiseppe and two other men had slid into concealment there, while Red and his two companions were lying hidden in among the boulders.

It was an ideal spot for an ambush, for the pay wagon had to come round a bend, and there was a slight slope up to the fringe of rocks.

Dave scated himself quietly and folded his arms.

The mere feel of his uniform had

brought a grim courage to Dave Elton. Out of the corners of his eyes he could see Red, and he knew that the awful finger was itching to close on the trigger, and he also knew that sooner or later Red would kill him. It suited the giant desperado's purpose to wait until the hold-up took place, but in those red-rimmed eyes Dave had already read his fate.

Once he had halted the wagon and the gang had made their attack, Red would have his revenge.

Feeling in his pocket, Dave discovered a packet of cigarettes, and he took one out, lighting it. There was an angry exclamation from the fringe of brushwood on the right, and he caught a glimpse of Giuseppe's lean, monkey face glaring at him.

Dave blew a long cloud of smoke into the still air. Those lurking did not dare follow his example lest they might betray their presence. A grim smile crossed Dave's lips for a moment, and he enjoyed this small jest.

He folded his arms across his chest, and as he did so his right hand came in contact with something long and hard in the breast-pocket of his tunic. The gang had known that he did not carry any weapons on his person and they had not troubled to search that garment.

Dave's steel-blue eyes hardened into flint as his fingers tightened on a tube.

It was a stick of T.N.T.!

It had been given to him by the superintendent of the dam down at Black

Falls as a souvenir. That small, six-inch tube, placed in the right position, could shift the biggest dam that ever flogged a river.

"Don't mistake it for a cigar, ranger," the superintendent had warned him. "They won't find as much of you as can be put on a fly's eyebrow!"

He drew another deep mouthful of smoke, and the red, glowing end of the cigarette brought inspiration to him. The T.N.T. cartridge was fitted with a small fuse—a two-second fuse. The distance between the stump and the boulders behind which Red and his men lurked was about ten yards. And once upon a time Ranger Dave Elton had been a skilled Mills' bomb-thrower.

The touch of that glowing end, a quick, sure throw—The rumble of wheels roused him from his tense musing, and a hoarse warning came from the cluster of rocks.

"Make a move now, ranger!" the harsh voice of Red called, and Dave caught sight of the gleaming muzzle of the automatic in the gap.

He arose to his feet, the cigarette between his lips, his left hand in his breast-pocket, a careless action apparently. A cloud of dust was gathering rapidly beyond the bend, and he could hear the quick beat of the mules' feet as they came cantering onward.

He paced onward, nearer and nearer to where Red was lurking.

Round the bend came the leading pair of mules, and a moment later the wagon swung into view, old Bill, the driver,

plying his whip, bringing his team into line.

Dave had a brief vision of the two armed guards seated on the wagon; then his right hand went up to his hat, and he snatched it off, raising it above his head.

Red was off his guard for a moment, as he saw his victim obediently following his instructions. Just for a second the burly giant removed his eyes from the uniformed figure and craned his head forward to watch the result of Dave's gesture.

He did not see Dave's left hand rise from the pocket and linger for a moment in front of the glowing cigarette. A faint, yellow smoke arose, then, lunging forward, Dave threw the small cylinder straight for the ragged gap.

As it left his hand a shower of sparks broke out, and Dave Elton flung himself sideways, falling on the road. A moment later, the shattering explosion came, and it seemed as though the earth shook to the force of it.

A great column of dust and smoke and boulders belched up from the left, and the flying fragments of limb and rock rained down on the road and river-bank and trees.

Leaping to his feet, the ranger staggered forward through the dust and smoke, shouting as he ran.

"Red's gang!" he called. "Look out! Red's gang!"

Bill, the driver, was tugging at the reins of his terrified mules, which had

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What You Have to Do!

Here is a splendid new competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of Blackpool Football Club in picture-puzzle form. What you are invited to do is to solve this picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears below, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Blackpool" Competition, GEM Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, APRIL 19th, 1923.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all, or any, of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This Competition is run in conjunction with the "Magnet," "Popular," and "Boys' Friend," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.

I enter "BLACKPOOL" COMPETITION and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name

Address

G



As the pay wagon swung into view, Red and his gang craned their heads forward and were off guard for a moment. Dave was quick to take advantage of this. Snatching the stick of T.N.T. from his pocket, he lit the fuse from his glowing cigarette, then lunging forward, he hurled the spluttering cylinder on its journey of destruction.

swerved right off the track and were bolting for the trees, the pay-wagon bumping and swaying over the ground.

