

Next Thursday's
Splendid School Tale:

"THE SCHOOLBOY MUTINEERS!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.
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THE - - SHADOW OF SHAME.

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School Tale of Tom Merry
at St. Jim's.

BY - -
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. Good Dog!

"YOW! Help!"
Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, of the Shell, were lounging in the old gateway of St. Jim's talking cricket, when that loud yell came ringing across the road.
"Yow-ow! Help!"
"That's Levison of the Fourth!" growled Monty Lowther.
"Let him yell. I dare say he's only trying to pull our giddy leg."

Tom Merry looked out into the road. The long white road ran past the walls of the school to Rylcombe, and on the other side were the deep woods, separated from the road by a paling and a wide ditch. Some distance from the gates of St. Jim's a plank crossed the ditch, giving access to a foot-path through the wood. It was from that direction that the yell for help had come.

"Oh! Help! Rescue, St. Jim's!"

"Better go, I think," said Tom Merry. "If he's pulling our leg, we'll jolly well bump him. But it sounds as if he's in trouble."

Monty Lowther, who was leaning against the old stone arch, with his hands in his pockets, did not trouble to move.
"If he's in trouble, he's got himself into it," he said.

"Let the cad alone!"
Tom Merry hesitated.

Lowther was quite right; Levison, the cad of the Fourth, was frequently enough in trouble, and he had his own crooked ways to thank for it. But as Tom Merry hesitated, there came a fresh yell from the wood.

"Help!"

"I'll go," said Tom Merry. "After all, he's a St. Jim's chap, and it may be the Grammarians bumping him."

"Serve him right if they are!" said Monty Lowther lazily.

Tom Merry ran out into the road. Manners and Lowther detached themselves from the stone arch and their hands from their pockets, and grunted, and followed him. They did not like Levison of the Fourth, and he might have shouted himself hoarse without inducing them to take the trouble to see what was the matter. But as their chum went, they grumbled and went, too.

Tom Merry ran down the dusty road to where the plank crossed the wide ditch, and ran across it into the wood.

The deep growl of a dog struck his ears as he came into the trees. It was followed by a frenzied yell from Levison of the Fourth.

"Help, help, help!"

"My hat!" muttered Tom Merry. "There must be something wrong! It's most likely his own fault, but—"

He dashed up the footpath. He knew that one of Levison's favourite amusements was tormenting animals; and Herries, of the Fourth, had lately inflicted a most terrific licking upon Levison for worrying his bulldog Towser. The deep growl was repeated, and it guided Tom Merry to the spot.

He turned from the footpath, and burst into a glade through the thickets. A strange scene burst upon his view.

Levison of the Fourth lay upon his back in the grass, his face white with terror. A huge dog was standing over him, and at every movement Levison made the great animal opened his jaws and showed his teeth and growled. He was

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evidently guarding Levison, and there was no escape for the cad of the Fourth, who was in fearful terror of feeling the white sharp teeth close upon him at every moment.

A lad of about Tom Merry's age, in ragged garments, with a ragged cap on the back of his head, sat upon a knoll, looking on at the scene with a grin. The boy was evidently a tramp. A bundle tied in a coloured handkerchief lay at his feet, with a stick, and he was eating bread and cheese as he sat, with a pocket-knife.

"Guard 'im, Buster!" said this youth cheerfully. "Don't let 'im get away! That's right! If he gets up, nip 'im!"

Buster growled, as if to show that he understood.

Tom Merry burst into the glade, and the youth with the bread and cheese started, and looked at him warily.

"My eye! 'Ere's another of 'em!" he ejaculated.

Tom Merry halted. There was something about the open and frank face of the tramp that he liked, and he knew enough of Levison to know that the St. Jim's fellow was very likely the one in fault. The hero of the bread-and-cheese picked up his stick, and laid it closer beside him, as if he had an idea that it might be wanted, and Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"What's the row here?" he exclaimed.

"There ain't any row, 'cept wot your friend's making," said the youth cheerfully. "I'm all right."

"He's not my friend," said Tom Merry, "but he belongs to our school."

"Well, I shouldn't think much of you if he was your friend," said the youth. "I wouldn't own a pal like that—no fear!"

"Help!" yelled Levison. "Don't stand talking to that tramping cad, Tom Merry. Get this beast away!"

"That won't be so jolly easy," remarked the owner of Buster. "That dog will bite if I give 'im the word. You'd better let 'im alone."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'm not afraid of him," he said, "and I don't think he would bite me, either. What have you been doing, Levison? Tormenting dogs again, as you did when Herries walloped you last time?"

"No, I haven't!" yelled Levison. "Get this beast away! He'll have his teeth in me in a minute! Call Taggles if you're afraid, or some of the fellows."

Gr-r-r-r-r!

Buster growled fiercely as Levison moved, and the cad of the Fourth subsided into the grass again, shivering with terror.

"Quite a merry scene!" said Monty Lowther, as he came through the thicket with Manners. "Two to one that you began the trouble, Levison—and you certainly seem to have bitten off more than you can chew!"

"Ow! Help!"

"Who are you, my cheerful young friend?" went on Monty Lowther, looking curiously at the stranger, who was eating his bread-and-cheese unconcernedly.

"I'm Harthur," he said.

"Oh, you're Arthur, are you?" grinned Monty Lowther. "Anything else?"

"No, jest Harthur. I'm lookin' for work," explained the youth, with one cheek bulging out with cheese as he talked. "I'm on tramp, lookin' for a job. They told me over at Wayland that there was work round 'ere, and I'm lookin' for it. I was sitting down 'ere—me and Buster—to 'ave my dinner, when this feller comes and horders me holf. So I puts him on the floor, and sets Buster to guard 'im."

And Harthur impaled a fresh lump of cheese upon the end of his pocket-knife, and transferred it to his mouth.

The Terrible Three burst into a roar.

"You've got what you asked for, Levison," said Monty Lowther. "What did you order him off for? This wood is free to everybody."

"I told him we don't want any dirty tramps round here," said Levison furiously. "If you had any decency you'd kick him out of the place."

"I don't see why we should interfere with a chap who's done no harm," said Tom Merry. "You tried to bully him because he's down on his luck, I suppose, and you've got what you asked for, and serve you jolly well right!"

"Ear, ear!" said Harthur.

"Will you take this beastly dog away?" yelled Levison.

"Certainly not," replied Tom Merry promptly. "I don't see that we're called upon to interfere. You were a rotten cad to order this chap away, when he has as much right here as you have. You can stick it out now."

"You—you coward!"

"Oh, shut up! Tell the chap you're sorry you acted like a cad and a rotter, and perhaps he'll let you off."

"Ready and willin'," said Harthur.

"I won't!" yelled Levison. "And I'll have him locked

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up! He's a dangerous character, and this dog is a dangerous beast! I'll—I'll——"

The sound of a bell came faintly from the direction of the school.

"Hallo," exclaimed Monty Lowther, "there goes the tinkler for afternoon lessons. Come on—we shall get lined."

"Don't leave me here!" shrieked Levison. "Get this dog away!"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"Help! You rotters! Don't leave me here! I tell you——"

"Buster!"

Harthur whistled, and called the dog, and the animal trotted over to him. Levison rose to his feet. He shook his fist savagely at the boy tramp.

"I'll make you pay for this!" he snarled. "I'll have you arrested, you vagrant! I'll have you——"

"You'll 'ave Buster arter you if you don't clear!" said Harthur cheerfully.

And Levison took the hint, and cleared. The Terrible Three followed him, laughing, leaving Arthur to finish his lunch in the wood. At the gates of St. Jim's Levison paused to cast a bitter look at the chums of the Shell.

"You—you rotters!" he muttered. "You couldn't stand by me to give that cad a licking. You were afraid of the dog, I suppose——"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry. "We wouldn't stand by you, or anybody else, to bully a chap, whatever he happened to be! It would have served you right if he'd licked you with that cudgel; he could have done it easily enough. You'd better grow a little more pluck before you start in business as a bully. Go and eat coke!"

And the Terrible Three rushed off to the Shell Form-room, and got in just in time. Levison, with a scowling face, went to the Fourth Form-room, dusty as he was, but he was not so quick as the Terrible Three, and he was late for class.

CHAPTER 2.

Trouble in the Fourth

THE Fourth-Formers looked round as Levison came into the Form-room. Little Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, glanced up from his desk.

"You are late, Levison!"

"I'm sorry, sir. I was delayed in the wood, sir; a tramp set a dog on me," said Levison.

"Dear me! Very well, go to your place."

Levison went to his place, and sat down between Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Dick Brooke. He was looking dusty and heated, and extremely ill-tempered. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave him a sympathetic look. D'Arcy was not on good terms with the cad of the Fourth, but he felt that Levison was to be sympathised with in this case. D'Arcy had had his own little troubles with Herries' bulldog, Towser.

"Hard cheese, deah boy," he whispered. "Did the beast teah your twousahs?"

"No, he didn't," said Levison.

"There are dogs and dogs," D'Arcy remarked sagely. "That howwid beast of Hewwies' has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs."

Levison grunted.

"I suppose you wan away?" said D'Arcy.

"No, I didn't," said Levison. "I couldn't; the beast had me down! But I'll make him smart for it. I'll get the brute shot somehow!"

"Weally, Levison, that would be wathah wuff. I could not approve of havin' a dog shot, you know."

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Levison——"

"Shut up!"

Arthur Augustus's eyes gleamed. He felt that he had wasted his sympathy upon Levison.

"You uttah wottah!" he said. "Now I wectect upon it, I dare say you were entirely to blame. I wemembah your tomentin' Hewwies dog, by pokin' a bwoom at him in his kennel. A wottah who does that deserves all he gets! You agwee with me, Bwooke, deah boy?"

"Yes, rather!" said Brooke. "I should certainly want to know who started the row before I wasted any sympathy on Levison."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Jack Blake, from the desk in front.

Levison scowled savagely.

"Oh, you'd naturally stand up for a tramp, you charity cad!" he said to Brooke. "Birds of a feather, of course."

Brooke flushed red.

"If we weren't in the Form-room, Levison——"

Little Mr. Lathom's voice broke in.



"Guard 'im, Buster!" said the ragged youth, cheerfully. "If 'e gets up, nip 'im!" "Help!" yelled Levison. "Get this beast away, Tom Merry! He'll have his teeth into me in a minute!" (See Chap. 3.)

"No talking in class, please!"

And the mutter of voices died away.

Levison's eyes were glinting. He had an unsatisfied longing for vengeance upon the youthful tramp, and he was filled with spite towards Tom Merry & Co. and his own Form-fellows. Brooke, of the Fourth, was the special object of his aversion. Brooke was a day-boy at St. Jim's, and it was known that he worked in the evenings at home to help pay his fees at the school; a fact which Levison and fellows of his kind regarded as casting a reflection upon themselves. Certainly Levison never did any work if he could help it, and his exercises were the most slovenly in the Form, with the possible exception of Percy Mellish's. Yet Levison was certainly clever enough, when he chose to exert himself. He was clever enough to lead less keen-witted boys into trouble, and to contrive that if there were unpleasant results, they seldom fell upon himself. Which was one reason why Levison was not popular in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. He sat and listened with a sneer upon his face while Dick Brooke construed, and received a word of praise from the Form-master when he finished. When Levison was called upon to construe, he was far from making so good a show, and he was given fifty lines as a reminder that school was a place for work as well as play. He sat down again, scowling, and he cast a venomous glance at Brooke.

"Fifty lines for me, and a pat on the back for you," he growled, under his breath. "It's all rotten favouritism!" Brooke glanced at him.

"It's nothing of the sort, and you know it," he said. "I've worked, and you haven't—that's the difference!"

"I'm not a rotten swot," said Levison.

"Better sweating over Virgil than sneaking into box-rooms to smoke cigarettes!" retorted Brooke.

"Don't talk to me, you beggar!" muttered Levison, between his teeth.

Brooke's eyes gleamed.

"That's the second fancy name you've given me," he said, in a low voice. "I'll ask you to say it over again when the Form's dismissed!"

"You are talking again!" said Mr. Lathom, stopping Digby in his construing, and turning with a frown towards the place in the Form where the speaker sat. "Who was that talking?"

There was no reply.

"I insist upon knowing who was speaking," said Mr. Lathom severely.

"It was I, sir," said Brooke.

"Indeed! I am surprised at you, Brooke. You know that you should not interrupt the work of the class in this way," said Mr. Lathom reprovingly. "Whom were you speaking to?"

"Levison, sir," said Brooke reluctantly.

"It is very curious that you cannot keep what you have to say to Levison until the class is dismissed," said Mr. Lathom, who was really irritated. "The Form-room is not the place to hold conversations."

"I am sorry, sir!"

"What were you saying to Levison?"

Brooke was silent.

Mr. Lathom frowned.

"Levison, what was he saying to you?"

Levison's eyes glinted maliciously.

"I'd rather not tell you, if you don't mind, sir!" he said.

Mr. Lathom's brow grew stern.

"I have already told you to tell me, Levison!" he exclaimed sharply. "Tell me at once, or I shall cane you!"

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"Well, sir, Brooke was threatening me."
 "What!"
 "He—he was saying what he was going to do to me when class was dismissed, sir!" said Levison. "I didn't want to tell you, sir!"
 Mr. Lathom fixed his eyes upon Brooke.
 "Is that correct, Brooke?" he asked coldly.
 Brooke's face was crimson.
 "Yes, sir!" he said.
 "Indeed! And do you think that that is the proper conduct in the Form-room, Brooke?"
 "N-no, sir."
 "You will take fifty lines, Brooke; and you will write them out before you go home to-day," said the Form-master.
 "Very well, sir."
 "You may go on, Digby."
 Digby went on. Levison turned a triumphant grin upon Brooke, who was sitting with a downcast and troubled face.
 "You've got it in the neck this time, you cad," he murmured. "So much for your swotting and crawling up to the Form-master."
 "Hold your tongue, confound you!" muttered Brooke angrily.
 Mr. Lathom swung round sharply.
 "Did you speak again, Brooke?"
 Brooke started. He had not expected the Form-master to hear that faint murmur, and he was caught. He could not explain how Levison had drawn him.
 "Yes, sir!" he faltered.
 "This is deliberate impertinence, Brooke. If lines will not keep you quiet in class, I shall have to cane you. Come out here!"
 Brooke rose reluctantly from his place. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy nudged Levison as Brooke went out before the Form-master.
 "Get up, Levison!"
 "What do you mean?" muttered Levison. "Dry up!"
 "Tell Mr. Lathom you spoke to Bwooke first. Bwooke won't tell him."
 "Oh, ring off!"
 "If you refuse, Levison—"
 "Shut up, I tell you."
 "Hold out your hand, Brooke," said Mr. Lathom, taking his cane off his desk.
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a scornful look at Levison, rose in his place.
 "Pwae excuse me, Mr. Lathom, sir—"
 "Sit down, D'Arcy!"
 "Certainly, sir." Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat down, but he did not leave off speaking. "If you will allow me to explain, sir—"
 "D'Arcy!"
 "Yaas, sir! Bwooke was not to blame, sir; he only answered anothah fellow who spoke to him first, sir!"
 "Shut up, you cad!" muttered Levison fiercely.
 "I feel it my duty to acquaint you with that fact, sir, before you cane Bwooke," said the swell of St. Jim's.
 Mr. Lathom lowered the cane he had been about to use.
 "Did you answer some boy who had spoken to you first, Brooke?" he demanded.
 "Yes, sir," said Brooke.
 "You should have told me so. Who was the boy?"
 Brooke was silent.
 "Was it you, D'Arcy?"
 "No, sir."
 "Then who was it?"
 "I would wathah not say, sir, as it would amount to sneakin'. But as Bwooke was not to blame in the mattah, sir—"
 "You may go back to your place, Brooke," said Mr. Lathom, laying down his cane upon the desk. "If there is any more talking I shall detain the whole class an hour."
 And there was no more talking in class that afternoon.

CHAPTER 3.

Arthur Augustus Wishes to be Useful.

DICK BROOKE glanced at Levison as the Form filed out after lessons were over. He had a strong desire upon him to punch Levison's head, but it was impossible just then. He had fifty lines to write out, and he had to stay in the Form-room until they were written. Levison gave him a sneering grin as he passed. Mr. Lathom paused for a moment to speak to the detained junior after the Form were gone.

"You will write out your lines, and leave them on my desk, Brooke," he said. "As soon as they are done you may go!"

"Yes, sir," said Brooke quietly.

Mr. Lathom left the Form-room, and closed the door. Dick Brooke remained alone in the big, silent room. Outside, in the sunny quadrangle, he heard the voices of the juniors, and distant shouts from the cricket-field, which told that the fellows were down at the nets. Brooke's heart was heavy as he sat at his desk, with his pen driving away at his lines.

