

Next Thursday's
Splendid School Tale:

"THE SHADOW OF SHAME!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.
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An illustration of a man in a graduation cap and gown standing next to a dog. In the background, a group of people are standing in a doorway. The title 'Towser Minor!' is written in large, bold, serif letters. Below the title, the text 'A Splendid, New, Laughable, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and Bernard Glyn—the Schoolboy Inventor.' is written. Below this, the author's name 'BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.' is written in large, bold, serif letters.

Towser Minor!

A Splendid, New, Laughable, Long,
Complete Tale of Tom
Merry & Co. and Bernard
Glyn—the Schoolboy
Inventor.

BY
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

The Madness of Bernard Glyn.

HERRIES of the Fourth rushed into Study No. 6, in the School House of St. Jim's, with his face crimson and his eyes ablaze with excitement. He came right into the study at top speed, and reached the table before he could stop himself, and grasped it with both hands to avoid pitching over it.

Jack Blake and Digby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were at work at the table, writing away industriously, and Herries' sudden grasp upon the table had a most disastrous effect.

The table rocked, and blots innumerable scattered from three pens, and three exercises were reduced at the same moment to a state of ruin. The inkpot rolled over, and shot towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and before that junior knew what was happening the ink was streaming over his beautiful waistcoat.

Three juniors jumped up with a roar of wrath.

"Herries, you ass!"

"Herries, you fathead!"

"Howwies, you dangerous maniac!"

"Oh!" gasped Herries. "I say—" He gasped breathlessly, and still held on to the table. "I say, you chaps—"

"You ass!" yelled Blake. "Look at my impot."

"Look at my giddy verbs!" shouted Digby.

"Look at my waistcoat!" groaned D'Arcy.

Herries panted.

"Blow your impot! Blow your verbs! Blow your waistcoat!"

"Look here, Herries—"

"You uttah ass!"

"Gimme your hammer, Blake! Come along, all of you!"

"My hammer! What on earth—"

Herries made a dash at Blake's tool-box. Jack Blake was an amateur carpenter, and his tools were the common property of the study. Herries dragged the box open, and groped in for the hammer, and jerked it out. The three juniors, forgetting even the ruined impots, and the waistcoat in their amazement, rushed at Herries and grasped him. Herries was such a quiet, steady-going old fellow as a rule, that his excitement was really alarming.

"What's the matter, Herries?"

"What's happened?"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Let me go!" panted Herries. "Come on, all of you! I'll smash him!"

"Him! Who?"

"Weally, you know—"

"Come on!" yelled Herries. "He's mad! Come on!"

"Eh?"

"Who's mad?"

"Bai Jove, I wathah think that Hewwies himself is mad!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Don't let him get away with that hammer. He may bwain somebody!"

And the three juniors, really alarmed, held Herries firmly.

Next Thursday:

"THE SHADOW OF SHAME!" AND "WINGS OF GOLD!"

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and Blake jerked the hammer out of his hand. Herries struggled furiously.

"Lemme go!" he roared. "I tell you, he's mad! The door's locked! I—"

"What door, you ass?"

"The box-room door! He's mad as a batter! Come on! Leggo! Chuck it! I tell you— Will you let me go?" yelled Herries frantically.

"But who—what—which—"

"Towser—"

"Towsah? Bai Jove! I always knew there was somethin' w'ong with that wotten bulldog. He nevah had the slightest respect for a fellow's twousahs."

"Towser's mad?" exclaimed Blake, in alarm. "Good heavens! There'll be hydrophobia about if he bites somebody. But you can't kill him with a hammer. You'll want an axe or something."

"Mr. Wailton has a gun in his studay—"

"I'll get the chopper!" gasped Digby. "Where is Towser, Herries?"

"In the box-room—"

"Has he bitten anybody?"

"No, ass, but I expect he'll bite Glyn. I hope so—"

"You hope so!" roared Blake. "I think you're as mad as Towser! Glyn will have hydrophobia if Towser bites him—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I wish he had hydrophobia and—and smallpox and measles and appendicitis!" hooted Herries. "He's mad!"

"Yes; Towser—"

"No, idiot—Glyn!"

"Bernard Glyn?"

"Yes, fathead! Lemme go! Come on! Back up! He's killing him!" Herries gasped incoherently.

"Look here!" roared Blake, exasperated. "Who's mad—and who's killing whom? Are you mad, or is Bernard Glyn killing Towser, or is Towser killing Bernard Glyn?"

"Glyn's mad, and he's killing Towser, you idiots!" shrieked Herries, almost in hysterics. "He's locked up in the box-room with him, and he's killing him! I want the hammer to smash in the door! Now you understand, you frabjous asses! Come on! If he kills Towser, I'll brain him! I'll—"

"Oh, you're potty!" said Blake. "Glyn wouldn't hurt an animal—"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'll brain him! I'll—"

"Pewwaps Towsah has been tearin' his twousahs, or somethin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as if that would be a full and adequate explanation for killing Towser.

"I don't care if he has! I'll brain him, I tell you! Come on! I tell you— Leggo!"

"Look here, Herries—"

"Rats! Leggo!"

Herries made a tremendous effort, and tore himself from the grasp of the Fourth-Formers. He snatched the hammer from Blake's hand, and dashed out of the study before the chums of the Fourth could grasp him again.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "He's off his giddy wockah, wight enough!"

"After him! He'll do some damage with that hammer!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The three juniors dashed out of the study. Herries was racing upstairs, three steps at a time, in desperate bounds. They dashed after him. From above came a wild sound of growling and snarling and snapping, and the juniors thought they recognised the well-known voice of Towser, the bulldog.

They dashed on, amazed and alarmed. Bernard Glyn, of the Shell, was a peculiar youth in some respects. He was a wonderful inventor, and his inventions had often caused great trouble in the School House, for the inventor and for everybody else. But the Liverpool lad was kindness itself, and they could not imagine him being cruel to an animal. It seemed impossible that Glyn, of the Shell, could have taken to vivisection, although he was always turning his hand to something new.

Gr-r-r-r-r!

Yowl-l-l-l-l-l!

It was certainly the voice of a canine sufferer. It came from the box-room over the Fourth Form studies—a room that was frequently used by Glyn for his experiments. The chums of No. 6 knew that to their cost, for Glyn had once left a tap running there, in his absorption in his work, and flooded out the study below.

In the passage outside the box-room half a dozen excited fellows were gathered. Some of them were knocking at the door, and calling to Bernard Glyn to open it; but no answering voice came from within.

Glyn was evidently too deep in his work to reply. Herries dashed through the juniors, and crashed the hammer upon

the lock of the door. It was a doughty blow. The lock did not yield, but the handle of the hammer did, breaking in two, and the hammer-head flew through the air, narrowly missing the aristocratic features of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as it flew back.

"Bai Jove! Take care, you fwightful ass!" yelled D'Arcy.

Herries snorted.

The door was as fast as ever, and the hammer was of no further use. Herries raged in the passage. Blake pushed him aside, and knelt at the door to look through the keyhole. From within the box-room came the growling and snapping and whining without a pause.

Jack Blake uttered an exclamation of horror as he looked through the keyhole.

He could see into the box-room, and he saw all that was passing. Bernard Glyn was there, and he was kneeling beside the form of a bulldog that was stretched upon the floor.

The keyhole allowed a view of only part of the bulldog, and Blake could not see what Glyn was doing to it; but he was evidently doing something, and the animal's mouth was wide open, showing the teeth, and growls and whines came incessantly forth.

Towser appeared to be in fearful agony, and yet he did not turn upon his tormentor and bite him. That was exceedingly strange, for Towser was supposed, as a rule, to be only too ready to bite, even without provocation, and certainly now he was having provocation enough.

Gr-r-r-r-r! Yowl-l-l-l-l-l!

"Good heavens!" gasped Blake. "Glyn, you idiot, you ass, stop it! Open the door!"

"He's mad!" yelled Herries. "He's killing him!"

"Glyn! Bernard Glyn!"

"Open the door!"

"You brute!"

"You villain!"

"Open the door, you horror!"

Bang, bang, bang! The juniors kicked upon the door, and thumped upon it, and yelled through the keyhole. But the schoolboy inventor did not speak. From within the box-room came no sound but the agonised voice of the bulldog.

CHAPTER 2.

Towser II.

TOM MERRY came dashing upstairs, with Manners and Lowther at his heels. The noise from the box-room was drawing a crowd to the place, and the Terrible Three had heard it from the passage below.

"What's the matter?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Glyn's gone mad!" stammered Blake. "He's vivisectioning Towser!"

"Glyn! Impossible!"

"Look for yourself!"

Tom Merry looked through the keyhole, and his face blanched white.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "He must be mad! Glyn, open the door! Leave that dog alone! Glyn, are you mad? Open the door, or we'll smash it in!"

There was no reply. The juniors hammered furiously at the door.

They were amazed, indignant, and wildly excited. If they had not seen what was going on they could not have believed it. Bernard Glyn stopped at little where his experiments were concerned, certainly. He would take Manners's camera, or Blake's tool-box, or Tom Merry's gramophone, or Herries's cornet, or anything else that he needed at the moment, and the articles were sometimes returned in a somewhat damaged state. But no one had ever supposed him to be cruel to animals. But now it seemed only too clear that he had taken up vivisection as his latest craze, and had selected Herries's bulldog for his experiments. It was no wonder that Herries was wildly excited.

"Open the door, Glyn!"

"Do you hear?"

"I'll brain him!" panted Herries, almost sobbing. "He's killing Towser! The brute! The villain! I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"Glyn, dear boy—"

"Will you open the door?"

"Get something to smash it in!"

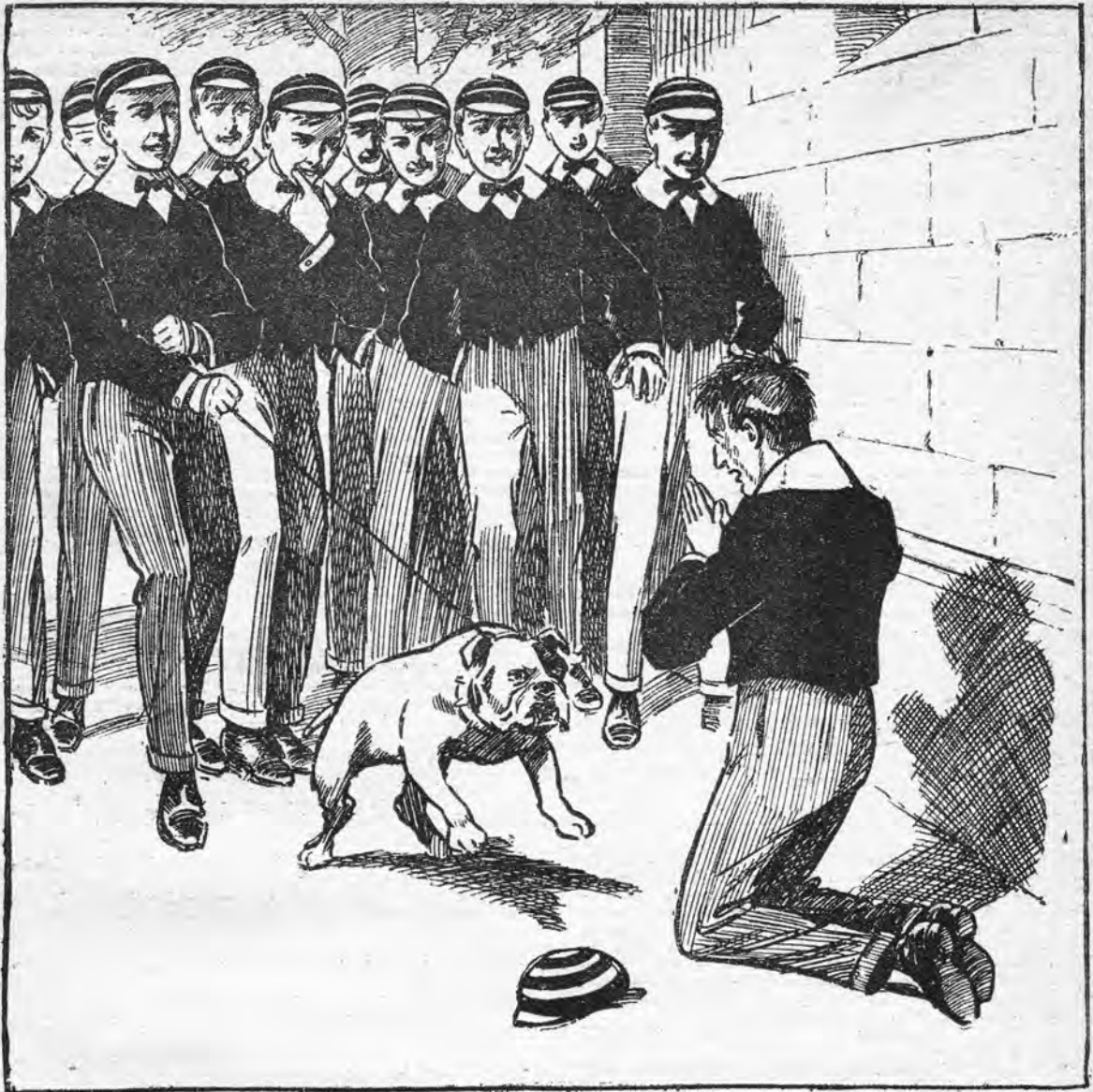
"Glyn! Glyn! Glyn!"

"Get the stool from the landing!" shouted Tom Merry.

"We can bust in the door with that!"

"Good egg!"

Three or four juniors rushed off for the heavy oaken stool. They brought it back at top speed, and, without a pause, crashed it upon the lock of the door. Under that terrific impact the door shook and trembled, and the schoolboy inventor seemed suddenly to wake up to the fact that there



"Now, apologise, you cad," said Herries, resolutely. "You'll go down on your knees and beg Towser's pardon, or I'll let him loose on you—honest Injun." Please Towser, I beg your pardon, and I promise never to be such a beastly cad again!" shrieked Levison desperately. "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. (See Chap. 3.)

was a disturbance going on outside. His voice was heard from the box-room for the first time.

"Hallo, out there! What are you up to?"

"Open the door!"

"What for?"

"What for, you ass!" stuttered Tom Merry. "Let Towser alone!"

"Towser!"

"Yes. Let that dog alone, you brute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bernard Glyn burst into a roar of laughter. But the juniors outside did not feel like laughing. It chilled their blood to hear it.

"He's mad!" said Tom Merry, in an awed voice. "That's the only excuse for him. He's mad! Anybody who does vivisection must be rocky! That's the only way to explain it. Glyn has gone right off his chump!"

"Poor old Glyn!"

"Blow poor old Glyn!" roared Herries. "It's Towser we've got to think of! Open the door, Glyn, you brute, or we'll smash it in, and smash you afterwards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crash! Crash!

The stool smote upon the lock with terrific force. There was an ominous creak from the door, stout as it was.

"Stop that!" shouted Glyn. "You'll break the lock!"

"You ass! That's what we're trying to do. Let Towser alone!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm not hurting the dog!"

"Not hurting him, you villain! We can hear his howls all over the place!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha! He can't feel it, you know."

"He means he's given him an anæsthetic—chloroform, or something," said Blake. "The vivisection beasts do that, you know."

"But the dog's howling——"

"Yes, they howl under chloroform——"

"He's not chloroformed," yelled Herries; "and if he is, Glyn's not going to vivisect my bulldog. I'll smash him!"

"Open the door, Glyn!"

"I can't! I haven't finished my experiment——"

"You're jolly well not going to, either!" shouted Tom Merry.

"I must! You see——"

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School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

"THE SHADOW OF SHAME!"

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.
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Crash—crash—crash!

The lock flew into pieces, and the door spun open. The stool crashed on the floor, and a wildly excited crowd of juniors rushed into the room. Bernard Glyn leaped to his feet, and in a second Herries was upon him, and had his head in chancery, and was hammering at him like a madman.

Glyn struggled and yelled, but Herries hammered and hammered with his clenched fists, as if bent upon reducing the schoolboy inventor's face to a pulp.

"You beast! You cad! You brute! You vivisectioning hound! You rotter! You awful cad! You boulder!" Herries jerked out a complimentary epithet with each jam of his fist upon Glyn's nose, mouth, or eyes. "I'll smash you! I'll brain you! You rotter!" Herries's voice rose in a kind of chant. "You boulder! You beast—"

"Yow—ow—ow—o—www! Draggimoff!" spluttered Glyn.

"You beastly cad! You rotter!" Biff—biff—biff!

"Yarooooooh! Oh! Help!"

Herries hurled Glyn with a crash into a corner, where a table stood covered with bottles and glasses and retorts and other paraphernalia. Table and glasses and the rest crashed to the floor, and Glyn rolled blindly in the midst of the wreck. Herries did not even look at him. He spun round towards Towser.

The bulldog was silent now.

He lay upon the floor, his paws outstretched, his mouth open, but no sound coming forth. Blake touched him; he was quite cold.

"He's dead!" gasped Blake.

"Poor old Towser!"

"Dead!" groaned Herries. "If he's dead, Glyn will jolly soon be dead, too!"

He threw himself upon his knees and clasped the rough head of the bulldog. Then an expression of utter amazement came over his face. He withdrew his hand, and stared blankly at the bulldog.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Is he dead, Hewwies, old man?"

"It—it's not alive!"

"Then it must be dead, deah boy—"

"It—it's not Towser!"

"What!"

"It ain't a dog at all!"

"What?" yelled the juniors.

"It's a dummy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat!"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

The juniors understood at last.

The schoolboy inventor was not mad, and he had not taken up vivisection. It was a mechanical dog, made in the exact likeness of the famous Towser. Towser was probably reposing peacefully in his kennel at that moment. The juniors gathered round the mechanical bulldog, gazing at it in wonder. It was not the first time that Bernard Glyn had made a wonderful piece of mechanism—the juniors still chuckled sometimes over the remembrance of his mechanical figure made in the likeness of Skimpole of the Shell.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I never thought of that!"

Bernard Glyn staggered to his feet. He had been fearfully punished the minute or two Herries had had his head in chancery. His nose and mouth were streaming red, and his left eye was quite closed, and he was blinking painfully out of the other eye. He was smothered with all sorts of mysterious liquids from the broken bottles he had rolled in, and he smelt horribly.

The juniors could not help grinning as they looked at him. Glyn was stuttering with fury.

"You—you—you dangerous idiots!" he roared. "I—I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—"

"Well, I thought it was Towser," said Herries, in explanation.

"Towser!" yelled Glyn. "Do you think I would experiment on a live animal, you frightful idiot? Do you think I could open Towser and put a gramophone attachment inside him, you blithering ass!"

"Bai Jove, it would be wathah difficult!"

"Well, why didn't you explain, then?" growled Herries. "I thought you were experimenting on Towser, and so did the other chaps."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We all thought so," said Tom Merry apologetically. "You should have explained, Glyn, instead of cackling. We couldn't possibly guess—"

"Wathah not!"

"You idiots!" roared Glyn furiously. "I can't have my experiments interrupted every time a silly ass knocks at the door, can I? Oh, you asses!"

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"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Well, I'm sorry I walloped you," said Herries; "but you shouldn't make these idiotic experiments. You've no business to make a silly mechanical dog looking like Towser! Go and eat coke!"

"I—I—I—"

Glyn made a wild rush at Herries, but the other fellows gathered round him, and caught hold of him, and held him back.

"Easy does it!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "There's nothing to fight about—"

"No; it's all wight now—"

"All right?" shrieked Glyn. "Look at my nose! Look at my eye! I'll—I'll—"

"Yaas, you do look wathah a sight," agreed D'Arcy; "but Hewwies was undah a misapprehension. An apology will set mattahs wight."

"Ass!" shrieked Glyn. "An apology won't set my face right!"

"Well, punching Herries won't do that," said Tom Merry.

"Certainly not! You had bettah wetire, Herries, till Glyn is a little calmah. He is naturally wathah excited, undah the cires."

Herries snorted.

"Serve him jolly well right, for making a rotten mechanical dog like Towser! He has no right to take Towser for a model, anyway. He can go and eat coke!"

And Herries tramped indignantly out of the box-room. Bernard Glyn made a spring after him, but the other fellows dragged him back.

"Fax, old man!" said Tom Merry. "No good making bad worse. And it's a wonderful invention. Show us how it works."

Tom Merry's speech was eminently tactful. It turned Glyn's thoughts from his black eye and swollen nose to his invention. He calmed down a little.

"It's the best thing I've done so far," he said, more cheerfully. "Anybody would take that for a live bulldog, and I've put in the works to make him walk. I was experimenting with a gramophone attachment to make him growl when you idiots interrupted me! We can have no end of larks with him when he's finished."

"Bai Jove, that's a jollay good ideah! We can spwing him on the New House fellows!" chuckled D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can he really walk?" asked Monty Lowther incredulously.

Glyn sniffed.

"Walk? Of course, he can! Didn't I make Skimpole the Second walk? Look here!"

He bent over the bulldog, and pressed a button in the back. The dog rose to its feet, and walked across the study, and lay down again. The juniors watched it in awe and wonder.

"Bai Jove! Anybody would think the beast was alive!" gasped D'Arcy.

"He will growl, too, when I've finished," said Glyn. "Clear out now, for goodness' sake, and let me get on with it!"

"Better bathe your eye first," said Kangaroo, of the Shell.

"Blow my eye!"

"Bettah bathe your nose, Glyn, deah boy."

"Blow my nose!"

"Weally, Glyn, I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, clear out, and let a chap get his work finished!" growled Glyn.

And the juniors cleared out, leaving Bernard Glyn alone with Towser the Second.

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CHAPTER 3. To Your Knees.

G R-R-R-R-R-R-R!

Herries gave a start. After leaving the box-room, in which Bernard Glyn was busy with the mechanical bulldog, Herries had hurried off in the direction of the kennels, to assure himself that his peculiar favourite was quite safe. Bernard Glyn had taken Towser for a model, and there was no telling what the schoolboy inventor might have done, and Herries wanted to have a look at Towser. As he came round the back of the School House, he heard the unmistakable tones of the bulldog raised in wrath.

Towser was evidently in trouble, if not with the schoolboy inventor. Herries's brow darkened as he hurried on. Towser was not a favourite at St. Jim's. Herries had been caned more than once for allowing him to run loose, when Towser had proved D'Arcy's assertion that he had no respect whatever for a fellow's trousers.

Towser was always kept on the chain now. Herries came round the corner of the stable-yard at a run, and came in sight of Towser's kennel—and of Levison and Mellish of the Fourth. The two black sheep of the School House were entertaining themselves in a way that might have been expected of them. Each of them had a broom in his hand, and they were making drives at the chained bulldog alternately, and the unfortunate animal was twisting and turning furiously at the end of his chain, striving in vain to get at his tormentors.

Levison and Mellish were so deeply engrossed in their cowardly amusement, that they did not hear the approaching footsteps of Herries, or the snort of wrath that he gave.

Towser was growling furiously, and leaping and almost foaming, as the brooms biffed upon him in turn, and the chain clinked as he jumped and dragged at it. The chain was strong, and there was no danger of its breaking, and the two cads of the Fourth felt quite safe.

"Give the beast another jab," said Levison, with a grin. "We'll teach him to chase a fellow across the quad."

"He, he, he!" cackled Mellish. "I suppose the chain won't break, though he's tugging at it pretty hard."

"No fear; it's strong enough."

"Biff him on the napper, then!"