Dave's warning cry reached the armed guard, and, as the first rogue behind the brushwood broke cover, revealing himself with his masked face, one of them levelled his rifle and fired.

The man spun round with a yell and fell sideways, clutching at the long grass. Next moment Bill had brought his team to a halt, and the two guards leaped out on to the rough ground.

By this time the cloud of smoke and dust had drifted away from the cluster of boulders, and one of the guards caught sight of the lanky figure of Jake poised amidst the rocks. Below him was Dave, and, with a headlong bound, Jake flung himself on the uniformed figure, firing as he leaped.

The two men crashed together and rolled over into the roadway.

"There's another of the skunks!" cried Bill. "Get him, Jim—get him!"

Guiseppe had slid out from the trees on the right, and, with a quick run, was half-way across the road. His knife was glimmering in his hand as he sped, and, bringing his rifle to his shoulder swiftly, the shorter of the two guards took aim.

Ping!

The whiplike crack of a Winchester sounded, and Guiseppe reeled with a shriek of pain.

Next moment the guard had reached the lean, monkey-like shape, and, club-

bing his gun, he brought the butt round hard on Guiseppe's head, sending him sprawling into the dust.

"Quit that, quick!"

A rifle-barrel jambed into Jake's side brought his fingers away from Dave Elton's throat. The second guard had reached him, and, with a look of sullen rage on his face, the lanky figure stood up, raising his hands over his head.

"All right, ranger!" his rescuer called. "I guess we've cleaned 'em up nicely now!"

And Ranger Dave Elton, dragging himself dizzily to his feet, grinned a wan, twisted grin that revealed his bruised, battered face to the amazed eyes of the guard.

"Yes, I think you've got all that's left of 'em!" Dave returned, as his eye travelled slowly round the scene.

Under the trees near to the wagon lay a dead man; on the left of the road Guiseppe sprawled limply; a search among the shattered boulders revealed the deadly work of the T.N.T. tube. Red and the man who had laid next him had received the full force of that terrific explosion. Farther down the bank was found the last remaining member of the gang, groaning in a bush with a broken thigh.

Jake and Guiseppe and the injured man were bundled into the wagon; then it was swung into the road again, and two hours later the pay wagon duly arrived outside the general offices of the big

lumber company, and a tired, bruised ex-Britisher handed his prisoners over to the sheriff of the little lumber town.

"Your horse came in late last night, ranger," the sheriff explained, "and I was sending out a posse this mornin' to try and locate you. We figured that as you were a stranger here, you might have got lost in the trees. But I guess it takes a darned lot to make one of your kind lose yourself!"

"Oh, I don't know!" Ranger Dave Elton returned. "I'm new at this game, and I've a lot to learn yet. One thing I have learned, sheriff, and that's not to go day-dreaming when you're riding a lonely trail!"

The sheriff glanced across towards the wagon, where Guiseppe and Jake, two scowling, hand-dog figures, were manacled together to the tailboard.

"Day-dreamin', was yer, stranger?" the old fellow remarked at last. "Waal, I guess it was pretty profitable dreamin' for us folks here in Black Falls, for you shifted a mighty nasty bed of nightmares when you woke up!"

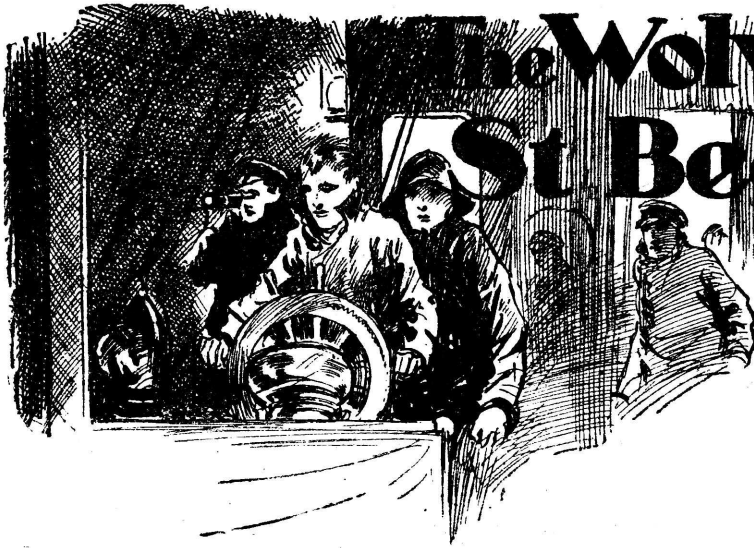
A somewhat mixed metaphor, with which the rest of the group entirely agreed.