He was wanted at home, and as he was seldom detained he had not supposed that he would be late at the school that evening. More responsibilities than usually fall to the lot of boys of his age, had fallen upon the young shoulders of Dick Brooke. At home, in the old rambling house on Wayland Moor, which was all that remained of the property that had once belonged to the family, his mother and his sister were waiting for him. And his father! Where his father was he was not likely to know. If Mr. Brooke had any money, he was probably at the Red Cow in Rylcombe or in a billiard-room in Wayland; and if he had no money he was probably hanging moodily about the house, discontented, and a trouble to himself and everybody else. Or, perhaps, if he was in a cheerful humour, he was laying great plans for restoring the fortunes of the family. Dick sighed as he thought of his father, whom he loved and respected in spite of his many failings. His earliest recollection of his father was when the old gentleman was half tipsy, and used to take him upon his knee, and teach him the rudiments of his Latin, with many a hiccough punctuating "hie, hæc, and hoc."

Outside, through the open Form-room window, came the sound of a voice. It was the voice of the cad of the Fourth. "You and Crooke and Foxe can come with me!" Levison was saying. "I believe we can find the fellow, and give him a good hiding!"

Brooke wondered whom the Fourth-Form cad was speaking of. The voices of Mellish of the Fourth replied:

"Can't be done! I've got fifty lines to do for old Schneider!"

"Oh, rats! I'll do your lines."

"I've got a hundred to do for Railton!" said the voice of Foxe of the Fourth. "The beast caught me smoking last night, and handed 'em out to me. If they're not done to-day they'll be doubled."

"I'll do yours as well as Mellish's."

"Yes, that's all very well for old Schneider, but it's a different thing with Railton," said Foxe. "Railton knows the difference between one fist and another."

"Oh, I can work that all right!"

"Well, if you do the lines, then—"

The voices drifted away. Brooke was writing steadily. Line after line, in a clear and firm hand, ran from his steady pen. The fifty were done at last, and he rose with a sigh of relief. He left his form, and placed the sheets upon Mr. Lathom's desk, as he had been told, and placed a book upon them to keep them in their place, ready for the Form-master's eye in the morning.

Then he quitted the Form-room.

Outside, on the School House steps, several juniors were waiting for him. Brooke, putting his cap on as he went, hurried out of the house. Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy called to him as he came out.

"Brooke, old man!"

"Bwooke, deah boy!"

Dick paused.

"Do you want me?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! You're comin' down to the cwicket?"

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CHAPTER 4.

Dick Brooke to the Rescue!

"Tom Merry told us specially to fetch you," said Jack Blake. "You've been neglecting the cricket lately, kid. It won't do, you know."

Brooke smiled.

"It's all right," he said. "I can't play in the House matches, anyway. My eyes are not good enough. So it doesn't matter about keeping up the practice."

"That's just where you're wrong," said Blake promptly. "It's necessary to keep yourself fit, my son, and there's no better way than by playing cricket."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's good of you to wait for me," said Brooke gratefully; "but I really can't come. I'm wanted at home, and I'm late already owing to those rotten lines."

"Yaas, that was vewy wuff," said Arthur Augustus sympathetically. "It was all that wottah Levison's fault, and if he had been anythin' like decent, he would have owned up. But you can't expect Levison to be decent. Look here, you must come to the cricket."

"Can't be did."

"Goin' to work?" asked D'Arcy.

Brooke nodded.

"Then I'll tell you what I'll do!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as if struck by a sudden inspiration. "I'll cut the cricket myself, and come and help you."

Jack Blake burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The swell of the Fourth Form jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and turned an exceedingly severe look upon Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake.

"I can see nothin' whatever to laugh at myself," said D'Arcy frigidly. "Will you kindly explain the cause of your merriment, Blake?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I can see you working—I don't think!" roared Blake. "I really fancy Brooke would get on quicker without. Come down to the cricket."

"I refuse to come down to the cricket," said D'Arcy. "I am goin' to help old Bwooke. I have thought of it a lot of times. I know what his work is like. He does illuminations, and things in colours and things. I have nevah twiced it myself, but I am sure I could do it all wight."

Brooke grinned.

"It wants some doing, you know," he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake.

"I refuse to stay here and listen to your wibald laughtah, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I am goin' to help Bwooke."

"You offered to help Glyn make his invisible ink!" grinned Jack Blake. "He was very grateful for the offer, wasn't he?"

"He was extwemely wude," said Arthur Augustus. "How-evah—"

"Thanks awfully," said Brooke; "but—but you couldn't help me, really. I'd let you, like a shot, if you could."

"Quite sure, deah boy?"

"Quite, thanks."

And Brooke, with a cordial nod to the chums of the Fourth, ran away, leaving Blake still chuckling, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shaking his head in a doubtful sort of way. The swell of the School House was very much taken up with his idea of helping Brooke, and he had no doubt whatever about his powers to do it.

Brooke hurried out of the gates of St. Jim's, and crossed the road into the footpath through the wood. It was a short cut home to the house near Wayland where he lived.

The path through the wood was very lonely, and was generally avoided after dark; but Dick Brooke was used to it. He went along the footpath at a run to make up for lost time, and his footsteps made no sound upon the grassy path.

He had crossed the wood, and was in sight of the open spaces of Wayland Moor, when a sudden sound burst upon his ears. A shrill, sharp voice came ringing through the thickets.

"Let me alone, you cowards! Leggo! You wouldn't dare to touch me if my dorg Buster was 'ere!"

"Hold the cad, you fellows!"

It was Levison's voice.

Dick Brooke frowned darkly. He remembered the words that had floated in to his ears from the quad, when he was writing out his lines in the Fourth Form-room. He paused, and turned from the path in the direction of the voices. There was the sound of a struggle and a heavy fall, and then a wild scrambling, and a choking voice crying out.

Dick Brooke ran through the thickets, his fists clenched, and his eyes blazing, and caught sight of a ragged lad sprawling on the ground, with three fellows in St. Jim's caps holding him down.

LEVISON & Co. did not hear the approach of the newcomer. They were too busily engaged. For Harthur, though he was only one against three, was giving a considerable amount of trouble to Levison, Mellish, and Foxe, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

"Pin the cad down!" said Levison between his teeth. "I'll make him smart now! Lucky we've caught him without that rotten dog with him."

"We've got him!" grinned Mellish. "What are you going to do with the cad?"

"Bump him!" suggested Foxe.

"I'm going to make the cad understand that it will be better for him to keep away from St. Jim's," said Levison, with a savage grin. "I've got a dog-whip with me. You chaps roll him over, and hold him down while I lick him."

"Good egg!"

"Beastly tramps ought to be made an example of," grinned Levison. "We don't want them hanging about the school, stealing all they can lay their hands on. Shove him over, and kneel on his back!"

"Lemme alone!" came a gurgling voice from Harthur.

"Lemme alone, I says! I ain't done nothing!"

"Kneel on the brute, and don't let him wriggle!"

"Right-ho!"

Levison raised the dog-whip. Before he could bring it down Dick Brooke came bursting through the thickets, his fists clenched, and his eyes blazing with indignation. Levison started at the sight of him. Brooke ran straight at the cad of the Fourth, with his fists up.

"Keep back!" muttered Levison, gripping the whip harder.

"Keep back, or—"

Brooke did not heed him. He rushed right on, hitting out, and received the lash of the whip across the face almost without feeling it. His knuckles crashed upon Levison's nose, and the cad of the Fourth went backwards into the grass with a crash.

"Let that kid alone!"

Brooke's voice rapped out sharply.

Mellish and Foxe, looking exceedingly sheepish, released Harthur, and rose to their feet, exchanging uneasy glances.

"It's—it's all right," muttered Mellish, backing away. "We—we weren't going to hurt him, you know. It's only a lark."

"Don't tell lies. You were going to lick him, three to one!"

"I—I—I—"

Harthur scrambled to his feet and picked up his stick, which lay in the grass. Mellish disappeared into the thickets. Foxe lingered a moment, looking at Harthur, and then at Brooke, and then followed Mellish. Levison, as he staggered to his feet, found that both his associates were gone.

He would gladly have followed them, but he was not to escape so easily. Dick Brooke sprang into his path.

"Let me pass!" said Levison, in a voice choking with passion. "Let me pass, you hound!"

"Put up your hands!"

"I'm not going to fight you."

Brooke snapped his teeth.

"You are!" he said. "You picked a quarrel with me in class, and got me detained, and weren't decent enough to own up to it. Now you are disgracing the school, and I'm going to show this chap that there are some fellows belonging to St. Jim's who aren't bullies and cowards. I'm going to lick you, or you're going to lick me."

"You charity cad—"

"That's enough! Put up your hands!"

And as Brooke was advancing upon him with clenched fists, Levison had no choice about putting up his hands.

He put them up quickly, and in a moment more the two juniors were fighting furiously.

Harthur stood and looked on, grinning.

"Go it!" he said. "My heye! This is as good as a circus! Go it!"

Levison was bigger than Dick Brooke, and rage, if not courage, stimulated him. He fought very hard, and Brooke received a good deal of punishment. But he gave more than he received. It was but seldom that Brooke, the quietest and most peaceable fellow in the Fourth, lost his temper, but he had lost it now. He hammered Levison till it seemed to the cad of the Fourth that the trees were spinning round him.

"Urrah!" shouted Harthur. "Pile in! Go it, my pippins! My eye, if this hain't great!"

Thud!

A heavy right-hander sent Levison crashing into the grass at last, and he lay there, gasping and blinking, and unable to rise.

Dick Brooke, panting for breath, stood looking down upon him, his face aflame, his eyes ablaze.

"Have you had enough, you cad?"

Levison groaned. It was only too evident that he had had enough.

"Oh! Ow! Groo! Yes, hang you! Let me alone!" Dick dabbed his nose with his handkerchief. It came away very red.

"Very well," he said. "I'll let you alone, if you've had enough. Get out!"

Levison rose painfully to his feet, and stood regarding Brooke with a look of deadly hate. All the malice in his spiteful nature seemed to be in his face.

"I—I'll make you pay for this!" he stammered. "You've got the best of me now, but I'll make you pay for it. I'll get you sacked from St. Jim's. I'll get you kicked out of the school. Do you hear, you cad? I'll—"

Brooke clenched his hand again.

"If you don't want some more, you'd better clear," he said savagely.

And Levison, with one last look of hatred, tramped into the wood, and the trees hid him from sight.

Dick Brooke turned towards the lad he had rescued from the hands of the raggars.

Harthur grinned at him cheerfully.

"I hope they haven't hurt you, kid," said Brooke.

The youthful tramp shook his head.

"I ain't 'urt," he said. "I reckon I should ha' been, though, if you 'adn't took a 'and. I'm very much obliged to yer. Do you belong to the same school as those blokes?"

Brooke nodded.

"Then it's very good of you to chip in like this for me," said Harthur. "You're a gentleman, you are, sir. As for them blokes—"Harthur sniffed to express his opinion of Levison & Co.—"I'd wallop any one of them; but they 'ad me three together, and Buster wasn't 'ere."

"Who's Buster?" asked Brooke, with a smile.

"My dorg, Buster is," Harthur explained. "I've 'ad a job in Wayland this afternoon, and I 'ad to leave Buster. That's 'ow they caught me nappin'. My name's Harthur. Wot might yours be, sir?"

"Brooke—Dick Brooke."

"I won't forget that," said Harthur. "If ever I can do anything for you, sir, you'd only 'ave to say so. You live at the school, I s'pose?"

Brooke shook his head.

"No; I'm a day-boy. I live at home, near Wayland. If you're going my way, you'd better walk a bit with me, in case those cads are hanging about."

"Glad to," said Harthur, "if—if you don't mind."

"Why should I mind?"

Harthur glanced down at his ragged clothes, and grinned.

"I ain't ezactly a toff," he explained.

Brooke laughed.

"Well, I'm not a toff, either. Never mind that. Come on, if you're going this way."

"Thank you kindly, sir."

And Dick Brooke and his queer new friend walked on together from the wood into the moor. Harthur explained that he was "dossing," as he called it, at Stayne, a village over the moor, where he had left his dog.

"You'll have to pass my home to get there," said Brooke. "There it is."

Harthur glanced at the rambling old house in the distance, half in ruins, with patches of trees round it, and a portion of garden carefully cultivated.

"You live there?" he said.

"Yes."

"Long walk to the school, ain't it?"

"Yes; it seems a bit long in winter, but in the summer it's jolly pleasant, going through the wood," said Brooke.

"I don't get too much exercise, and the walk does me good. Are you on tramp down here?"

"That's it!" said Harthur. "I'm tryin' the country for the summer; better'n knockin' round the stations in London carryin' parcels, and gittin' more cuffs than ha'pence. Wot do you think?"

"I suppose so," said Brooke.

"Oh, it's all right in the summer," said Harthur. "I git a barn to sleep in sometimes, and sometimes hunder a 'aystack. Quite as good as an arch in Lime'ouse."

"If you want shelter when you pass this way, you can always drop in here," said Brooke, with a nod towards the house they were approaching.

Harthur chuckled.

"That's kind of you, sir; but I s'pose p'r'aps your people wouldn't be glad to see a visitor like me."

"Oh, that's all right! You can drop into the barn there, or one of the sheds," said Brooke. "They're never used, now."

"Thank you kindly, sir. P'r'aps I will, some time, if you don't mind, if I stay round this place. 'Ere's your gate. Good-bye, sir, and thank you fer wot you've done!"

"That's all right. Good-night!"

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Dick Brooke stood at the garden gate a minute or two, looking at the tramp as he marched on over the moor, whistling cheerily. The boy was certainly in a bad way so far as worldly goods went, but he seemed cheerful enough.

Life was not easy for Dick Brooke, but he realised that there were many degrees of hardship between his lot and that of Harthur. A young girl came down the garden path, and greeted the Fourth-Former of St. Jim's with a bright smile. Dick's face lighted up as he turned towards her.

"I'm late, Amy. I was detained, worse luck."

"You detained, Dick!" said his sister, in surprise.

Brooke laughed.

"It wasn't really my fault," he said; "it was bad luck. But—"

"You've been fighting, Dick?" said Amy Brooke.

"Well, yes; and that delayed me, too. Is my face very bad?" asked Brooke anxiously. "I don't want the mater to see it if it is."

"Slip up to your room and bathe it first, then," said Amy. "Your nose is quite swollen, and very red. I've put the things all ready for your work, and taken the gold-leaf out of the paper all ready."

"Thank you, Amy, old girl!"

And the brother and sister went up the garden path together.

CHAPTER 5.

D'Arcy Makes Up His Mind.

"I 'VE made up my mind about it, you know, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that statement in Study No. 6, in the Fourth-Form passage in the School House.

Blake, who was frying sausages, grunted. He had no time for further reply than that; the sausages claimed all his attention. Digby, who was scribbling away lines on the corner of the table, echoed Blake's grunt. Herries sniffed. It was evident that the statement of the swell of St. Jim's evoked no enthusiasm in Study No. 6.

"I wepeat, deah boys—"

The study door opened, and the Terrible Three of the Shell came in. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther sniffed appreciatively. The smell of the frying sausages was decidedly good to hungry juniors after cricket practice.

"Well, that's ripping!" said Tom Merry. "Are we early?"

"No," said Blake. "Just in time to lay the table. Dig's got lines to do, and Gussy is busy talking, and—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"And I don't suppose he'll leave off this evening at all," said Jack Blake. "You'll find the tablecloth somewhere, and the crockery somewhere else. Wire in!"

"Good egg!" grinned Tom Merry. "Get off the table, Dig."

"Buck up, then."

"I am glad you have come, Tom Mewwy, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a gracious nod. "I've been tellin' Blake—"

"These sausages are about done," said Blake.

"Weally, deah boy, you are intewwuptin' me—"

"Hand me the dish, Gussy."

"How can I hand you the dish, when I've got my hands in my pockets, Blake? P'way be weasonable, deah boy!"

"Ass! Hand me over that dish!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Can't you take your hands out of your pockets?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, you know!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy passed the dish to Blake, who rested it on the fender, and turned the sausages into it, beautifully browned and rich in gravy.

"There!" he said. "I think that's all right!"

"Ripping! Spiffing! Gorgeous!" said Monty Lowther.

"Where do you keep the plates, Gussy?"

"I weally do not know, deah boy. I was sayin', when you came in, that I had made up my mind about—"

"Here are the plates," said Herries. "When Gussy's done talking, he might fill the kettle."

"Oh, no! We want it to-night," said Lowther. "I'll do it."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Monty Lowther went out of the study with the kettle.

ANSWERS

Manners discovered the teapot behind a pile of books on the coal-locker, and cleaned it out. It was customary for visitors in junior studies to make themselves useful. Tom Merry laid the cloth, eliciting a yell from Digby as he overlapped the impot. paper.