The bulldog growled with pain, and retreated into his kennel. At the same moment the enraged Herries reached the spot.

"You cads!" roared Herries.

Levison and Mellish jumped.

"Hallo!" gasped Levison. "I—I say, Herries, it's—it's all right, you know. Only a—a little lark with Towser, you know."

"That's all!" said Mellish, turning quite pale as he caught the look on Herries's face. "Only a little fun."

"I'll fun you!" roared Herries. "I'll lark you, you cads!"

"Yaroorh!"

Herries's fist came crashing into Levison's face, and Levison dropped like a log. Mellish backed away, brandishing the stable broom.

"Keep off!" he panted. "Keep off, or—"

Herries did not keep off. He rushed right at Mellish, and the junior had not the nerve to smite him with the broom. Herries knocked it contemptuously aside, and the next moment Mellish rolled on the ground.

"Now, then!" roared Herries, dancing round the fallen juniors and flourishing his fists. "Now, then! Up with you, and come on! I'll take on the pair of you, you worms! I'll teach you to bully my dog! Come on!"

"Oh!" groaned Levison.

"Ow!" mumbled Mellish.

"Get up!" yelled Herries.

"Yow! I won't!"

"Groo! I can't!"

"I'll jolly well set Towser on you, then."

Herries rushed to the kennel and grasped the chain to unlock it. Levison and Mellish found that they could rise then. They sprang up, and tore away round the stable-yard at a marvellous speed.

Gr-r-r-r!

The deep, angry tones of the bulldog could be heard behind them, and the clink of the chain. Fear lent the juniors wings. If Towser got at them, after their treatment of him, they were likely to suffer severely. They dashed away at frantic speed, and burst round the School House as if they were running a race for life or death. They rushed right into Brooke, of the Fourth, who was coming round the House, reading a book as he walked. Brooke was a little short-sighted, and he had the book very close to his eyes, and he did not see them, and they were in too great a hurry to see him.

Crash!

"Oh!" gasped Brooke.

He rolled over on his back, and Mellish and Levison rolled over him. In another second or two Towser was on the scene, but fortunately Herries held the chain in his hand. Towser made a spring for Levison, and Herries dragged him back only in time, or the bulldog's teeth would have closed with a snap on the cad of the Fourth.

"Keep him off!" shrieked Levison, white with fear.

"Ow! Help! Murder!" screamed Mellish.

Gr-r-r-r!

Brooke, of the Fourth, leaped to his feet.

"What on earth's the matter?" he exclaimed. "Keep that dog off, Herries; he looks as if he'll tear them to pieces."

"Let him, then!" yelled Herries, keeping Towser back, however. "They've been tormenting him—biffing him with stable brooms while he was chained up and couldn't help himself."

Brooke knitted his brows.

"The cads!" he exclaimed. "But you can't let him bite them, Herries. It will mean a fearful row if you do."

Levison and Mellish had scrambled up. They backed away to the School House wall, and stood there, trembling and panting. They dared not run, for fear that the bulldog should leap upon them from behind, but it was almost equally impossible for them to stand there and face him. Towser was wildly excited, and he looked deadly dangerous. Herries seemed to be more than half inclined to let the chain loose. Towser was straining at it with all his strength.

"Keep him off!" shrieked Mellish.

"I—I'll complain to the Head!" yelled Levison. "I'll have you summoned for keeping a dangerous animal, you brute! Keep him off!"

"He wasn't dangerous, if you'd let him alone," said Herries fiercely, "and I don't see why I shouldn't let him have a bite."

He loosened the chain a little, and the bulldog came closer to the shrinking juniors, and they crouched back against the wall as close as they could, white with terror.

"Keep him off!" said Mellish faintly.

"Help!" shrieked Levison.

Brooke burst into a laugh.

"Make the cads beg Towser's pardon," he said, "and let them go! You can let them off with a fright, I should think. They've had a scare."

Herries grinned. If dire terror was a punishment, Levison and Mellish had been punished for their brutality. Herries's good nature was returning.

"Good wheeze!" he exclaimed. "Do you hear, you cads? You'll go down on your giddy knees to Towser, and beg his pardon!"

"I won't!" yelled Levison.

But Mellish eagerly assented. He would have gone down on his knees to a dog or a cat or any other living thing, to get out of his present predicament.

"What on earth's the matter here?" exclaimed Jack Blake, coming round the house, with a dozen more juniors at his heels. "What's the trouble?"

"Yaas, wathah! It's the weal Towsah this time! What has he been doin', Hewwies?"

Herries explained, in furious tones, and there was a yell of delight from the juniors as he stated his intention of making the culprits beg Towser's pardon. Levison and Mellish were not popular in the School House.

"Good egg!" shouted Blake. "Ha, ha, ha! Get on your knees, you cads!"

"To your knees!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! An apology ffrom one gentleman to another is always all right!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy judiciously. "Therefore, an apology ffrom one beast to another ought to settle the mattah here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You hear, you cads?" said Herries resolutely. "You'll go down on your knees and beg Towser's pardon, or I'll let him loose on you—honest Injun!"

And Herries meant it, and the two juniors could see that he meant it. Mellish was already on his knees, but Levison, who had more pluck than the sneak of the Fourth, still hesitated.

"I give you one minute!" said Herries threateningly. The chain clinked as he let it out a little, and Towser's open jaws were within a foot of Levison's knees.

"All—all right!" panted Levison. "Keep it off!"

"Buck up, then?"

The crowd was thickening, the noise was bringing fellows to the scene from all quarters. There was a formidable yell of laughter as the two cads of the Fourth dropped upon their knees, with Towser straining at the chain only a foot from them.

"You will say, 'Please, Towser, I beg your pardon, and I promise never to be such a beastly cad again!'" said Herries.

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"I won't!" yelled Levison.
 "I will!" mumbled Mellish. "Keep him off! Please, Towser—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Please, Towser, I beg your pardon, and I promise never to be such a beastly cad again!" yelled Mellish, in dire terror, as the chain clinked.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Good! You can crawl off!" said Herries contemptuously. "I'll hold Towser while you get away. Now, it's your turn, Levison!"
 Mellish ran away, panting, and Levison made a movement to follow him. Brooke pushed him back with a strong hand.
 "No, you don't!" he said. "You're not finished yet!"
 "Let me pass, you cad!"
 "No fear!"
 "On your knees, Levison, or I'll let Towser loose!" shouted Herries.
 "Keep him off!" screamed Levison, as the bulldog's nose for a moment brushed against his trousers.
 "You'd better back up, then! I'm tired of holding him in!"
 Levison dropped on his knees. His face was white and twisted with terror and rage. The crowd burst into a roar.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Now then, you know what to say, Levison!" rapped out Herries.
 "Hang you! Please, Towser—" mumbled Levison.
 "Louder!"
 "Please, Towser, I beg—" whispered Levison.
 The chain clinked ominously.
 "Louder, for all the fellows to hear!" said Herries.
 "Please, Towser, I beg your pardon, and I promise never to be such a beastly cad again!" shrieked Levison desperately.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Good!" said Herries. "And if you ever are such a beastly cad again, I'll smash you, and let Towser get at you in good earnest! Crawl away, you cad!"
 And Herries, not without difficulty, half-persuaded and half-dragged Towser back to his kennel, and fastened him up. Levison and Mellish, followed by howls of laughter, fled into the School House, to hide their crimson faces in their own study. Mellish collapsed into a chair, panting. Levison strode about the study, breathing fury.
 "I'll settle him! I'll settle him!" he said, between his teeth.
 "Herries?" asked Mellish.
 "No, you idiot! I'd be glad to, but I mean Towser! By George, I'll make 'em sit up for this! I'll settle him!"
 "You won't get me going near Towser again!" gasped Mellish. "I've had enough of him! And that brute Herries meant what he said! He'll set the horrible beast on to us if we meddle with him again!"
 "He won't be able to set him on to us when I'm done with him," said Levison, grinding his teeth. "I'm going to get some rat poison from Rylcombe for Towser!"
 Mellish turned quite pale.
 "Levison! Better draw it mild!"
 "Mind your own business!" snapped Levison. "You can keep out of it, if you're afraid!"
 "I jolly well shall keep out of it!" said Mellish promptly.
 "Why, you might get expelled from the school for doing a thing like that!"
 "I'll risk it! They won't make a fool of me for nothing! I'll get even with Herries, and that charity cad Brooke somehow! And I'll begin with Towser!"
 "Better be careful—"
 "Oh, shut up!"
 And Mellish shut up. He was afraid of his study-mate when Levison was in this mood. Mellish was a cad and a coward, but Levison had the makings of a very considerable scoundrel in him—a fact which his schoolfellows were discovering gradually.

CHAPTER 4.

Dick Brooke is Just in Time.

DICK BROOKE rose from the study table in No. 6. Brooke was a day-boy at St. Jim's, and had no study, but when he stayed later than usual at the school, fellows in the Fourth were always willing to let him use their studies, and he naturally liked it better than working in the Form-room. There were very few day-boys at St. Jim's, and the other fellows regarded them with a good-natured tolerance, as if they really were not quite St. Jim's fellows. Brooke did not mind. He was a quiet, grave fellow, and he got on very well with most fellows at St. Jim's. With Levison and Mellish, certainly, he did not pull very well; but there was nothing remarkable in that.

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for the cads of the Fourth never quite agreed with anybody.

Brooke was on the best of terms with Study No. 6, and he frequently did his work there. He was entitled to leave the school with the other day-boys as soon as lessons were over, but he was working for a scholarship, and little Mr. Lathom, the kind-hearted master of the Fourth, was giving him what the juniors called "extra toot," and so Brooke frequently stayed later.

Brooke was not what the St. Jim's fellows would have called a "swot," but he certainly worked very hard, and some of the fellows knew that he had other work to do besides his school work. He was very glad to get the extra tuition from Mr. Lathom, and was in great hopes of carrying off a scholarship which would enable him to stay a year at St. Jim's without the expense of fees. Tom Merry & Co. knew that most, if not all, of Brooke's fees came out of his own earnings.

"Thank you fellows very much!" said Brooke, who had stayed on to tea in the study, and had just finished. "I think I'll be off now!"

"Right-ho!" said Blake cheerily. "I suppose your people don't mind your getting in after dark?"

"It's all right, once in a way," said Brooke. "My mother knows that I'm having extra lessons here. It's jolly decent of you to let me work in your study."

"Oh, wats!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We are highly honahed, deah boy!"

Brooke smiled.
 "By the way, what about the cricket this term?" said Jack Blake. "Tom Merry was talking about putting you in the eleven, if you were up to it."

Brooke shook his head.
 "Can't be done!" he said. "I'm not up to it. I should be jolly glad, of course; but my sight isn't good enough. It's not getting any worse, but it's not good enough for cricket. But I shall turn up and cheer you fellows—that's the next best thing. Good-night!"

"Good-night, old chap!"
 Brooke left the study with his books under his arm. He walked away thoughtfully down the corridor, and left the School House. It was dark in the quadrangle, and Brooke peered before him, with his head slanting a little forward, in the manner that some short-sighted people have. As he left the House behind him, two dim shadows loomed for a moment in the darkness of the quadrangle, and he heard a faint whisper:

"Quiet, Mellish!"
 Brooke paused. The thought came into his mind at once that his enemies in the Fourth were waiting for him in the quadrangle. But the next words showed that the speakers were not even aware that he was there.

"Look here, Levison, I won't have a hand in it!"
 "Quiet, you fool!" came Levison's voice, in a fierce whisper. "I only want you to stand at the corner of the house and keep watch, while I go round to the kennel. Whistle to me if anyone comes, that's all!"

"But—"
 "That's enough!"

There was a sound of retreating footsteps. Brooke stood still, his eyes gleaming, and his hands clenched. By the sheerest chance he had come upon the two young rascals, and he knew what was on now. It was a plot to revenge upon the unfortunate Towser their discomfiture of the afternoon. Brooke jammed his books into his jacket pocket, and ran through the gloom towards Mellish. He ran right into the cad of the School House, and grasped him with both hands. Mellish gave a startled gasp.

"Who—who's that?"

"It's Brooke, you rotter! What is Levison going to do to Towser?"

"I—I—I don't know!" stammered Mellish.

Levison had told his confederate to whistle an alarm, but Mellish's dry lips were not capable of whistling just then.

"I don't know anything about it," he muttered huskily. "He made me come here! You'd better go after him if you want to know! Let me alone!"

Brooke contemptuously hurled the cad of the Fourth from him, and Mellish staggered away. Without giving him even a glance, Dick Brooke dashed round the corner of the house. The stables in the rear seemed quite dark and deserted, but a gleam of light caught Dick Brooke's eye as he came near Towser's kennel. He caught sight of Levison kneeling beside the kennel with a lantern on the ground. Levison had a large slice of steak in his hand, and was coaxing Towser from his kennel to eat it.

Brooke paused in astonishment.

He had been certain that Levison intended some harm to the bulldog, and he had found the Fourth-Former trying to feed Towser with an unusually luxurious feed. Steaks did not often come in Towser's way. Did it mean that Levison

was sorry for his brutality of the afternoon, and was trying to make it up to Towser by giving him a good feed? Brooke wondered, and he paused, a little repentant of his suspicions.

Towser had his head out of the kennel, and he was sniffing at the meat. It evidently attracted him, but he seemed to have his suspicions about it. Brooke caught sight of the face of Levison in the lantern light, and the savage expression upon it, the gleam of cold malice in the eyes struck him at once.

It was not ordinary meat that Levison was offering to the bulldog. A black suspicion darted into Brooke's mind, and he ran furiously forward.

"Stop, you cad!"

Levison gave a violent start.

He swung round from the kennel, dropping the meat. Towser made a movement as if to take it, and Brooke kicked it instantly out of the bulldog's reach. Levison rose to his feet, his face white with rage and hatred.

"You charity cad!" he muttered. "What are you doing here?"

"What were you doing?" said Brooke, leaving Levison's taunt unheeded and unanswered. "Is that meat poisoned?"

"No," said Levison sullenly.

"Why were you giving it to Towser, then?"

"Can't I feed him if I like?"

"Does Herries know?"

"Mind your own business!"

Brooke's eyes gleamed, and he stooped and picked up the meat. There was a peculiar white powder discernible on it, and then his suspicion became a certainty.

"You say this is not poisoned?" he said.

"No, it isn't!"

"Very well. I will take it to Herries, and let him see what you were offering to his bulldog. Will you come with me?"

Levison's face blanched.

"Don't say a word to Herries!" he breathed. "Look here, I—I'll own up! I—I hate that brute! Herries has no right to keep such a dangerous brute! I was going to rid the school of him! Don't say a word about it!"

Brooke's eyes blazed.

"You were going to poison Herries's dog, and you want me to keep it dark!" he exclaimed. "So that you can try it again another time, I suppose? I'm going to warn Herries to take care of his dog."

Levison uttered a cry.

"You sneak!"

Brooke paused.

"It's not sneaking!" he said. "I must warn Herries! It would be rotten to leave Towser in danger!"

"You sneak! If you mention my name—"

"I won't mention your name if you're afraid to let Herries know what you've done," said Brooke scornfully. "But I shall take this to him, and tell him what I saw here. If he finds you out without my assistance, you can look after yourself."

"Look here, I—I—"

"Don't talk to me! You make me sick. Get away from here. I don't trust you near Towser. Walk in front of me back to the School House!"

Levison, gritting his teeth with rage, obeyed. At the steps of the School House, Brooke left him, and hurried into the House.

CHAPTER 5.

The Culprits.

BERNARD GLYN came into Blake's study, looking very tired and dusty. His face was in a most unenviable state. One of his eyes was quite closed, and his nose looked, as Blake remarked, like a prize beetroot. Herries looked at him rather truculently. But Glyn had not come on the war-path.

"I'm finished," he said. "Towser II. is as good as Towser I. now. He can growl, and I may be able to make him bite."

"Bai Jove!"

Herries snorted.

"Like your cheek to make a rotten mechanical dog like Towser!" he said. "You might have asked a fellow's permission first, anyway."

"It's a compliment to your beastly bulldog, you ass!" said the schoolboy inventor. "Besides, we can get some larks out of it. Give me some tea, you chaps. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane are gone out, and the fire's out in the study. You owe me something for this eye and nose, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" said D'Arcy sympathetically. "I weally think that Hewwies ought to apologise and set the mattah wight."

"Oh, rats!" said Herries. "Still, I don't mind saying

I'm sorry I've made Glyn such a figure of fun. But he shouldn't make inventions. I never make inventions."

"Needs brains, of course," remarked Glyn.

"Why, you ass—"

"Make some fresh tea, Blake, deah boy," said D'Arcy, "and you make some toast, Dig. Tom Mewwy is comin' in to tea. I'm sowwy Bwooke has gone, Glyn; he had to get home. Here comes Tom Mewwy!"

But it was not Tom Merry who came into the study. It was Dick Brooke, of the Fourth. The juniors looked at him in surprise, which increased as he laid a powdery-looking lump of meat on the study table.

"What on earth's that?" exclaimed Blake.

"Brooke's contribution to a feed?" suggested Digby, with a grin.

"It's meat, and it's poisoned," said Brooke quietly.

There was a startled exclamation from every fellow in the study.

"Poisoned?"

"Bai Jove!"

"I found a fellow giving it to Towser," said Brooke.

Herries jumped.

"Towser! Giving poisoned meat to Towser! Why, I—I—"

"It's all right," said Brooke. "I kicked it away before Towser could touch it. I don't know whether he would have eaten it, either; he seemed very suspicious about it. I've brought it here to you so that you can look after Towser."

"Thanks!" said Herries dazedly. "But—but who could be such a villain as to want to poison Towser?"

"Who was it, Brooke?"

The Fourth-Former shook his head.

"I've promised not to mention his name," he said. "He's afraid of Herries. But I felt bound to tell Herries, so that he could be on his guard."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It was Levison or Mellish," said Herries. "They've got a spite against my dog. Which of them was it, Brooke?"

"Pway wemembah, Hewwies, that Bwooke has pwomised not to tell. He cannot possibly bweak his word. But you can keep your peepahs open."

"I'll find out!" said Herries sulphurously. "I'll go and look at Towser now, and make sure he's all right. Then I'll look into this. Thanks, Brooke; you're a jolly decent chap."

And Herries ran out of the study. Brooke said good-night to the chums of the School House for the second time, and left. As he walked across the quadrangle to the gates, he hoped that Herries would not discover the intended poisoner. Levison's punishment, if Herries knew of his guilt, was likely to be severe enough to get Herries into trouble afterwards. Brooke was thinking more of Herries than of the cad of the Fourth.

In Study No. 5 the juniors stood silent, looking at the meat on the table. Jack Blake broke the silence.

"Jolly lucky Brooke happened on the cad, whoever he was," he said, with a deep breath. "I believe Herries would go quite potty if he lost his dog. Of course, it must have been either Levison or Mellish, after what happened this afternoon."

"No doubt about that," said Bernard Glyn; "and I don't think anybody else in the school is cur enough for such a thing."

"Quite wight, deah boy."

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry, as he came into the study with Manners and Lowther. "Holding an inquest, or what?"

Blake explained. The Terrible Three looked serious enough when they heard what had happened. Tom Merry scanned the meat, and smelt it.

"It's poisoned right enough," he said. "What awful cad was it, I wonder?"

"Levison or Mellish—or both."

"Yes, it must have been."

"We'll have 'em in here and question them," said Glyn.

"Not much good," said Tom Merry. "They will deny it. Fellows who would poison a dog would tell lies, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, Herries won't rest till he's found them," said Blake.

"We shall never hear the end of it. He's as likely as not to make them eat that blessed meat."

Tom Merry grinned.

"That would be rather thick," he said; "but— My hat!"

"What's the matter?"

"A wheeze, my son—a giddy wheeze!" gasped Tom Merry. "My hat! We will punish the cads in a way that will make their hair curl! It's the giddiest wheeze of the season."

"Explain, you ass!"

Tom Merry cautiously closed the study door and explained

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in a whisper. A wild yell of laughter rang through the study. Tom Merry's wheeze, whatever it was, seemed to meet with unanimous approval.

"Oh, my hat!" almost sobbed Blake. "I want to see their faces! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha! Yaas, wathah!"

"We shall want a new steak, and you can shove it in your study cupboard, and mind you sprinkle it with flour," said Tom Merry.

"What-ho!"

"That's settled, then! Now we'll get out before you have Levison in."

"Right you are!"

The Terrible Three left the study. Herries, very red and breathless, entered it a few moments later.

"Tower's all right," he said. "Now we're going to find out who did this. I know it was either Levison or Mellish—or both the cads! I'm going to smash the chap who tried to poison Tower!"

"Better make sure first," hinted Blake. "You are rather sudden on the smashing business, you know. You've nearly killed Glyn for nothing."

"Well, let's make sure, then," said Herries crossly. "Some of you fetch the cads in here, and make 'em see this poisoned meat, and see if they have the nerve to deny it."

"Yes, we'll do that."

Blake and Herries and D'Arcy and Glyn hurried out of the study. They returned in a few minutes with Levison and Mellish. The cads of the Fourth were looking angry and alarmed, but they had not been able to refuse to come to Study No. 6. Blake having stated blandly that if they didn't walk they would be carried, they had decided to walk.

Herries glared at them as they came in. Blake insinuated himself between the burly Fourth-Former and the two visitors.

"Go easy, Herries, old man," he said.

"Easy be hanged!" growled Herries. "Look here, you cads, which of you gave this poisoned meat to Tower?"

"I didn't!" gasped Mellish.

"Poisoned meat?" said Levison, in great surprise. "What are you talking about? Is this a joke?"

"If it's a joke, it's a rotten bad one," said Mellish, taking his cue from his more courageous companion. "I don't see the fun myself."

"You don't know anything about it?" asked Blake.

"Certainly not. I suppose this is some plot that you fellows have got up against us," said Levison boldly. "We know how much fair play to expect from this study."

"Weally, Levison—"

"Brooke caught somebody trying to poison Tower with this meat, and he won't give the name," said Herries savagely. "I'm going to find out who it was. I know jolly well that it was one of you cads."

"I know nothing about it," said Levison.

"Same here," said Mellish.

"Very well! I'll inquire in the village whether either of you bought any poison there for animals," said Herries.

Levison's face paled for a moment.

"Ah! That's got you, has it?" exclaimed Digby.

Levison forced a laugh.

"I may have bought rat poison some time—I don't remember," he said. "You can make all the inquiries you like. I'm going."

The cads of the Fourth were allowed to leave the study. The juniors felt certain enough of their guilt. But it was impossible to allow Herries to begin the smashing business, as Blake described it, without proof. Blake called to them as they turned to the door.

"I shall keep this poisoned meat for the present, and we'll see about it," he said. "Lock it up in the cupboard, Dig."

"Certainly!" said Digby.

Levison laughed sneeringly.

"You can keep it till it begins to talk, if you like," he said. "It's no business of mine. You can go and eat coke, all of you! Come on, Mellish!"

And he walked away.

CHAPTER 6.

An Irish Stew.

MONTY LOWTHER looked into Levison's study in the Fourth-Form passage about an hour later. The three juniors who shared the study—Mellish, Levison, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley—were all there, engaged in doing their preparation. Monty Lowther nodded to the trio in the most friendly way.

"I thought I should find you here, Lumley-Lumley," he remarked. "We've got a stew going, and we want you to come. It's something rather special—a real Irish stew. Reilly has helped us to make it, and I can tell you it's prime."