THE END.

(Look out for next week's splendid complete story, entitled: **A BRITISHER'S TEST!** You will enjoy this grand tale of a boy's adventures alone in America.)

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DON'T SKIP A LINE OF THIS POWERFUL SERIAL!



The Wolves of St Beowulf's!

A Story of Thrills and
Breathless Situations
on Land and Sea.

BY

DUNCAN STORM.

Wobby & Co. are the pluckiest
and liveliest boys you ever
met, and their adventures are
amazing.

Introduction.

Jack Wabbyong, James Ready, Sweet, and a Chinese named Lung, chums together in the great school of St. Beowulf's, together with Viscount Waffington, a relation of the Countess of Castlewood, are instrumental in bringing about the capture of a gang of international burglars.

John Lincoln, one of the governors, takes an interest in the lads, and arranges to take them on a world tour.

The great day comes, and aboard the Pole Star the happy party set off on their great adventure.

After an exciting sea trip, the Pole Star drops anchor at San Carlo, where the boys make things so lively they have to dash back to the ship to avoid arrest. Immediately they get back they are told they are to rout out a number of pirates—a prospect they hail with joy. The journey is continued until the coast of Morocco is reached. Here the party land, and, armed to the teeth, they advance upon the stronghold of Suini Baba, the pirate chief.

They are captured, however, by a party of mounted Moors, and marched to the residence of El Took, the nigger governor of Suini Baba. Things would have gone badly for the boys, but for the sudden appearance of Nobby, whose strange antics helps them in effecting their escape. They prepare a further attack upon the dreaded Suini Baba, and the column is toiling along through the hills when they are confronted by more of the pirate chief's riders, who, with the kind treatment shown them, throw in their lot with that of the attackers. Mr. Hobbs then dynamites the entrance to the treacherous Kaid's tower, and the attacking-party sweep forward with fixed bayonets.

(Now read on.)

Kings of the Castle!

THE column, sweeping into the building, met with no resistance till they reached the other hall which guarded the sanctum of the Kaid. Here were gathered a handful of the Kaid's guards, who fired one ill-directed volley and ran for it.

When the attackers burst into Kaid Suini Baba's apartment they found only that old gentleman calm and wicked.

In his hand was a flaming torch.

At his feet there was lifted a trap-door in the marble-tiled floor in the hall. And piled high in this cellar below were barrels of powder.

"Stand back, ye Nazarene dogs!" cried Suini Baba. "Stand back, or we go to the Halls of Ebless together!"

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The head of the attacking-party wavered for a moment. There was a ton or two of gunpowder below them, and they knew that the old Kaid, like a cornered rat, would take his last bite if he could.

Wobby saw his chance. He stepped through the ranks, twisting his arm like a Balearic slinger as his trusty boomerang flew.

It hit the torch from the old ruffian's hand as it flew, and torch and boomerang flew through the open window.

There was a rush forward, and the blade of Suini Baba's scimitar played like a flash of lightning as it rattled on the bayonets, driving them aside.

"Surrender, Suini Baba!" cried Sulieman.

In answer, the old gentleman dashed forward and dealt such a slash at Sulieman as would have cost him his life had he not caught the blow on a mace of finely tempered steel.

The blade broke on the mace into half a dozen fragments of steel. That finished Suini Baba. He had always believed that sword of his to be a magic sword, made by an ancient master of Damascus, and blessed by the Prophet himself.

It was indeed a magnificent blade. But Suini Baba did not know that his wives had used it for stirring up their charcoal fires in the cold weather, and had thus taken the temper out of it. Even the finest of Damascus blades will not stand prolonged use as a poker.

When his sword failed, the heart of the old ruffian failed also.

Sulieman dashed forward and caught him by his white cloak.

"Yield ye, Suini!" he cried.

Kaid Suini Baba knew that his time was come, and that the tale of his sins was complete. He gave a twist and a leap, and bounced through the open window behind him, leaving his cloak in Sulieman's hands.

He had taken his last leap into the abyss into which he had hurled so many poor souls during his bloodstained rule.

Mr. Hobbs looked out of the window.