"Yah! You ass! You've smudged it!" roared Digby.

"Sorry!" said Tom Merry. "What is it?"

"My impot. for Schneider, you ass!" growled Digby.

"Well, that's all right, if it's in German. A few smudges will only make it look more German," said Tom Merry. "Shove it away, and hand out the teacups."

"I was remarkin'—"

"And knives and forks," said Blake. "We shall want them. One of you Shell-fish had better dodge back to your study and get some; there ain't enough to go round here. It's a remarkable thing what becomes of knives and forks. And crockery! Last time Gussy had a fiver, we blued quite a lot of it in a new set of teacups and saucers, and now, where are we? It's very odd!"

"Things get busted!" said Manners philosophically.

"That ass Glyn has taken a lot of the cups to mix up his beastly inks in!" Digby remarked. "He's had three or four. I don't think more than fifteen have been broken since we bought the lot last week."

"Glyn's coming to tea, if he doesn't forget all about it, and stick to some disgusting invention," said Blake. "Stir the fire, Gussy. We want some tea."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway stir the fish, Lowthah, deah boy."

"And some of you dig up some tea-cups from somewhere," said Blake. "It's about time your pater came down with another fiver, Gussy. The crockery's pretty nearly all gone."

"Yaas, wathah! But the patah is wathah obstinate," said D'Arcy. "That's what I was goin' to speak about. Instead of sendin' me a fivah last time I wote home, the governah sent me a vegulah lecture. I hardly wogard that as playin' the game. If a chap's governah can't send him a tip, he might say so; but it's almost like hittin' below the belt to send him a lecture instead."

"These paters are all the same," said Manners, with a shake of the head. "I told my pater, in a very confidential letter, that I should like to have a larger camera, and what do you think he answered? He said he hoped I should be able to save up enough out of my allowance to buy one. He did!"

"Wotten!" said D'Arcy, with a sympathetic shake of the head. "I was thinkin' of tellin' my patah exactly how I wogarded the mattah, but I don't want to be hard on the old boy. I wote to my bwothah Conway instead, and told him that a pound would be vewy welcome, and I said, too, that if he was in trowble at any time he could always come to me for advice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' whatevah to laugh at, deah boys. My youngah bwothah Wally and my eldah bwothah Conway are gweat wowwies to me, and vewy gweat wespensibilities. And Conway had the awful cheek to tell me that I was an expensive luxury, you know, and that I ought to buck up and be useful instead of ornamental."

"Which, of course, is impossible," remarked Monty Lowther.

"I fail to undahstand you, Lowthah. I twust that if I turned my mind to it, I could be as useful as anybody."

"In some ways, yes," assented Lowther. "You could hire yourself out as a tailor's dummy—"

"Pway don't be an ass. I was sayin' when you fellows came in, that pewwaps there is somethin' in what old Conway says, though it was an awful cheek of him to say it. I have made up my mind to show that I can be a useful chap."

"My hat!"

"I am goin' to begin," said Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to help young Wally with his lessons, and coach him in the classics, and see if I can't get him on in the Third. I wogard that as my duty."

"How will Wally take it?" grinned Tom Merry.

"I twust my minah will not venture to argue the mattah with his eldah bwothah," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "Of course, he will have to do what I tell him. I have also wresolved to help Dick Bwooke."

The juniors, as they sat round the table and started on the sausages, grinned. Arthur Augustus remained standing, too much taken up with the interest of his subject to think of tea at present.

"Does Brooke need helpin'?" asked Tom Merry, laughing.

"Yes; he does work, you know, in the evenings," said D'Arcy. "His father is, or was, an artist of sorts, and Bwooke does somethin' of the sort—paints fat bulls for beef-tea advertisements and texts for chapels, and things like that, and does illuminatin' with colours and gold-leaf and things. I think it would be a wippin' ideah for me to wire in and help the chap."

"Good wheeze!" said Blake. "I can see Brooke lettin' you loose on his colour-box—I don't think!"

"I am also goin' to help Glyn," said D'Arcy. "Glyn is wathah an ass, but there is no doubt that some of his inventions are wathah clevah. His mechanical bulldog was vewy funnay; and the indelible ink was a gweat success. Now, with a bwain like mine to help him, I don't see why Bernard Glyn shouldn't turn out a weally gweat invention."

"Hear, hear! Shove some coal on the fire, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"My dear chap," said Blake, "charity begins at home, you know that. You can't be more useful than by putting coal on the fire. Then you can open the window at the top, and then you can cut some bread-and-butter."

"Weally, you ass—"

"Then you can run along the passage and thump at Glyn's door, and tell him that if he doesn't buck up all the sausages will be gone."

"I wefuse—"

"Ass! This is where you make yourself useful—much better than by upsettin' Brooke's colours, and giving Wally a headache with Latin verbs."

"I will go and call Glyn, on second thoughts," said Arthur Augustus. "If he is not finished, I will stay and lend him a hand."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus quitted Study No. 6, and walked along the passage. The last study in the Shell passage belonged to Bernard Glyn, Noble, and Clifton Dane. The latter two juniors were not likely to be there now. Bernard Glyn was an enthusiastic amateur inventor, and when he was busy upon an experiment, he usually locked the study door, and his study-mates might rage for hours in the passage without the slightest chance of getting in. On many occasions Noble and Dane had had to do their preparation in Tom Merry's study, and have tea in Hall, because their door was locked against them. And on other occasions they had been driven forth by the fearful smells that hung round the study after Glyn had been using his chemicals.

Glyn was a very pleasant fellow, and his study-mates were very chummy with him, and they were proud of his inventive genius; but sometimes they bumped him on the study carpet in sheer exasperation.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tapped at the study door, and found it locked. He tapped again, and called through the keyhole:

"Glyn, deah boy—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Weally, Glyn—"

"Buzz off! I'm nearly finished! Don't jaw!"

"But tea is weady—"

"Rats!"

"Pway open the door, deah boy! If you are workin' at an invention I shall be vewy pleased to help."

"Yah!"

After that polite rejoinder there was silence in the study. Arthur Augustus shook the handle of the door. It opened suddenly—so suddenly that the swell of St. Jim's started back.

Bernard Glyn gave a whoop.

"I've done it!" he roared.

"Eh?"

"Hurray!"

And the schoolboy-inventor, in his exuberance, clasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy round the neck with both arms and waltzed him into the study.

CHAPTER 6

Bernard Glyn's Invisible Ink.

"B AI Jove!"

"Hurray!"

"Weally, Glyn—"

"I've done it!"

"You uttah ass! Yawwoh! Welease me, you ass! You are wumplin' my hair!"

"It's a howling success!"

"And spoilin' my collah—"

"Complete success! Hurray!"

"You fwightful ass!" roared D'Arcy, struggling in the grasp of the schoolboy-inventor. "If you don't welease me at once I shall stwike you violently!"

He wrenched himself away from Bernard Glyn. Glyn, with all sorts of stains on his hands and face, and a grin of delight, gasped for breath.

"I've finished it!" he said.

"Finished what, you fwightful ass?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, trying to smooth out his rumpled collar and set his necktie straight.

"The invisible ink!" grinned Bernard Glyn. "It's perfect! The best invisible ink that ever was made—though I say it!"

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.
Please Order Your Copy Early.

"I'll bring a bottle of it along to your study and show you fellows. It's simply ripping!"

Glyn took up a jar containing liquid, and pointed to a bottle on the table.

"Hold that while I fill it," he said. "I've lost my funnel—it was busted when Towser was in the study the other day. Hold the bottle steady."

"Yaas, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus was feeling very much inclined to punch Glyn's head for rumpling his hair and his collar; but he remembered in time that he had come to the study to be useful, so he held up the ink-bottle for Glyn to fill it from the mysterious compound in the jar.

"Steady!" said Glyn.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Glyn began to pour. As the jar had a wide mouth and no spout, and the ink-bottle a very narrow neck, the task was not easy. Perhaps Arthur Augustus did not hold the bottle so steadily as was desirable. Glyn swamped the liquid over, and it ran in two streams up D'Arcy's sleeves as he held the bottle up to the jar. There was a yell from the swell of St. Jim's, and a crash as the bottle dropped on the floor.

"Yawooh!"

Crash!

"You—you ass!" yelled Glyn. "You're wasting my ink! You fearful ass!"

"You dangevous idiot!" panted D'Arcy. "You've soaked my waistcoat with the filthy stuff, and wetted my beastly shirtsleeves. I shall have to go and change my shirt now. You are a frightful idiot!"

And Arthur Augustus tramped out of the study.

Glyn snorted, and selected a fresh ink-bottle and filled it very carefully with what was left of his wonderful compound. There was just enough left to fill the bottle, and Glyn grunted as he set down the jar on the table.

"The ass! Never mind, this is enough."

And Glyn corked the bottle and put it into his pocket and left the study. The stains upon his hands and face did not seem to bother him. There generally were some signs of his latest invention about Bernard Glyn of the Shell.

"Hallo! Where's Gussy?" asked Blake, as the schoolboy inventor entered the study.

The Shell fellow grinned.

"Changing his clothes, I believe. He insisted upon helping me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And got some ink over him. I told him that it didn't matter, as it was invisible ink; but he had gone to change. I say, you chaps, I'm hungry. Didn't you tell me that there were sausages for tea?" asked Glyn, glancing round the table.

"Quite so!" said Blake cheerfully. "So there were!"

"Well, where are they, then?"

"Gone, my son. You're late. The sausages are done in, but there are some sardines left. Pile into them before Gussy comes back."

Glyn chuckled, and sat down to tea-table. He made a raid on the sardines, and bolted them at a great rate. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came into the study, newly swept and garnished, so to speak.

"Bai Jove! Where are the sausages?" he asked.

"Gone!" said Blake, with a grin. "All gegangen, ein-ander nach, as you say in that German song you chortle sometimes."

"Weally, Blake! Where are the sardines?"

"Gone after the sosses."

"Bai Jove! You'd bettah make me some toast, then."

"I'll watch you make it."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"I want to tell you about my latest," said Glyn, finishing the sardines.

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"If it's any more mechanical dogs or indelible inks, you're warned off the course," he exclaimed. "The whole House is fed up with 'em."

"It's my invisible ink—"

"You've got some on your chivvy that's visible enough," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Glyn. "That was only in experimenting. Look here, I'll show you how it works, if you'll clear the table!"

"Weally, Glyn, I haven't had my tea—"

"Take it on the coal-locker, or on the mat," said Glyn.

"That will be all right."

"I refuse to do anything of the sort—"

"Well, let's have part of the table," said Glyn, cheerfully shoving back the tea-things and upsetting two or three cups and saucers. "Look here, this invisible ink is simply ripping. You write in it, and it remains quite visible for a few minutes."

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Next Thursday's Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

"I've got some ordinary ink that will remain longer than that," said Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass! After five minutes it gradually fades away and dies!" said Glyn. "Then the paper's just the same as if it hadn't been written on. See?"

"Well?"

"And if you want to make it become visible again, you can hold it to a fire—"

"Bai Jove! There are lots of invisible inks that will do that," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking round from the fire, where he was making toast. "I've seen lots of fellows use them."

"Yes; but my ink is something very special," said Glyn warmly. "Instead of requiring a lot of heat to make it show, the slightest warmth is enough. If you lay the sheet out in the sun for an hour or so, the writing comes up as plain as anything."

"Just in the sun?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes; just in the sun—any summer day. Of course, it wouldn't work in midwinter, when there isn't any sun!" snapped Glyn.

"Well, let's see how it works," said Tom Merry, who, like most boys, was interested in anything of an inventive character. "Got any of it with you?"

"Yes; I've got all excepting what Gussy's got up his sleeves. Got any impot. paper here?"

"Heaps of it," said Blake. "Brooke keeps his paper here, as he does a lot of his work in this study. He never runs out of things; queer chap, you know. He's always got pen-nibs when you want 'em, and a pencil, and anything."

"Well, hand out some paper, and I'll show you!"

Impot. paper galore was laid upon the table before the schoolboy inventor. He took a pen, washed it in the milk-jug, and dried it on the corner of the tablecloth—a proceeding that was watched with mixed feelings by the chums of Study No. 6.

"Now, suppose I write some ordinary sentence—such as 'Gussy is an ass—'"

"Weally, Glyn—"

Glyn rapidly scrawled that polite sentence upon the paper, and in a few minutes it dried and sank out of sight. Glyn held the paper up to the light.

"Now, can you see anything on that?" he exclaimed.

The juniors examined it.

"Quite blank!" said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Now, hold it to the fire."

Tom Merry held the sheet to the fire. As the paper browned, the writing came out white on the brown: "Gussy is an ass," was plainly read.

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "But there are lots of invisible inks that will do that."

Glyn snorted.

"Yes; but not that will come out through being laid in the sun, ass!"

"And this hasn't, yet," grinned Blake.

"I'm going to prove it to you, you giddy set of doubting Thomases!" said Glyn, with a grunt. "I'll write that sentence again on the top sheet of paper here—"

"I refuse to allow you write that sentence again, Glyn! I should be sorry to have to give a fearful thwashin' to any visitah to this studay, but undah the cires—"

Bernard Glyn laughed.

"Well, I'll write something else, something from Shakespeare if you like." He dipped his pen into the invisible ink, and wrote:

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

The line sprawled across the page in large letters.

The juniors watched the ink fade into indistinctness, and then invisibility. When it was invisible Blake put the paper back into the cupboard.

"Nobody will disturb that," he remarked. "We'll try to-morrow if it will come out in the sun. If it answers, we can use this giddy ink for a lot of japes. What price writing across Herr Schneider's German paper 'Schneider's an ass'! He always takes it out into the garden to read it, and if the sun will do the trick—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as wathah funnary, you know!"

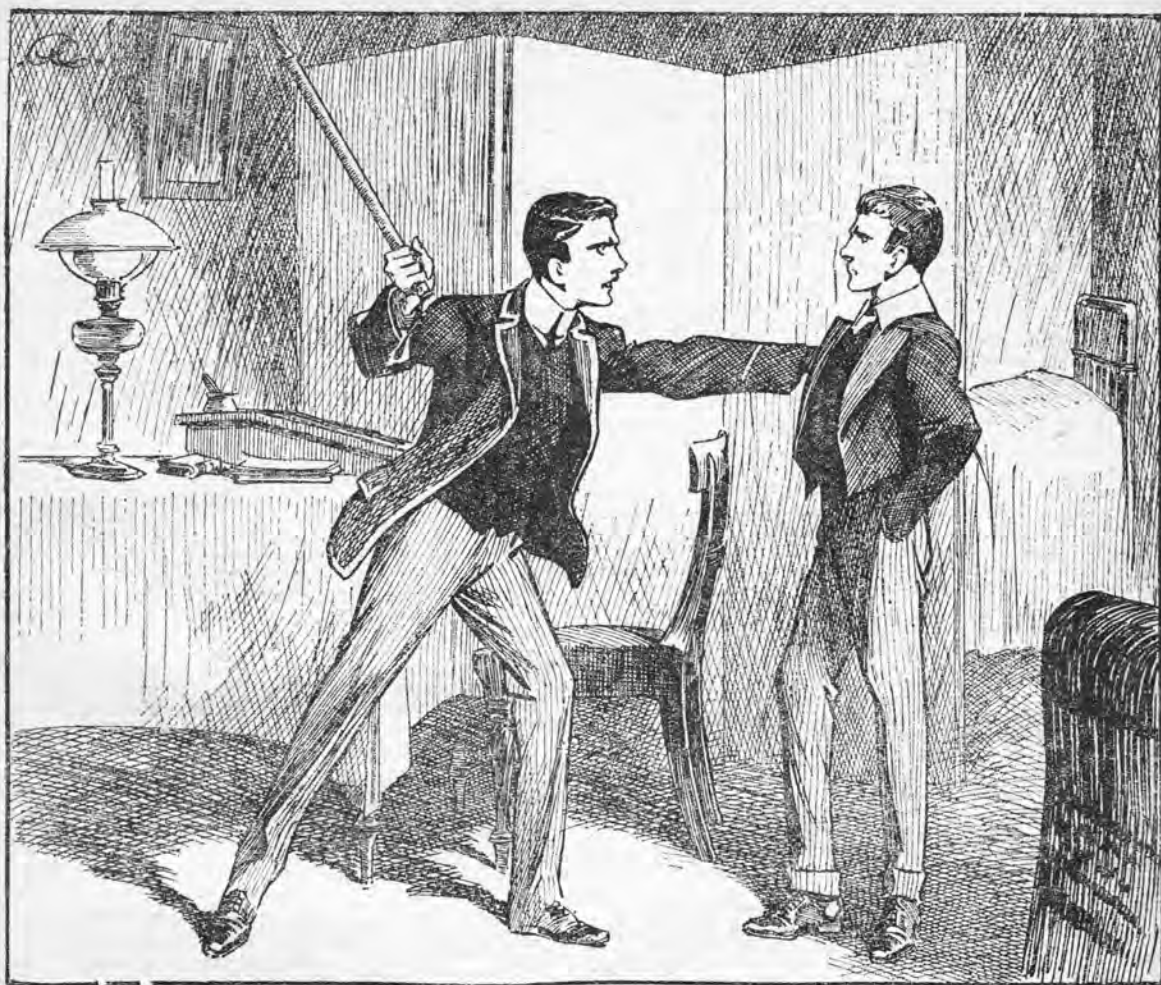
"And we could put it on Figgins & Co.'s exercise paper, too," grinned Glyn. "Down with the New House! and things of that sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Only we'll see first if it works," said Tom Merry.