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"I guess I'll come," said Lumley-Lumley, cheerfully enough. Lumley-Lumley was on very good terms with the Terrible Three, and he frequently dropped into Tom Merry's study. And he rose to his feet.

Monty Lowther turned to the door again. And then, as if struck by a sudden thought, he turned back. It was as if, asking Lumley-Lumley in the presence of his study-mates, he felt constrained by politeness to ask Levison and Mellish, too.

"You fellows like to come?" he asked. "It's a good feed, and we'll be glad to see you."

"Yes, rather," said Mellish promptly.

Levison hesitated.

"Blake and his lot going to be there?" he asked.

"No. They've gone over to the New House to see Redfern."

"Good! I'll come with pleasure. Do you mind if I finish my prep. first?"

"Not at all. Come in when you're ready!"

And Monty Lowther quitted the study with Lumley-Lumley. Mellish followed them. Mellish was always ready for a feed. He would have dined cheerfully with his worst enemy. Levison finished his preparation, and about ten minutes later came into Tom Merry's study.

He found the supper going on. There was a huge dish on the table, and it was half filled with a hot and smoking Irish stew. Pieces of beef floated in the stew, with carrot and onions and turnip and other ingredients, and certainly it smelt very flavoury. Reilly of the Fourth, who had lent a master hand in making the stew, sat beaming at the table. Levison sniffed with appreciation. A hot Irish stew was better for supper than the bread and cheese in the Hall.

Tom Merry nodded to the cad of the Fourth, and Manners pulled out a chair for him, and Monty Lowther pushed a plate before him.

"Ladle it out, Reilly!" he said.

"Right ye are!" said Reilly. "Faith, and it's a stunning stew. Lucky for you chaps I helped you. It takes an Irishman to make an Irish stew. Would ye believe it, Levison, the spalpeens wanted to put suet dumplings in it. We don't do that!"

"It smells jolly nice," said Levison, sitting down.

"Faith, and it tastes jolly nice!" said Reilly.

"You're right; it does."

Levison was right, and he wired into the Irish stew with a keenness worthy of the famous Fatty Wynn. Mellish was already going strong. The other fellows also had good helpings. Extensive as the stew was, it rapidly diminished as the six juniors made repeated onslaughts upon it.

"My hat!" said Levison. "This is jolly good! Where did you get your beef—at Dame Taggles's, I suppose?"

To his surprise, the chums of the Shell burst into a laugh.

"Guess again!" said Tom Merry.

Levison looked surprised. So far as he could see, there was nothing to laugh at in his question as to where the amateur cooks had procured the beef.

"The butcher's in the village?" he asked.

"No; we haven't been out."

"Did the cook give it to you?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"No fear!"

"Oh, you've raided it, I suppose?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Right!" said Tom Merry.

Levison laughed.

"Raided it from Figgins & Co.?" he asked.

"No; we haven't been over to the New House."

"Then where the dickens—"

Monty Lowther winked mysteriously.

"Perhaps you can guess now why we didn't invite Blake & Co. to the feed?" he suggested.

Levison and Mellish started simultaneously.

"You don't mean to say—" began Mellish.

"Yes, we do!" said Tom Merry. "We raided it out of Blake's study! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners and Lowther.

Levison, who had a piece of meat upon his fork, gazed at it in horror, and lowered it into his plate again. Mellish turned white and then yellow.

"You raided this beef from Blake's study?" Levison repeated faintly.

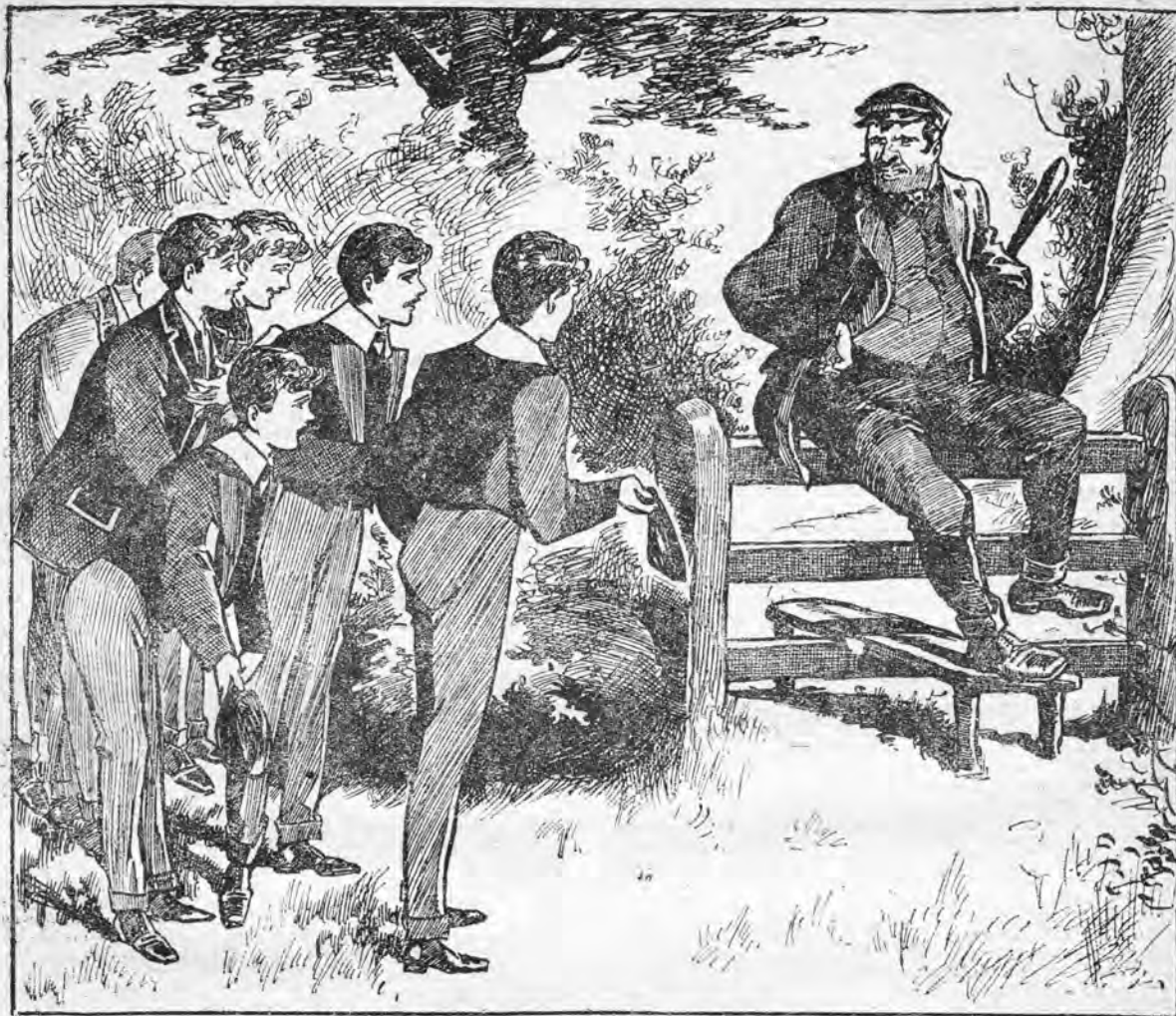
"Yes, rather!"

"Faith, and it would have been a good joke to invite them to the feed!" chuckled Reilly. "You could have told them afterwards where the meat came from, bedad!"

"I guess that would have been the cream of the joke!" grinned Lumley-Lumley. Then he stared in surprise at Levison and Mellish. "What's the matter with you two chaps? You look ill!"

"Oh!" groaned Mellish.

Levison started to his feet, with the perspiration thick upon his brow.



Harry Wharton & Co. walked up to the man on the stile, and took off their caps. The ruffian stared at them in blank amazement, as well he might. He was not accustomed to being saluted so respectfully by half a dozen well-dressed fellows. "Whatcher gittin' at?" he asked savagely. (For this incident see the grand, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled, "Foes of the Fourth," by Frank Richards, which is contained in our popular companion paper, "The Magnet" Library Now on sale at all newsagents'. Price One Penny.)

"Did—did you get this meat out of Blake's cupboard?" he asked unsteadily.

"Yes, certainly!"

"Wasn't—wasn't the cupboard locked?"

"Yes; but we knew where the key was kept," explained Tom Merry, laughing. "We found the key under the clock on the mantelpiece."

"Oh, dear!"

"It will be a giddy surprise for Blake when he comes back from the New House!" chuckled Lumley-Lumley. "I guess he will get his hair off!"

"M-m-my heavens!" stammered Mellish.

"What's the matter?"

"Was—was there anything peculiar about the meat?" asked Levison, trying to speak calmly, in spite of the horrible uneasiness that had fastened upon him.

"Not that I noticed," said Tom Merry, in surprise. "What's the matter? It's good enough, isn't it? It tastes all right."

"Faith, and it's a drama!" said Reilly.

"Was there any other meat in the cupboard?" asked Levison, clinging to a faint hope.

"No fear!"

"You—you looked?"

"You can bet we did!" said Monty Lowther. "If there had been any more, we should have made a clean sweep of it!"

"I—I say—" Levison's voice was thick and husky. He remembered how he had seen Jack Blake put the poisoned beefsteak into the study cupboard in No. 6, saying that he would keep it locked up there. "I—I say, Merry, did—did you notice anything about the meat? Was—was it sprinkled with anything?"

"Yes; flour!"

"Flour?" panted Levison.

"Yes, certainly!"

"Are—are you sure it was flour?" said Levison, white as a ghost.

"Well, I didn't taste it," said Tom Merry, looking astonished. "It was sprinkled with a white powder, anyway, and I certainly took it for flour. It might have been salt, but I'm pretty certain it was flour. Anyway, whichever it was, it didn't hurt the beef. It tastes ripping, to my mind!"

"It's a drama!" repeated Reilly, helping himself again from the dish. "A rare drama! I've never tasted a better stew even in Ireland!"

"Don't eat it!" shrieked Levison.

The Belfast boy stared at him in amazement.

"Don't ate it?" he repeated. "Faith, and what do you mean, then? Why shouldn't I ate the most illigant Irish-stew that ever was cooked at St. Jim's?"

"It's poisoned!" panted Levison, staggering away from the table.

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Monty Lowther's left eye half-closed, so that Reilly and Lumley-Lumley could see it, and they understood. Reilly, in fact, had already had a hint of the matter. And Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was quick to catch on.

"Poisoned?" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yes. We—we're as good as dead!" moaned Mellish. "Oh! Help! Fetch a doctor! Get a stomach-pump! Quick!"

"It's no good!" said Levison, with a haggard face. "It's too late! We're done for! Oh, you mad fools! You've poisoned us!"

"But what do you mean?" asked Tom Merry, looking perplexed. "I don't feel poisoned! Do you other fellows?"

"Faith, and I'm as right as rain!" said Reilly cheerfully. "I'm going to have some more, poisoned or not! May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, intirely!"

"I guess so," said Lumley-Lumley, helping himself again. "It's all right, Levison, old man; you're only dreaming!"

"I tell you it's poisoned!" shrieked Levison. "It's rat poison! Blake had the poisoned meat in his cupboard, and—and it's certain death to taste it! Oh, heavens!"

Mellish collapsed upon the floor, groaning in sheer terror, without the strength even to make an effort to help himself. Levison staggered blindly to the door.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, stepping quickly between the cad of the Fourth and the study door. "Where are you going?"

"To—to find a doctor!" panted Levison. "I'm poisoned!"

"Oh, rot! Don't play the giddy goat!"

"I tell you I'm poisoned!" shrieked Levison, struggling to pass Tom Merry. "Let me go! It may not be too late after all. Let me pass! I tell you the meat was poisoned!"

Tom Merry held him back with a grip of iron.

"Don't talk rot!" he said. "How could poisoned meat possibly come into Blake's study cupboard? You're talking out of your hat."

"It—it was poisoned for Towser!" gasped Levison.

"Brooke found it, and brought it in to show Herries, and—and Blake locked it up in the study cupboard. I saw him."

"By Jove," said Manners, "that looks serious!"

"Jolly serious, if Levison isn't having a lark with us," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head.

"Do I look as if I were having a lark?" screamed Levison.

"Well, no; but you are such an awful whopper merchant."

"It's all rot!" said Tom Merry. "Perhaps Brooke was having a lark, if he said that the meat was poisoned. I suppose you didn't taste it?"

"I—I saw it."

"Well, I saw the meat we used in the stew, but it didn't look poisoned, or of course I shouldn't have used it."

"It was covered with white powder."

"Oh, that was flour!"

"It wasn't flour," moaned Mellish, writhing on the floor.

"It was rat poison."

"Stuff!"

"I know it was poison!" shouted Levison. "Let me pass! I must see a doctor! Let me pass! I tell you I know it was poison!"

"You couldn't possibly know without tasting it," said Tom Merry.

"I do know—I do know!"

"How?"

"Let me pass!"

"You're not going to spread a yarn that there's poison in my study unless you prove to me how you know the meat was poisoned," said Tom Merry.

"I poisoned it for Towser!" panted Levison. "Now are you satisfied? Let me pass!"

"Yes, I'm satisfied now," said Tom Merry sternly, "and you won't pass. Stay there, you cad! You're not poisoned, but you're found out!"

And he flung the cad of the Fourth into the corner of the study.

CHAPTER 7.

A Licking for Levison.

TOM MERRY looked at the two juniors on the floor, and his face was half angry and half laughing. The

terror of the would-be dog poisoners was comic enough to the fellows who knew that there was nothing the matter with them. There was a chuckle from Manners and Lowther and Reilly. Reilly was still eating stew, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley looked very much puzzled, but not at all alarmed. If the stew had really been poisoned, Lumley-Lumley would not have lost his nerve.

"I suppose there's nothing in all that, Tom Merry?" he asked.

"Nothing at all."

"What the dickens does it all mean, then?"

"I'll explain," said Tom Merry quietly. "Brooke found

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a cad giving poisoned meat to Towser, but he wouldn't tell his name. We got up this little game to find out, and to punish the cads for their dirty trick. Blake locked the poisoned meat up in his study cupboard, and afterwards he burnt it in the study fire-grate, to make sure of getting the beastly stuff out of the way."

Mellish suddenly left off groaning. Levison stared at the hero of the Shell with new hope in his eyes.

"W-what's that?" he gasped.

Tom Merry took no notice of him.

"Afterwards," he went on, "Blake bought some new beefsteak, and locked it in his study cupboard, and sprinkled it with flour."

"What on earth for?" demanded Lumley-Lumley.

"So that we could raid it, and make this Irish stew, and let Levison eat some of it," said Tom Merry coolly. "I wanted to be able to answer Levison's questions about the meat quite accurately, you know."

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison rose to his feet, with a bitter smile on his face. Monty Lowther had crossed to the window, and was holding up a lamp there, evidently as a signal to someone over in the New House. A whistle was heard in the quadrangle. Levison understood, and he made a quick movement towards the door.

But Tom Merry was standing there, with his back to the door, and he did not move.

"You won't leave this study yet, Levison," he said quietly.

"Let me pass!"

"The Fourth Form chaps are coming back from the New House," said Tom Merry. "You can repeat to them what you've said to us."

Levison gave him a look of hatred.

"I won't!" he muttered. "I—I—"

"I will, then," said Tom Merry, with a shrug of the shoulders. "You've got to explain to Herries. If I kept a dog, and a fellow tried to poison it, I'd smash him into little pieces. Herries wants to see you very badly."

Mellish edged towards the door.

"I—I didn't have anything to do with it," he whined. "I told Levison I wouldn't have a hand in it when he proposed it, and he can't deny it. I was against it all the time. I—I don't want to stay in this study."

"I believe you," said Tom Merry scornfully. "You can go, but Levison stays here till Herries comes."

He stepped aside, and Mellish gladly slipped out of the study. Levison made a desperate rush to follow him. Tom Merry swung him back, and the desperate junior struck at him fiercely. Tom Merry knocked up his hand.

"If you want to fight me as well as Herries you've only got to say so," he said; "but I think you'll have enough on your hands with Herries."

Levison backed away.

"Let me go!" he said hoarsely. "I won't fight Herries! I—I—"

"I know you don't want to, but you should have thought of that before you tried to poison his dog. Stand where you are!"

There were hurried footsteps in the passage, and the chums of the Fourth came in, followed by Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn. They were all grinning with the exception of Herries. Herries looked grim and savage.

"Well, has the giddy culprit confessed?" asked Glyn.

"Yes. He has admitted that he poisoned the meat for Towser, under the impression that he had eaten some of it," said Tom Merry.

Herries pushed back his cuffs.

"Will you come into the gym., Levison, or will you have it here?" he asked, with ominous politeness.

Levison backed against the wall, his face white and his eyes gleaming. Always cunning and underhand, he never came out into the open if he could help it, but matters had been brought out into the open now with a vengeance. The cad of the Fourth was fairly caught, and there was no escape for him, whichever way he turned.

"I—I won't fight you, Herries," he muttered thickly. "I—I'll complain to Mr. Railton if you touch me. I—I won't be forced into this."

"You can explain to Mr. Railton at the same time how you tried to poison Towser, then," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison panted. He dared not let the story get to the ears of the School House master. He was fairly caught. Herries looked impatient.

"I'm waiting!" he said. "You can have it here or in the gym."

"Hang you!" snarled Levison passionately. "I'll fight you, then—here and now! Hang you all! Come on!"

"Bai Jove! Quite plucky, all of a sudden," remarked D'Arcy. "Take off your jacket, deah boy. I'll hold it for you if you like."

"Fair play," said Levison. "Don't all of you pile on me."
Tom Merry frowned.
"You know you'll get fair play here, though you don't deserve it," he said. "If you say another word like that I'll lick you when Herries has finished."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "Upon the whole, Hewwies, deah boy, pewwaps you had bettah leave him to me. I will give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Stand back, Gussy!"
"Weally, Tom Mewwy!"
"Give them room!"

Jack Blake drew Arthur Augustus back into a corner, and the juniors all stood back against the walls and the door to leave room for the combat.

It was not a long combat. Levison threw himself desperately upon Herries, and the owner of Towser wreaked his long-pent-up wrath upon the attempted poisoner of the bulldog. Levison was knocked right and left. In his desperation he inflicted a good deal of punishment upon Herries, but the indignant Fourth-Former seemed hardly to notice it. He hammered and hammered, and Levison, resorting to foul play as his brief courage waned, began to kick.

Herries gave a sharp cry as Levison's boot crashed upon his shin.

"You coward!" yelled Blake.

"Leave him to me to finish, Herries," said Tom Merry, white with anger.

Herries was staggering with the pain of that cruel kick, but he waved Tom Merry back.

"I'll finish him!" he said hoarsely.

He leaped upon Levison, and got his head into chancery. Then nothing was heard in the study save the trampling of feet and the muffled yells of Levison as Herries hammered him, and hammered and hammered.

The juniors dragged him off at last. Herries seemed inclined to go on until bedtime, though he was hopping with the pain in his damaged shin. Levison staggered against the wall as Herries was forced to release him, his face white save where it was blue with blows.

"Kick him out!" said Tom Merry.

He opened the door, and Levison staggered into the passage.

The door was closed upon him. Herries sank into a chair, gasping.

"I think he'll let Towser alone after this!" he panted.

"I should say so!" remarked Tom Merry. "I've got some embrocation here. You'd better rub your shin. That cad ought to be scalped."

Herries ruefully rubbed his shin with embrocation, and then the juniors sat down to the table to finish the Irish stew. Levison reached his own quarters, feeling more dead than alive, and collapsed into a chair as he entered. Mellish was there, and he looked at his confederate with startled eyes.

"My word!" he murmured. "You've had a pasting!"

"I'll make them suffer for it!" groaned Levison. "All of them, and that charity cad Brooke, who was the cause of it all. Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"I advised you to let Towser alone!" said Mellish.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Well, I told you so."

Levison caught up a cricket-stump, and limped towards his study-mate. Mellish dodged out of the study just in time, and slammed the door. Levison was left alone to groan over his punishment, and to meditate upon his sins, if he chose!

CHAPTER 8.

Levison's Little Scheme.

DICK BROOKE smiled a little involuntarily, when he saw Levison in the Fourth Form class-room the next morning. The would-be poisoner of Towser had exacted from him a promise that he would not mention his name. And he had not mentioned it. But the state of Levison's features was a pretty plain proof that Herries had made the discovery all the same. Levison's face was in an unenviable state. Herries was looking rather cut up. But Levison's looks gave one the impression that he had been under a lawn-mower. Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, was a short-sighted little gentleman, and not given to noticing things, but he could not help noticing Levison's state.

"You have been fighting, Levison!" he said severely.

"Yes, sir," said Levison. It was not much use denying it.

"Dear me! Whom have you been fighting with?" said the mild little Form-master, with a disapproving shake of the head.

"Herries, sir!"

"This is very, very wrong, my dear boys," said Mr. Lathom. "Let dogs delight to bark and bite, you know,

but little boys should never—er—do this sort of thing. It is very wrong."

The whole Form glared. The Fourth Form of St. Jim's did not like being referred to as little boys. But Mr. Lathom did not notice it.

"I should really punish both of you," he said. "However, we will let the matter pass, but it must not occur again. We will now proceed with the lesson."

And they proceeded.

Levison caught Dick Brooke's glance as the day-boy came in, and he scowled savagely. He hated Dick Brooke more than he did Herries, and Brooke was a safer object upon whom to wreak his vengeance, which was a consideration that appealed very much to a fellow like Levison of the Fourth.

Morning lessons were very painful to Levison. He had a variety of aches and pains, and he shifted most uncomfortably all the time. He left the Form-room when the Fourth were dismissed in the most savage temper.

He stopped in the passage to speak to Brooke.

"You're the cause of this, you charity cad!" he muttered, between his teeth.

Brooke flushed.

"I did not mention your name to Herries," he said. "If he has found you out, it serves you right!"

"I will make you suffer for it!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Brooke contemptuously. "I can't hit you while you are in that state, or you'd get it in the neck for what you've just said. Get out of my way!"

And Levison got out of his way.

The cad of the Fourth went up to his study, making a sign to Mellish to follow him. Mellish went rather unwillingly. He did not like Levison in his present humour, and he did not want to be drawn into any more of his plotting. But Levison was the stronger character of the two, and Mellish was his unwilling follower.

"What are you up to now?" said Mellish sullenly, when they were in the study.

"I'm going to make that cad Brooke sit up for what he's done," said Levison.

Mellish brightened up a little. He had been afraid that the plot was to be against Herries. And Mellish was quite determined that nothing should induce him to quarrel with the burly Fourth-Former, and share Levison's punishment.

"Oh, that's all right!" he said. "Let Towser and Herries alone, for goodness' sake. It's not safe to meddle with them."

Levison snapped his teeth.

"I'm not going to let them alone," he said. "But never mind them now. It's Brooke. I'm going to show him up!"

Mellish looked puzzled.

"Show him up!" he repeated. "I don't quite see! What has he done?"

"Have you seen his father?"

Mellish grinned.

"Yes, rather. I've passed their house near Wayland sometimes. The old man is a coughdrop, and no mistake!"

Levison's eyes glittered.

"What have you specially noticed about him?" he said.

Mellish reflected.

"He's a coughdrop!" he repeated. "He's been in a good position, and he's lost it through booze, I suppose. I've heard that he's been seen in the High Street at Rylcombe, as tipsy as a fiddler, spouting out Greek by the yard, with the village kids in a circle round him. It must have been funny."