"Crumbs!" he cried. "Did you ever see such a place! The bottom's dropped out of the world here!"

In a flash of lightning he saw far below a white flutter.

"He hasn't reached the pavement

yet!" he added, drawing back his head hastily.

"Don't you go looking out o' that window, boys!" he said. "It's worse than going up the monument. Made me fair dizzy. Now let's have a look round for the prisoners."

Mr. Hobbs was armed with a cold steel crowbar.

"Keep your pistols ready, young gents," he said. "It's close work going round an ole Tower of London like this, and there's no coppers about. Shoot first, and ask questions afterwards!"

He kicked open a small door which led into the hall.

It was a door from which issued the smell of cellars and dampness.

"It's this way to the dungeons," said Mr. Hobbs, as he switched on his electric lamp.

They found themselves in a labyrinth of narrow passages, and into these Mr. Hobbs squeezed his fat body like a queuing rat.

Their first passage was a blind lead, for they found themselves looking through a narrow slit in the carved tracery of the hall they had just left.

"This is one of old Suini Baba's rat runs, boys," said Mr. Hobbs. "He must have been a regular ole spy. All he had to do was to walk about in the thickness of his own walls and listen. We'll take a cast back and try to find the steps to the coal cellar."

They went back and dived into the labyrinth again, Mr. Hobbs taking the precaution to chalk the line of their passage on the walls.

"When you get into a place like this, young gents," he said, "it's always as well to know how you are going to get out. Mind your eye. Here's some steps!"

Mr. Hobbs had cast the light of his lamp on the flagged floor of the passage.

He came to a sudden stop, for at his feet yawned a circular hole thrice the diameter of a coal hole.

"Crumbs!" he exclaimed, as he cast the light of his lantern into this hole and saw no bottom to it.

He drew an empty tin tobacco-box from his pocket and dropped it into the black depths. Some seconds elapsed before there rose from the depths a hollow splash showing that the tin had hit water far below.

"Right about, young gents, and light your way carefully!" exclaimed Mr. Hobbs. "This is worse than the Chamber o' 'Orrors at Madame Tussauds. If I was down 'ere long I should get the fantods and expect to meet ole Palmer the Poisoner round every corner! It's a reg'lar death trap!"

Wobby was leading now. He turned into a side alley of the labyrinth, and soon they heard a faint whimpering.

"Pris'ners!" called Mr. Hobbs, from the rear of the file. "I can 'ear them! Let me come along!"

He pushed his way past them in the narrow passage.

"It's somewhere along here," he said. "This is a nice sort of place to stow human beings! Gimme good ole Wormwood Scrubs all the time!"

Suddenly Mr. Hobbs' crowbar went up in menace.

Into the circle of his electric lamp had floated a face. It was a dirty face, the face of a hook-nosed man with fat cheeks, and eyes that were rolling with fear. He was a yellow man.

"Hallo!" called Mr. Hobbs. "What are you doing 'ere?"

The man was crouching on the floor of the passage.

Mr. Hobbs kicked him to his feet, and there was a jangle of keys as the man rose.

"He's the warden on duty!" exclaimed Mr. Hobbs. "Hey, Jack, d'ye understand me?" he demanded of the man, with a threatening flourish of his steel bar. "Where's the dungeons? Prodooce the prisoners. We've come with a writ of Habeas Corpus. Open up the gaol, you dog, or I'll comb your hair with this 'ere iron bar!"

"Mercy, O great Kaid!" stammered the man in Arabic.

"I don't know what you are talking about, Jack, but if you don't open up every cell in this ole gaol of yours, you are a dead man in two minutes! Lead on, Macduff, and any hanky on your part will be visited by a severe reprimand from this steel bar!" answered Mr. Hobbs.

The trembling gaoler pattered ahead of them, his slippers shuffling holow on the stone flags.

He had evidently been going his rounds amongst his prisoners, for he carried, as well as the great bunch of keys at his girdle, an earthen pitcher of water and an esparto basket containing flat cakes of rough-looking bread.

He came at last to a heavy, iron-bound door and unlocked it.

Here was a small dungeon. In the corner crouched a white woman holding a baby tight to her breast. Over her stood a man, his fists clenched and his eyes wild with fear.

At the sight of the hooded figures in the doorway he stood erect.

"I don't know who you devils are!" he cried in English. "But one of you is going to die!"