"You'll see that to-morrow morning," said Glyn confidently.

And Monty Lowther remarked that they would see what they would see. And as that was undoubtedly the case, no one disputed it.



Valence's face went red with rage, and he sprang upon the Removite, and grasped him by the collar with his left hand, and raised a cricket-stump in his right. "Give me the letter, you cheeky cub, or I'll half kill you!" he ground out between his teeth. (For this dramatic incident see the grand, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars, entitled, "**HONOUR BEFORE ALL!**" by Frank Richards, which is contained in our popular companion paper, "**THE MAGNET**" LIBRARY. Now on sale at all newsagents'. Price One Penny.)

CHAPTER 7. Rogues in Council.

"YOU look pretty seedy!"

Mellish made that remark in the study that he shared with Levison and Lumley-Lumley.

Lumley-Lumley had finished his preparation, and gone down. He seldom remained with the cads of the Fourth. Time had been when the three had been very "thick," but that time was past. Levison and Mellish had the study to themselves just now, and Levison was sitting in the armchair, his hands thrust deeply into his pockets, and a scowl upon his bruised face.

Mellish spoke rather maliciously. He was chums with Levison, but he did not like him. It was not in his nature to like anyone, and certainly Levison was not the kind of fellow to inspire affection. It was not wholly without satisfaction that Mellish saw upon Levison's features the signs of his encounter with Dick Brooke in Rylcombe Wood.

Levison started out of his black thoughts, and looked up.

"Do I?" he said.

"Yes. You'll have a blue eye to-morrow."

"Is that anything to cackle at, you rotter?"

Mellish drew away a little. Levison looked angry enough to attack him, and Mellish did not like fighting.

"I—I wasn't cackling," he said. "I—I was only wondering if I could—could do anything for you, you know."

"Don't tell lies!"

"Ahem!"

"I should have licked the cad easily enough, if you two cowards had stayed to help, instead of bolting!" said Levison, between his teeth.

Mellish shifted uncomfortably.

"Well, you see, it wouldn't have been fair-play. Man to man's fair," he said.

"You care a fat lot for fair play!" sneered his study mate savagely.

"Well, I don't know that I care more than you do, if you come to that," said Mellish, with unusual frankness. "But—but it wouldn't do with a St. Jim's fellow. It was all very well three of us piling on that tramping cad, but with a chap belonging to our own school it would come out, and—and the fellows—well, I don't want to have a Form licking, if you do."

"I'll make the cad sorry he laid hands on me!" said Levison, with so savage a look that Mellish backed away a little further, vaguely alarmed.

"I—I say you're not thinking of any rot, are you?" he said uneasily. "I—I should be careful, you know."

"I told him," said Levison, speaking slowly, and with a bitter tone, "that I'd get him sacked from the school, kicked out of St. Jim's."

Mellish laughed.

"That's a tall order," he said. "You can't do it."

"I'm going to do it!"

"What do you mean, you ass?" said Mellish nervously.

"Don't play the giddy goat. If you've got one of your

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rotten plots on, you can leave me out. You got me into a fearful fix last time, and the fellows fixed us up with Glyn's indelible ink, and we were the laughing-stock of the school for days."

"I'm going to keep my word to Brooke."

"But you can't do it! He's done nothing to be sacked for. As a matter of fact, the masters look on him as a giddy model!" said Mellish, with a sneer.

"He had lines given him this afternoon," said Levison, apparently not hearing Mellish's remark.

"What about that?"

"He was told to leave them on Mr. Lathom's desk."

"Yes, I suppose he's done so."

"So do I. I want those lines."

Mellish grinned.

"Oh, you want to take them, and give old Lathom the impression that Brooke never wrote out his lines," he said.

"Yes, and for something else. You can go and get them."

"I—I'd rather not," muttered Mellish.

Levison scowled.

"I've agreed to write out your imposition," he said. "I haven't done it yet. I shan't do it unless you get Brooke's lines for me."

"Why can't you get them yourself?"

"Because I don't choose to."

"Well, I—I don't mind doing it," said Mellish. "It would be a good joke on the cad, and they could never prove we did it—in fact, Mr. Lathom won't believe him when he says he did the lines, if he doesn't find them there in the morning."

"Exactly. Cut off and get them, and bring them here. I'll go on with your impot. while you're gone."

"Good!"

Mellish quitted the study. Levison sat down at the table, and drew a sheet of impot. paper towards him. Mellish had written a single line upon it, as a model of his handwriting for Levison to copy; and Levison's pen ran swiftly, and each line as he wrote it was in Mellish's hand, and not in his own. For Levison had the gift of penmanship; he could imitate any hand, and, after a little practice, he was perfect. He had often written lines for Mellish, and Gore, and Crooke, and other fellows who made it worth his while, and the hand had never been detected by the masters.

Even a keen master like Mr. Ratcliff, of the Fifth, who always examined impositions very carefully in order to discover whether the culprit had had any help from his chums, never detected Levison's forgeries—to give them their right name. For that was what they were, though Levison, to do him justice, had never thought of the ugly word forgery.

It was a very dangerous gift for a boy to possess, and likely to lead its owner into trouble unless he had an unusually well-balanced mind, which Levison certainly had not. Levison was ready to use that gift, as well as any other that he possessed, for the sake of his revenge upon the boy he hated—Dick Brooke, of the Fourth.

Levison's pen worked quickly, and he had the imposition almost finished by the time Mellish returned with the paper from the Fourth Form-room. The cad of the Fourth came into the study grinning, and closed the door behind him, and drew a couple of folded sheets from the inside of his jacket.

"There you are," he said. "There was nobody round the Form-rooms, and it was as easy as rolling off a log. Brooke had left them on Lathom's desk, all ready for him to find in the morning. He won't find 'em now."

Levison took the sheets, and scanned them keenly. He thrust one of them into the study fire, and it blazed up and disappeared. The other sheet he carefully folded. Mellish watched him in amazement.

"You're not going to keep that?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I am."

"I say, it's dangerous. If it came out that we had rolled the impot. we should get into a fearful row," objected Mellish.

"It won't come out."

"But why not burn it like the other sheet?" demanded Mellish impatiently. "What's the good of keeping it when it's only dangerous?"

"I need it."

Mellish stared.

"What on earth do you need it for?"

"A specimen of Dick Brooke's handwriting."

Mellish burst into a chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha! Are you thinking of practising his hand to write out impositions for him?" he asked.

"No, not exactly."

"You've done mine, I see," said Mellish, taking it up. "I'll get along to Mr. Railton with this. My word, what a forger you'd make, Levison!"

Levison scowled.

"You'll be doing time for this, one of these days," grinned Mellish.

"Shut up!" growled Levison, apparently touched on the

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raw by the remark. Perhaps the same idea had come into his mind.

"But what do you want Brooke's handwriting for?" asked Mellish curiously. "His name's not signed there, if you were thinking of imitating his signature for any reason."

"I wasn't, you idiot! Do you think I'm a forger?" said Levison angrily.

"Ahem!" Mellish coughed, and did not reply to the question. "Well, what do you want it for?"

"I want a specimen to copy. And I want some of the impot. paper that Brooke uses," said Levison.

Mellish's face changed.

"Look here, Levison, what's the little game?"

"Suppose," said Levison in a low voice, "—suppose a paper was pinned up in the Form-room, containing an insulting message to Mr. Lathom?"

"My word!"

"They'd inquire into it—eh?"

"I should say so! The chap would be expelled from the school. You're not thinking of doing that, surely?"

"Yes, I am—only when they inquire into it the handwriting will turn out to be Dick Brooke's, that's all!"

"Levison!"

"And in case of the strictest inquiry, I want it to be written on paper belonging to Brooke."

"But—but—" stammered Mellish.

Levison smiled contemptuously.

"You needn't shiver like a drowning rat," he exclaimed. "There's no risk—for you, at all events. You see how I've turned out your impot., and I've done 'em for Crooke and Foxe in the same way, and Gore. I can pick up anybody's hand; I used to do the same thing at Greyfriars, my old school. After I've practised Brooke's hand for an hour or so I shall be able to write anything in his writing, so near that he wouldn't be able to tell the difference himself. And it will be written upon his paper, and there can be no mistake about that. He can swear to his innocence till he's black in the face, but no one will believe him—not even Tom Merry or Blake or Figgins!"

"But—but—"

"I told him," said Levison between his teeth, "that I'd get him kicked out of the school. I'm going to do it. And I'll give old Lathom some worry, too, for being down on me, at the same time. Of course, Brooke will be supposed to have done it for revenge on old Lathom for detaining him."

"Levison! It's too thick! I—"

"You don't run any risk. I'm going to do the writing."

"But—but suppose you're seen practising it. Lumley-Lumley can't be kept out of this study, and anybody might come into the Form-room—"

Levison laughed scornfully.

"You ass! Do you think I would risk it inside the school? I shall take this paper of Brooke's out to-morrow afternoon, with a fountain-pen and a blotting-pad, and do the practice somewhere right in the wood. It's a half-holiday to-morrow, and I shall have plenty of time."

"Well, that will be safer," said Mellish, with a breath of relief. "But it's awfully risky. I—I don't like having anything to do with it."

"You won't have anything to do with it," said Levison. "All you've got to do is to get me a sheet of Brooke's impot. paper."

"But—but he hasn't a study here, and—"

"He uses Blake's study when he does anything here, and he keeps his paper there. You know where it is as well as I do—in the study cupboard. I only want one sheet—I can do the practice on my own paper, of course. But I must have a sheet of Brooke's paper for the precious document itself. Take only one sheet, in case they should miss any more—I don't know how much there is there. Wait till those cads in Number Six have gone downstairs. They always go down for half an hour before bedtime."

"I—I don't half like it. Why can't you get the paper yourself?"

"So I could, and I will, if you're afraid," said Levison contemptuously.

"Well, I—I'm not afraid—I— Well, I'll get it, if you'll keep watch in the passage so that they won't catch me there."

"Come on, then."

Study No. 6 was deserted and dark as the two juniors went down the passage. Levison lounged at the head of the stairs with a careless air, but with his eyes keenly open in case any of the Fourth should come up. Mellish slipped into Study No. 6. The gas was out, but he knew the study well enough. There was a glimmer of light at the window, and he struck a match as he looked into the cupboard. There was a little pile of impot. paper, and Mellish whipped off the top sheet and slipped it under his jacket, and dodged quickly out of the study.

He rejoined Levison in the passage, breathing very quickly "Got it?"

"Here it is!"

"Good!"

Levison's eyes gleamed as he took the sheet. He hurried back into his study with it, to place it in concealment. All was prepared now for the dastardly plot he had laid to ruin Brooke of the Fourth; and Levison, thinking it over carefully with his cool, keen, unscrupulous brain, could not see a single point that was left unguarded, not a single loophole by which his victim could possibly escape.

CHAPTER 8.

Very Invisible.

BERNARD GLYN was the first fellow up in the Shell dormitory in the School House the next morning. Tom Merry & Co., it is to be feared, had forgotten about that interesting experiment with the invisible ink, but the schoolboy inventor hadn't forgotten. He was only too keen to prove to the doubting Thomases of the School House that the invisible ink was a howling success. Indeed, he wanted to prove it to the New House fellows, too—and, in fact, everybody he knew.

"Get up, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "The sun's very bright this morning, and it's all right for the experiment. We shall have time before morning school."

Tom Merry sat up and yawned.

"What experiment?" he asked.

"The invisible ink!" said Glyn. "You don't mean to say that you have forgotten about it, you silly ass?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Blessed if I hadn't!" he said. "Good! We'll go along and see. If it's a success, we can dig up a lot of fun out of that invisible ink."

"If, you ass! Of course, it will be a success!"

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" yawned Monty Lowther.

"Oh, rats!"

Bernard Glyn was the first down, and he went at once into Study No. 6. He opened the cupboard door, and found the little pile of paper just as it had been left—so far as he could see, at all events. He picked up the top sheet, and examined it in the light at the study window. There was not a trace of writing on it, and the schoolboy inventor chuckled with satisfaction.

"It's simply a ripping success!" he murmured.

There was a blaze of early sunshine at the window of Study No. 6. Glyn opened the window, and laid the sheet upon the window-sill, and placed several inkpots upon it by way of paper-weight. The rays of the sun fell full upon the paper, and if there was anything in the qualities that Glyn attributed to his latest invention, the writing should have become visible during the next hour or so.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther followed him into the study a few minutes later, and looked gravely at the sheet spread upon the window-sill. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy came in, and they all surveyed it solemnly.

"Expowment goin' all wight, deah boy?" Arthur Augustus asked.

"Of course it is, ass!"

"Weally, Glyn—"

"The writing's not visible yet," Herries remarked.

Glyn snorted.

"If it was visible now, it wouldn't be invisible ink, would it, fathead?" he said. "Of course, there isn't the slightest trace of writing on the paper now. That's the beauty of the thing. But the action of the sun will gradually bring it to light."

"Bai Jove!"

"We'll come up here after breakfast, just before school, and look at it," said Glyn. "The writing will be perfectly clear by then."

"Oh, good!"

And the juniors went downstairs. The smile of satisfaction on Glyn's face was beautiful to see. The faith of his chums was not strong, but Glyn had the most complete confidence in his invention.

He confided the matter to several of his friends, and invited them to Blake's study to see the invisible ink become visible. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—Figgins & Co., of the New House—were very much interested, and they promised to look in just before morning lessons. So did Redfern of the Fourth.

Five minutes before the bell was timed to go for first lessons, quite a little crowd gathered in Study No. 6 in the School House.

The Terrible Three, and Figgins & Co., and Blake and his chums, and Kangaroo of the Shell, pretty well filled the

study as they crowded in. Bernard Glyn walked towards the open window, with the air of a showman who had something very special to display to an interested public.

He stopped at the window, and gazed at the paper, and a peculiar expression came over his face.

"Well, hand it in!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! We're waitin', deah boy!"

Bernard Glyn did not hand the paper in. Blake winked solemnly at Tom Merry.

"Quite a success, I'm sure, Glyn," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's have a look at it," said Figgins. "We've come a long way specially to see this wonderful invention—haven't we, Kerr?"

"Just so!" said Kerr, with a grin. "Hand it out, Glyn, old man."

"Only three minutes to first lesson," said Fatty Wynn.

"We've got to huck up, you know, Glyn," Kangaroo observed.

"Ahem!"

"We're all ready to cheer," remarked Monty Lowther.

"All you fellows open your mouths ready, and give a yell when I say the word."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's see the giddy marvel, Glyn."

"Ahem!"

Bernard Glyn, with a very red face, handed in the sheet of paper at last. The sheet was perfectly blank. There was no sign of writing on it whatever. It was slightly crinkled from exposure to the sun, and that was all.

The juniors all stared at it.

"Well?" said a chorus of voices.

"It doesn't seem to have come out," said Glyn.

"Bai Jove!"

"It's an invisible ink, isn't it?" asked Kerr.

"Yes."

"Well, that's all right; it's staying invisible, that's all. You had better re-christen it 'Glyn's Permanently Invisible Ink.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" growled Glyn.

"There goes the bell!" exclaimed Blake. "I'm off!"

"Leave it to cook," said Figgins, with a chuckle. "It may come out by the time we get out of the Form-room, Glyn."

Glyn nodded eagerly.

"Yes, that's rather a good idea. I suppose it simply requires a little more time. I'll leave it in the sun here."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway excuse me now; I shall be late."

And the Fourth-Formers and the Shell fellows streamed off to their respective Form-rooms. Glyn stayed behind to arrange the unfortunate sheet upon the sunny window-sill again, and then ran after them, and was a minute or two late in the Shell-room, and received twenty lines from Mr. Linton.

But Glyn did not mind the lines; he was thinking of his experiment. He had tried it before with success, and it was too bad that the first public experiment should be a blank failure. So far as he knew, he had been perfectly careful with the experiment, and he simply could not account for the ink so obstinately remaining invisible.