"Exactly!" said Levison. "That fellow Brooke works at something—illuminating or something of the sort—in the evenings at home, and teaches his sister French and German as fast as he learns them here. He keeps the house going, like any common working rotter, and, as a matter of fact, he's no right to be at a school like this at all!"

"Well, he's only a day-boy," said Mellish disparagingly.

"Most of St. Jim's fellows have never seen his father," went on Levison. "I think it would be a treat for them—and for Brooke."

Mellish stared.

"He wouldn't come here," he said. "When he's sober, he shows plainly enough what he's been up to. He looks like a giddy wreck!"

"He's never sober, when he's got any money," said Levison.

"Then I expect he's jolly seldom got any!" grinned Mellish.

"If he were asked here, and had some money at the time, what do you think he would do?" said the cad of the Fourth slowly.

"Fill himself up to the neck, and come here squiffy, I suppose!"

"Just so!"

"My hat!" said Mellish, with a deep breath. "Is that what you're thinking of? What a stunning lark—and how

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hipping for Brooke! The cad holds his head jolly high, as if a fellow like myself weren't worth speaking to! I'd like to see his pater squiffy, rolling across the quad, and reciting Homer under the Head's window! Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison chuckled like some impish gnome

"That's the idea!" he said.

"But how are you going to work it?"

"Oh, I can work it! Suppose he had a letter——"

Mellish shook his head.

"Too dangerous! Letters have a way of turning up afterwards, and getting a chap into a beastly row!" he said, in alarm.

"Well, that's so. Suppose he had a message—you could take it——"

"Oh, could I?" said Mellish uneasily.

"Yes; you could!" growled Levison. "He doesn't know you, and doesn't know your name. You could tell him that Brooke wanted him here, and hand him some money——"

"He wouldn't take money from me!"

"Ass! You could say Brooke had sent it—spin some yarn about a money prize! Thirsty men like Brooke senior don't examine too carefully into where money comes from; he'd believe anything, for a chance of filling himself up at the Green Man. If you met him early in the afternoon, and told him Brooke wanted him here about five, he'd have a couple of hours to spare, with money in his pocket. The result would be——"

"Precisely!"

"It's a jolly good dodge, and—and I like the idea. But if it came out——"

"Your part in it couldn't come out; you could be careful to keep out of sight while he was here. You could give him your name as Brown or Jones, too. There are five Browns in the school, if he inquired after them. It's as safe as houses!"

"Why can't you see him yourself, then?"

"He knows me by sight. I've talked to him over his garden fence, getting information. I've had this wheeze in my head for a long time."

Mellish moved restlessly.

"Where's the money to come from?" he said.

"I've got a sovereign, and that's more than enough."

"Do you mean to say you'd spring a sovereign to show Brooke up?"

Levison gritted his teeth.

"Yes—or fifty, if I had them!"

"Well, I—I'll take it on!" said Mellish. "I've got two hundred lines to do for old Schneider. You can do them for me in return."

"Done!"

"And—and when——"

"To-morrow afternoon."

"Good, then!"

"Not a word, even to Croke!" said Levison.

"No fear!"

Mellish quitted the study, looking very thoughtful. He disliked Brooke, of the Fourth, very much; but even if he had felt indifferent towards him, this plot would have afforded great pleasure to his impish, mischievous nature. He burst into a chuckle in the passage as he pictured to himself Dick Brooke's father, and the sensation he would make at St. Jim's if he visited the school in the state which Mellish elegantly described as "squiffy."

"Hallo!" said Jack Blake, meeting him in the passage. "What are you going off like a cheap cracker for, Mellish? What rotten game are you up to now?"

"Find out!" snapped Mellish.

He walked on, and Blake looked after him suspiciously. When Mellish was specially pleased it generally meant that something unpleasant was happening to somebody, or was going to happen. Blake wondered what it was.

CHAPTER 9. Which Towser?

"IMPOSS.!"

Tom Merry & Co. were coming along the Fourth-Form passage later in the day when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice, raised in excitement, reached them from Study No. 6. Monty Lowther grinned, and kicked open the study door. The four chums were all there, and they were all looking rather worn.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "Trouble in the family? Let us mediate! I suggest that you all apologise to one another, which, according to Gussy, would set the matter right at once."

Blake and Herries and Digby grinned, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle in his eye and regarded the Terrible Three with severity.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, this is no laughin' mattah——"

"Gussy is right for once," said Blake.

"I should wathah say so!" exclaimed D'Arcy warmly. "I

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appeal to you fellows. Would you have a wotten bulldog in your studay?"

"Certainly not!" said Tom Merry promptly. "If I had a bulldog in my study, I should insist upon his being perfectly wholesome. I should bar a rotten one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't talk out of your hat, Tom Mewwy. This is a vewy sewious mattah. Hewries wants to have Towsah in the studay. It's barred by the rules of the House——"

"And the rules of the study, too," said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's all rot!" said Herries crossly. "Anybody who can't get on with Towser must be a cross-grained ass! Towser hardly ever bites anybody——"

"You uttah ass!"

"And I'm not leaving him out in the kennel to be poisoned by cads like Levison!" said Herries excitedly. "Brooke stopped him once, but a chap can't always be watching the kennel. I'm going to have him in the study!"

"Can I make a suggestion?" asked Monty Lowther blandly.

"Pway do, deah boy."

"Suppose Herries has Glyn's mechanical dog in the study instead of Towser? It will look just the same, and it won't bite. That will please all parties."

"You silly ass!" said Herries. "If you can't talk sense, you had better ring off. I'm going to have Towser in the study!"

"It's imposs."

"You'd have the prefects down on you in next to no time, you know," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "It wouldn't do, Herries. Knox, the prefect, caught him in your study once, and you had a ragging from Mr. Railton."

"Blow Knox!"

"He won't be blown!" said Manners. "You see——"

"What's that?" The individual the juniors were speaking of looked into the study with a frowning brow. Knox, the prefect, had a decidedly unpleasant look upon his face. He was the most unpopular senior in the School House, and he fully deserved his unpopularity. "What's that about keeping a bulldog in the study?"

"We didn't know you were listening," said Monty Lowther politely.

Knox scowled.

"Take fifty lines, Lowther! If I find you keeping a dog in the study, any of you, you will get into trouble."

And Knox walked off angrily.

Herries snorted.

"That's done it!" he said. "All through you silly asses! I can't have Towser here now that Knox is on the scent."

"Knox would soon have got on the scent," said Tom Merry consolingly. "You could tip the stableman to keep an eye on Towser. That would make it all right."

Herries brightened a little.

"Well, there's something in that," he said. "I might arrange it with George. I think I'll go and see him about it now."

And Herries departed.

"I'm getting fed up with Towser!" said Jack Blake. "There seems to be nothing going but Towser. It's Towser to right of us, Towser to left of us, and Towser all over us. He's as much bother as Gussy."

"Weally, Blake——"

Monty Lowther burst into a chuckle.

"Well, what are you cachinnating at?" asked Blake.

"I was thinking of Knox. He'll look into this study presently to see whether you chaps have got Towser here."

"I suppose he will. What about it?"

"Let him find him!"

"Fathead! It would mean two hundred lines each for all of us if he found Towser in the study," growled Blake.

"Not if he found Towser II."

"Eh?"

"I was thinking of Bernard Glyn's Towser, you see," Monty Lowther explained. "Knox doesn't know anything about him, and he doesn't know that the esteemed Towser's got a double. If he found Glyn's latest here, he would take him for the original and genuine Towser."

Blake burst into a roar.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy, "that's wippen! That awful cad Knox wants takin' down a considerable numbah of pegs. He's a fwightful coward, and he'd be afwaid to touch Towsah, so he couldn't find out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!" roared Blake. "Let's go and find Glyn. This is better than springing Towser II. on the New House."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the Terrible Three and the Fourth-Formers rushed off to Bernard Glyn's study. Glyn had the study at the end of the Shell passage, with Kangaroo and Clifton Dane. The three Shell fellows were there, having tea, when the new-comers burst in. Bernard Glyn had stains of various

lunes upon his fingers and face, and had a mottled look, which indicated that he had been at work upon another of his famous inventions, a wonderful discovery in the line of indelible inks. The juniors grinned as they looked at him.

"Hallo!" said Kangaroo. "If you fellows have come to tea, wire in and welcome. There's exactly half a sardine left, and you can share it out."

"Weally, Kangy—"

"We haven't come to tea," roared Blake; "we've come for Towser II. Where is the giddy mechanical mongrel?" Bernard Glyn jerked his thumb towards a large box in the corner of the study.

"I've finished him," he said. "I'm going on with my indelible ink now."

"Yes, you look as if you were," said Tom Merry. "I should recommend you to invent invisible inks instead. They'd leave you a little less like a tropical beetle."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Not a bad idea," said Glyn thoughtfully. "I've really got an idea for a good invisible ink, and I haven't worked it out yet. If I—"

"Never mind the invisible ink now," said Blake cheerfully. "We want the visible bulldog. It's a little jape on Knoxy."

"Good egg! You can have him. I'll bring him. I'm not going to trust my inventions into any duffer's hands."

"Weally, you know—"

"What do you want to do with him?" asked Glyn.

Tom Merry explained, and there was a roar from the chums of the end study. They entered into the spirit of the thing at once. The box was rushed along the passage, and opened in Study No. 6. Towser the Second was taken out, looking very flat; but Bernard Glyn inserted a key into his back, and wound him up. There was a slight whirring sound as the bulldog rose to his feet and walked round the study.

"My hat!" Blake gasped. "I'd swear it was alive!"

"Yaas, wathah! What a howwid-lookin' beast! It weally makes me quite uneasy about my twousahs, you know."

"Have you fixed up his beautiful voice?" asked Tom Merry.

Bernard Glyn grinned.

"Yes; listen!"

He touched a button concealed under one of the bulldog's ears. Towser II's mouth opened, and a deep and rumbling growl came forth.

Gr-r-r-r!

"Bai Jove!"

The mechanical dog's eyes rolled, and the lips moved and showed the gleaming teeth. The juniors started involuntarily back. It seemed as if the savage animal were about to spring upon them. Glyn chuckled, and backed Towser II. into a corner of the study, the shadiest corner. The fearsome-looking beast glared at them with its glass eyes, which, as Blake declared, looked more natural than life.

Herries came into the study.

"I've fixed it up with George," he said, with satisfaction. "He's going to— Great Scott! You've got Towser here, after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Herries. "Look here, if you fellows really want Towser in the study, I'll have him here, and risk Knox."

"Bai Jove!"

"Towser will risk knocks if he comes in here," said Digby. "This is Towser II., you ass!"

"Oh, my aunt!"

Herries stooped and felt over the mechanical bulldog before he could quite credit that statement. Then he was satisfied. Bernard Glyn had not been able to breathe into the bulldog the breath of life, and Towser II. was cold to the touch.

"What's the little game?" demanded Herries.

"Knox!" grinned Monty Lowther. "We're trying to please Knox. He's always looking for a chance to jump on us, and we don't want to disappoint him. Savvy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come out of the study!" said Blake. "Set him at growling, Glyn, and leave him!"

"Right you are!"

The juniors left the study, and closed the door. From within a low growl came after them. Glyn grinned cheerfully.

"He's wound-up to growl every half-minute!" he said. "I've got a speed gear inside him. Blessed if I don't half think he's a real dog myself, he does it so well."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake and Herries strolled down into the lower hall, where Knox was chatting with Langton of the Sixth. The juniors did not appear to notice the prefects, but Knox noticed them. For as Blake passed him, he said to Herries:

"It will be all right so long as he doesn't make a row, I suppose?"

Then the juniors walked into the quad. Knox's eyes glittered. Those words, overheard apparently by accident,

put him on the scent. He left Langton, and strode after the juniors.

"Blake!" he called out.

Jack Blake turned his head.

"Yes, Knox?" he said meekly.

"Have you taken that bulldog into Study No. 6?"

"No, Knox."

"Don't prevaricate, Blake," said the prefect. "Has Herries taken him?"

"No, Knox," said Herries.

"Is he there at all?" exclaimed the prefect angrily.

"Certainly not!" said Blake. "Didn't you tell us we weren't to have him there? You don't think I'd disobey you, do you, Knox? I'd sooner disobey my own great-grandfather."

"You cheeky young cad! I believe you're lying!" said Knox, between his teeth. "I will go and see for myself."

"Hold on, Knox!" exclaimed Blake, with an artistic look of alarm. "I—I don't think you need go. Towser isn't in the study."

"I shall satisfy myself about that," said Knox. And he went up the stairs three at a time.

CHAPTER 10.

Not Dangerous.

GR-R-R-R-R-R-R!

That was the sound that greeted Knox's ears as he came up to the door of the Sixth study in the Fourth-Form passage.

The prefect's eyes glittered. He did not want much more evidence than that. Knox had a feeling of the most profound satisfaction. Blake was supposed to be a most truthful boy, as indeed he was. And Mr. Railton or his Form-master would have taken his word without question. Not so Knox. Knox's charitable opinion was that if a fellow had an appearance of being very frank, it only meant that he was more deep than usual. And he was very pleased at finding Blake out in a lie. He would be able to report that to the House-master as a proof that he had been right all along in his estimate of Jack Blake's character.

He opened the door of the study, and looked in. He started as he caught sight of Towser II. in the opposite corner of the study.

"The—the lying young scoundrel!" muttered Knox, amazed in spite of himself at this indubitable proof that Blake had told an untruth. "There's the blessed bulldog, as large as life! I'll take him to Railton!"

Gr-r-r-r!

Knox backed away, and changed his mind about taking Towser to Mr. Railton.

"The beast!" he muttered. "He looks as if he's ready to tear a chap limb from limb. I—I'd better not touch him!"

Gr-r-r-r!

Towser II.'s eyes rolled, and his jaws moved, and Knox made one jump out of the study, and slammed the door behind him. He gasped in the passage.

"The dangerous beast! It ought to be shot! Herries shall be caned for this!"

The prefect hurried downstairs, and knocked at Mr. Railton's door. Mr. Railton was having tea in his study with Mr. Lathom of the Fourth, and he did not look pleased at being interrupted. He was accustomed to hearing complaints from Knox, and he was what the juniors would have called fed up with them.

"Is anything wrong, Knox?" he asked wearily.

"Yes, sir. The juniors in No. 6 Study have brought a bulldog into the house, and it is now in the study."

Mr. Railton frowned.

"They have been expressly forbidden to do so," he said.

"I warned them that that was the case, sir," said Knox. "And Blake has just denied to me, point-blank, that the dog was there."

"Then I am sure it is not there," said little Mr. Lathom, blinking at Knox over his glasses. "Blake is a most truthful boy."

Knox smiled sarcastically.

"I have never thought so, sir," he said. "My opinion is—"

"Your opinion does not do you credit, then," said Mr. Lathom, with unusual sharpness of manner for him. "If you cannot see that Blake is an honourable lad, Knox, the fault must be in your character, not in his."

"He has denied that the dog is there, sir."

"Then it is not there."

"But I have seen it."

"What!"

"I have just looked into the study, and the dog is there," said Knox. "I have left it there, because it looks too savage to touch. It is a positive danger to the whole house. I do not know what is to be done with it."

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Mr. Lathom put his glasses firmly upon his nose, and looked directly at the prefect.

"Do you mean to say, Knox, that Blake denied having the dog there, and that it was there all the time?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"Then I do not believe you." And little Mr. Lathom turned his back upon Knox.

The prefect turned crimson with mortification.

"Will you step up to the study, and see for yourself?" he exclaimed.

"No, I will not. You have an unreasonable prejudice against one of the best boys in my Form, and I have observed it before," said Mr. Lathom tartly. "I shall take not the slightest notice of your statement. If I were Head of this school you would not be a prefect. Dr. Holmes does not know you as I do."

"Sir! If you choose to insult me—"

"I will see into this matter," said Mr. Railton, rising, his brow very clouded. "I am as surprised as you are, Mr. Lathom, at Knox's statement; but it is easy to ascertain the facts. Pray excuse me a few minutes."

And he followed Knox from the study. The prefect mounted the stairs with a burning face; but he felt that his justification was coming.

"Gr-r-r!"

"There, sir!" Knox exclaimed triumphantly. "You can hear him yourself now."

Mr. Railton looked very grave.

He opened the door of the study. Knox remained behind the stalwart form of the Housemaster. He did not want to get too near to Towser.

"Better take care, sir. He looks frightfully savage."

Mr. Railton did not reply. He knew that the surest way to make a dog attack was to appear afraid of it. He strode into the study. He started at the sight of the bulldog crouched in the corner, with open jaws and glistening eyes. Towser II. gave voice again as the Housemaster entered.

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"You can see for yourself that Blake lied, now, sir," said Knox maliciously, from the passage.

"Good dog!" said Mr. Railton, stepping towards the animal. "Come! Good dog!"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

The animal looked so ferocious that Mr. Railton drew back his hand in spite of himself. Several fellows had come along the passage, and they looked into the study.

"Faith!" exclaimed Reilly. "Towser's here!"

"Mind he doesn't bite you, sir," said Gore of the Shell.

"He looks dangerous, sir."

Mr. Railton hesitated. The bulldog seemed about to spring, but did not spring. But it certainly seemed dangerous work to touch him, and trousers were a very poor protection against such terrible teeth as Towser possessed.

Brooke of the Fourth stepped into the study.

"Shall I coax him, sir?" he said. "He knows me."

"Take care, Brooke, you ass!" muttered Hancock. "He'll have your hand off if you're not jolly careful."

"Oh, he won't bite me," said Brooke cheerfully.

"Stand back, Brooke," said Mr. Railton. "The animal looks very savage, and I will not allow you to run risks."

"He won't hurt me, sir."

"I always get on with dogs," said Brooke confidently.

"That's true for ye," said Reilly. "It's so, sir. Brooke can always get on with dogs; they take to him like ducks to water."

"Let me try, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Railton. "If you can persuade him, good! I should be sorry to have to hurt the dog, who is not responsible for being where he is not allowed to be."

Brooke stepped closer to Towser. The glistening eyes seemed to be fixed upon him, and the gleaming jaws moved slightly. But Brooke did not falter. He stooped, and lightly touched the head of the bulldog with a caressing gesture.

"Good old Towser!" he murmured softly. "My hat!"

He jumped back in amazement.

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"My hat! It's not Towser! It's not alive!"

"What!" shouted Mr. Railton.

"It's a dummy, sir! I—I remember, now—"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"It's so, sir! You can tell if you touch him."

Mr. Railton bent down, and touched the bulldog. Then he was convinced. He rose, and turned upon Knox with a frowning brow. The prefect stood dumbfounded. His face was a study.

"Knox! Were you aware of this?" thundered the Housemaster.

"I, sir!" stuttered Knox. "I! Certainly not! It is a— a trick!"

"Where did this dog come from, Brooke?" asked Mr. Railton.

Brooke grinned; he could not help it.

"It's a mechanical dog, sir," he said. "I hadn't seen it before, but I heard the fellows talking about it yesterday. It's one of Glyn's inventions."

"Faith, rather!" said Reilly. "I forgot Towser II. Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton frowned sternly.

"There is no harm in Glyn making a mechanical dog," he said. "It is very clever of him, and it is certainly wonderfully lifelike. There is no harm in Blake having a mechanical toy in his study. You have made a fool of yourself, Knox!"

"Sir!"

"If you had taken Blake's word, as you ought to have done, you would not have made yourself look ridiculous, and would not have brought me here upon a fool's errand!" said Mr. Railton angrily. "You have been taken in by a simple trick, and you fully deserve it! When Blake denied that there was a bulldog in his study, you ought to have guessed that it was a joke of some sort, instead of concluding that Blake was speaking falsely. Any other prefect would have done better! I cannot help thinking that you were glad to find the boy out in a falsehood! That was base of you!"

And Mr. Railton strode out of the study, very much annoyed. Knox remained white with rage, and as soon as the Housemaster was gone, the juniors burst into a chuckle.

"That was base of you, Knox!" said a voice from the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox gritted his teeth. He caught up a chair, and rushed at the mechanical dog, and smote it fiercely. There was a wild whirl from Towser II., and he rolled over on the floor of the study. His performances were stopped with a vengeance now.

Knox, scowling like a demon, strode from the study. A yell from the juniors followed him.

"That was base of you, Knox!"

The prefect gritted his teeth as he strode away.

CHAPTER 11.

Brooke Has an Idea.

BERNARD GLYN almost wept over Towser II., when he discovered what had happened. The wrecked bulldog was carried into the end study, and Glyn examined him in dismay. The other fellows were very sympathetic. But Towser II. was past the aid of sympathy.

"Do you think you can mend him, old chap?" asked Blake.

Glyn grunted.

"Yes, I can; but it's like making the beast over again!" he said. "I never dreamed that that brute would lash him with a chair, though I might have guessed it. I'll get even with the brute, somehow! The awful rotter! Buzz off, you asses, and let me get on with him!"

And Glyn was left alone to the task of repairing Towser II.—a very lengthy task. The juniors were sorry for Glyn's invention, but they chuckled gleefully over Knox's discomfiture.

The words Mr. Railton had used were known all over the School House, and cheeky fags yelled them at Knox from behind corners, and raced off before he could

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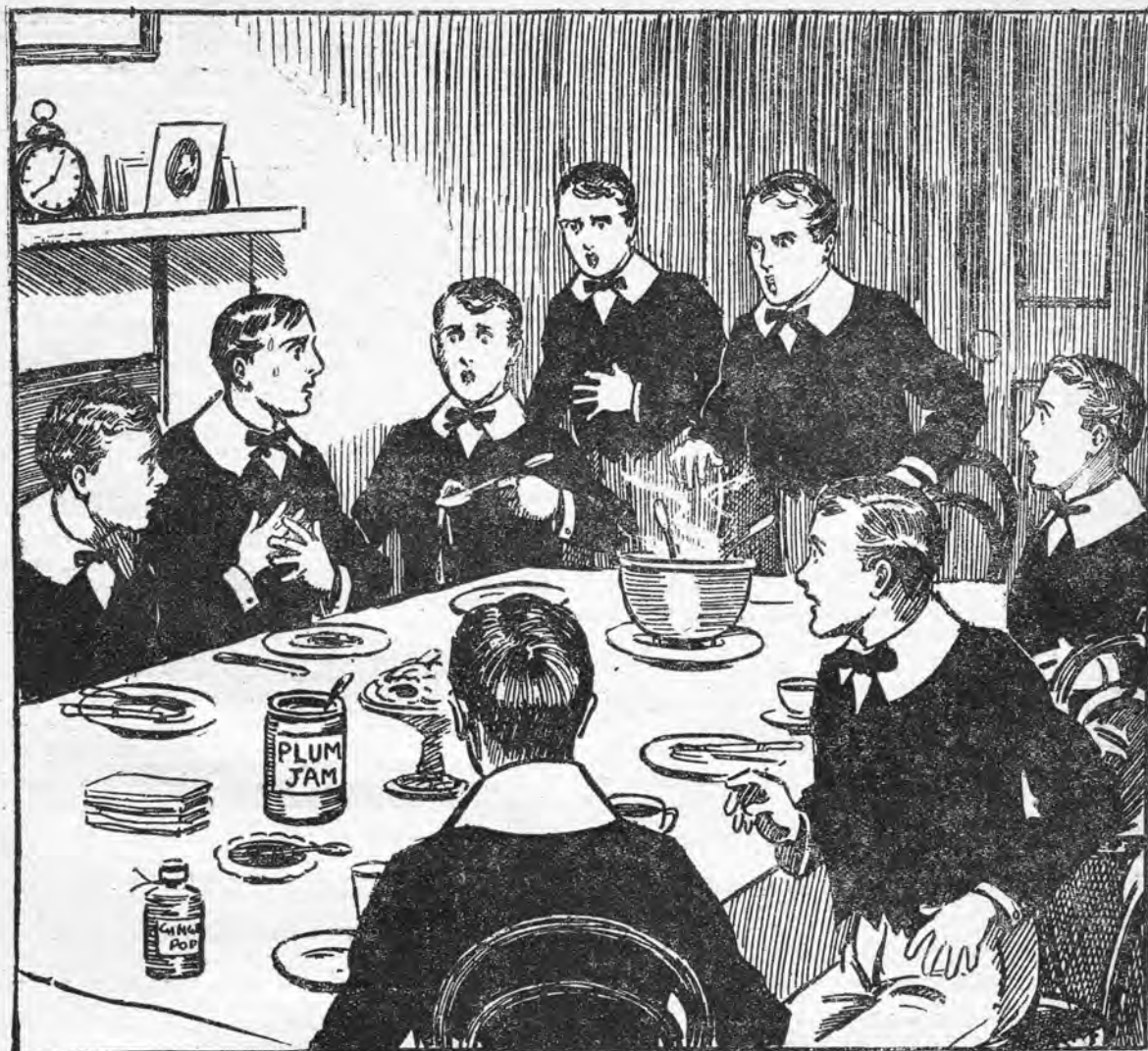
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"The—the meat was poisoned! We're as good as dead!" moaned Mellish. "Oh! Help! Fetch a doctor! Get a stomach pump! quick!" "By jove!" gasped Tom Merry, "this looks serious" (See Chapter 6.)

get near them. When Knox went into his study, he found an inscription chalked on his looking-glass: "That was base of you, Knox!" When he opened his desk in the Sixth Form-room, a paper slipped out bearing the same words.