"Arf a mo, matey!" replied Mr. Hobbs. "We are not what we seem. If you are Mr. Brown, who was captured by that old ruffian, Suini Baba, you've no fear. Suini Baba is no more. We have captured the castle, and we are kings of it—Mr. Lincoln, a landing party from the trawler Kipper King, and the Wolves of St. Beowulf's—party of young gents out seeing life!"

It was indeed the captured agent. At the sound of English he stared as though he could not believe his eyes.

Then he covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears.

Mr. Hobbs was visibly affected.

His voice was quite shaky as he clapped the poor fellow on the back.

"Cheer up, mate," he said. "It's all

over now except the shouting. We'll have you, the missus, and the baby out of this in a brace of shakes. We've thought of everything. There's proper food for the baby up above with the stores. Master Jinn, follow the chalk line carefully, and take this lady and gentleman and the baby up above to Mr. Lincoln."

The boys lifted the poor woman to her feet. She was nearly fainting with the sudden relief. They had heard the sound of an explosion, which had shaken even this cell down in the depths of the solid rock, and they had expected nothing but death, for Suini Baba had promised them that if any attempt at rescue was made death would be their portion.

Jim Ready took the baby, and Waff and Wobby supported the prisoners, leading them up to the great hall, and being very careful to follow their chalk line through the passages.

"Did that tug down below ill-treat you, sir?" asked Wobby of Mr. Brown.

"Not so bad," replied Mr. Brown.

"Good for him!" replied Wobby, who was profoundly moved by the hole in which they had found these prisoners. "I'm Australian, I am, and though I've never done in a chap yet, it's a great temptation!"

A shout of welcome greeted the prisoners as they were led into the hall. The boys hurried back to the dungeons.

Treasure!

MR. HOBBS was getting busy with his crowbar. He could not wait whilst the trembling gaoler unlocked the heavy doors. He pushed the point of the steel

bar into the staples which held the padlocks and wrenched them from their hold, revealing dungeon after dungeon of the prisoners of Kaid Suini Baba.

Poor, trembling creatures were these, mostly harmless peasants from the plains below who had fallen under the wrath of the tyrant or had been cast into these awful places because they could not reveal the whereabouts of treasures which they had never possessed.

Mr. Hobbs' brow grew as black as thunder as he patted them on the back and spoke encouraging words to them.

"This way, ma!" he said to a poor old woman who, with her daughter, had not seen the light of day for five long years. "Cheer up, old sweetheart! You stand out in the passage there with Birdie till we get the rest out. We'll see you righted. We'll put a compensation claim through this buzzard's nest, and we'll smoke out these robbers till not one of 'em remains to tell the tale."

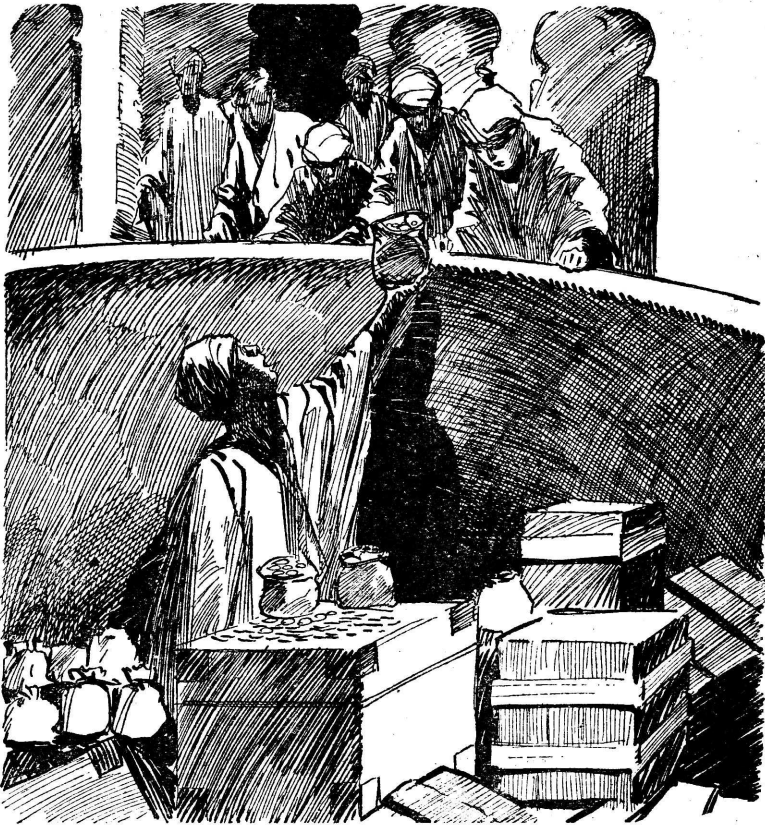
The poor people were dazed. They did not know who these strangers could be who were dressed like Moors, but who spoke gentle words in a strange tongue and carried no whips.