There was a recess after third lesson, when the boys were free from the Form-rooms for a quarter of an hour. Bernard Glyn ran at once from the Shell Form-room to Study No. 6.

There had been a bright sun on the window of the study for some hours now, and if the invisible ink intended to become visible at all, it must have done so by now. A crowd of sympathetic friends followed Glyn into the study, all the same fellows who had been there before.

Glyn took in the crinkled sheet of paper.

The juniors gazed at it.

It was a beautiful blank.

Not a single sign of writing was to be seen upon it.

Glyn's face was so disappointed that the juniors forbore to grin. It was very rough on the schoolboy inventor, and they reserved their laughter till afterwards.

"Well?" said Blake sympathetically.

"It hasn't come out," growled Glyn. "There must be something peculiar about this paper of Brooke's."

"H'm!"

"It isn't the same paper that we use, anyway," growled Glyn. "I'll try again on some other paper."

"The papah looks quite ordinawy, deah boy, exceptin' that the wuled lines are darkah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Quite ordinary," said Monty Lowther.

"In fact, extra ordinary," remarked Redfern.

Glyn grunted discontentedly.

"Yes; but my ink is a perfect success, and so the fault must be in the paper," he said tartly.

"My dear chap, you could have beaten Socrates himself in argument," said Redfern admiringly. "I never heard such giddy logic before."

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B: MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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"Yaas, wathah!"

Glyn tore the sheet into fragments, and scattered them in the grate.

"Blow the thing," he said. "I'll go to my study now and write out a fresh sheet, and we'll try it this afternoon. You'll see that it's a complete success."

"Ahem!" murmured Blake.

Glyn strode away, and when he was gone the juniors allowed themselves to chuckle.

"We were going to give you New House chaps quite a high old time with that giddy invisible ink," grinned Blake. "But there's something rotten in the state of Denmark, somehow. It hasn't come off."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My pwivate opinion," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "My pwivate opinion, deah boys, is that Glyn is an ass. If he had accepted my assistance in makin' that stuff I have vewy little doubt that it would have been a howlin' success. I considah—Pway do not walk away while I am talkin', deah boys, it's had form."

But the juniors were guilty of that bad form.

CHAPTER 9.

Arthur Augustus is Awfully Good!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY wore a thoughtful expression upon his aristocratic brow when the Fourth Form came out of the Form-room at the end of morning lessons. It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and Tom Merry & Co. were playing cricket with the New House fellows. D'Arcy had a place in the team; but D'Arcy had been thinking. The letter of brotherly advice from his elder brother, Lord Conway, had made a great impression upon the susceptible mind of the swell of St. Jim's, and Arthur Augustus was determined to show that he could be useful as well as ornamental. And when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had an idea in his head it was very difficult for anybody to get it out again.

The swell of St. Jim's waited in the passage till the Shell came out, a few minutes after the Fourth.

The Terrible Three came down the passage with linked arms, and as Arthur Augustus held up his hand they stopped like soldiers at the gesture of command.

"Halt!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Halt it is!" said Manners.

"I want to speak to you, Tom Mewwy. It's wathah important—about the cwicket," said D'Arcy, without taking any notice of the humorous expression of the Terrible Three. "We are playin' the New House this aftahnoon. Do you think the House team would have any chance against Figgins & Co. if I stayed out?"

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"Well, yes, I believe we should have a ghost of a chance," said Tom Merry. "Of course, it would be a frightful loss. But I fancy I could scare up a chap in the School House who might be able to take your place after a fashion."

"We should have to go over the House with a microscope to find him, but we'd do our level best," said Lowther solemnly.

"Pway don't be funnay, Lowthah. I've got somethin' wathah important on this aftahnoon, you know, and if I could stay out without lettin' the team down—"

"It would buck it up," said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"I don't think I'd worry about that, Gussy," said Tom Merry kindly. "Young Reilly would jump at the chance of playing in a House match, and he will be all right."

"You feel sure that it won't mean a lickin' for the House?" asked Arthur Augustus very thoughtfully.

"Oh, quite!"

"Vewy well, then, I think I'll stay out, if you don't mind," said D'Arcy.

"Right you are! I'll speak to Reilly. Something awfully important on?" asked Tom Merry. "Going to see your tailor, I suppose?"

"No, I'm not goin' to see my tailah," said D'Arcy seriously.

"I'm goin' to help Bwooke."

"Help Brooke?"

"Yaas, wathah! He's stayin' here till thwee o'clock, and then he's goin' home to work, and I'm goin' to help him."

"My hat! Has Brooke asked you?"

"No; I'm goin' to do this unasked. It's up to a fellow to make himself useful sometimes, you know."

"I—I suppose so," said Tom Merry. "Quite sure you can help Brooke, I suppose?"

"Oh, yaas, wathah! I shall wegulahly wire into it, you know."

"Good! I can see Brooke blossoming out into a bloated millionaire if he takes you into the firm," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

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The Terrible Three walked on, grinning.

Arthur Augustus had been much exercised in his mind about staying out of the cricket match, but Tom Merry's assurance on that point had relieved his mind. Having settled the matter to his satisfaction, he went in search of Brooke. He found him in Study No. 6.

Dick Brooke, being a day-boy, was supposed to use the Form-room for any work he had to do at St. Jim's, but he naturally preferred a study if he could have one; and the chums of No. 6 were only too willing to let him use their room. And as they were not likely to want the room again till evening preparation, Brooke had it all to himself now.

The Fourth-Former was working at the study table, getting ready for the extra lesson he was to have from Mr. Lathom after dinner. Brooke was working for an examination for a valuable scholarship, and he had taken "extra toot" with Mr. Lathom, his Form-master, who took a great interest in the boy, and helped him in every way he could.

Brooke looked up as D'Arcy came in, with his cheerful smile. Dick Brooke had very pleasant blue eyes, though there was an expression in them, and a puckering of the brows, which would have told any observer that he was short-sighted. This was one of the troubles which the lad bore with quiet patience.

When he first discovered that his sight was weakening, it had been a painful shock to him. It was upon the cricket-field, when he had muffed the easiest of catches, that the fact had been first borne home upon his mind. Now he took it as a fact that had to be reckoned with. Mr. Lathom had found it out, too, when, looking over an imposition written out by Brooke, he had found the writing wandering on the paper, instead of following the ruled lines. And when he found the boy at his desk one day, with his head bent down within six inches of the paper to write, in order to follow the ruled lines, Mr. Lathom had given him a word of kindly advice, which Brooke had followed. Brooke used ruled paper now on which the ruled lines were darker, and more easily seen without straining his eyes. Brooke had been easily able to get the paper at a stationer's in Wayland, and he found it a relief—and he little dreamed that a cold-hearted and calculating young rascal in the Form had taken special note of the fact that he used a variety of writing-paper easily distinguished from that supplied by the school, and that the fact was to be made use of in a miserable scheme to injure him.

Arthur Augustus glanced at Brooke's work on the table. It was rather out of D'Arcy's depth; though the swell of St. Jim's prided himself a little upon being as keen in the class-room as on the cricket-field.

"Gettin' on all wight?" he asked.

"Yes, thanks!" said Brooke.

"Goin' home to work this aftahnoon?"

Brooke smiled.

"Yes," he said. "I'm sorry I can't stay and watch the cricket; I'd like to see you fellows play."

"You wouldn't see me play," said D'Arcy. "I'm standin' out."

"Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Not at all, deah boy. I'm goin' to make myself useful. My eldah bwothah, Conway, says that I ought to learn to be useful as well as ornamental. Awful cheek, you know; these eldah bwothahs have a feahful nerve sometimes. But I think there's somethin' in it, and I'm goin' to buck up. I'm goin' to help you."

Brooke started a little.

"But I—" He hesitated, and D'Arcy smiled good-naturedly.

"I don't mean with the lessons, deah boy. I know that's wathah too deep for me, and I can't wead more than two lines of that wotten Anabasis; I couldn't tell the difference between a satwap and pawasang in Gweek. I'm goin' to help you with your work."

"But, my dear chap—"

"Now, pway don't be an ass, like Glyn, Bwooke, old man," said D'Arcy. "Glyn wefused my help and he has completely mucked up his latest invention. Wally wouldn't let me help him with his Latin and he's been wagged by old Selby. I twust you have more bwains. If I help you with your work, you'll have more time to swot ovah that exam, won't you?"

"You're awfully good, D'Arcy. But—"

"No buts in the case, deah boy," said D'Arcy cheerfully. "I'm comin' home with you this aftahnoon, to help you—unless I shall be in the way, of course."

Under the circumstances, Brooke could hardly have had the heart to tell Arthur Augustus that he would be in the way.

"Thanks very much!" he said. "Come home, by all means, and have some tea with me—and if you can help me, I—I shall be jolly glad."

"It's a go, deah boy. I won't wowwy you any more now; wire in!"

And Arthur Augustus quitted the study. He looked very pleased with himself at dinner-time. It was a new experience to the swell of St. Jim's to feel that he was useful. He confided to Blake that, as a mattah of fact, a D'Arcy could be just as useful as anybody else, if he brougth his bwa in to bear on it. Indeed, he had a theow that all the work of the country could be done bettah by the uppah classes, if they could only have found time to do it. At which Blake grinned.

When the School House eleven went down to the cricket-field to meet Figgins & Co., Arthur Augustus did not go with them. He gave Reilly some fatherly advice on the subject of cricket, which was not received with any marked effusion of gratitude. Then he hung about watching the cricketers, till it was time to go home with Brooke. Brooke had had his extra tuition in Mr. Lathom's study, and he came out with his books under his arm, and joined D'Arcy in the quadrangle. Levison and Mellish were lounging about the school gates when they went out. Levison cast a venomous glance after the day-boy.

"Queer how people take to that bounder," he confided to Mellish. "Gussy is frightfully particular, and he cottons to Brooke like anything. And that fellow has a father who gets tight in the village, and rolls round spouting Greek poetry with yokels grinning at him. Crump, the bobby, had to shift him once, when he was standing outside the Red Cow reciting the Iliad at the top of his voice, and getting all Rylcombe round him. And that's the fellow D'Arcy picks out to chum with. Blessed if I can understand it!"

"And he won't speak to us!" grunted Mellish.

"No," said Levison. "When we got Brooke's father to come here, squiffy, I thought Brooke was done in, for good, at St. Jim's. And the brute holds his head as high as ever, and the fellows seem to think as much of him."

"It's queer!"

Levison gritted his teeth.

"I'll bring his head lower, though," he said. "I'll make him squirm, the cad! I've got everything in order now—and I'm going to fix it on him this afternoon."

"Good egg!" said Mellish.

Levison tapped his pocket.

"I've got it all here," he said. "I'm going out now to get the practice done. I'll do the paper in the study this evening. That won't take long. Bye-bye!"

And the cad of the Fourth strolled out of the school gateway, and went into the wood, to seek a secluded spot where he could get in his practice at penmanship unseen.

CHAPTER 10.

Helping Brooke.

DICK BROOKE had come out of Mr. Lathom's study, looking a little fatigued, but the walk through the fresh green woods freshened him up wonderfully. He talked little as he walked along with the elegant Fourth-Former, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy quite made up for any deficiencies in that line. The swell of St. Jim's kept up a steady flow of conversation as they walked through the woods, and came out upon the wide heathery moor. D'Arcy had visited the Brooke home before, with his chums, and he was known and liked there. Whether he would be able to help Brooke with his work was a question. But there was no doubt that he would be a welcome and agreeable visitor. Dick's father was not at home, but Mrs. Brooke and Amy greeted the junior kindly, though they could not help feeling a little surprised when they learned D'Arcy's object. Little Amy looked at the swell of St. Jim's, who looked like a picture of elegance from his gleaming boots to his carefully-brushed hair, and she did not think that he would be of much use in Dick Brooke's little workshop. But she did not say so. Brooke went up to his room at once. He had no time to lose. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained chatting with the mother and daughter for a good hour, before he remembered that he was there to be useful. Then he followed Brooke upstairs.

The house on the moor was a large and rambling building. A great part of it was uninhabitable, and had fallen into decay; and at night the wind would wail in a ghostly way through the shattered windows and broken roofs. The portion of the building that was still in a state of repair was more than the little family required, however. Brooke had a large upper room with a good light for his workshop, as he called it, and, indeed, a great deal of work was done there. Mr. Brooke sometimes came up to help his son, and he was about as useful as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was likely to be. He would sit on a stool or on the bench, with the fumes of wine strong in his head, and the grave manner of a man who was

determined not to let it be seen that he had been drinking. He would talk incessantly on all kinds of subjects, from his successes at college in his younger days to his losses at Monte Carlo or on the racecourse, which had reduced the family to their present straitened circumstances. Brooke would listen with perfect patience and kindness, for in spite of the man's many weaknesses of character, Dick loved him dearly, and respected him as well. It was not for a son to set up to judge his father, and Mr. Brooke, too, was kindness and amiability itself. He was nobody's enemy but his own. But he had been a very dangerous enemy to himself.

Sometimes he would insist upon doing some work, and then Dick would sigh a little to himself as the old gentleman ruined sheets of paper and Bristol board that had cost good hard money in Wayland town. Mr. Brooke had been a painter of great artistic ability in his younger days, and he still sometimes sold his sketches; but, as a rule, his hand trembled too much for his work to be of any use. And he sadly declared that there was no market for art in these days. Dick, in the time he spared from school, could make money by painting a fat bull to advertise some beef extract, or by illuminating some text to hang up in some local Ebenezer; while the art dealer in Wayland would shake his head over Mr. Brooke's pictures.

"They don't want art, Dicky," Mr. Brooke would confide to his son. "The grocer over in Wayland pays you ten bob for painting him a bull three feet by two, as much like a real bull as—as a grasshopper, and Dabbs, at the colour shop, snorts, sir—snorts at a picture by me—John Brooke. He says he can't sell 'em. They don't want good drawing in these days, Dick, and they don't want good colour. They want all the colours in the box dabbed on in a chunk, sir, and not looking like anything except a palette that hasn't been cleaned for a dog's age. They call that impressionism, and buy it. Groo!"

Dick Brooke was busy at his bench when Arthur Augustus came in.

"Weedy?" asked D'Arcy.

Brooke looked round, and smiled. He was deep in his work, but it was not work to tax the brain very much. He had a sheet of Bristol board of imperial size on the bench before him. On the board, in old English letters, was traced,

"THE LORD LOVETH A CHEERFUL GIVER!"

Brooke had pencilled out the words, and was colouring them with a great richness of red and blue, and he had a book of gold-leaf beside him for the final gilding.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "What's that?"

"It's for Mr. Tinkler, of the Wayland Chapel," Brooke explained. "It's to hang up on the wall."

"Bai Jove! It's awfl'y clevah of you to be able to do that, Bwooke, deah boy," said D'Arcy, in great admiration.

"Does he pay for it?"

Brooke smiled.

"Yes, rather! I'm not doing it for fun. I get fifteen bob for this."

"That's wippin'! Blessed if I wouldn't take it up myself, and do it in the studay at St. Jim's; but I wouldn't take your twade away," said D'Arcy.

Brooke laughed.

"No, I know you wouldn't do that, Gussy," he said.

"How can I help you, old fellow?"

Brooke hesitated.

"You can put the colour on, if you like, while I block out another of them," he said.

"Good egg! I'm wathah a good hand at watah-colours, you know. Give me the bwush. Shall I make it all wed."

"No; only the initials are red."

"Good! Does it mattah if the colour wuns over the pencil lines?"

"Well, it does, as a matter of fact. Keep to the lines."

"All wight."

Brooke yielded to the brush of Arthur Augustus, and began with his pencil on another sheet. The blocking out did not take him long, and then he looked at D'Arcy's progress. Arthur Augustus had nearly covered an initial letter with red, but his unskilled hand had not mastered the brush. There was red all over the letter, and all round it, and on several places on the cardboard. Brooke's heart sank a little.

"I suppose that doesn't mattah?" said D'Arcy, a little anxiously.

"No-no! I'll put a little extra gold leaf on, and an ornamental scroll down here over the smudge. Keep to the lines if you can, though."

"Yaas, wathah! I'm gettin' bettah ewevy minute. I think I should be soon able to knock these things off like anythin', and earn quite a lot of money, if I should evah go on the wocks!" said D'Arcy.

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Brooke smiled. He had no more texts to do, but he had other work. He took a pencil and paper, and sat down at the bench, and screwed up his brows thoughtfully. He wrote a few lines on the paper, and screwed up his brows again. Arthur Augustus looked round at him curiously.

"Goin' oah your Gweek verbs?" he asked.

"No; this is work!"

"Bai Jove! May I see it?"

"If you like."