The prefect writhed under the persecution, and his rage mounted as it continued. He looked into the end study in the Shell passage that evening, where Bernard Glyn was at work upon the damaged mechanical bulldog.

Glyn looked round, and laid hold of a bottle of his famous indelible ink.

"Don't come in here, you cad!" he said. "If you get this over you, you'll have a purple complexion for three weeks at least!"

Knox halted in the doorway.

"So you are mending that thing?" he said.

"Yes, you beast!"

"Mind!" said the prefect, between his teeth. "If you mend it, I'll smash it again! I won't allow you to have it!" "I've got Mr Railton's permission."

"Permission or not, I'll look into your study before bedtime, and smash it to atoms if you've mended it!" said Knox.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Knox made a movement as if to rush in upon the junior, and Glyn lifted the bottle of indelible ink. The prefect changed his mind, and went out of the study, slamming the door after him. Glyn had been defiant while Knox was there, but when he was gone he ceased to work upon Towser II., looking very dismayed.

"The brute!" he muttered. "He means that—he'll smash poor old Towser II.! I wish he'd start on the real Towser—he would get what he's asking for, then!"

And Glyn, very much worried, put Towser II. in his box, still unmended, and left the study, with a troubled wrinkle in his brow. He met Brooke, of the Fourth, as he walked slowly down the passage, and Brooke stopped him.

"Anything amiss?" he asked.

"Yes," growled Glyn. "It's all through that giddy jape in Study No. 6. Knox has just told me that he's going to smash up Towser II. if I mend him. He's going into my study this evening to see whether he's mended."

Brooke whistled.

"Hard cheese!" he said.

"It's beastly!" growled the schoolboy inventor. "Knox isn't allowed to do anything of the sort. He comes down on us pretty heavy if we do things we're not allowed to do. But he will do it all the same. He knows I won't sneak to the Housemaster. That's where an honourable chap is at a disadvantage dealing with a cad. The cad has the pull over him all the time."

Brooke wrinkled his brows thoughtfully. His face cleared suddenly, and he chuckled.

"It would be a good wheeze——" he began.

"What are you cackling about?"

Brooke lowered his voice.

"Look here," he murmured. "The chaps in Study No. 6 have been forbidden to have Towser in their study. But you haven't."

Glyn stared at him.

"I jolly well don't need forbidding," he said. "You don't think I have Herries's dangerous beast in my study, do you?"

"He's not really dangerous," said Brooke laughing. "If he bites he will give only a little nip. He wouldn't really hurt anybody."

"Blessed if I'd like to risk it, and I don't want even a little nip, as you call it. Besides, what are you driving at?" demanded the puzzled Glyn.

"Don't you see? Knox took your mechanical bulldog for the real Towser. Why shouldn't he take the real Towser for your mechanical bulldog?"

"M-m-my hat!"

"And if he tried to break up the real Towser—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Glyn.

"What do you think of the idea?" asked Brooke modestly.

"I think it's rather good myself. Herries would be glad to bring Towser into the house—he's always glad to show the beast to anybody."

Glyn suddenly clasped the day-boy round the neck and waltzed him round in the passage. Brooke gasped.

"Here, you ass, chuck it! Are you dotty?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Glyn.

"Oh, cheese it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What on earth's the row?" asked Tom Merry, looking out of his study in amazement. "Are you off your rocker, Glyn?"

Glyn ceased his waltz, and gasped breathlessly. In two seconds Tom Merry was in possession of Brooke's idea, and he roared as loudly as Glyn. They rushed away together to find Herries. Herries almost fell into hysterics when they told him. The mental picture of Knox tackling Towser in Glyn's study came near overcoming him.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Herries. "Yes, I'll fetch in Towser—yes, rather! We can get him into the house by the back way easily enough. They've barred him in our study, but not a word's been said about not having him in Glyn's study. We shan't be breaking any rules."

"Not a giddy rule!" said Tom Merry.

"Then let's go and fetch him."

Four or five more juniors were taken into the scheme, and they kept watch and ward while Towser was cautiously conveyed into the house by the back way and up to the Shell passage. There, as luck would have it, the juniors camp right upon Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's. Kildare stared at them, and they stopped in dismay.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said the prefect.

"Ye-es!" said Glyn. "Certainly!"

"It's wonderful!" said Kildare. "I've heard about it, but I shouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it—quite! You are a clever kid, Glyn, to be able to make a dog like that! I'm not surprised that Knox was taken in—it's really very clever!"

And Kildare nodded genially to the juniors and walked on. Tom Merry & Co. gasped with relief. They did not speak till the captain of St. Jim's was gone.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "He's taken the real Towser for the dummy Towser! What a stroke of luck! I thought it was all up!"

"You are a clever lad to make a dog like that, Glyn!" murmured Brooke, almost suffocating.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Towser was hurried into Glyn's study. He seemed rather restive, but a bone from the cupboard, with a good deal of mutton on it, quieted him.

"I wish I could stay and see the fun," said Brooke regretfully. "A chap misses a lot through being a day-boy here."

"You'll see Knox in the morning—what's left of him,"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Towser was given a long chain in the study, which would enable him to move about into almost every corner but not to get out of the room. And there the juniors left him, reposing in a corner, just as Towser II. had reposed in Study No. 6, all ready for Knox to make his raid.

It was Knox's duty to see the Shell to bed that night, as it happened, and there was a very unpleasant smile upon his face as he put the lights out in the Shell dormitory in the School House. Glyn and his friends being gone to bed, they could not interfere with anything Knox chose to do in their study. But as the mechanical Towser was hidden away safely in a box-room, and the real Towser had taken his place, Knox would not be able to do much damage. When the prefect departed, Tom Merry & Co. sat up in bed, chuckling.

"Now for the giddy circus!" murmured Bernard Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the joke?" asked Gore, sitting up in bed, too.

Tom Merry explained. There was a gust of laughter in the Shell dormitory.

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"My only summer bonnet!" ejaculated Gore. "We must see this!"

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry.

And the Shell fellows turned promptly out of bed, and crowded just inside the dormitory door, which Tom Merry held a little open. They were all ready to hear the sounds of revelry by night, as Monty Lowther put it. And it was not very long before they heard them.

CHAPTER 12.

Towser Objects.

KNOX, the prefect, lost no time. As he went down, after turning the light out in the Shell dormitory, he stopped in the passage below, and opened the door of Bernard Glyn's study. The study was dark, save for a faint glimmer of starlight at the window; and in that faint glimmer Knox caught the gleam of two greenish eyes in a corner. But Knox was not alarmed. He was not to be taken in a second time. At all events, he thought he wasn't!

Gr-r-r-r-r!

It was a low growl from Towser. But Knox had heard that growl before, or one so like it that he couldn't detect any difference.

He struck a match and lighted the gas, and looked at the bulldog in the corner. Towser looked wonderfully life-like, which was really not surprising under the circumstances.

He moved his head a little, and looked at Knox. Knox grinned.

"It's jolly clever!" he murmured. "If I didn't know what it was, blessed if I shouldn't think that was a real live bulldog. Blessed if it isn't a pity to smash it up! But I'll make those young scoundrels sorry for their cheek! Here goes!"

Knox picked up a chair, and advanced upon the bulldog. Towser eyed him suspiciously. He had been tormented more than once by Levison, and he knew what a hostile movement meant. He watched Knox, and growled again.

Gr-r-r-r-r!

The growl was so exceedingly life-like that it made Knox pause in spite of himself. Then he chuckled, and aimed a terrific swipe at Towser with the chair.

If that blow had reached its mark, Towser I. would have been in very much the same state as Towser II., and would have been very much in need of repairs, which even the schoolboy inventor would hardly have been equal to.

But before the blow had reached him there was a clink of the chain, and Towser leaped at Knox. The chair missed its mark, and crashed upon the floor with such force that two of its legs were broken off. Knox reeled forward, and as he did so the bulldog's teeth fastened upon his leg.

Knox gave a yell of terror.

"Ow! It's alive! Help! Help! Ow!"

Towser was certainly alive, and indeed very lively. Knox made a wild rush to the door, with the bulldog hanging upon him. But he had closed the door, and before he could reach the handle Towser dragged him back.

"Ow! Ow! Help!"

Knox wrenched himself away from Towser, leaving a great patch of his trouser-leg in the dog's teeth, and sprang away into a corner of the study, with the bulldog after him.

Towser growled furiously as the chain tautened, and jerked him short of his enemy.

Knox crammed himself into the corner of the study, just out of reach of the snapping jaws of the bulldog.

The bite he had had was slight, having taken effect chiefly upon his trousers; but it was certain that the next one would not be slight if the bulldog could get at him.

But the taut chain, which was fastened securely to a staple in the study wall, held the bulldog back just out of reach.

Towser leaped and struggled, growling horribly, in his efforts to get at the prefect. Knox, wild with terror, yelled frantically for help. Every instant he expected to see the chain yield under the strain, and to feel the bulldog upon him.

Gr-r-r-r-r-r!

"Help! Help!"

Knox's yells rang along the passage. From the dormitory above a crowd of half-dressed juniors came swarming down, and from the senior studies below a crowd of the Sixth came rushing up. Kildare was the first to reach the end study, and he threw the door open, and stared in in amazement.

"What's the matter here? Great Scott!"

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r!" came from Towser.

"Keep him off!" shrieked Knox. "Drag him away! It's alive!"

"I should jolly well say it is!" gasped Kildare. "How on earth did it come here?" He stared blankly at the bulldog leaping and foaming at the end of his chain.

"Sure it is a bulldog!" asked Darrel of the Sixth, looking

in. "I've heard about a mechanical dog made by Glyn, and this is Glyn's study."

Kildare laughed.

"A mechanical dog wouldn't act like that, Darrel."

"Well, no, I suppose not," said Darrell, laughing as he looked at Towser. "Only young Glyn is very clever with these weird inventions of his."

"Drag him away!" shrieked Knox, crouching in the corner with huddled legs.

"Oh, keep quiet!" said Kildare scornfully. "You're in no danger. He can't reach you; the chain's too short."

"It—it may break!" gasped Knox.

"I don't think there's any danger of that. Glyn! Is Glyn among those kids?" called out Kildare, looking round into the passage, where a crowd of figures in nightshirts and pyjamas had assembled.

"Here I am," said the schoolboy inventor, coming forward meekly. "Is anything wrong?"

"Wrong!" ejaculated Kildare. "I should say so! What do you mean by having a bulldog chained up in your study?"

"To guard it," said Glyn cheerfully. "You see, I was afraid of burglars. There's no rule against having Towser in my study, is there? He's not allowed in No. 6, but nothing's been said about my study."

"You young rascal! You know he's not allowed in the house at all."

"Well, I haven't been told so."

"Kids can't be expected to guess these things," said Tom Merry seriously. "We look up to the prefects for orders and advice and things, and we shouldn't dream of working out rules for ourselves, Kildare. It wouldn't be respectful."

Kildare laughed, in spite of himself.

"None of your cheek, you young scamp," he said. "Look here, Glyn, you know you oughtn't to tie up a bulldog in a study, and disturb the whole School House."

"It seems to me that it's Knox who's disturbed the school," said Tom Merry. "What was he going in Glyn's study at all?"

"Yes. What were you doing here, Knox?"

"I—I heard the dog, and came in to remove him," said Knox.

Kildare looked at him suspiciously. He remembered that on a previous occasion Knox had not dared to interfere with Towser II., and had called in Mr. Railton. Knox was recovering his nerve now, and speaking calmly. He realised that Towser could not get at him, and Towser, too, was quieting down under Tom Merry's caressing hand.

"And did you try to biff him with that chair?" demanded Glyn, pointing to the smashed article of furniture on the floor, near where the end of Towser's chain was fastened.

Knox started, and flushed.

"Look here, what does all this mean?" demanded Kildare sharply. "I can see that something is being kept back."

"Knox came in here to smash up my mechanical dog," said Glyn, "so we changed him for the real Towser. I knew the real Towser wouldn't let himself be smashed up."

"It's a lie!" said Knox.

"How did you come to smash that chair, then?" demanded Tom Merry. "You must have been swiping at something pretty hard."

"I—I was defending myself against the bulldog."

"Rats!" said Herries, from the passage, quite forgetting the respect due to a prefect. "You'd have biffed Towser with it in that case. You were swiping at something you didn't expect to move, and it did move. That's why the chair biffed on the floor, and busted."

Herries had not expressed it elegantly, but the truth of his statement was clear to all. Kildare's lip curled contemptuously, as he looked at Knox.

"It's pretty clear to me," he said. "You had no right to harm any of Glyn's property, Knox, and you would get into trouble for it if it were reported. You'd better let the matter drop. Herries, take that dog back to his kennel at once. If he's brought into the School House again, you will be caned."

"Right-ho!" said Herries cheerfully.

"Now get back to bed, you kids!"

The juniors crowded off to bed, grinning. Knox did not say a word. He knew when he was beaten. If it had come to the Housemaster's knowledge that he had deliberately visited a junior study after lights out to destroy property belonging to a junior, he knew that it would have been all up with his prefectship. He was only too glad to let the matter drop where it was, and he went to his room to bathe his leg, and to vow vengeance upon the juniors; but to

reflect, at the same time, that he had better be very careful how he set about it.

Tom Merry & Co. gloated, as Monty Lowther expressed it, as they trooped back to the Shell dormitory. They had discomfited Knox. The unpopular prefect was quite beaten.

"And he's had a giddy fright, and shown himself up to the whole House as a rotten coward!" chuckled Bernard Glyn. "If you want to raise Knox's hair in the future, you will only have to say 'Towser' to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish I could have taken a snap-shot of him, crouching up in the corner with Towser's nose only an inch off him," sighed Manners.

And the Shell roared at the idea.

CHAPTER 13.

Brooke's Pater.

"BROOKE, old man!"

Brooke, of the Fourth, stopped as Tom Merry called to him. He gave the captain of the Shell a cheerful nod and smile.

"I want to speak to you about the cricket," said Tom Merry. "You're not going to give it the go-by, you know?"

Brooke's face clouded a little. He was as keen on the great game as any other fellow at St. Jim's, but he knew he would have to give it up.

"That's all right," he said; "I can't play. I can't see the blessed ball coming, you know. But I want to stay in the club, and I shall always turn up at the matches and yell. You can easily shove someone in instead of me. I was never above the average."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Quite so!" he agreed. "When it's a school match we've got better players for the Junior Eleven; young Redfern, of the New House, is a regular ripper. But in House matches we have to scrape up twenty-two from the Lower Forms, and that's where you come in. But I suppose you know best. But if you can't play in a House match, you ought to turn up for practice, you know, if only to keep yourself fit."

Brooke looked doubtful. Like many people with some personal affliction, he was almost morbidly anxious about not letting it bother other people. But he nodded.

"Well, I'll come down to the nets," he said. "Thanks!"

"Come on, then, with me."

"Right-ho!" said Brooke, cheerfully enough.

It was one of the two weekly half-holidays at St. Jim's, and the weather was glorious. The whole school was streaming for the playing-fields and the river. It was yet early in the cricket season, and Tom Merry & Co. were practising that afternoon. The New House fellows were at practice on their ground, and the yells of delight could be heard as Fatty Wynn bowled to Redfern's wicket. Fatty Wynn, of the New House, had always been the best junior bowler at St. Jim's; and now it looked, since Redfern's coming, as if they had the best junior batsman, too. Tom Merry and Jack Blake needed to look to their laurels.

Brooke had been a good bat and a good bowler before his eyes began to trouble him; and some of the fellows knew that that trouble was due to his working late hours at home at close and difficult work, added to hard study at St. Jim's. But Brooke was not the kind of fellow to take his troubles sadly. He was always cheerful, though a wrinkle was already showing in his boyish brow.

Levison stood on the School House steps, and watched Brooke walking away with Tom Merry, with a sarcastic smile upon his face. Mellish was with the cad of the Fourth, and he was looking a little nervous and uneasy, though there was a malicious glitter in his eyes.

"Time you were off," said Levison.

"Ye-es, I suppose so," said Mellish.

"It's as easy as rolling off a log," Levison went on, lowering his voice. "You'll find him in Rylcombe. He gives a violin lesson to some clodhopper there, and always leaves at three. I've found that out. He used to be a violinist before he took to going on the razzle, and he turns an honest penny that way now by teaching. Give him the message from Brooke—Brooke specially wants him here at five o'clock. The rotter will be having tea here in No. 6, most likely, at that time. Hand him the sovereign in the envelope—from Brooke. Dash it all, I've found the sovereign, and it isn't much for you to do!"

"Oh, it's all right; I'll do it."

"Then cut off, and mind you don't miss him."

Mellish nodded and walked away. Levison strolled down to the cricket ground. Levison did not play cricket, and he never turned up for more practice than was compulsory. But he wanted to keep his eye on Brooke, of the Fourth, that afternoon.

Brooke was batting now, and Blake was bowling to him. Brooke's brow was screwed up almost in a scowl, not from

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ill-humour, but from the effort to see what he was about. But it was not of much use. Blake gave him easy bowling, but Brooke's willow missed the ball nearly every time, and the wicket fell very soon. Brooke's brow unclouded, and he smiled a little ruefully.

"I'll watch you fellows," he said.

"Weally, Bwooke, old man, it's wathah wuff on you!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I should wecommend you to twy an eyeglass."

Brooke laughed, and handed over the bat to someone else, and walked off the pitch. It was pleasant to lie in the grass on that sunny afternoon, and watch the figures in white on the level green, and to hear the merry click of bat and ball, and to listen to the cheery shouts of the players. The day-boy had a book in his pocket, too—he was seldom without one—and he took it out to read and watch the players by turn. The book was Xenophon, and Brooke sighed a little as the Greek characters seemed to dance before his eyes.

"Swotting, as usual!" said Levison, in his sneering tones, stopping to look down upon the Fourth-Former in the grass.

Brooke glanced at him quietly.

"Yes," he said; "swotting, as usual!"

Levison would have gone on to further unpleasant remarks, but there was a gleam in Brooke's blue eyes that warned him that he had better not. The cad of the Fourth moved away, and stood leaning against the pavilion, idly watching the players, and wishing that the afternoon would speed by till Brooke's father arrived. That Mr. Brooke would come Levison had not the slightest doubt. And he grinned at the thought of what was to happen to the boy he hated. He knew how Brooke would suffer; not on his own account, but upon his father's. For whatever his father's weaknesses might be, Brooke had a strong affection for him, and he never forgot the respect that was due to him, whatever he might do to forfeit it.

To Levison the afternoon was slow, but to the juniors on the cricket-pitch it fled by swiftly enough. It was getting near five o'clock when Tom Merry came over to Brooke.

"Hallo!" he said cheerfully. "What's that?"

"The Anabasis," said Brooke, with a smile.

Tom Merry yawned.

"Good old Anabasis! Are they going up or going down, and how many parasangs?" he inquired.

Brooke laughed, and closed the book.

"You're coming in to tea with us," said Tom Merry.

"There's going to be high jinks in No. 6. Gussy has screwed a fiver out of his governor, and Fatty Wynn has done the shopping. It will be a jolly crowd, and we want you. We'll let you get home before dark this time. You'll come in?"

"Glad to!" said Brooke.

"Come along with me, then, and we'll get the fire going! I'm finished here, but some of the others are going on."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry and Brooke went into the School House. Levison shifted restlessly. Five o'clock rang out from the clock-tower. Mellish had not come in, but as the clock struck Levison caught sight of him in the quadrangle, and hurried towards him.

"Well?" he exclaimed.

Mellish grinned.

"It's all serene!" he said.

"He's coming?"

"Well, he said he would," said Mellish. "Hasn't he come? I gave them a look in the Green Man, and I've only just got back."

"He hasn't come yet. What did he do after you gave him the message and the money?"

Mellish chuckled.

"He stood thinking for about five minutes," he said.

"I watched him from the door of old Bunn's shop. He started to go home, and stopped, and then started for the Red Cow, and stopped again. Then he stood a minute or two, and then made a sort of dive for the Red Cow, and went in, and didn't come out again."

Levison laughed. All had gone as he expected, and he knew what would come of Mr. Brooke's visit to the Red Cow. The elder Brooke was seldom sober when he had any money.

"He'll be along here soon," said Mellish. "I'm going to get into my study. I dare say I can see the fun from the window—anyway, I don't want him to see me and claim me as an acquaintance. Brooke would cut up rough if it all came out, and the beast can hit hard! If there's a fight you've got to take it on!"

"Oh, rats!" said Levison irritably.

Mellish went into the House, and did not emerge again. Levison loitered in the quadrangle, waiting. It was a quarter-past five, and Mr. Brooke had not appeared. Levison was biting his lips with uneasiness now. Had he

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expended his sovereign for nothing? Suppose the man drank himself into an incapable state, and did not come? The thought of that made the cad of the Fourth half-regret his extremely clever plot. A sovereign was a sovereign, and Levison was by nature very close with money.

Half-past five!

Most of the cricketers were gone in to tea by now, and others were on their way back from the playing-fields. Levison walked down to the gates with growing uneasiness. Was his plot a failure, after all? He started, and his eyes brightened, as he heard a sharp voice in the gateway. It was the voice of Taggles, the school porter of St. Jim's.

"You can't come in 'ere like that!"

"Oh, good!" muttered Levison. "He's come! Now for the circus!"

He hurried towards the gate. Several other fellows, who had heard Taggles' excited voice, were hurrying in the same direction, wondering what was the matter.

In the gateway stood a strange figure.

It was that of a man still in early middle-age, with a handsome and somewhat striking face, and clear, blue eyes still as fresh and handsome as a boy's. He was dressed in shabby clothes, but he wore them in a way that made one hardly notice their shabbiness. Anyone, looking at him, would have said that this was a man far above the common run of men; but the soft, almost womanly, mouth and the delicate chin would have shown, too, that this was a man of weak and good-natured character—the kind of man who is said to be nobody's enemy but his own.