Cell after cell was emptied of its occupants, till fifty poor souls, dirty and ragged, were standing in a line in the passage.

Then Mr. Hobbs flourished his iron bar over the head of the gaoler.

"Now, Jack," he said menacingly, "is this the lot? If there's a single one left I'll smash your head, and the fires of Eblless will take you, and you'll burn and burn and burn, till you'd give a million pounds for a penny lump of hokey-pokey!"

The prisoners interposed. They knew their numbers. They were all there.



As Mr. Hobbs, down in the hold, cut the lashings from one of the bags, there was a metallic jingle. "Quids!" he exclaimed with great satisfaction, clutching a large handful. "There you are, boys!"

Then Mr. Hobbs slipped a noose of stout cord round the neck of the gaoler. "You are going to quod, anyways, my lad," he said genially, "then you'll get a taste of what you've been giving people these many years. Right turn, ladies and gents; follow the guides if you don't want to tumble into the coal-cellar."

But the prisoners knew the passages well enough. They filed out into the great hall, where a few prisoners, including the wives of the late Suini Baba, had been assembled.

"Now, where's the kitchens of this place?" demanded Mr. Hobbs. "Ere, ole Ali Baba, set the cooks to work and dish out the best supper that there is in this place. I want these ladies and gents to thoroughly enjoy themselves to-night, and if those ladies are the widows of Mr. Suini Baba, they can help with the cooking."

It was plain that the household of Suini Baba was not sorrowing for his death. They were equally prisoners in this pirate stronghold. They were laughing and smoking and handing round the sticky sweetmeats which all Moorish women love. And soon they set to work to prepare kabobs and boiled rice and kous-kous for the hollow-eyed prisoners.

Mr. Hobbs, having arranged everything to his satisfaction, entered the inner hall, where Mr. Travers was leading a search for the treasure of the Kaid.

He had been tapping the walls and the floors. The powder-hold had been emptied and the powder-barrels ranged along the walls; but no signs of treasure in the cellar were revealed.

"It's bound to be hidden somewhere in this chamber," said Mr. Travers. "If we can do nothing else, we'll have to pull the place down piecemeal. But the sooner we get it and are out of it the better. The news will soon spread, and we shall have all the mountaineers of the Atlas down on us to share the plunder."

"What do you expect to find, sir?" asked Mr. Hobbs.

"Why," replied Mr. Travers, "the proceeds of five hundred hotel robberies all over Europe, and whatever that old ruffian has saved and screwed and plundered in the last fifty years."

"That's a nice little game of hot buttered beans and bacon!" said Mr. Hobbs, seating himself on the edge of the marble fountain heavily and wiping his face on a large cotton handkerchief.

Mr. Hobbs was a heavy man. The exertions and the emotion he had been through in the last hour had made him feel quite shaky, and all the blood in his body seemed to have run to his head.

But it seemed to Mr. Hobbs that that solid marble fountain moved as he sat on it.

"I don't know whether it's my fat head, sir," he said to Mr. Travers, "but I'd a notion that this big marble basin moved just now. Come along, boys, all come and sit on this side of it. Now heave!"

The boys seated themselves alongside Mr. Hobbs and bore down on the basin, which weighed over a ton, for it was of heavy marble construction lined with blue tiles.

"She's a-doing! She's a-doing!" cried Mr. Hobbs, in great excitement, and the water in the fountain stirred. "Down with the ole bath!"

The marble basin had surely tipped, it was down an inch on one side now.

"Where's Fat 'Orrocks?" demanded Mr. Hobbs.

Fatty Horrocks, a stoker of the Kipper King, stepped forward.

"Here, ole Forty Stun, put your weight on it!" said Mr. Hobbs. "I bet we are on the treasure-chamber! There's a Bank of England hid away under here!"

Fatty Horrocks put his weight on. "Look out!" yelled Mr. Hobbs.

The marble basin sank on one side, pouring its contents down into the hollow below as it swung over on its pivot, and there, in the square chamber revealed, lay the ill-gotten hoard of Kaid Suini Baba.