Arthur Augustus took the paper, and read what was written upon it in great amazement. It ran as follows:

"The cottage was a thatched one,
The outside old and bare,
But just inside was joy and pride,
For Tipton's Tea was there!"

"And little Jim was joyful,
His skin was smooth as silk;
He was the collier's only child,
And reared on Tipton's Milk!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "That weads somethin' like a poem I wead somewhere, but—but it's different. What does it mean?"

Brooke grinned.

"It's an advertisement," he explained. "When I've finished this classic poem, it's going to be printed on hand-bills, and distributed all over Wayland and Rylcombe and the countryside generally."

"Gweat Scott! Do you get ordals for poetry?" exclaimed D'Arcy, in astonishment.

"Yes; not for epics, you know—this kind!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus, filled with admiration, turned back to his painting, and discovered that he had dipped one sleeve of his elegant Eton jacket into the red, and the other into the blue.

"Oh, deah!" he ejaculated.

Brooke jumped up at once.

"You'd better run down and get mother to clean that for you before it dries," he said.

"But I'm helpin' you—"

"Oh, that's all right; I'm nearly finished."

"All sewene, then!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy descended, and Brooke set to work to repair the damage he had done, and worked away steadily for a whole hour, and then went downstairs. He found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy chatting very cheerfully with Mrs. Brooke and Amy. The swell of St. Jim's glanced at him.

"I was just comin' up," he said.

Brooke nodded brightly.

"All serene—it's finished now," he said. "You—you've helped me splendidly, and I'm jolly glad you came over."

"Good!" said D'Arcy. "I shall write to old Conway and tell him all about this, and we'll see whethah he'll say again that a chap can't be useful. Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus had a very pleasant tea with Dick Brooke and his mother and sister. He gave a little sigh as he rose to go at last.

"I've enjoyed myself splendidly, Brooke, old man," he said, as Dick walked down to the footpath with him. "I'm beginnin' to undahstand now what the fellows mean in books when they say that there's no sauce like hard work. I really believe that there's no gweatah enjoyment than sittin' down to a meal aftah havin' worked weally hard!"

And Dick Brooke smilingly assented.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked back to St. Jim's very well pleased with himself. He met Tom Merry & Co. coming off the cricket-ground.

"Had a good day?" asked Blake, with a grin.

"Yaas, wathah! I've been helpin' old Bwooke. And as a mattah of fact, deah boys, I can tell you fworm expewience that there's a feelin' of vewy gweat satisfaction in workin'."

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hard for an afternoon, instead of laziness would a cricket-ground like some chaps."

To which the cricketers replied, with one accord, and somewhat to the surprise of the swell of St. Jim's:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 11.

Very Suspicious!

"GOOD!" muttered Levison.

The cad of the Fourth was sitting on a log in a deep, shady glade in the heart of Rylcombe Wood. Upon the log beside him lay a sheet of paper, covered with writing, in Latin. It was one of the sheets of Dick Brooke's imposition, which Levison's confederate had purloined from the Fourth Form-room the previous evening. To Levison's disappointment, the loss of the impot. had not led to its being renewed or doubled for Brooke, as he had confidently expected.

If Levison himself had failed to take in an imposition, and had explained that it had been destroyed or lost, the chances were great that Mr. Lathom would have declined to believe him, and would have given him double the number of lines to do. But with Brooke it was different. Brooke had explained, when the Fourth Form-master questioned him, that he had left the lines on the desk, and Mr. Lathom had not even thought of doubting his statement. They were gone, and the Form-master supposed that they had been blown away or removed by chance; he never thought of doubting Brooke's word.

That was another example of what Levison and Mellish called favouritism; their word would not have been taken in a similar case. Mr. Lathom took Brooke's word because he knew him to be honourable; and for exactly the opposite reason, he would not have taken Levison's.

Levison was disappointed. But that, after all, was a small matter, in comparison with the rest of his scheme. He had the stolen imposition beside him now, as a copy. He had been at work an hour in the deep wood. He had a blotting-pad across his knees, and a good supply of paper, and a fountain pen. He had covered sheet after sheet with writing, in imitation of Brooke's.

He began by copying out the imposition word for word, making the writing as like as he could, and when he had secured a good copy of the impot., he began to write other words, keeping the original sheet before his eyes so as to get the exact form of each letter in his mind.

A dozen sheets lay in the grass at his feet. Such words as "Mr. Lathom," and "old fool," and "sack" appeared many times, and each time that they were written they were more like Dick Brooke's handwriting.

When Levison raised his head finally from his task, and ejaculated "Good!" he had a paper before him upon which sentences were written in a hand so like Dick Brooke's that Brooke himself would have been puzzled to tell the difference.

Brooke would have known that he had not written the words, because they were words that he never would write; but from the handwriting he could not have told it, so exact was Levison's cunning imitation.

The Fourth Form cad's eyes gleamed as he read over what he had written. He grinned with satisfaction, and folded up the sheet, and put it in an inside pocket.

"That will do for me to copy from," he muttered. "I'll get rid of the rest here now, including Brooke's impot. It would be dangerous to keep it."

He closed the fountain-pen. Unconsciously he had spoken aloud; he never dreamed that there might be ears to hear, deep in the silent wood. He rose from the log and stretched himself.

"Brooke's got his quietus now, if he only knew it," he muttered. "It will do me good to see the cad's face when the Head expels him from St. Jim's."

He stooped to pick up the sheets of paper lying in the grass—a dozen of them, at least, covered with writing in varying stages of imitation.

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"Mother, dear, don't!" muttered Dick Brooke. "I'm expelled, but I shall have to stand it, that's all." Outside in the darkness a big dog sprang towards the window, as if in sympathy with the poor woman sobbing within. His master heard the sounds of grief. "Master Brooke, you're in trouble!" (See Chapter 13.)

As he did so there was a rustle in the thickets, and a face, much in need of washing, and surmounted by a ragged cap, looked out.

Levison started, and turned.

His eyes became fixed upon the grimy visage of Harthur. He drew a quick breath of relief; he had feared that it might be a St. Jim's fellow.

The youthful tramp grinned at him.

"'Ere we are agin, my lord!" he remarked. "Quiet, Buster, ole man! You ain't got to go for 'im unless he cuts up rusty."

Levison cast a nervous look at the dog. Buster looked very much inclined to go for him, in spite of his master's prohibition.

The cad of the Fourth gathered up the papers with a quick, nervous hand. Harthur came out of the thickets.

"Wot's the little gime?" he demanded.

"Mind your own business!" said Levison fiercely. "What do you want here?"

Harthur grinned.

"I don't want nothing," he said. "I bin watching you the last ten minutes, that's all. I bin having my lunch in the wood 'ere, and fell asleep arter it. Don't try to run, young feller-me-lad, or Buster will 'ave you as sure as a gun."

"I—I wasn't going to run," muttered Levison.

"Orlright, then, don't! Wot are them papers?"

"Mind your own bizney!"

"You was saying something about Brooke—that's the chap who 'elped me agin your gang," said Harthur. "He told me his name, and a fine feller he is—werry different from your breed. You've got your knife into him for 'elping me, and you're playing some rotten gime against him."

Levison gritted his teeth.

"I'm not," he said. "I—I came here to do some of my exercises, that's all."

Harthur gave him a suspicious look.

"You was copying off that paper," he said.

"Yes; they're Latin verbs."

"Lemme see."

Harthur was evidently very suspicious. He read Levison's character like a book—it was not difficult to read. He suspected, from the muttered words he had heard, that the cad of St. Jim's had some scheme in his mind for revenge upon Dick Brooke, and Harthur would have taken a very great deal of trouble for the fellow who had rescued him and befriended him. He looked keenly at the papers, but Latin was a language of which poor Harthur had probably never even heard. The cad of the Fourth would gladly have prevented him from looking at the papers, and he clenched his fists once, but a deep growl from Buster warned him to be careful. He unclenched his hands, grinding his teeth with rage, while Harthur examined the papers.

"Wot's all this 'ere?" asked Harthur, examining the impot, with puzzled eyes.

"Latin," said Levison sullenly.

"Wot's that?"

"A language, you ignorant brute—a dead language."

"Wot do you write it fur, if it's a dead langwidge?" asked Harthur.

"We learn it at school."

"Does yer?" said Harthur. "Well, that ain't in my line. I'm pretty glad I don't go to your school, if you've ave to stick that sorter stuff. You bin copying this?"

"Yes."

"You've been imitating the writing," said Harthur, examining the other sheets. "This 'ere ain't your writing. You been copying it."

"It's an exercise in penmanship," Levison explained, with a great appearance of candour. "We copy the writing, and learn the verbs at the same time."

"My heye! Do you?" said Harthur. "Hallo! This ain't Latin verbs, or wotever they are—this 'ere is English!"

And he looked at one of the sheets upon which the name of Mr. Lathom and several other words were written in imitation of Brooke's hand.

"Yes, that was because I got sick of the grammar," said Levison.

Harthur looked at him sharply.

"You're telling lies," he said, with simple directness.

"What?"

"You wouldn't explain it all so neat and clear if you wasn't up to some dirty trick," said Harthur, with great keenness. "My belief is that you're up to something agin Dick Brooke."

Levison forced a laugh.

"What nonsense!" he said. "Those papers are merely exercises, and of no value. I was going to destroy them—they're no good."

"Oh, they ain't no good, aren't they?" said Harthur slowly.

"Not in the least."

Harthur rolled up the sheets and put them in his pocket.

"Then I'll keep them," he said.

Levison started.

"What do you want them for?" he exclaimed.

"Maybe I might wanter learn Latin one o' these days," grinned Harthur. "Maybe I might meet Master Brooke, and ask 'im to explain them to me."

Levison turned quite pale.

"Look here, they're my papers. Hand them over to me!" he exclaimed, with a show of bluster.

Harthur chuckled.

"Wot for, if they ain't any good?" he asked.

Levison set his teeth.

"Give me those papers, you low cad, or—"

Buster growled ominously, and Levison broke off. The young vagrant chuckled. He was not afraid of Levison, even without Buster to aid him.

"Well, what will you do?" he asked.

"Look here, I'll give you five bob for them," said Levison desperately.

Harthur's expression changed.

"Now you're talkin'!" he exclaimed. "I'll tell you wot I'll do. I don't know wot all this means, but if it's anything up agin Dick Brooke, I'm down on it. You says 'ow these papers ain't no good."

"Yes, I want to destroy them."

"Ere's a go, then; if they're done in, it's all right," said Harthur. "You make an end of 'em with me lookin' on, and I'll take the five bob, and it's a go."

Levison almost gasped with relief. So long as he got the papers destroyed, it did not matter a button to him whether Harthur was looking on or not. He assented eagerly.

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"It's a go. Hand over the papers, and here's your money."

"I ain't 'anding them over," said Harthur, with a shake of the head. "I ain't trusting you. I'll finish 'em for you, and you can watch me. Come this way!"

He stepped through the wood to where the Feeder—a little tributary of the River Ryll—ran foaming and tumbling under the shadows of the trees. He drew the papers from his pocket, and folded them up into a tight ball.

"Now, 'and over the dibs, and the papers goes into the water," he said.

"Look here, can I trust you?" muttered Levison. "You won't take the money and keep the papers?"

"Course, I won't!" said Harthur. "You gottier trust me."

It was not Levison's way to trust anybody; but he had no choice in this case. He unwillingly placed the five shillings in the hand of the vagrant. Harthur raised his hand, and the ball of twisted paper shot out into the stream, and was whirled away on the swift current in the twinkling of an eye. Harthur turned to the cad of St. Jim's with a grin.

"Ain't I done it?" he demanded.

Levison drew a gasping breath of relief.

"Yes, yes, that's all right."

And with a weight gone from his mind, the cad of the Fourth tramped away through the trees. He heard the voice of the vagrant behind him.

"Down, Buster! Down!"

Levison quickened his pace. He was terribly afraid of the dog. As a matter of fact, the dog was not moving. Harthur had called out those words for the especial purpose of accelerating Levison's departure. There was a somewhat unpleasant grin on the face of the young vagabond. As Levison's hurried footsteps crashed away through the wood, and died in the distance, Harthur turned from the spot, and hurried down the stream.

A dozen yards below where he stood, the waters shallowed, and thick green rushes grew across the stream from side to side, forming a kind of barrier, through which the waters flowed with ease, but upon which drifting sticks and twigs caught and swayed. Bobbing up and down against the reeds was the ball of paper Harthur had tossed into the stream, not yet soaked through, and still floating. Harthur patted the head of his "dorg," and pointed.

"Fetch it, Buster!"

The dog plunged into the shallow stream.

In a few seconds he had the little bundle in his teeth, and was swimming back with it held high and dry above the water. Harthur took it from the dog's jaws, and wiped it on his ragged jacket.

"Arf of 'em soaked," he muttered, examining his prize; "but 'arf's all right, and the rest'll dry. I wonder wot it all means. I wonder. That feller is as full of mischief as a hegg is of meat, that's as sure as my name's Harthur—if it is Harthur, which I don't know, more does nobody else. He's got his knife into Master Brooke somethin' horrid. I can see that. He was plannin' somethin'; I don't know what. I told 'im I'd chuck the papers into the water for five bob, and I kept my word." Harthur grinned over his rather sharp practice; he had not been brought up among persons of the strictest morality. "I'm goin' to keep these 'ere papers, and if I ever see Master Brooke agin, maybe he'll know whether there's any 'arm in them. I don't trust that Levison feller—not 'arf a hinch!"

And in that Harthur was certainly wise!

CHAPTER 12.

A Shock for the Form-Master.

"GOOD heavens!" Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, uttered that startled exclamation.

It was Thursday morning, and the Fourth Form were assembled in their Form-room for morning lessons.

Little Mr. Lathom had come in, cheerful and good-tempered as usual, and blinked at the juniors, and given them his usual kindly nod.

Then he had gone to his desk and opened it.

And as he did so, he uttered that startled and amazed exclamation. The Fourth-Formers simply jumped.

Bang!

The lid of the desk fell from the startled master's hand, and fell with a report that rang like a pistol-shot through the Form-room.

Two or three of the juniors rose to their feet in alarm. It was not uncommon for little japes to be played on a master, such as putting rats or frogs in a desk. The juniors concluded that something of the sort had taken place now.

"Is anything wrong, sir?" asked Redfern.

Mr. Lathom gasped.

"Good heavens!"

"What is it, sir?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Can I assist you, sir?"

"Oh, dear!"

"Is there something in your desk, sir?" asked Jack Blake, coming out of his place in the Form.

"I—I never was so insulted in my life!" gasped the Form-master.

There was a general exclamation from the Fourth. They all liked and respected Mr. Lathom very much. He was kindness itself to them, and probably the most respected and beloved master at the school. And his short sight and his absent-mindedness gave the Fourth a sort of protective feeling towards him. They never japed him; and as for insulting him, there was hardly a fellow in the Fourth Form who would not have punched anybody's head for suggesting such a thing.

"Insulted, sir!" exclaimed the Fourth-Formers, with one voice.

"Yes, insulted! It is scandalous, disrespectful, infamous!"

"Oh, sir!"

Mr. Lathom opened his desk again with a trembling hand, and took out a sheet of paper which lay upon the top of all the other things in the desk. There were a couple of lines of writing across the paper. The juniors could see that, though they could not see what words were written.

"What is it, sir?" asked Levison. "Some rotten practical joke, sir? It must have been a chap in some other Form did it, sir. Nobody here would do it, I'm sure."

"Yaas, wathah, sir. I agree with Levison for once," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We would wag anybody bald-headed, sir, for doin' such a wotten thing."

Mr. Lathom looked at his Form, the paper in his hand. There was a glistening on his eyelashes, which showed that he was deeply moved. It gave the Form a thrill as they saw it—a thrill of sympathy and indignation.

"I have always thought that my Form respected me," said Mr. Lathom, in a trembling voice.

"We do, sir!" exclaimed Figgins hotly. "If any cad has written anything insulting there, sir, we—we'll scrag him!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

Mr. Lathom gulped. He held up the paper, but he was too far away for the juniors to make out what was written there.

"I have always done my best," he said, "to make myself liked and respected in this Form. I have had occasion to detain boys, and to cane them sometimes, but I think you know that I have done my best to be a good master."

"We know it, sir. We—we'd back you up like anything, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yet I have found this paper in my desk," said Mr. Lathom. "It has been written, and placed there ready for me to find, by some evilly-disposed boy. I am not a hard-hearted man, I hope, but I cannot let this insult pass. The culprit must be found out and punished. I shall place the matter in the hands of the headmaster."

"May we see the paper, sir?"

"Yes, yes; certainly!"