To the dozen or two fellows who stared at him inquiringly, he was not known by sight; but Levison knew him, and he took care that the other fellows should.

"Brooke's pater!" yelled Levison.

The man was evidently under the influence of drink. He walked unsteadily, and yet held himself with an air of exaggerated dignity and stateliness common to intoxicated men in a certain stage of intoxication. His voice, when he spoke, was broken by hiccoughs, and yet it was cultivated and pleasant to hear.

"You lumme pass, my man!" said Mr. Brooke. "I've come to see my boy. He wants me."

"Look 'ere—," said Taggles.

"Mind your own bizney, Taggles!" said Levison, coming forward. "A fellow's pater has the right to come and see him if he wants to."

"But see the state he's in, Master Levison," whispered Taggles, who was far from guessing what was in the mind of the cad of the Fourth.

"Well, that's his business, not yours."

Taggles hesitated, not knowing what to do, and while he hesitated Mr. Brooke lurched past him and walked into the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 14.

A Surprise for the School.

"BROOKE'S pater!"

"Where's Brooke?"

"My hat! What a giddy sight!"

There were exclamations and grins and chuckles among the fellows in the quadrangle. The sight of the intoxicated man walking with absurd dignity across the quad, seemed irresistibly funny to the boys. The element of tragedy in it did not occur to them. A fine man reduced to such a state by irresolution of character was tragic enough, but it was the comic element that struck the onlookers.

"Where's Brooke?" shouted a dozen voices. "Brooke, come and see your pater home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My only chapeau!" exclaimed Figgins of the Fourth, coming off the cricket-field in time to see Mr. Brooke enter.

"Who's that?"

"Brooke's pater!" yelled Levison.

"Impossible!"

"Ask him, then!"

Mr. Brooke looked round rather dizzily. The crowd of laughing faces seemed to swim before his eyes, and the number of them was at least doubled to his vision.

"I'm glad to see you all, my boys," he said. "You're all friends of my boy Dick. Dick is a good lad."

"I'm sure he is," said Levison. "I hope he'll grow up to follow in his father's footsteps, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Dick wants me," said Mr. Brooke. "He sent me a message to come. Where's Dick?"

"Show up, Brooke!" roared a score of voices. "Here's your pater!"

The roar reached Dick Brooke in Study No. 6 in the School House. He had been making toast, and his face was very ruddy, but the colour died out of it as he stepped to the study window and looked out into the quadrangle.

Blake and D'Arcy and Tom Merry and Lowther were in the study. They came at once to the window, and saw what Dick Brooke saw.

Mr. Brooke, surrounded and followed by a laughing crowd, was crossing the quad, with slow and unsteady steps towards the School House.

Dick's face was white as chalk.

"My father!" he muttered.

"Bai Jove!"

"Your father?" said Tom Merry, in startled tones.

"Yes," groaned Brooke.

"I'm sorry, old man. You'd better run down."

Brooke nodded, and ran out of the study. The juniors looked at one another in silence. Even Monty Lowther's humour was gone. He realised what this meant for Brooke of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, at last. "This is swiftness wuff on Bwooke."

"Horrible!" said Blake.

"Poor old Brooke!"

"The ass ought to have had more sense than to come here," said Tom Merry. "I knew he was like this—you remember the time we were at Brooke's house? But—but what on earth has he come here for in this state?"

"I suppose he doesn't know what he's doing."

"Come on, dear boys!" said D'Arcy, jamming his silk topper on his head.

"Where?" asked Tom Merry.

"To stand by old Bwooke. We can't desert him in a fix like this."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy left the study. The other fellows followed him more slowly. They were willing enough to stand by Brooke, but they did not see how they could help him in an emergency like this.

Brooke had reached the quadrangle. Mr. Brooke was near the School House now, and the crowd was increasing in numbers.

Some of the fellows were looking grave and troubled, but most were laughing. They were hardly to blame. They were thoughtless, and the intoxicated man's air of stately dignity was certainly comic to see.

"Where's my boy—Dick?" repeated Mr. Brooke.

"Oh, he's coming!" said Levison. "I say, sir, can't you give us a song and dance?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Levison, you cad!" growled Figgins. "Let him alone!"

"Rats!" said Levison. "Why shouldn't he go through his tricks? I think it's a jolly good thing to have Brooke shown up like this."

"Song and dance, Mr. Brooke!" roared Crooke of the Shell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What on earth is all this?" exclaimed Kildare, coming out of the School House before Brooke arrived on the scene.

"Who is this man?"

"Brooke's pater."

"Nonsense! My man, you had better get out! People aren't allowed here in your state," said the captain of St. Jim's sharply.

Mr. Brooke looked at Kildare with an air of offended dignity.

"Young man—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've come here to see my boy," said Mr. Brooke, wagging an unsteady finger at Kildare. "He sent me a message. Here I am!"

Brooke came up, white and breathless. Kildare turned to him angrily.

"Do you know this man, Brooke?"

"Yes, Kildare," said Brooke quietly. "He's my father."

"Then you'd better get him out of sight before the Head sees him." Kildare's tone was very sharp. And then, as the white misery in the boy's face struck him, it softened. "I'm sorry for this, Brooke, but for goodness' sake get him out of sight!"

"Father"—Brooke took his arm—"come along!"

Mr. Brooke blinked at him uncertainly.

"You're Dick, are you?" he asked, evidently not being able to trust his vision. As a matter of fact, three or four Dicks were dancing before his eyes.

"Yes, I'm Dick."

"That's all very well," said Mr. Brooke argumentatively, "but which of you is Dick?"

"Father—"

"I've come to see you, Dick," said Mr. Brooke. "But—but I can't make out which of you is Dick! You're all like my son, all three of you, but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The yell of laughter from the crowd drowned Mr. Brooke's uncertain voice.

Dick Brooke's face was scarlet now.

"Pway shut up, you chaps!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "There is nothin' whatevah to cackle at. This is simply howwid for Bwooke."

"Serve him right!" said Levison.

Blake pushed Levison roughly away.

"You shut up!" he said savagely.

"Mr. Bwooke," said D'Arcy, seeing that the man was resisting Brooke's attempts to lead him away towards the gates, protesting that he had come to see Dick, and wouldn't go without seeing him—"Mr. Bwooke, will you have the greatest kindness to accept the hospitality of my study. We're just going to have tea."

"Pleased, I'm sure!" said Mr. Brooke. "Pour out the Rhine wine, let it flow. In kühlen Keller sitz ich hier, auf einen Fass voll Reben!" He broke into song.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes; come in, father," said Brooke. "This is awfully good of you, D'Arcy. Father, come in and have some tea!"

"Certainly!" said Mr. Brooke, lurching in between D'Arcy and Brooke, who did their best to support him, and guide his uncertain footsteps. "Gentleman, upon this most auspicious occasion—I mean, auspicious occasion—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. loyally gathered round, and pushed the crowd back, and closed round Mr. Brooke as he was taken in and guided to the stairs. Mr. Railton, surprised by so much noise, looked out of his study.

"Is anything wrong there?" asked the School House master.

"It's all wight, sir!" said D'Arcy hurriedly. "Only Bwooke's patah has come to have tea with us, sir."

"We're just showing him up to the study, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, very well! I must say you are very noisy about it."

Mr. Railton was about to withdraw into his study. But, unluckily, Mr. Brooke, with the peculiar obstinacy that belongs to intoxication, halted on the stairs, and held on to the banisters, and insisted upon speaking to Mr. Railton.

"Mush speak a word to the gentleman," he said.

"Father!"

"Come on, sir!"

"This way, Mr. Brooke!"

"Mush be shivil," said Mr. Brooke, with an obstinate shake of the head. "My dear sir, I am Brooke's pater. This is my boy Dick."

Mr. Railton looked up sharply from the lower hall. It was a little dim on the stairs, but he could see the two hands holding tightly to the banisters, and the flushed face looking down at him over them.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton.

"Yesh! I've come to see my boy Dick. Perhaps," said Mr. Brooke, with great gravity—"I say perhaps—you could tell me which is Dick."

"I do not understand you, sir," said Mr. Railton, staring hard at him. "Do you mean to tell me you do not know your own son?"

"There are three of them."

"What!"

"Bai Jove! Come on, sir!" said D'Arcy, in agony; and he simply dragged the man away from the banisters, and Mr. Brooke was taken upstairs with a rush, still persisting that it was necessary to be "shivil."

Mr. Railton frowned a little, and hesitated, but he stepped back into his study, and closed the door. Mr. Brooke, without further misadventures, was piloted into Study No. 6 in the Fourth-Form passage.

CHAPTER 15.

Tea in Study No. 6.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had nobly expended the five he had received from his "governor." He had asked all sorts of fellows to the study to tea. The Terrible Three were coming, and Kangaroo and Glyn and Reilly, and Figgins & Co. of the New House, and Redfern and Owen and Lawrence and D'Arcy minor of the Third, and Skimpole of the Shell, and two or three others. Study No. 6, which was frequently crammed to its utmost capacity on festive occasions, seemed likely this time to be filled to bursting point. But the unexpected arrival of Mr. Brooke altered all that.

Brooke's immediate friends felt it their duty to stand by him, but the other fellows thought it would be more delicate not to witness his humiliation. Redfern & Co. of the New House made an excuse, and Figgins & Co. followed their example, with the exception of Fatty Wynn. Fatty Wynn had quite as much delicacy as the others, but he had a bigger appetite, and he explained to Figgins that he thought he'd better go. And he did! Tom Merry and Lowther stayed, too, but Manners went to develop some films. Other fellows dropped off, and so the tea-party in No. 6 was reduced

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to the four juniors to whom the study belonged, and Tom Merry, Wynn, Lowther, and Dick Brooke—and, of course, Brooke's pater.

Brooke's pater dropped into the armchair, and smiled round upon the juniors with a benignant though rather uncertain smile.

Arthur Augustus tapped the miserable Brooke on the shoulder.

"Pwaw don't take it to heart, deah boy!" he murmured. "We're all good friends here, you know, and we'll look after him, and see him home when he's—when he's all wight again. Pwaw don't wowwy!"

"Thank you," said Brooke, in a strained voice. "I'm mucking up your tea-party."

"That's nothin'."

"Nothing at all," said Tom Merry. "The fellows don't mind in the least, and we can have another feed to-morrow, anyway. I think we'll be getting along!"

"No, you stay," said Blake. "We want some chaps here. Levison and some other rotters may come along."

"Good! We'll stay!"

"I hope I am not disturbing anybody," said Mr. Brooke, imperfectly hearing the muttered conversation; and he rose to his feet, but immediately collapsed into the armchair again. "Gentlemen, you are all welcome at this board! Gentlemen—gentle—hie!"

"Bai Jove!"

"He's jolly good-tempered, and lots of people get like this," said Monty Lowther, with some idea of comforting Brooke. "Don't worry about it, and he'll soon be all right again."

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Brooke, "I go nap!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Les jeux sont faites," said Mr. Brooke, evidently seeing before his dizzy eyes once more the table of Monte Carlo, where a great part of the fortune had gone which had once been his. "Rien ne va plus!"

"Quiet, father!"

"Le cinq!" said Mr. Brooke. "Le cinq, rouge, impair, et manque! Always that infernal red! Always rouge, excepting when I plump on red. Then it's noir—noir—noir! Black all the time! It's a fool's game, and they don't play fair. I know they don't, but I'll make 'em squirm yet! Do you hear? I'll make 'em squirm? I'm not stony yet, mes enfants. I know they work the game, of course they do, but I've got a system that will beat them hollow anyway, cheat or not! I tell you my system is invincible! Haven't I tried it? Messieurs, les jeux sont faites."

Brooke coloured with shame.

"Give him some tea," said Tom Merry.

Blake made the tea.

There was a knock at the study door, and it opened. Levison grinned into the study, with two or three fellows behind him.

"Can we come in?" said Levison blandly. "We want to be introduced to Brooke's pater."

"No, you can't!" growled Blake. "You can sheer off."

"But we want—"

"That's what you want," said Blake, hitting out straight from the shoulder, and catching Levison full on the nose.

"Now you've got it, and you can go."

Levison sat down suddenly in the passage.

Blake slammed the door of the study, and the cad of the Fourth did not venture to open it again.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was presenting Mr. Brooke with a cup of tea, and the visitor to Study No. 6 spilt most of it upon his waistcoat and trousers, and swallowed a little.

He uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"Do you call that whisky?" he demanded indignantly.

"Bai Jove! No, we call it tea," said D'Arcy.

"A Scotch-and-soda, please, miss!" said Mr. Brooke, apparently under the impression now that Study No. 6 was the bar-room of the Red Cow in Rylcombe. "And not too much soda."

"Bai Jove!"

"Have something to eat, father," said Brooke.

"Hallo! Is that you, Dick?" asked Mr. Brooke. "You haven't told me yet what you sent for me for? Do you want me to help you with your classics?"

"I didn't send for you, father," said Brooke.

"Hey? Didn't you send him, with the message and the sovereign?"

"The sovereign!" said Brooke, in amazement.

"It came in very useful," said Mr. Brooke. "It was very kind of you to send it, Dick. You knew I should be thirsty on a warm afternoon, didn't you?"

"I didn't send you a sovereign, father."

"Who did, then?" said Mr. Brooke, sitting upright in the chair and blinking at his son. "Who sent me the sovereign?"

"I don't know."

"I've got a bob left," said Mr. Brooke. "The whisky at the Red Cow is very good. The brandy is poor, but the whisky is good. You can't beat good Scotch whisky, unless

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you have good Irish whisky. Better than the stuff they drink here," he went on, Study No. 6 changing to a foreign cafe in his heated imagination. "No, I won't have any absinthe, and I won't have any Chartreuse, and I won't have any Benedictine. If I can't have decent English whisky, I won't have anything."

"Bai Jove!"

The study door opened, and the juniors turned round wrathfully, but it was only Bernard Glyn who came in. He was one of the party who had been invited to tea, and he had been at work in his study upon his latest invention, and knew nothing about Brooke's pater being at St. Jim's. The stains of deep red upon Glyn's fingers and face seemed to indicate that he had discovered the secret of making red ink, at least, indelible.

"Come in, Glyn, old man!" said Blake. "Shut the door. This is Brooke's pater; he's having tea with us."

"Oh!" said Glyn, in amazement, as he looked at the unfortunate gentleman in the armchair. "All right!"

"Les jeux sont faites," said Mr. Brooke, mumbling. "Monsieur, vous avez gagne. I win three thousand francs on the red. C'est tres bien, ca! I shall be able to do something for my poor boy in England if this luck holds out. Oh, oh! That infernal black again! Oh!"

So his wild talk ran on, till at last it died away, and he sank into sleep in the armchair. Brooke gave the juniors a haggard look.

"It's horrible to have to worry you fellows like this," he muttered. "Would you mind if he stays here a bit, till I can see him home?"

"Vewy pleased, deah boy. We'll leave you the study."

"How did he get here?" whispered Glyn.

"Somebody seems to have taken him some money and a message, in Brooke's name, asking him to come here," said Tom Merry. "Brooke says he didn't send it, so it's a trick somebody has played on him, I suppose."

"I don't think we need to look far for the trickster, either," said Blake. "It was Levison, of course."

"I wish I knew!" said Brooke, between his teeth.

"We'll find out," said Tom Merry, knitting his brows.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's bring Levison and Mellish here when Mr. Brooke wakes up," said Glyn; "we can see then if he recognises either of them."

"Good egg!"

It was more than an hour later when Mr. Brooke opened his eyes. The gas was burning now in Study No. 6, and his son was alone with him. Mr. Brooke started, and shivered, and sat up in the chair. The fumes of drink had somewhat cleared from his brain, though he was far from being himself yet.

"Where am I?" he murmured.

"With me, father," said Brooke quietly.

"Dick!"

"Yes. Are you ready to go home?"

Mr. Brooke blinked at him. He was sober enough now to realise what he had done, and he crimsoned with shame and remorse.

"Dick! Dicky, my lad! I'm sorry!"

"It's all right, father!" said Dick Brooke, with an effort.

"Shall I take you home now?"

"Yes, Dick," muttered his father. "I—I'm sorry! When the wine is in, the wit is out, you know! But why did you ask me to come here, Dick, and send me money at the same time? You might have known what would happen!"

"I didn't, father! It was a trick of some cad—the message and the money did not come from me!"

"Oh, Dick! A trick—to disgrace you here?"

"Yes, dad."

"And I—I've done it!" groaned Mr. Brooke, letting his face fall into his hands. "Oh, Dick, I've disgraced you before the school, and it was hard enough for you before!"

"Never mind, dad; it's no good crying over spilt milk!" said Dick bravely. "Let's get off home now. You can walk all right?"

"Yes, Dick."

Mr. Brooke staggered to his feet. His head was getting clear, but his legs were as intoxicated as ever, and certainly he was in no state to walk unaided. Brooke stepped to the study door and called, and Tom Merry and Lowther and Glyn came along at once.

"You'll help me, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!"

They helped Mr. Brooke out of the study. There was a sound of a scuffle up the passage, and four juniors came in sight, marching along Levison and Mellish, who were resisting unavailingly.

"Here are the cads!" said Blake. "Did either of these fellows bring you the message you thought was from Brooke, sir?"

Mr. Brooke blinked at them.

"Yes," he said. "It was this boy! He said his name was Brown!"

And he pointed with a shaking finger to Percy Mellish.

"It—it wasn't!" stammered Mellish, turning pale. "I—I've never seen him before! He's drunk, and he doesn't know me!"

"He knows you well enough, you cad, and you're going to pay for it!" said Herries. "Yank him into the study!"

"It was Levison!" shrieked Mellish, as he was hurled into No. 6, and the juniors released his confederate. "He put me up to it! He gave me the sovereign!"

"Oh!" said Digby. "I thought Levison was in it, too!"

"Shove him in, and keep 'em both there till we get back!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I won't—" began Levison fiercely.

But he had no time to finish. He was flung neck and crop into Study No. 6, and rolled on the carpet there.

The three Shell fellows and Brooke helped Mr. Brooke down the stairs, and got him out of the House quietly. Mr. Brooke was very quiet now. They piloted him out of the gates of St. Jim's, and in the road Brooke said good-bye to them.

"I can manage now," he said.

"Sure?" said Tom Merry doubtfully.

"Yes. This isn't the first time," said Brooke, with a touch of bitterness for once in his voice. "Thank you fellows for all you've done! Good-night!"

"Good-night, old man! Good-night, sir!"

The Shell fellows stood by the gate, and watched father and son disappear into the gloom. Then they turned back into the school.

"And now for those cads who've brought this on poor old Brooke!" said Tom Merry, setting his teeth.

CHAPTER 16.

Levison and Mellish Blush for their Misdeeds.

JACK BLAKE and his chums were standing guard over the cads of the Fourth when Tom Merry came in with Lowther and Glyn. Levison and Mellish were standing by the mantelpiece, looking sullen and savage. There were marks upon them which seemed to indicate that they had attempted to leave the study by force, and had been handled far from gently. Sharp apprehension crept into Mellish's face as Tom Merry entered, and savage defiance into Levison's.

"The cads own up to what they've done!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm not afraid to own it!" said Levison fiercely. "I wanted to show Brooke up, and I've done it! Now you can do what you like!"

"It was all Levison's doing!" muttered Mellish. "I was against it from the first!"

"And what did you want to show Brooke up for, Levison?" asked Tom Merry quietly, without taking any notice of Mellish.

"Because he's a rotten outsider!"

"Because he stopped you from poisoning Towser, and because I licked you for it, you mean, you unspeakable cad!" said Herries.

"I quite agree with Hewwies!"

"If ever a pair of rotten cads ought to be ragged, these are the rotters!" said Tom Merry. "It's our duty as decent fellows to make an example of them!"

"Yaas, wathah! I quite agree with my friend Mewwy. It would be a wotten contamination," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Pewwaps we could give them a feahful thwashin' with a pokah or somethin'!"

Glyn burst into a chuckle.

"I've got an idea," he said.

"Go ahead!"

"Criminals used to be branded at one time, so that people could know them, and be on the watch for them," said Glyn. "I think it was a jolly good idea myself. Suppose we brand them?"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'm afraid that would be rather thick, though they certainly deserve it, or hanging, for that matter," he said.

"I'm not thinking of hot irons," grinned the schoolboy inventor. "Something a little more merciful, and that won't last permanently, only a week or two. I think you fellows all agree that they ought to blush for themselves?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But they won't!"

"No feah!"

"Then we ought to make them blush!" Bernard Glyn took a bottle from his pocket. "This is my latest invention, Indelible red ink."

"Gweat Scott!"

"If we paint their chivvies with it, the colour can't possibly come off under a week, and they will be pink for another week after that," said Bernard Glyn. "If they won't blush for themselves, they can blush for us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you dare to put that stuff on me!" shrieked Levison.

"Shut up, Levison!"

"I—I tell you I—I—" Levison made a wild bolt for the door. Tom Merry caught him by the collar, and swung him back, and he rolled on the floor.

"It's a simply ripping, gorgeous idea!" said Monty Lowther, chuckling. "They may learn to blush for their sins after we've shown them the way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar the cads!" said Glyn. "The invention is quite at your service, and I shall not charge Levison or Mellish anything for the ink!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Glyn opened the bottle, and Blake produced a paste-brush. Levison and Mellish were grasped, and in spite of their frantic struggles, they were held fast in strong hands, and Tom Merry proceeded to paint their faces.

The ink was of a bright vermilion colour, and the effect upon the features of the cads of the Fourth was startling. The reddest of Red Indians never looked so red as Levison and Mellish looked in a few minutes. The most awkward and modest of youths never blushed so vividly.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy, when Tom Merry had finished. "They look jolly well, and no mistake! Bai Jove!"

"Now, get out, you cads!" said Blake.

The two culprits were released, and they made a wild rush from the study, panting with rage and terror. In one minute they were washing and rubbing and scrubbing and kneading at their faces with hot water and lathering soap. But the water was hardly stained pink from the washing. The red remained upon their faces, and, as Bernard Glyn had declared, it was likely to remain there for at least a week to come.

One uproarious yell of laughter greeted the cads of the Fourth when they appeared in public. Juniors and seniors went almost into hysterics at the sight of the scarlet faces.

"Levison's blushing!" yelled Reilly. "Blushing, begorra! Faith, and it's the most wonderful of all Glyn's wheezes—to make Levison blush!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The infuriated blushers hid their blushes in their study till bedtime. But when they went up to the Fourth-Form dormitory to bed, the Fourth-Form went almost into hysterics at the sight of them. The prefect who saw lights out for the Fourth staggered out of the dormitory cackling like an alarm-clock.

In the morning, when the juniors woke, a fresh yell of merriment greeted the two crimson faces looking out of bed. Levison and Mellish were not very thorough washers, but they washed very thoroughly that morning for a change. But it did not make much difference. They were blushing furiously when they went down to breakfast. At the breakfast-table little Mr. Lathom noticed that they were very red, but he was short-sighted, and made no remark upon it. But after breakfast, when the crimson youths encountered Mr. Railton in the Hall, the Housemaster stopped them in amazement, and questioned them.

Then the story came out. Mr. Railton heard it all, and then turned to Tom Merry & Co.