There was no doubt about the quantity of it. The tank was wedged up, and Mr. Hobbs leaped into the hole, throwing out bag after bag of Spanish dollars. Beneath these were more bags which gave out a different chink. They were all the same weight, methodically stowed and tied up, and sealed with the seal of the dead freebooter.

Mr. Hobbs cut the lashings of one of these bags.

"Quids!" he exclaimed, with great satisfaction, and he held out a handful of British sovereigns. "There you are, boys," he said. "You won't have seen many of them in your time. Those are the real British durlions, same as we used to have before the war. Hark to the chink of them! We haven't heard that sort of music since the year nineteen hundred and fourteen."

But there were greater wonders waiting below.

Mr. Hobbs pulled up a wooden box, and the lid was burst up with a hatchet.

Then Mr. Travers began to take an interest in things.

Wrapped in dirty rags were priceless jewels, and the first object that was unwrapped from its envelope was a collar of diamonds, whose brilliancy made the boys blink.

Mr. Travers had his notebook out.

"That's interesting," he said. "That's the famous Rockland diamonds. The Duchess of Rockland had them stolen from her house when she was at dinner, and her maid was found strangled in the dressing-room. That's a Scotland Yard mystery that's never been cleared up till now."

"What's these?" asked Mr. Hobbs, unrolling a bit of cotton-cloth and showing a blue gleam of stones.

"The Mountford sapphires," responded Mr. Travers. "They disappeared at Monte Carlo from the Hotel Beauregard. And there was nothing to account for one of the waiters committing suicide. Hung himself with a silken cord in one of the pantries. And the silken cord was of a sort that no manufacturer in Europe could identify. That waiter was one of Suini Baba's young men, for a good dollar!"

Mass after mass of jewels were brought up from the hole. Mr. Travers could give half of them a name. The rest were Russian and Turkish settings and stones which baffled him.

"Why, this old ruffian must have been working all the countries in Europe," said Mr. Travers, in wonderment. "This will be quite a surprise for them at the Yard!"

"Should think it takes a lot to surprise them up there!" said Mr. Hobbs, bringing the last box out of the treasure-chamber. "There, I think that little lot would make old Tutankhamen's mummy sit up and turn green with envy."

Mr. Travers was very methodical. He took an inventory of all the jewels.

Then the released prisoners were brought forward. They had all been fed and some had been partially washed, and Mr. Travers was quite proud of them as he marshalled them up to receive their "compensation and old-age pensions," as he called the big sack of dollars, which was handed out to each one.

And there was not one of these who did not elect to accompany the column to the coast to be moved to one of the ports, where they could enjoy their fortune in peace and quietness, for they

(Continued on page 27.)

Result of Notts County Picture-Puzzle Competition.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

J. BOARD,
Dowell Street,
Honiton,
Devon.

The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided among the following five competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

Mrs. J. Board, Dowell Street, Honiton, Devon; T. Jobson, 2, Charlotte Street, Tidal Basin, E. 16; Tom Loynd, 17, Clementina Terrace, Carlisle; Robert Scott, 424, Parliamentary Road, Glasgow; Fred Brooks, 16, Nichols Square, Hackney Road, E. 2.

Fifty-one competitors with two errors each divide the ten prizes of 5s. each—one shilling being added to the prize list to make up a round sum. The names and addresses of these prize-winners can be seen on application at this office.

SOLUTION.

There are few older football teams in the country than Notts County. It goes back practically to the commencement of the game. The club made swift headway, and reached a magnificent position on the First League table. Since then, fortune has ebbed and flowed.



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BOYS' REALM 2

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THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 792.

THE WOLVES OF ST. BEOWULF'S!

(Continued from page 26.)

knew that there was only one watch-word in this troubled country, and this was, "How dare you have money!"

The jewels were packed up. There were four camel-loads of these, and Mr. Travers would not put any money value on them.

"All I know," he said, "is that we've got more money about us than I like to have in this part of the country. To my mind, the sooner we are off the better, and if we can get down to the coast without a fight for it, better still!"

So all haste was made in getting the caravan ready for the return.

There was a fair stable of camels and doukeys still left, though the larger portion of Sini Baba's horsemen were out on a raid.

These were set aside for the released prisoners and the plunder.

Then Mr. Hobbs got ready to deal his last blow at the robber fortress.

"With 'arf a load of dynamite and that powder we ought to make a very nice show of it," he said.