The Fourth-Formers crowded out of the forms. They gathered round the Form-master, and there was a general exclamation of anger as they read the paper. For this was what was written, in a clear, firm hand:

"Mr. Lathom is an old fool, and we all wish that he would get the sack!"

"It's a lie, sir!" yelled Blake. "We don't wish anything of the kind. And I'm certain that nobody in the Fourth ever wrote that."

"Quite imposs., sir!"

"Some awful cad must have done it, sir."

"Some crawling reptile!" said Redfern.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Lathom choked.

"I—I have had a very painful shock," he said, in a faltering voice. "I am very happy to hear what you say about it, my boys. I cannot conceive who could have been wicked and cruel enough to insult me in this way. I shall take this paper at once to the Head. Pray keep order while I am gone."

"Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Lathom, very much agitated, quitted the Form-room with the paper in his hand. There was no disorder, but there was a babel of voices when he was gone.

"The uthah, wottah who wrote that—"

"Ought to be boiled!"

"In oil!"

"Hanging would be too good for him!" said Figgins, crimson with rage. "Poor old Lathom! It hits him harder than it would any other master here, because he's so jolly tender-hearted."

"Yaas, wathah! It's simply outside."

"I can't imagine any fellow here being cad enough to do it," said Blake; "but they'll find out. The fellow who did it must be as big a fool as rascal, for they will find him out by his handwriting."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!"

"The Head will think of it, you bet!" said Jack Blake. "And the sooner they find him out the better. He will be expelled from the school, as sure as a gun!"

"And serve him jolly well right—whoever he is!" said Levison.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Mellish. "I should draw a line at putting a thing like that in a master's desk. It's altogether too thick. It wouldn't be so bad if it was old Ratty of the New House. But Mr. Lathom—"

"It's too rotten!"

"Caddish!"

"Beastly!"

"Yaas, wathah! By the way, did any of you chaps recognise the hand?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I nevah thought of it. But did you?"

"I—" began Brooke, turning rather red.

All eyes were upon Brooke at once.

"Do you know the fist, Brooke?"

"It struck me as being something like my own handwriting," said Brooke rather uncomfortably. "Of course, it wasn't mine!"

Jack Blake laughed.

"No; we know it wasn't yours, Brooke, old man. You couldn't do a mean, rotten thing like that!"

"Wathah not!"

"Look out, here comes the Head!"

The buzz of voices died away as Mr. Lathom re-entered the Form-room, and with him came Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 13.

Shame!

DR. HOLMES was looking sterner than the juniors had ever seen him looking before. Even on an occasion when they had seen him expel a fellow from the school his brow had not been so dark and stern. Under his contracted brows his eyes were gleaming with a light that was not pleasant to see.

Little Mr. Lathom, still greatly agitated, peered through his glasses at the boys, who stood silent and respectful under the stern glance of the Head. The Head held the paper in his hand now.

"Boys!" His voice was deep as distant thunder. "Boys! The master of this Form has been insulted in a way that I can only describe as infamous. Boys have been guilty of many reckless things at this school, it is true, in the course of the history of St. Jim's. But for sheer wanton wickedness and cruelty, I do not think that this insult to Mr. Lathom can be equalled. It is infamous!"

The Head paused, and there was a murmur from the Fourth. The juniors exchanged glances, and Jack Blake stepped forward.

"We all think the same about it, sir," he said. "It's a rotten shame, sir! And Mr. Lathom knows that the whole Form likes him and respects him, sir. And if the fellow who wrote that paper is found out, sir, we all think he ought to be expelled."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

The doctor's face relaxed a little.

"Thank you, Blake!" he said quietly. "I am glad to hear that this outrage is condemned by the boys of this Form as much as by myself. The boy must and shall be discovered. And you may be certain that he will be expelled. I should not dream of showing him the slightest mercy. We shall now proceed to inquire into the matter."

"It can't have been a Fourth-Former did that, sir," ventured Figgins.

"I shall examine the Fourth Form first, Figgins, and if there is no result I shall proceed to the other Forms," said the Head. "This message certainly sounds as if it were written by a member of this Form who nourishes a wicked hatred towards his Form-master. Each of you will take his pen and write out these words upon a sheet of paper, so that the handwriting may be compared."

"Yes, sir."

The juniors sat down at their desks.

Mr. Lathom, who seemed almost overcome, sank into a seat. Dr. Holmes stood like a rock while the juniors were writing. His brow was stern and relentless. It was only too clear from his look that the delinquent, when discovered, had no mercy to expect.

The writing was done in a few minutes. The sheets were

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taken up by the boys in turn, and compared with the one in the hand of the doctor.

As Dick Brooke showed up his sheet Dr. Holmes was seen to start a little and fix a sharp look upon Brooke. He signed to Brooke to stand aside, while the rest of the Form came up. When the comparing of the papers was finished the juniors went back to their places, only Brooke remaining out. The face of Dick Brooke was pale.

"Brooke!" The Head's voice was like iron.

"Yes, sir?" said Brooke firmly.

"Look at these two papers again, Brooke. Can you see any difference between the two sentences in the writing?"

Dick Brooke's brain swam as he looked.

Was it some horrible dream?

How did that sentence come to be written there in his handwriting? For it was his handwriting—every line, every curve, every little trick of the pen was reproduced there.

An exclamation swept like a gust through the Form.

"Brooke!"

"Good heavens!"

Dick Brooke was almost the last fellow the juniors would have suspected.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dazedly. "It's—it's imposs."

"Brooke!" said Levison. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Well, Brooke?" said the Head.

Brooke started as if out of a fearful dream.

"It's not my writing, sir," he stammered.

"Is there any difference?"

"I—I—I can't see any, sir."

"Mr. Lathom, look at this writing, please."

The Fourth Form-master obeyed.

"It is Brooke's writing, is it not?"

Mr. Lathom nodded.

"It is Brooke's writing, sir," he said miserably. "Brooke's writing and Brooke's paper. Brooke uses this writing-paper with darker lines than that served out to the Form here on account of his short sight. It is his paper and his writing. Heaven forgive him for this!" said Mr. Lathom, in a deeply-moved voice. "I could never have suspected him of this without the plainest proof. I have tried to be kind to him. If I have detained him, if I have ever been hard upon him, it was because I thought it was my duty. I believed that this boy respected me, and, indeed, that he had some personal regard for me. I am shocked more than I can say."

And the little gentleman's voice broke as he concluded.

Dick Brooke staggered as he stood there.

"Have you anything to say, Brooke?" asked the Head icily.

Brooke panted.

"Yes, sir! I—I have to say this. I am innocent! I did not write that paper! I am innocent! I have never seen it before! Mr. Lathom, you cannot believe that I would so insult you!" Dick cried wildly, turning from the stern features of the Head to the kind little Form-master.

Mr. Lathom shook his head sadly.

"I would not willingly have believed it, Brooke," he said. "But I cannot doubt the evidence of my own eyes. Oh, my boy—my boy, what have I done to you that you should have done this?"

"I didn't do it!" shrieked the boy. "Oh, sir, I swear I know nothing about it! Some villain has done this to injure me!"

"Silence!" The Head's voice rang out sharply. "Don't attempt to excuse your wickedness by wild accusations against others, Brooke. Do you ask me to believe that there is a skilled and practised forger in this school, and one so base as to imitate a schoolfellow's hand in such a matter as this. And if there were, pray where did he get this special kind of paper, which belongs to you alone? You are a day-boy. You have no study here."

"Brooke keeps some of that paper in our study, sir," said Jack Blake. Blake was shocked, bewildered by the proof of Brooke's guilt. But he would say anything that was possible for his friend. "There's generally some of it in the cupboard in No. 6, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Do you suggest that one of the boys in Study No. 6 used Brooke's paper, and forged his hand?" demanded the Head.

"Oh, sir! No, sir! I—I don't know what to think."

The Head fixed his eyes upon Brooke. The lad's white, miserable face awoke no pity in his heart. Dr. Holmes had a kind heart, but he was adamant now.

"Brooke," he said, "your handwriting and the paper used convict you. You have done this. Of your wickedness and ingratitude to Mr. Lathom I will not speak. I fear that you are too hard-hearted to feel a proper sense of shame. The only thing you can do now is to confess, and beg Mr. Lathom's pardon before you leave this school for ever."

Brooke gave a kind of groan.

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"Leave the school, sir!"

The doctor raised his hand.

"You are expelled!" he said. "You will leave this Form-room and this school, and never enter either again! I shall give you a letter to take to your father explaining the reason. I trust, Brooke, that when you see the trouble you have brought upon your parents, your wicked heart may be touched. Have you sufficient decency left to beg Mr. Lathom's pardon before you go?"

Brooke raised his head. His eyes were flashing now.

"I would beg Mr. Lathom's pardon on my knees if I had done anything wrong," he said. "But I have not! I never wrote that paper."

"Enough! Go!"

"Mr. Lathom!" cried Brooke, in an agony. "Don't you believe me, sir?"

The little Form-master shook his head. He could not speak. Dr. Holmes pointed to the door.

"Go!" he said. "Go, and never enter here again!"

Dick Brooke gave him one wild, hopeless look, and staggered towards the door. And as he went, there was an angry yell from the Fourth. The culprit was discovered; his guilt was proved beyond doubt, and even his best friends found nothing to say for him. And in that yell were expressed all the anger and scorn of the Fourth.

"Shame!"

"Cad!"

"Shame, shame!"

And with that word ringing in his ears, Dick Brooke staggered away.

CHAPTER 14.

Under the Shadow.

"H, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

The boy, lying in the deep, rich grass under the green shade of the trees, moaned out in words in dry, husky tones.

The day had been a long-drawn-out horror to Dick Brooke.

He had left St. Jim's—left the school with the scornful voices of his former friends ringing in his ears. But he had not gone home. How could he go home, and break this news to his mother and little Amy?

How could he go and tell the patient, gentle-faced woman, upon whom so much trouble had already fallen, that he was driven from the school with the shadow of shame upon him—driven forth like a pariah, despised by all.

Through the long, sunny hours Dick Brooke had tramped in the wood, or lain to rest his weary limbs and aching head in the thick grass, trying to think it out.

The long summer day was like a nightmare to him.

What was he to do?

It was now past the hour when the day-boy usually returned to his home; the sun was setting, and long shadows falling in the wood.

The day of dreadful loneliness and suffering had left its mark upon the sturdy junior. His face was white and drawn, there were deep lines in his brow, and his eyes seemed sunken. He must go home; if his return was longer delayed, his mother would be anxious about him. And she must know some time. But how was he to face her—how was he to tell her? He groaned aloud at the thought.

He was ruined. All that he had hoped from his work at the school was at an end. The long struggle to keep at school, to earn the money to pay his fees, all was for nothing—all had ended in this! He was expelled from the school, and no St. Jim's fellow would ever speak to him again. Yet it was not of himself that he chiefly thought. It was of his mother and his sister. How could he return to them and tell them—that he had left St. Jim's in disgrace, never to return?

It seemed like some evil dream to the lad as he lay there in the grass with aching head, and dull, weary eyes.

What should he do?

He rose to his feet at last; it was dark in the wood—the sun was almost gone. With heavy limbs he tramped slowly on the way homeward. Even the knowledge that he was innocent of what was imputed to him gave him little comfort. Of what use was his innocence when he was condemned by all—an outcast from the school? His mother would believe him, he knew that—so would Amy. They would never believe that he had done that blackguardly thing—but no one else would believe. Everyone else would say that he had been justly punished for a brutal insult, and the blackest ingratitude to his master.

Darkness lay upon the moor when Dick Brooke reached his home. The light gleamed from the little parlour-window. The window was open—he could see Amy there, as he came slowly and heavily up the garden-path.

The young girl heard his footstep on the path, and came out to meet him, with a bright smile of welcome on her face.

"You're late, Dick."

She could not see his face in the gloom. But as he entered the house, she saw it, and she gave a cry.

"Dick, Dick! What's the matter?"

The boy sank into a chair. He could not speak. Amy called out:

"Mother!"

Mrs. Brooke came into the room.

Her face changed at the sight of her son. She came quickly towards him.

"Dick, my dearest boy! What has happened?"

The boy groaned.

"Oh, mother!"

"Dick, your father——" She broke off breathless. When trouble came upon the little family, it was only natural that her thoughts should fly at once to John Brooke.

Dick shook his head.

"It's not father this time," he said.

"Something has happened at the school?"

"Yes, mother."

"Dick! Tell me what it is. You are in trouble, but—but you have done nothing wrong. I know that!"

"I've done nothing wrong," said the boy hoarsely. "I know you'll believe that, mother. But—but—but——" He gasped and broke off.

"But what, Dick?"

"I'm expelled!"

Mrs. Brooke gave a sharp cry.

"Expelled! Dick! You're dreaming! It's impossible!"

Little Amy, scared and troubled, began to cry softly. Dick's mother put an arm round her boy's neck protectingly.

"Tell me about it, Dick."

In husky, broken tones the boy told her.

"Our Form-master found a paper in his desk this morning, with an insulting message on it. It was Mr. Lathom, you know. He detained me the other day, but he has always been kindness itself to me; he gives me extra tuition for nothing, and helps me in every way. The paper was mine; the handwriting was mine. I—I couldn't tell the difference myself. Somebody must have imitated my hand, to get me into trouble. I can't imagine who it was. It seems impossible that any boy could be skilful enough to do it—or villain enough! I don't understand it all. But—but they took it that I had done it. I—I can't blame them. I couldn't explain. I had nothing to say except that I hadn't done it. The Head told me to go. He's given me a letter for you explaining—— The fellows all hissed me as I went. Oh, mother!"

The boy broke off with a sob.

"Dick, my poor boy!"

"I didn't do it, mother. Some awful rotter has done it to hurt me. I don't know who it was; and the Head would never believe such a thing. I couldn't believe any boy could be such a villain, myself, only—only there's nothing else to account for it. They've turned me out; I'm not to go back to St. Jim's any more."

And then the tears, at last, ran down Dick Brooke's cheeks.

"My dear, dear boy!"

"Oh, mother!"

"And—and this happened this morning, Dicky?"

"Yes, mother. I—I couldn't come home and tell you; I—I've been hanging about all day," said Dick miserably. "But I had to come at last. Oh, mother! What shall I do?"

The woman was crying now. She wanted to comfort her boy, but what could she say to comfort him? She believed him, and that was all she could do. She sank into a chair by the table, and her face fell into her hands.

Dick looked at her miserably. The letter from Dr. Holmes was in his hand; his mother would not look at it. She did not want to know what they had to say about her boy; she knew that he had been wronged, and that was enough.

She sobbed, and the tears ran through her fingers.

"Mother, dear, don't!" muttered Dick. "I shall have to stand it, that's all! We've stood a lot of things together, mum."

"My poor, poor boy!"

There was a sound outside the window in the dusk; a footstep, and the whine of a dog. Neither mother nor son heard.

Outside, in the night, a ragged figure came through the gloom, and if Dick Brooke had looked out, he would have recognised the boy vagrant whom he had befriended, and saved from ragging at the hands of Levison and his associates. The big dog sprang forward towards the window, as if in sympathy with the poor woman sobbing within. Harthur heard the sobs through the open window, and stopped, struck by the sound.

"My eye!" murmured Harthur.

The dog whined at the window, and Dick Brooke looked round dully.

He caught sight of the boy outside.

Harthur came up to the window, and touched his ragged cap.

"Master Brooke, you're in trouble!"

"Yes," said Brooke heavily.

"I'm sorry I kem along jest now, ther," said Harthur. "I didn't know! I wanted to show you somefin'."

Mrs. Brooke raised her head, her face white and stained with tears.

"Who is this boy, Dick?" she asked dully.

"The kid I told you about, mother, that Levison was ragging the other day."

"You may come in, my poor lad," said Mrs. Brooke, with an effort. "We must not let our own troubles make us forgetful of others, Dick. Come in!"

"Thank you, madam," said Harthur slowly. "P'raps I may be able to 'elp Master Dick; I think p'raps I can, ma'am, if things be as I reckon they is."

Mrs. Brooke smiled faintly; she did not think it likely. She called to old Martha, the only servant who remained to the fallen family, and Harthur was brought in.

CHAPTER 15.

What Harthur Knew.

HARTHUR ducked his head nervously to Mrs. Brooke and the sobbing Amy. He stood with his ragged cap in his dirty hands, with Buster behind him. He looked a forlorn figure enough, so far as clothes went. But there was a light in his eyes now. Harthur might be wanting in education, but he was a keen and sensible lad, and he knew how to put two and two together. He could not help connecting Levison's muttered threats with the evil that had evidently fallen upon his friend Dick Brooke. And the papers he had saved from the wood and stream were still in the pocket of his ragged jacket.

"Askin' yer pardin, mum," he said awkwardly. "I think p'raps I knows somefin' that will 'elp Master Dick. You're in trouble, sir?"