"You should not have done this," he said. "It was a very wild and reckless thing to do; but you had such provocation that I shall excuse you. Levison and Mellish acted so basely that you were naturally indignant, and I am glad you were! Glyn, I forbid you to make any more indelible ink. It is evidently not safe in your hands. Levison and Mellish, you will go at once into my study. I shall cane you both severely for your mean and cowardly trick upon Brooke's father!"

Levison and Mellish emerged from the Housemaster's study five minutes later, looking as if they found life not worth living. And for nearly a week they furnished inexhaustible merriment to the St. Jim's fellows. As Blake said, they had never been known to blush before, but now they had started, they were going the whole hog. And Mellish and Levison continued to blush till the effect of the indelible ink wore off, which it did at last, and they refused, quite rudely, the schoolboy inventor's offer to give them a second coat if they liked!

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete story of the Chums of St. Jim's next Thursday, entitled, "The Shadow of Shame," by Martin Clifford. Please order your copy of the GEM LIBRARY in advance. Price One Penny.)

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OUR NEW SERIAL STORY.

WINGS OF GOLD!

The Story of the Most Terrible and Amazing Journey Ever Made By Man.

Edited from the Notes of Maurice Fordham, Esq.

By **SIDNEY DREW.**

CHARACTERS IN THIS GRAND STORY.

MAURICE FORDHAM and **LANCE MORTON**—Two healthy and wealthy young Britons, owners of the yacht *Foamwitch*, and the wonderful aeronef, *Wings of Gold*.
PROFESSOR LUDWIG VON HAAGEL—The famous German scientist, also noted for his clumsiness.
CROOKS—The ship's cook.
JOSEPH JACKSON or **SHOREDITCH JOSE**—A Cockney member of the crew, whose constant companion is a game bantam named the Smacker.
TEDDY MORGAN—Ship's engineer.
WILLIAM TOOTER—The hairy first mate.

The *Foamwitch* is on an expedition with the object of exploring the strange land which is believed to lie beyond the barrier of eternal ice near the South Pole.

As soon as the first land is reached the construction of the aeronef, *Wings of Gold*—which has been carried in pieces on the *Foamwitch*—is proceeded with, and in it begins a wonderful voyage into the heart of the Antarctic.

Fearful creatures, thought to be extinct since prehistoric times, are encountered when the adventurers reach a mysterious mountain country never before trodden by the foot of civilised man.

Once the aeronef is wrecked; but, by dint of much ingenuity and hard work, is repaired, and her head is turned towards the North. A terrific wind, however, springs up, and *Wings of Gold* is forced through a ravine in the mountains, and the crew find themselves flying over a large inland lake, surrounded by the vast, unknown mountains. They encounter such fearful creatures here that they decide to go back and return to the *Foamwitch*; but investigation reveals that the ravine is now blocked up, and they are prisoners in that vast enclosure.

Their tinned provisions have all gone bad, and the adventurers are in a bad case, when, cruising gently along, they come upon first an isolated human being, a jet-black giant nine feet high, and then upon a whole city, which they name the City of Triangles from the way it is laid out. Suspicious at first, the race of black giants and their king soon become well-disposed towards *Wings of Gold*, whose crew are examining the city with interest from above, when suddenly the whole population appears to become madly excited. Switching on the aeronef's powerful searchlight, the crew see a vast army approaching to attack the city—an army not of men, but of beasts!

(Now go on with the story.)

Wings of Gold Proves Herself More than a Match for the Invading Army—Mr. Crooks Attains to High Honours.

Little wonder the City of Triangles was moated and fortified! Little wonder the city maintained a standing army of warriors! They needed warriors. By sea and land the city was perpetually threatened by hideous and merciless foes.

The searchlight revealed the slopes, as its white rays moved here and there under the guiding hand of the cook. The slopes were packed, glutted, swarming with shaggy brutes—the dog-apes—beasts of the night, more ravenous than starving wolves. The monsters were powerful enough to tear a tiger to shreds. They took no notice of the light, except to glare. Steadily the shaggy mass pressed on. There was no roaring or howling now. The brutes moved in ghastly silence, as if they hoped to stalk the city.

Not a word was spoken for several minutes. The sight of this extraordinary and terrifying invading host had bereft them of speech. They did not dream that such a thing ever happened before; but this war between savage man and savage beast was being perpetually waged in the strange land beyond the adamant barriers of everlasting ice.

"It was Barnum's let loose. Why not?" growled Mr. Crooks. "There was thousands of 'em. Haw, haw! Hercules and Little Benjamin will stick a few afore it's over."

"Thunder!" said Morgan, tapping his pipe against the rail. "We live and learn. It's like a nightmare."

"They'll swarm the city," said Fordham. "And—"

"I don't see what it has got to do with us, sir."

"But the poor wretches can never fight these apes. They'll be across the moat and up the walls into the town. It's terrible! There are enough of them to tear down the walls. Think, Teddy, think! We've got to help those people."

"Give 'em pepper! Why not?" growled the one-eyed man.

"Here was the pepper-box."

"The Maxim, you mean?"

"Why not?"

"Get it, then," said Fordham.

Maurice sent the light sweeping down. The army of

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beasts that had before been advancing in a solid mass had now thrown out two horns. The dog-apes were treading as softly as cats. It was certain that they intended to attack the city, and not merely to raid the cultivated fields. They were not vegetable-eaters, but flesh-eaters.

The walls of the City of Triangles showed up suddenly like a triangle of fire. The light came from thousands of torches, and was reflected by the water and the rows of glittering spears. Through his binoculars Fordham could see the packed mass of warriors and the rows of great catapults, ready strained to fling great stones into the foe.

"Drop her? Why not?"

There was a muttering, and then a roar. *Wings of Gold* dipped earthwards. There was a wild, hideous, nightmare vision of tossing, hairy arms and gleaming eyes and gnashing jaws.

"Turn on all the lights," said Morgan. "That may scare them."

Then the aeronef was ablaze. She was a ship of fire, for every lamp was burning. She skimmed down to within thirty feet of the ground. Then a stone crashed through the glass of the wheelhouse; and Morgan, realising the danger, made the suspensory-screws whirl.

The relentless invaders pushed on, rank upon rank. The terrible brutes might have been trained and generalised. They were not afraid of the aeronef. The two horns had already extended beyond the ends of the moat. Men and beasts were alike silent. It was the lull before the storm.

The stars were bright enough, and the moon was creeping up. The towering peaks loomed out slowly, the triangle of lights grew brighter as *Wings of Gold* moved back. Her searchlights swept over the shaggy ranks.

Crooks squatted on the gun-trail, scratching his head.

Tooter came on deck with a bundle of rockets. They were signalling-rockets, and the biggest made. He dropped a stick through the rocket-ring, and a trail of fire showed at a downward slant against the darkness.

Bang!

There was a blaze of stars as the rocket exploded, and shrieks of terror and pain. Lance, Maurice, and the excited

professor were down on their knees in a minute, laying rows of rockets under the rails. Matches spluttered, and a whole flight of rockets roared and buzzed and exploded.

"They don't like it. Why not?" chuckled Crooks. "It sings their whiskers. Haw, haw!"

"More, more! We can spare these!" yelled Lance.

"They're bolting!" said Maurice.

"They'll bolt more. Why not?" growled Crooks. "Mind your heyes!"

R-r-r-r-r! A blue flame flickered at the muzzle of the Maxim, and the noisy clatter of the gun drowned the blood-curdling yells of the brutes. Down sped another flight of fiery-tailed rockets. The gun was doing terrible work. Then there was a cheer. The shaggy brutes had broke, and on that side the dog-apes were in retreat.

"Haw, haw!" said the cook.

"By thunder, they're at it!" yelled Morgan, springing back to the wheelhouse.

The attack on the town had begun on the left. Teddy made the aeronef absolutely leap forward.

"Give 'em rockets!" he shouted.

"Ach, yes! Der rockets! Der rockets!" panted the excited professor.

Wings of Gold soared over the moat.

"Mind your heyes! Why not?" growled Crooks.

R-r-r-r! The Maxim was at work again. Deadly as it was, it did not seem to have the same effect on the brutes as the exploding rockets. Teddy's rifle cracked now and again.

"Hurrah!" shouted Lance. "They don't like it."

"Shaf! Ow! I haf burned myself badly!" groaned the professor.

"Why not?" growled Crooks, as he lifted another belt of cartridges. "Fire was 'ot when 'andled."

A wild cheer burst from the crowded ramparts. The apes were in retreat on that side, too.

"Teddy," grinned the cook, "shall we get medals for this? Why not?"

"Hold fast!" shouted Teddy.

The aeronef had crossed the angle they had expected to see the fighting on. Instead of that, the warriors were laughing and dancing and waving their spears.

"The beasts have cleared!" said Lance. "Hurrah again!"

"Well done, our side!" said Fordham.

"Will they make me commander-in-chief?" chuckled the one-eyed cook. "Why not? I deserve it. Haw, haw! Shall I go down and be kissed?"

"You ought to go down and be kicked!" said Tooter.

Crooks rose from the gun-trail and winked.

"Willie was angry," he remarked. "I do not blame him. Why not? He has cause. Haw, haw! Why not?"

Mr. Crooks winked again.

"Well, why not, cook?" asked Lance.

"He was angry because I killed so many apes, which was his relations," grinned the cook. "Haw, haw, haw!"

Torches were burning in every street. The roar of voices was deafening. Presently the pyramid was also lighted up. Teddy brought the aeronef over the centre of the town, and turned on all her lamps. A great fire began to flare in the triangular place before the pyramid.

"They're going to celebrate the event," said Lance.

"Why don't you go down, Teddy? Are you still funky?"

"Not at all, by thunder!" said Teddy. "If they aren't good to us after this, they all want boiling!"

"Let her go, then."

Wings of Gold descended slowly until she touched the ground. The giant figure of the king burst through the crowd.

"Gimme your slipper, Blacklead!" said the cook. "Why not? You was looking pale."

Big Ben sprang on deck. He forgot his dignity and stateliness, and absolutely hugged the cook.

"She loves me, she loves me not!" grinned the cook.

"Don't crush my clean shirt, old tar-barrel! Haw, haw!"

"Shaf! Crooks, he might haf done it all," said Von Haagel. "He gets all der credit. 'We are nopodies, it seems, dear lads.'"

"Just so," grinned Lance. "I'm quite jealous. Hallo! That's fine!"

The warriors pressed round the aeronef. Spear clashed against spear. Then, like the roar of the sea, they broke into a chant, a deep song of triumph, sung by ten thousand voices. Hercules had joined his brother. They stood holding Crooks by the hand. The cook grinned his delight. It was all for him. Spears and torches were flung up and caught again.

"Ach, if I only knew the language!" sighed Von Haagel.

"Blow me!" said the cook. "I was a big pot, and why not? Haw, haw, haw!"

"You're a one-eyed ass!" said Tooter politely.

Tooter had brought Jackson on deck, and ensconced him in a chair to view the proceedings. The little man delighted everybody by taking a cigar and smoking. Such a proof of returning health was most welcome.

"Ach! I hope there will be no more relapses," said Von Haagel. "Good food now will make him so dot he jump and laf and caper like der pest of us. Ach! Ach! Dot is very goot—very goot!"

Big Ben looked proudly at his warriors. The lines of steel and fire widened out, so as to leave a brightly-illuminated space. Into this two unarmed warriors sprang. They saluted the king by bowing low.

"Wrestlers," said Lance.

"And sturdy fellows, old chap!" said Maurice.

After some careful feinting and nimble dodging, the men clinched. They swayed and rocked to and fro. Then one of them went down on his back amid approving shouts, and the victor, who wore a leather strap round each wrist, again saluted the king. Another man sprang forward, but only to meet with the same quick defeat. A third entered the list, but in a few moments he was vanquished, and the conqueror stood gleaming with perspiration and panting, as he waited for another competitor.

"Why not?" growled Mr. Crooks.

"What's got you, cook?" asked Mr. Tooter.

The cook had removed coat, waistcoat, and shirt, and was removing his boots.

"I was going to wrastle. Why not?"

"He'll chase himself all over yer!" grinned Jackson. "He'll take yer for a bone, an' chew yer up. Not 'arf he won't, neither. If yer don't come back alive may I 'ave yer watch an' chain?"

Mr. Crooks winked one eye, and chuckled.

"Haw, haw!"

Lance and Maurice were too deeply interested to offer any objection. Tooter advised the cook to make his will before leaving, and Teddy Morgan laughingly promised to give him a handsome funeral. Then there was a great hush as Crooks went down the ladder. Hercules smiled, and the king nodded assent. Crooks held out his hand to the wrestler.

"Shaf!" panted Von Haagel. "You shall haf der conceit taken from you, cook. It is ein pity to let you do it, for you can make der most suplime pie I ever taste."

The native was cautious. He knew that the white stranger had carefully watched his methods, but he felt the advantage of his own weight and muscle. The Englishman seemed remarkably lean, bony, and loose-jointed. They sparred round each other for a catch. Crooks was aware that defeat would greatly lower his prestige, while a victory would enhance it enormously. And Crooks had not forgotten what he learned from a certain little Jap, Taraki-min, professor of that most tricky and deadly system of wrestling called "baritsu."

Crooks dodged a clever attempt at shoulder and thigh catch, and then had his man by the wrists. His right palm went under the native's armpit, a sudden lightning thrust brought the cook's elbow against his assailant's ribs.

"Haw, haw!" grinned the cook.

A look of amaze sprang into the savage's eyes. He tried to break away. He forced Crooks back, and pulled him forward. But he had no power to move his arms, for that sharp elbow would have broken his ribs. The spectators could not understand it. Of course, they were quite in ignorance of the amazing, clever baritsu catches, by means of some of which a child can pin a strong man. Crooks was playing for a throw now. The leverage he had was enormous.

He pretended to slip. For an instant the strain was slightly relaxed, and the native took advantage of it to press forward. The cook's right knee bent. He exerted every atom of his vast strength to fling the native's legs against his knee. The powerful black figure went flying backwards like a ninepin, and dropped prone on his back in the sand.

A great cheer arose. Crooks put his hands in his trousers' pockets, and went up the ladder, chuckling. Lance, Maurice, and Teddy Morgan began to laugh. Mr. Tooter was so astonished that he dropped his pipe, and Jackson could hardly believe his eyes.

"That was science. Why not?" growled the victor. "I am sorry if I 'ave busted one of your subjects, Benny. Or was he tired?"

The citizens of the City of Triangles appeared to have a sense of humour, for on seeing their vanquished champion sit up and gaze about him in a dazed and wondering fashion, the cheering became mingled with laughter, in which his Majesty and Hercules joined.

Then came a mock fight with spears between picked warriors, and shooting at a target with arrows. When this was over, spears, torches, and fingers were pointed at Crooks.

"Argarmi—argarmi!"

Thousands of voices took up the shout.

"I don't know what it means, cooky," said Lance; "but you're getting a very big pot."

"They want you to show them something else," said Fordham.

"Blackbirds! Ain't he showed his face?" remarked Tooter.

"That ought to keep 'em quiet for months."

"It's a wonder it ain't poisoned 'em," said Jackson.

"Argarmi—argarmi!" came the roar.

Later on it was discovered that "Argarmi," when rendered into English, meant the "Thin one of the shining eye."

They were clamouring for the thin one of the shining eye. That was unmistakable.

"Dance 'em a cakewalk," suggested Jackson.

"Sing 'em a song, an' give 'em measles," said Tooter.

Crooks winked.

"Some folks was asses," he growled, "and ought to be fed on thistles. I shall shoot for 'em. Why not?"

The excitement was great when the cook walked up to the wall of the pyramid with hammer, nails, string, and empty bottles. In the neck of each bottle he put a piece of wax candle. Then, waving the people back, he loaded his rifle.

"Don't miss more than eleven out of the dozen, cook!" shouted Lance.

Crooks snorted, and walked away through the line of spears, counting his steps as he went. Morgan turned the searchlight on the targets.

"How far is der idiot going?" said the professor. "Shaf! Der man's gannod hit it from dere!"

Teddy knew better. A shot rang out, but before they heard the report, one of the bottles was a bottle no longer, but a cloud of falling atoms of glass, mixed with brickdust.

Shot followed shot, until only the central bottle remained. A splinter of flying glass set it swinging.

"Missed, by Jove!" cried Fordham.

Crooks had missed, but another bullet followed so closely, and sent the bottle to chips, that none of the natives knew it. The spears clashed together enthusiastically. Hercules and the king examined the wall. The deep dents in the bricks could not fail to give them an idea of the terrible power of the unknown weapon. Crooks sauntered back, very satisfied with himself.

"Bed-time, cook!" shouted Teddy. "Come aboard!"

That night, for the first time since the breakdown, the aeroplane did not use her pinions. She lay in the heart of the City of Triangles, with only one light burning. Now and again the light flickered on a spear as a dusky sentinel moved round her. That night, too, after a long silence, Jackson's mouth-organ sounded again, as Messrs. Tooter, Jackson, and Crooks entertained royalty in the galley with bread and cheese, coffee and music.

Learning a Language Under Difficulties.

Von Haugel was a busy man for some time. It became known that the "Fat One" longed for gifts of beasts, birds, plants, and fishes. The good-natured savages brought such gifts in shoals. Lance struck and put his foot down when a young plesiosaurus, about eleven feet long and very much alive, was delivered. It had been taken in a fishing-net, and arrived well-roped up. They had to draw the line somewhere, and much to the professor's grief, for he wanted to keep it and study its habits, Mr. Crooks had an interview with the snake-necked saurian, and the saurian died.

They fed like princes, for provisions were showered upon them. The succulent tops of a species of moss-tree made an excellent vegetable when Crooks had cooked it. A fox-like animal, but somewhat larger than a full-grown fox, sent the professor into raptures. He pronounced it to be an eohippus, the ancestor of the horse. Then he grew mournful again, for the eohippus ought not to have lived. It was ages before its time.

Mr. Tooter shook his head, and fetched Jackson to where the animal hung.

"Josh!" he said. "He wants a strait-weskit. He says that's a boss!"

"Then he's an ass, and not 'alf he ain't!" said the little man. "That a boss! He'll be chasin' hisself rahnd a loonatic asylum afore long, an' no error. What d'yer fink? He said, Jackson, you are a loomar, but ein leedle loomar!"

"Blackbirds! Was 'e swearin'?"

"Dunno! I pretty near told him 'e was annuvver; but 'e knocked der breff out of me when 'e chipped in and said,

"Und you haf two gasvars," or gasjars, I dunno which. He must be goin' orf it, straight 'e must. Pr'aps it's missing his lager beer and German sossidge wots hacting on his brain!"

Certainly, the professor was acting in a peculiar way. He would walk up to something, place his finger upon it, and another upon his forehead, and utter some terrible exclamation. Tooter was so concerned that he went to Teddy about it. Teddy listened, removed his pipe, and became very grave.

"By thunder," he said, after a pause, "this is mighty bad, Willie—terrible bad! Can you understand it, cook?"

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DON'T MISS "FOES OF THE FOURTH!" The Splendid, Long, Complete School Story appearing in this week's number of the

"S-sh!" muttered Tooter. "Watch him now."

They peered through the gloom. Deep in thought, Von Haugel sauntered across the deck. He had a hunting-knife in his hand, which he had taken absent-mindedly for his spectacle case. He took the knife, and tried to place it on his nose.

"Haw, haw!" giggled the cook.

The great man, luckily for himself, discovered his error without slicing his nose. He smiled. Then, holding the knife before him, he clutched his brow and stood still. After that he began to dance about, and to utter strange grunts and angry snorts.

Suddenly the great man stopped dancing. He had sighted a native. The man was approaching, carrying a closely woven reed basket on his head.

"Pouf! Shouf!" roared Von Haugel. "I shall haf it. Where are der prains of me? Dolt! Fool! Come here mit you. Ach, pe quick, teufel of ein slowcoach!"

Brandishing the knife, the professor bolted down the ladder straight for the man.

"He'll murder him!" gasped Tooter.

By accident, Morgan and Crooks got in Tooter's way. The professor had the horrified man by the shoulder, and was waving the knife in a hideously bloodthirsty way, and yelling in German, English, Dutch, French, Latin, and Greek. The native shrieked out one word, shot the basket off his head, and ran.

The basket turned over in the air, and shot its contents—rice flour—over Von Haugel. Extinguished by the basket, and smothered in white, Von Haugel took a seat; but his fat legs were kicking triumphantly, and his voice, though somewhat muffled and choked, was equally triumphant as he rose like a corpulent white ghost and puffed out:

"Shaf! I haf it. Ja, ja! He did me tell. Ach, I shall remember it always yet!"

"Blackbirds, what have you got? What did he tell you, sir?" asked Tooter.

"Der native name for ein knife, which I did forget, Tooter!" panted the professor. "I learn der language. Der name is—is—Himmel, I haf forgotten! Come back, dog! Come back, villain! I haf forgot!"

And then, while Crooks and Teddy Morgan howled, the floury professor darted down the narrow street in pursuit of the native. The man had halted, but when he saw Von Haugel in motion, he fled into the nearest hut and shut the door.

"Loomar—man—I do you want?" snorted the professor, knocking at the door.

A naked arm, holding a spear, came through the hole that did duty for a window, and Von Haugel jumped back with great alacrity when he discovered he was almost smelling the business end of a particularly sharp weapon.

The professor shook his fist, and finding that he had come to the wrong place to learn a language, he withdrew to get rid of the flour.

Lance and Maurice discovered that the game was procured from the lower slopes, where the ground was too hard to suit the great lizards. The dog-apes occasionally hunted there. Though too heavy to be tree-climbers, the great brutes haunted the vast forests. They made periodical attacks on the city in small numbers, and often had deadly battles among themselves.

"It seems," said Maurice, "that we pretty well saved the place from being wiped out."

"Shaf, dot is so," answered the professor. "Der apes, no doubt, met to fight mit each oder, and then they change their minds and gombine to take the town. I get dot from Hercules. He nefer so many before did see. It is suplime. It is vunderful der intelligence of der two big giant men. Ach, it is not many vords I yet know, but der are so quick, dot I can get der idea always."

"Have you tried to ask about a passage through the mountains, dad?"

"Hey, but I fail in dot, dear lad of mine; but I try again. Haf you many photographs take?"

"Dozens," answered Lance. "We're going finely. We shall have plenty of trophies and specimens to take back. These are funny people. They don't stand round and gape at all."

"Der king haf ordered them not," smiled the professor.

"That's thoughtful of him," said Maurice, yawning.

"Who says a cup of tea? Crooks, you lazy loafer, tea!"

The cook brought it on deck. They missed the condensed milk and butter, as such dainties were unknown in the City of Triangles. There were neither cows, nor goats, nor any beasts of burden; but there were plenty of wolf-like dogs.

In the evening, Big Ben, resplendent in his leather robes, paid them a visit.

(To be continued.)



THE BAND OF STEEL!

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**"THE RED
GRANGE
MYSTERY."**

CHAPTER 1.

Carson Gray's Visit—The House at Wapping—A Prisoner!

"VISITOR to see you, sir!" Tim Curtis, Frank Kingston's smart boy assistant, made the announcement. When not on duty—as Tim called it—he served his master as page. Kingston looked round languidly. He was sitting in an easy-chair, glancing over the evening paper.

"Well, Tim, did you get his card?"

"No, sir; it's Mr. Gray."

"By Jove! Carson Gray!" exclaimed Kingston flinging the paper aside, and rising to his feet. "Ah, my dear Gray," he added heartily, "this is a surprise!"