"What are you going to do, Hobbo?" asked Wobby.

"Put the powder back in the cellar where we found it," replied Mr. Hobbs, "and lay a fuse to it. Then we'll put the dynamite down in the dungeons, and lay a fuse to that. Then we'll 'op it, and I bet the castle will jump from its foundations."

They worked like Trojans whilst the caravan was getting ready outside.

Soon all the camels were loaded up, and, under a strong guard, were sent away.

Only Suleiman remained behind guarding the camels and horses of the boys and Mr. Hobbs.

Presently all was ready. Mr. Hobbs had arranged his charges and laid the trains.

He brought these to the central hall, and pensively lit a cigar, from which he carefully lighted the fuses.

He watched these for a moment or two till they were well under way, the sparks travelling along them whilst two tiny spirals of blue smoke foretold the doom of Sini Baba's stronghold.

"Now, lads," said Mr. Hobbs, "I think it's time we were going. It's me for the seaside."

They hastened out of the building, and soon they were off, their camels and horses picking their way carefully down the Valley of Stones.

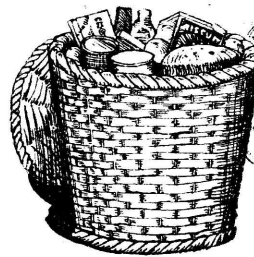
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All Attempts in this Competition should be Addressed to: The GEM, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER.

GIVE THEM TIME.

The visiting team was not distinguishing itself. Their defence was weak, their play was half-hearted, and their forwards were hopeless. They could not take advantage of any opening, and the few shots they had at goal went hopelessly wide. Rude remarks began to fly around, and presently a spectator, standing near the visiting goalkeeper, asked sarcastically: "Say, have your forwards ever scored a goal?" "I couldn't say, mister," replied the goalkeeper. "I've only played with this team six years."—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious tuck has been awarded to C. Livermore, 5, Station Road, Dunstable, Beds.

FORCED TO SLOW DOWN.

A man nearly eighty years of age walked ten miles from his home to an adjoining town. When he reached his destination he was greeted with some astonishment by an acquaintance. "You walked all the way!" the latter exclaimed. "How did you get along?" "Oh, first rate!" the old man replied. "That is, I did until I came to a sign, 'Slow down to fifteen miles an hour.' That kept me back as bit!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to David P. Gourley, 23, Union Place, Perth Road, Dundee, N.B.

A RECORD HOLDER.

A young man with a worried look made his way into the motor manufacturer's private office. "Is it true," he asked, "that you've really turned out a motor-car in seven minutes thirty-five seconds, sir?" "Yes," said the great man, blowing a cloud of smoke into the air from his Corona, "that's our record, and let me tell you, we're proud of it!" "I'm not!" the youth retorted. "I've got it!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Harry Walters, 60, Sharoe Green Lane, Fulwood, Preston, Lancs.

A "COUNTER" ATTRACTION.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the hosier's shop in Wayland, and regarded the man behind the counter with distinct disapproval. "I say," he said, "could you take that yellow tie with the pink spots out of the window for me?" "Certainly, sir," said the shopman politely. "Pleased to take anything from the window for you at any time, sir." "Thanks awfully!" retorted the swell of St. Jim's, with a sigh of relief. "The beastly thing bothais me howwibly ewevy time I pass the shop. Good-morning!" And before the shopman had time to recover from his surprise, Gussy had disappeared.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Ronnie Higgs, The House, Globe Works, Chatsworth Road, Clapton Park, E. 5.

HOW WE WON THE CUP.

Did I ever tell you the tale, sir. Of the way that our boys won the Cup? We were playing the Spurs in the Final, And at half-time the "Whites" were one up. The second half had barely started, When our goalie, a great box of tricks, Got injured when saving his charge, sir. And our captain placed me 'tween the sticks. We took half an hour to draw level, With ten men—a pretty good show. But I'll tell you how we came the winners, Though we'd only one minute to go. The Spurs' centre-forward, you know him, He let drive a rocket at me. I intended to save with my head, sir; I missed, and the ball struck my knee. The force of that shot was terrific; It's a thing that I'll never forget. The ball struck my knee and rebounded, And, believe me, burst the other goal net!

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. G. Jeffrey, 14, Park Street, South-end-on-Sea.

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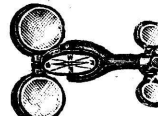
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