Carson Gray, the well-known detective, and Kingston's firmest friend, had at that moment entered, and Kingston shook him warmly by the hand. The pair had not met for several weeks, both, as a matter of fact, having been too busy. Gray had known Kingston before the latter became a detective; Gray, in fact, had induced Kingston to place his wonderful powers at the disposal of the community.

"I want you to help me in a capture, Kingston," said Gray, when they were seated.

"To-night? Immediately?"

"Oh, no! Not until half-past eleven or twelve."

"Good!" murmured Frank Kingston. "Then it won't interfere with my arrangements. I've promised to take Dolores to Whitney's to see a new play."

"When you arrive home will suit me," declared Carson Gray. "It's just seven now, so I'll give you a brief outline of what I've got on hand—there's not time for full details. Have you ever heard of four scoundrels who call themselves the Band of Steel?"

"Never."

"Well, they exist, and they've made themselves conspicuously lately. I don't suppose you've heard of them because they're more in the police line. I've managed to get on their scent at last. How, I'll explain

later. And I know for a fact that the four are going to meet to-night at a house in the Wapping district."

"Why not raid the place with a posse of police?"

"I could do so," replied Carson Gray; "but if I did I should lose my wager."

"Wager?" asked Kingston curiously.

"Exactly. Three weeks ago that pompous brute, Inspector Brandon, of the Yard, scoffed in a most insulting manner when I told him I could run the Band of Steel to earth without police assistance. I thereupon wagered that I'd have them within a month—and, Kingston, I'm going to prove my words true, if you'll lend me a hand."

"Both hands, my dear fellow, if you like!" murmured Kingston.

"Thanks!" smiled Gray. "Now, my information is this: The quartette of villains are to meet some sharper from America at twelve o'clock to-night, with a view to carrying out some new scheme. I suggest we arrive at the place at about half-past eleven, accompanied by Tim and Fraser, and, between the lot of us, it would be a simple matter to down the whole four. You, yourself, are as good as three men!"

Frank Kingston smiled.

"No, no, Gray, hardly that!" he protested. "Still, I think we could manage it all right. I'll rush home immediately the play's over—it doesn't run late, I know—and meet you here. I shall enjoy the adventure."

"Good!" cried Carson Gray. "The knowledge that you'll be with me, Kingston, gives me added confidence. But while you're enjoying yourself with Miss O'Brien I shall be over at Wapping, doing my best to reconnoitre the position, as it were. Then, when we go altogether, I shall know exactly where to lead you."

"Not a bad idea. Suppose you take Tim with you?"

"Thanks, I will, if you can spare him. I know he's a smart youngster."

So, ten minutes later, Carson Gray left No. 100, Charing Cross, accompanied by Tim Curtis, who, needless to say, was delighted to go with Gray on the adventure. They took the Underground to Wapping, and then walked. Overhead the

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sky was somewhat overcast, and a cool wind whistled round the riverside wharves and warehouses. Gray had effected a slight disguise, and Tim was attired in ragged clothing.

"We don't want to attract attention," Gray had said.

The streets were practically deserted in places, though, where the glaring lights of a public-house illuminated the roadway, loungers and grimy urchins were to be seen. At last Carson Gray turned down a narrow street, ill-lighted, which ended in nothing but a wharf.

"The house is in the next street, Tim!" explained the detective, "but the back yard wall is in this. I intend getting into that back yard."

"Ain't it too risky, sir?"

"I admit it is risky, my boy, but these things can't be done without a certain amount of risk. Here we are," added Gray, coming to a halt below a fairly high wall. "You remain here for five minutes. By the end of that time I'll rejoin you."

"Right you are, Mr. Gray."

After a glance up and down the dingy street to make sure that his movements were not being observed, Carson Gray vaulted lightly to the top of the wall. For a moment he sat astride, and a look of anticipation entered his eyes as he saw a lighted window, with the blind only three-parts lowered.

"I'm in luck!" he told himself.

And he dropped noiselessly into the yard. He crept forward, meaning to find out, if possible, which room the scoundrels were in. Then, when he and Kingston made their raid, they would make make no mistake. There would be no chance of the Band of Steel escaping. In all probability the four were in the room with the lighted window. But it was not certain, and Gray wanted to make certain.

So he stole forward without making a sound. Then, with startling suddenness, two dark forms sprang upon him. Gray was taken utterly by surprise, and had no time to defend himself from the attack. In that first second he realised that two of the band had been out in the yard for some reason of their own, and had seen him entering. He was quite sure they had not been on their guard. What infernal luck!

Gray had just time to let a low cry of surprised anger escape his lips, then he was seized and overpowered, one of the men giving him a crack on the head that caused everything to whirl round, and then become blank.

When he came to himself he looked round him for a few minutes in dazed surprise. Then remembrance flooded to his aching head, and his mind became clear. And with its clearance, Gray felt himself becoming intensely angry. What a fool he had been to allow himself to be captured! Everything was spoiled now!

"Feeling good?" a sneering voice inquired.

Carson Gray looked round him. He was lying full length on the floor of a well-lighted room, bound hand and foot, and gagged. In addition, his disguise had been removed, and he was in his shirt-sleeves. The room contained three men, two of whom were coolly playing cards near the fire. The other was going through the pockets of Gray's coat. It was this man who made the remark, although, of course, his victim could not answer.

"Has he come round, Bob?" asked one of the other men, turning.

"Yes, sooner than I expected. Well, Mr. Carson Gray," he added, with a grin, "it was an unlucky time for you to pay us a call, though it was very obliging of you to give yourself into our hands. You see, we ripped your disguise off in a minute."

Gray looked at the man quite coolly.

"Oh, you can brazen it out all you like, but it won't make any difference; you've had your last look at daylight. What a silly thing it was to come here by yourself, when you knew—"

Carson Gray didn't hear any more, for he had suddenly remembered that he had left Tim Curtis outside. Of course, Tim would know that something had gone wrong, and would rush off for help. And the "Band of Steel" thought that Gray had paid this visit unaccompanied!

"Why not shove him out of the way straight off?" growled a short, stout man, with a heavy moustache. "We don't want him here."

The man addressed as Bob turned.

"We don't want him, certainly," he agreed; "but we'd better wait till the boss comes in. He'd be pleased to meet Mr. Gray, I'm sure, and he won't be more than half an hour."

Carson Gray caught his breath in. Half an hour! That would be ample time for Tim to rush back for help. The detective's heart beat faster, and he closed his eyes, lest the triumphant light in them should betray him.

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CHAPTER 2.

Tim Gets a Move on Him—The Old Warehouse—In the Cellars.

"H, crumbs, that's done it proper!"

Tim Curtis uttered the words in a tone of great consternation. He was hanging on to the back wall by his hands, and he could just see over into the yard. The low cry Carson Gray had uttered had been quite sufficient to excite the boy's suspicions, and he had lost no time in making sure. And when he had caught hold of the wall-top and drawn himself up, it was just in time to see Carson Gray's unconscious form being carried swiftly into the house.

Tim dropped to the pavement.

"What the dickens can I do?" he asked himself anxiously. "Mr. Gray's been an' absolutely done it! He's let himself be copped, an' those murderous chaps might decide to kill him. Crikey, what a go!"

Tim wasn't long in coming to a decision. He realised that he, alone, could do nothing, so he straightway hurried off to the station, and was soon being swiftly carried Westwards. When he arrived at No. 100, Charing Cross, he found that Fraser was out, for Kingston had told him he would not be wanted until eleven. Tim went straight to the telephone and rang up the Whitney Theatre.

"Please tell Mr. Frank Kingston that I want to speak to him," requested Tim eagerly. "He's in the stalls, I think, with a lady—"

"That's right!" came the voice of the box-office clerk. "He wrote for the seats, so I know which numbers they are. I'll tell him you want him. What name shall I say?"

"Curtis," replied Tim.

"Hallo, Tim, what's the trouble?" inquired Frank Kingston's voice a few moments later over the wires.

"Trouble enough, sir," said Tim quickly. "Mr. Gray's been an' done it for himself."

"Eh? What's that, young 'un?"

"Mr. Gray an' I went to Wapping, sir, an' he's got copped—"

"That's enough, my lad! Where are you speaking from?"

"Home, sir."

"Right!" came Kingston's brisk tones. "I'll be with you in five minutes, Tim!"

Tim hung up the receiver, and waited eagerly for his master. Kingston strode into the consulting-room after the elapse of five minutes, and told Tim to let him know what had occurred. Tim did so in a few sentences, and Kingston nodded.

"Gray couldn't foresee that would happen," he exclaimed. "Looks rather bad, Tim. Well, all we can do is to go to his rescue."

"Won't you raid the place with police, sir?"

"That might hasten poor Gray's end," replied Kingston thoughtfully. "Even if the scoundrels were captured, they might succeed in killing their victim first. No, young 'un, we must do this job ourselves."

A second time Tim took the Underground to Wapping, and on arrival he hurried his master to the narrow side street. But Kingston seemed to take no interest in the house which contained the "Band of Steel." Instead, he was thoughtfully gazing at a large warehouse which adjoined, and apparently making some deductions.

"Yes, Tim, that will be our plan of procedure," he murmured.

"Which will, sir?"

"This, my lad!" answered his master; and Kingston led the way round a corner to the front of the large warehouse. It was an old, disused building, and its windows were grimy and shattered. In two minutes Kingston had broken open a small door, and he and Tim entered. Nobody had seen them, although people were constantly passing to and fro. Had they been observed, people would have wondered what their business was there, for Tim was in rags, while Kingston's attire was evening-dress, with an overcoat thrown over.

"Now, Tim, I don't know whether you observed it, but the adjoining house was at one time a part of this building."

"I could see that, sir."

"Perhaps it was made into a dwelling house ten or twenty years ago," went on Kingston. "But that doesn't alter the fact that the two were, at one time, one. Therefore it is probable that we can walk right under the house of the 'Band of Steel,' if we explore the cellars."

"Crikey!" gasped Tim excitedly. "I never thought of that!"

Kingston led the way with an electric torch, and it did not take him long to find the way to the cellars. Down a flight of dank and musty stone steps they went, and found themselves under the huge warehouse. The light showed up great stone pillars, and rats by the score scampered before

them with shrill squeals. Otherwise everything was as silent as the grave.

"Jummy, what a hole!" murmured Tim, with a shiver. His master led the way with unerring sense of direction. The cellars were of large dimensions, and the remains of boxes and barrels lay about by the score. Then, suddenly, Kingston came to a halt. For a second he stood listening, then a smile crossed his lips—a grim smile.

"I was right, Tim—I was right!" he exclaimed softly.

"What do you mean, sir? I can't hear nothing!"

"But I did just now, youngster. Follow me."

Tim was all excitement now, and he eagerly followed Kingston. He knew his master possessed marvellous hearing powers, and it almost awed the boy. They walked towards the left for perhaps ten yards, then the flooring became of huge stone slabs instead of bricks. Kingston crept forward on tiptoe, for the sound of voices and laughter was now quite distinct. It was coming from above, and Kingston flashed his light there. It revealed the cobwebby floorboards of a room—the room in which Carson Gray lay a prisoner.

"My word, if this don't beat everything!" whispered Tim.

Yet there was nothing wonderful about it, really. As Kingston had remarked, the house had been at one time part of the old warehouse, and it was only natural that the cellars should run uninterruptedly under both. But it was owing to Frank Kingston's wonderful instinctive sense of direction that he and Tim now stood almost directly under Carson Gray.

They stood there breathlessly.

"Extremely foolish thing to do, Gray!" were the first words Kingston caught. "You simply committed suicide! Well, boys, we've said about enough, I should think. Suppose we take him down right away?"

The voice was a jeering one, which grated on Kingston's ears. Evidently the speaker had just concluded a long speech, probably telling Gray exactly what sort of death he had to die.

"Need a light, sha'n't we, boss?" asked another voice.

"Yes; there's a lantern in the passage."

Frank Kingston stepped forward quickly and gazed about him. His light flashed on to a flight of wooden steps, and then he hurried back twenty yards and took his stand behind a great stone pillar.

"We came at exactly the right second, Tim," he whispered calmly. "They are coming down here with Mr. Gray."

"Down here?" gasped Tim.

"Yes. It was providential our arriving that moment—Sh-sh-h!"

A door had just creaked open, and a gleam of yellow light shot into the cellar.

CHAPTER 3.

A Terrible Sentence—The Fight—And Its Result.

"THAT'LL do, boys!—Shove him down there!"

"Right you are, boss!"

The three men who had carried the bound form of Carson Gray down into the cellars dropped him unceremoniously on to the hard stone floor. Another man, the leader of the band, stood by with a lantern. He was a big man, with a thick moustache. Kingston and Tim crouched behind the pillar as quiet as mice, not fifteen yards from the spot where the scoundrels were standing.

Carson Gray lay pale and still, but his eyes were flashing with angry contempt. The gag prevented him saying anything.

"We've wanted to stop your tricks for a long time, Gray," sneered the leader, "and now, to save us trouble, you've handed yourself over to us, which was really very kind and considerate of you! Up with the stone, boys!"

"Right you are, Ted!"

The others, chuckling, swung back a huge flagstone, revealing a dark and ominous cavity. Flash Ted—as the leader was called—stepped forward, and directed the gleam of his lantern into the black hole.

"There is only a drop of six feet," he explained, looking at Carson Gray, "and it's a stone apartment with a grating up one corner. At present you'll find it perfectly dry, but in an hour or two's time, when the tide rises in the Thames, the water will make it somewhat damp, I'm afraid. It only rises about five feet six."

The utter callousness with which the man spoke was amazing. True, two of the others were a little pale and shaky, but they didn't think of disputing the sentence passed on Carson Gray by their leader. Gray didn't move a muscle, and Kingston felt very proud of his friend and rival.

"That's enough, Ted," said one of the men uneasily. "Bung him in, an' get the job over. It's gettin' on my nerves!"

"Go ahead, then!" said Flash Ted coolly.

Quickly Carson Gray was lifted and lowered into the dark cavity. The big man flashed the light downwards.

"Good-evening!" he sneered.

The slab was dropped into place, and two minutes later the cellars were again silent and deserted. Kingston kept hold of Tim's shoulder until another full minute had elapsed, and then he stepped forward.

"The villains!" he muttered angrily.

"Not half, sir!" added Tim indignantly. "They're worse than villains!"

"Come along; we will soon release Mr. Gray."

Again the flagstone was lifted, and Frank Kingston dropped into the dank and chill chamber. In a moment Gray's bonds were ripped off, and the cruel gag removed. The rescued man staggered to his feet in amazement.

"Great Scott, Kingston!" he gasped. "I'd given up hope!"

"Nonsense! You knew Tim was at liberty," replied Kingston lightly. "We'll carry out your programme after all, Gray, if you feel up to it."

"If I feel up to it!" echoed Gray, his anger rising again. "I'd like to fight the whole lot single-handed! Ted Hanley, the leader, is the worst of the bunch. But I haven't thanked you, old man, for—"

"No time for that!" interjected Kingston briskly. "Up you get!"

He assisted Carson Gray up through the aperture, then quickly followed himself. Tim was dancing about excitedly, but he calmed down when Kingston and Gray stepped lightly towards the wooden steps. He knew they meant business, and the youngster, too, made up his mind to lend a hand.

Silently they mounted the steps, and passing through a doorway, found themselves in a cold passage. At the end of it a light could be seen gleaming from beneath a doorway. Kingston's plan was to surprise the "Band of Steel" by suddenly bursting in and simply knocking the scoundrels out of time. The famous detective was aware of his own fighting powers, and knew such a plan could be carried out.

But something happened which upset everything. The door suddenly opened, and the short, stout man came up the passage. He came face to face with Carson Gray, and let out a scream of terror and surprise. Next moment Gray was struggling with him desperately.

"I can manage him, Kingston!" panted Gray.

"Right!" And Kingston, without a second's thought, dashed into the lighted room. It contained Flash Ted and the other two men, and they were on their feet, starting towards the door. Frank Kingston dashed in, and made straight for the leader.

At the same moment, outside, Carson Gray had succeeded in landing a blow on the stout man's stomach which effectually placed him out of the fight. To make assurance doubly sure, Tim sat himself heavily on the winded man.

Gray ran into the room, and took the situation in at a glance. Frank Kingston was struggling with Flash Jim, who seemed to suddenly possess abnormal strength. One of the others was behind Kingston, pulling a deadly-looking life-preserver from his pocket. The remaining member of the band stood with back to the door, grasping a poker. Things would have gone hard with Kingston but for Gray's interference.

Out shot his fist, and the man with the poker fell like a pole-axed bull. Quick as lightning Carson Gray seized the poker, and slung it with all his strength across the room. It caught the other scoundrel on the forehead, broadside, as he was in the act of swinging his life-preserver down upon Kingston's head.

He staggered back with a groan, and fell.

After that the fight was tame. Kingston had Flash Jim on his back, and Gray was bending over the other fallen man. The former looked up with a smile.

"Blow your whistle, my dear fellow!" he exclaimed coolly. "It was a bit fast while it lasted, but you've won your wager!"

"By Jove, yes!"

Gray blew his whistle shrilly, and five minutes later the four villains calling themselves the "Band of Steel" were in the hands of the police, the man who had received the poker on his head having to be taken away on the ambulance. He wasn't badly hurt, but, as Gray said, he had something to remember the fight by.

And as the two detectives and Tim whizzed westwards in a taxi Frank Kingston smiled slightly.

"I reckon we're quits now, Gray," he murmured.

"Quits?"

"Exactly. I saved you from drowning in that hole under the cellar, but you undoubtedly prevented my brains—what little I have—from being knocked out by that fellow with a life-preserver."

And Frank Kingston and Carson Gray shook hands.

THE END.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE —



For Next Thursday.

"THE SHADOW OF SHAME!"

By Martin Clifford,

is our next week's title, round which the author has written a really powerful and stirring story of public school life. The hero is Dick Brooke, the hard-working and plucky lad who has before won the admiration of his schoolfellows by the grand fight he is making to keep his end up, while Tom Merry & Co., as usual, play a not unimportant part. Readers of all ages will enjoy

"THE SHADOW OF SHAME!"

and my chums should make a point of ordering next week's GEM Library IN ADVANCE.

Replies in Brief.

Mrs. Lillian C. (Dublin).—I feel that I must really write and thank you for the very nice letters and postcards which I receive from you from time to time. It is indeed a pleasure to me to receive this constant proof of the kindly interest you take in the two little papers under my control.

F. S. (Lymington), and Others.—As I have repeated many times before, I cannot at present issue any bound volumes of THE GEM or "The Magnet," or undertake to bind any numbers of the papers which readers may already possess. The best way of having your GEMS or "Magnets" bound is to take them to your local bookseller, stationer, or railway bookstall man, any of whom will bind your books up for you at prices ranging from one shilling upwards, according to the quality of the binding.

Christopher G. B. (Liverpool).—Thanks for your letter and suggestion, which latter, however, I hardly feel inclined to ask my readers to vote upon at present.

E. A. (Norwich).—Some useful hints on photography were published on this page some weeks back. Messrs. Kodak, Limited, of 57, Clerkenwell Road, London, will willingly supply you with full directions for using your No. 2 Brownie. How is it you did not obtain a book of instructions with the camera?

George E. D. (South Tottenham).—Thank you for your letter and suggestion. I have had the latter under consideration before, but I am afraid adequate space in which to carry it out could not be allowed without crowding out a great deal of interesting reading matter.

A Work of Art.

The latest catalogue of the Quadrant Cycle Company, of Coventry, which we have just received, is a veritable work of art, and contains a budget of information about the "Aristocrat of Cycles," proving, incidentally, how fully the nickname is deserved when applied to the famous Quadrants. The catalogue also explains how these excellent, reliable machines may be obtained direct from the factory upon the easiest of easy payment terms, and we advise all our readers who are interested in cycling to apply for one of the 1912 Quadrant lists, which will be sent free to all readers of THE GEM Library on application.

Back Numbers Offered and Wanted.

E. Mackie, Post Office, Inverurie, wishes to obtain No. 10, old series, of THE GEM. Mark "To be left until called for."

G. Alexander, 152, Holland Street, Glasgow, W., has 105 copies of THE GEM and "The Magnet" to dispose of at half price.

W. Hyder, 3, Pemberton Road, Ashford, Kent, wishes to dispose of one hundred back numbers of THE GEM (no half-penny issues).

J. Goldberg, of 54, Lovaine Place, Newcastle-on-Tyne, wishes to dispose of GEMS Nos. 144 to 204.

H. Navier, 60, West Parade, Hull, Yorks, wishes to obtain the first twelve numbers of the halfpenny series of THE GEM and "Magnet." Will pay half price.

The Misses Helena Oxnard-Smith and Helena Jagger would be grateful if any fellow-readers would let them have any numbers of "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library dealing with the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. Address: "Vedra," Gordon Road, Chatswood, Sydney, Australia.

G. Simmers, Mossville, Kemnay, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, has back numbers of THE GEM, "The Magnet," and "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library for sale at half price, with postage.

S. A. Wasdell, of 53, High Street, Erdington, Birmingham, wishes to obtain back numbers of THE GEM or "The Magnet" up to No. 100.

G. F. Brock, 15, Worsley Grove, Levenshulme, Manchester, wishes to obtain 30 back numbers of THE GEM for one shilling.

C. Sherriff, of 72, Embankment Road, Plymouth, Devon, would like to buy some back numbers of "The Magnet."

Road Rules for Cyclists.

Most cyclists are more or less familiar with the ordinary rules of the road, but it is this very familiarity which breeds contempt, as witness the crop of cycling accidents which occur every season, many of which could be avoided were the parties concerned more careful to adhere to the regulations which have been drawn up for their safety.

Perhaps the law that is most often broken is one that is, or should be, the best known—that is the law regarding riding without a light after dusk. When cycling it is not always easy to tell the right time to light up unless a lighting-up-time calendar is carried, a precaution which may save a heavy fine. It is a mistake to go for a ride without a lamp, as, no matter what time you intend to get home, there is always a great chance of something happening on the way to prevent it. It is rather awkward to be stranded twenty miles from home after dark, and without a lamp or any prospects of getting one.

One thing to study carefully is the use of your bell. The law is that a warning shall be given to the public and to the drivers of vehicles when the cyclist is approaching from behind. There can be too much of a good thing, however, and when the cyclist is perpetually ringing his bell it irritates the public, and causes uncomplimentary remarks—and sometimes other things—to be hurled at him. The bell, then, is to be used as a warning, and should not be made a public nuisance.

It is hardly necessary to mention that the left-hand side of the road is the correct side on which to travel—at least, in England. The wheelman is not apt to forget this except when he is in a hurry, when serious accidents sometimes occur. A point that often seems to be neglected is that when stopping the right hand should be raised, so as to warn any vehicles approaching from behind, in order that they may pull up in time to avoid an accident.

Riding on a public footpath is, of course, forbidden, as also is wheeling a machine on the pathway. This latter, however, is not taken much note of by the police except in busy thoroughfares.

With regard to passing other vehicles going in the same direction, the correct side to pass them is, of course, on the offside—i.e., the right-hand side. It is always a danger to try and pass on the inside (left). It is, however, legal to pass a tramcar going in the same direction on the left-hand side.

A fruitful cause of accidents is the foolhardy habit of riding behind a motor. It is almost impossible for the cyclist to stop himself crashing into the car if the brakes of the latter are suddenly applied.

To escape accidents during the cycling season it is necessary to pay due regard to the rules and regulations of the road, and to act with consideration to all other road users.

THE EDITOR.