"Yes," said Brooke. "But you can't help me, old chap. It's trouble at the school."

"That's jest what I thought," said Harthur eagerly. "Jest so, sir. Is it that feller who was goin' for me when you stopped 'im—Levison 'is name is?"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Dick.

"Then I know the little game!" said Harthur emphatically. Dick Brooke looked at him in wonder.

"My dear chap, you can't know anything about it," he said, with a miserable smile.

"Is it anythin' to do with writing on paper?" asked Harthur.

Dick stared.

"Yes," he said. "What on earth do you mean? I don't mind telling you what it is—somebody has copied my handwriting, and put an insulting letter in the Form-master's desk, supposed to be written by me."

Harthur gave a whoop of triumph.

"Urrah!"

"What on earth——"

"I saw 'im doin' of it!" roared Harthur. "I tell you I saw 'im a-doin' of it, in the wood yesterday. I knew he was up to somefin'. He was a-mutterin' to 'imself about gettin' you drove out of the school, and he was a-copyin' the paper there. I knowed it was somefin' up agin you, Master Dick."

Brooke drew a deep breath. Amazing as it seemed, the boy vagrant did know something about the matter. Was it possible that his kindness to this unfortunate lad the other day had won him a witness who could save him?

Mrs. Brooke looked, with a wild hope in her face, at the vagrant.

"Tell us what you saw," said Brooke breathlessly. "You say you saw Levison, of the Fourth, copying out a paper in the wood?"

"Yes, Master Dick. He had a sheet of paper there, and was copying it agin and agin. I got on to 'im, and he told me lies. I knew they was lies, and that he was fixing up somefin' agin you, though I couldn't rightly understand. He told me it was Latin that he was copying—a dead langwidge, he says."

Dick gave a cry.

"My impot!" he exclaimed. "Levison must have been the chap who stole it from the Form-room, and he was using it as a copy of my writing! Oh, mother, if we could only prove that to the Head! But we can't—we can't!"

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Levison would deny every word, and they would think I had got this kid to say so."

"But I've got the proofs!" yelled Harthur.

"Proofs! What proofs?"

"The papers he was writing!"

"Oh!"

Harthur dragged the paper out of his pocket, and opened it on the table. A dozen sheets rolled out, crumpled and crinkled.

"There you are!" said Harthur triumphantly. "There's the sheet he was copyin'—the one he said was Latin, or some such outlandish nime."

"It's my impot. It was taken from the Form-room!"

"And these were the copies. I kept 'em; I knew it was some dirty game agin you, Master Dick, and I kep' the papers to show you."

Dick Brooke, with dazzled eyes, looked over the papers. Some had been smudged by their partial immersion in the stream, but all could be read quite clearly. Dick, as he examined them, could trace the progress of the forger. There were sheets in a hand that was unmistakably Levison's, gradually approaching to a clever imitation of Dick's writing, till on the last sheet the writing was so like Dick's that there was hardly any difference. By arranging the sheets in consecutive order as they had been written, the whole progress of the schoolboy forger could be seen, from the writing that was certainly Levison's to a hand that approximated more and more to Dick's, till the forgery was finally hardly to be detected.

Dick's eyes blazed.

"Mother! Mother! Look—do you understand? It's proof clear as daylight! Once the Head sees these papers he won't want any more proof. Mother, I can go up to the school in the morning and show these papers to the Head, and take this kid as a witness! Mother, I'm saved! Oh, mother!"

Mrs. Brooke burst into tears of thankfulness.

Harthur capered with delight.

"I done it!" he exclaimed, with pardonable satisfaction. "I done it! You did me a good turn, Master Dick, and now I done you one! 'Urah!"

And in the exuberance of his feelings Harthur hugged Buster ecstatically.

Mrs. Brooke took the ragged boy's hand, and pressed it to her lips.

"God bless you!" she said. "It was Providence that sent you here. We are poor here, my dear boy, but while we have a home you shall never want one, if you choose. Dick, it was your own kind action that made this boy your friend, and he has saved you! Cast your bread upon the waters, and it shall return after many days!"

Dick wrung the vagrant's hand as if he would wring it off.

"You've saved me, kid," he said. "The Head can't doubt when he sees these papers. Oh, my hat! Amy, old girl, it's all right! Hurrah!"

Needless to say, Harthur was made much of in the Brooke home that evening, and he went to bed cheerfully, after a supper that would have fulfilled all his dreams of Elysium, if he had had any!

CHAPTER 16.

The Justification of Brooke!

"BROOKE!"

"My hat!"

"The cheeky bounder's come back!"

"Bai Jove! Bwooke!"

Tom Merry & Co. were on the steps of the School House, in the bright sunshine of the morning. They had been looking somewhat gloomy; the happenings of the previous day had cast a shadow upon the school. That Brooke was guilty they could hardly entertain a doubt, and it was a great shock to them. The sight of the day-boy walking across the quadrangle of St. Jim's towards the School House, as if nothing had happened, was a greater shock still.

Brooke strode across the quad. with a firm step, his head held proudly high. Harthur, the boy vagrant, was following him, looking much more uneasy. Harthur had come to back up his friend, but the great school and the crowds of well-dressed fellows had a very discomposing effect upon him.

"Brooke!"

"Get out, you cad!" shouted Levison.

"Shame!"

"Cad! Rotter!"

Dick Brooke came firmly up the steps of the School House. There was colour in his cheeks, and a gleam in his eyes, as he met the scornful glances of the juniors.

"Weally, Bwooke, this is too thick, you know!"

"You shouldn't have come back, Brooke," said Tom Merry. "What the dickens—"

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"I have come back to prove my innocence," said Dick Brooke.

"Oh, rats!" said Gore.

"I have the proofs!"

"What!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Where are the giddy proofs?" asked Bernard Glyn.

"Invisible, like your ink," grinned Kangaroo.

Levison burst into a mocking laugh, though the sight of the grinning Harthur behind Brooke had struck him with a sudden chill of fear.

"What proofs have you got?" he asked sneeringly.

Brooke looked at him steadily.

"I've got the papers you were writing out in the wood on Wednesday afternoon," he said, with crushing directness, "and I've got this kid to prove that he saw you at practice forging my handwriting."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Levison!"

The blow was so sudden that the cad of the Fourth, with all his cunning, was taken utterly aback. He staggered against the wall, his face white as a sheet. Every eye was turned upon him at once.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, you know!"

"It's a lie!" shrieked Levison. "This is the tramp I had a row with the other day. He set his dog on me Brooke has bribed him to come and tell lies about me."

Brooke's lip curled in scorn.

"The Head can judge whether they're lies or not," he said quietly. "I'm going to the Head now."

Levison sprang into his path, his fists clenched furiously.

"You're not going to the Head to tell lies about me! Show us your proofs! Let me see the papers!"

"You can see them in the presence of the Head. Mr. Lathom!" exclaimed Brooke, as the Fourth Form-master looked out of his study. "Mr. Lathom!"

"Brooke! What are you doing here?" exclaimed the Form-master sternly. "You are expelled from the school! How dare you, sir?"

Brooke did not flinch.

"I have found proof, sir, that Levison forged the paper that was found in your desk!"

"What—what!"

"It's a lie!" yelled Levison, white to the lips.

"It's the truth!" said Dick Brooke. "Mr. Lathom, I demand to be taken before the Head, in company with Levison, to have the matter sifted."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom, in a great flurry. "You are certainly within your rights in asking that, Brooke. Come with me. Levison, you may come also."

"Tell him to bring a specimen of his writing, sir," said Brooke. "It will be needed. And something that is already written, or he will try to disguise his hand."

"Very well," said Mr. Lathom. "You shall have every chance, Brooke, though I can hardly credit this extraordinary story. I have some lines of Levison's in my study; they will answer the purpose. Who is this—this untidy boy?"

"He's my witness, sir. He saw Levison forging my hand on Wednesday."

"Oh, indeed! Bring him with you, then. Levison, come at once."

Mr. Lathom walked away to the Head's study. Dick Brooke and Harthur followed him, and Levison staggered on after them. The cad of the Fourth could not disobey; he hoped yet to be able to brazen the matter out, though the chill of deadly fear was upon him.

The juniors were left in an uproar. Indisputable proof had seemed to be against Dick Brooke, yet his old friends had never been able to reconcile what he had done with their knowledge of his character. But of Levison they had never thought much. And Gore suddenly exclaimed:

"It's true! I remember Levison writing out an impot. for me, in a hand exactly like mine. He's done it for Mellish, too. He could have imitated Brooke's hand if he liked."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "My deah boys, I am affaid we have been wathah hasty about poor old Bwooke. I always said he was decent. I'm goin' to the Head's study."

"Ass!" said Blake politely.

"I'm goin' to back up old Bwooke."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You'll get shoved out!" said Glyn.

"I am goin' to back up my friend Bwooke."

And the swell of St. Jim's walked after Brooke with a great deal of dignity, and followed him and Levison and Mr. Lathom into the Head's study. Dr. Holmes was about to leave his study for the Sixth Form-room; but he stopped at the sight of this unexpected invasion.

He frowned sternly at Dick Brooke.

"Brooke," he said harshly, "how dare you come here?"

Brooke met his eyes fearlessly.

"I've come to prove my innocence, sir."

"What!"

Dick Brooke laid the crumpled papers on the Head's desk. Dr. Holmes glanced at them with a puzzled expression; and then suddenly his glance became fixed.

"I accuse Levison of having forged the paper found in Mr. Lathom's desk, in my hand, sir," said Brooke steadily. "Yesterday afternoon, this boy here saw him making copies of this paper in the wood. I suppose he had gone there so as not to be seen practising forgery. This sheet is part of an imposition I wrote out for Mr. Lathom on Monday, and which was stolen from the Form-room. Mr. Lathom will remember that."

"Yes, yes!" muttered Mr. Lathom dazedly. "I certainly recall the circumstances!"

"Levison was using it as a copy," went on Brooke firmly, while the Head's brow grew darker and darker. "Here are the copies he made. You can see that the first ones are in Levison's own hand; and they get more and more like my writing as they go on. Mr. Lathom has a specimen of Levison's handwriting to compare."

Mr. Lathom laid Levison's lines on the desk. Dr. Holmes examined them, and then examined more carefully the dozen sheets practised upon by the schoolboy forger. Then he took from his desk the document that bore the insulting inscription, which had given so great a shock to Mr. Lathom the previous morning.

There was a dead silence in the study as the Head compared the various papers, his lips growing very tight.

Brooke stood firm and confident, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stealthily clapped him on the shoulder. Levison was white as a sheet. Had his crime found him out? What lie could save him now?

The terrible silence was broken at last. Dr. Holmes raised his head from the papers, as they lay spread out in the sunshine on his desk, and fixed his cold glance upon the quaking oad of the Fourth.

"Have you anything to say, Levison?" His voice seemed like the roll of thunder to the terrified ears of the schoolboy forger.

Levison licked his dry lips.

"Ye-es, sir," he stammered. "It—it's not true, sir. I never did anything of the sort. It's all lies, sir!"

"Here is your handwriting—gradually becoming more and more like Brooke's, until the resemblance is complete!" said the Head sternly.

"Brooke must have done it, sir."

"What!"

"That's what I say, sir," said Levison, regaining some courage. "Brooke has forged those papers, sir. He must have thought this out yesterday, and he's written out all that stuff to bring to you, sir, to take you in. It's all lies."

Dr. Holmes pursed his lips.

"As for this tramp, sir, he's a ragamuffin who set a dog on me the other day, and I gave him a licking, sir," said Levison. "Brooke interfered; they're old friends, I suppose. Brooke has paid the young scoundrel to come here and tell these lies, and back up his forgery."

"Oh, my heye!" murmured Harthur. "Wot an awful young villain!"

"Silence!" said the Head. He sat at the desk, his hand resting on the papers. "Levison, your defence is that Brooke is the forger, and not yourself."

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Holmes passed a hand over his brow. In the first place, he would never have believed that such a forgery could be committed by a schoolboy. But it was evident now that it had been done—it was before him. But whether Levison had forged Brooke's hand in the message to Mr. Lathom, or whether Brooke had forged Levison's hand in the other sheets—how was he to decide that?

Brooke's heart sank. He had succeeded in proving that his guilt was not proved, but not his innocence. Levison's defence almost confounded him. There seemed no end to the cunning and resource of the young rascal.

There was a long silence in the study.

Dr. Holmes broke it at last.

"I—I hardly know what to say," he exclaimed. "This is a shocking case—most shocking! One of you boys has forged the writing of the other, and there is no proof which is guilty. I can hardly accept the evidence of a vagrant against a boy of this school. Good heavens, that such a thing should have happened in this college!"

"I—I hardly know what to think, sir," said Mr. Lathom slowly. "But under the circumstances Brooke cannot be condemned. The balance of proof seems equally divided, and I must say that Brooke's previous record is much better than Levison's. Until this wretched happening, I always found him a most high-minded and honourable lad."

"I cannot adjudge either guilty without further evidence," said the Head, "and—yet I cannot adjudge either innocent. It is terrible!"

There was silence again. It was a strange position of affairs, and Levison's heart was beating with relief. At all events, he had warded off the blow, he told himself. The shadow of shame might be upon both of them, but Levison could still protest his innocence. But Levison congratulated himself too soon.

For in the midst of the silence there was a sudden yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove!"

Dr. Holmes turned towards him angrily.

"D'Arcy, how dare you! What are you doing here?"

"I came in to back up old Bwooke, sir—"

"Leave the study at once!"

"Pway excuse me, sir. But—"

"Go!"

"Pway allow me to speak, sir. It's all wight about Bwooke! This is a remarkable thing—a most remarkable thing, and Bernard Glyn is not such an ass afiah all!"

"If you are not insane, D'Arcy," exclaimed the exasperated doctor, "tell me what you mean!"

D'Arcy pointed at the paper on the desk that bore the message to Mr. Lathom.

"Look, sir!"

All eyes were turned in wonder upon the sheet, and as they looked the wonder increased. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Lathom uttered a simultaneous exclamation.

Upon the paper was clearly written, in black ink, the insulting message to the Form-master: "Mr. Lathom is an old fool, and we all wish he would get the sack!" That was all that had been visible upon the paper—till now! But now, as the sheet lay in the bright sunlight streaming in at the window, other words had become visible as if by magic. In a purple colour, a line of writing had appeared upon the paper: "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!"

Dr. Holmes gasped.

"What is it? Is it a trick? How—how did that writing come there? Half an hour ago the paper was perfectly blank, and it has not left my desk! Am I dreaming?"

"Bai Jove! I can explain, sir! Glyn can explain! It's the invisible ink, sir!"

"What!"

"It's weally remarkable," said the swell of St. Jim's excitedly. "You wemembah the expewiment, Bwooke. You weren't here when we twied it, but I told you about it the next mornin'."

"I remember," said Brooke, in wonder.

"Explain yourself, D'Arcy, and lose no time!" exclaimed the bewildered Head.

"Yaas, wathah, sir. Bernard Glyn of the Shell, sir, invented an invisible ink—he's always inventin' some piffle or othah—"

"Go on!"

"Yaas, sir. He bwrought it to our study to show us how it worked. He said that the ink would become invisible, you see, sir, and that it would come to light if exposed to sunshine, instead of bein' held to a fire as usual. That was the beauty of it, sir. He wrote a sentence from Shakespeare on a sheet of paper in the study. It was some of Bwooke's impot. paper, sir—Bwooke uses our study when he works here, and he keeps his paper in the cupboard, and we use it sometimes when we run out. We do sometimes, as Blake is a wathah careless ass—"

"Never mind that! Go on!"

"Well, sir, the sheet that Glyn wrote that sentence upon was left on top of the heap, and put back in the cupboard. The next morning he twied to make it become visible in the sun, but it wouldn't, and we all thought that the expewiment had failed. I attributed it to the fact that Glyn had wufused my assistance in makin' the invention—"

"You say Glyn tried to make the writing show the next morning?"

"Yaas, sir."

"But you say that this is the sheet?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Then how—"

"Don't you see, sir?" exclaimed D'Arcy, highly excited.

"Glyn's expewiment failed, because somebody had taken away the top sheet of papah. When he twied the next mornin', it must have been the second sheet he twied with, the top sheet bein' gone. The invisible ink didn't show up because it wasn't there. And the pwoof is, that that is the sentence that Glyn wrote—'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown,' sir. That bein' there pwoves that it is the same sheet that was left on top of the heap in our study cupboard on Monday evenin', sir, and that somebody sneaked it out of the study, without sayin' a word to anybody."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Head, as a light dawned on him.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 221.

Next Thursday's Grand, Long, Complete "THE SCHOOLBOY MUTINEERS!" B. MARTIN CLIFFORD.

School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

Please Order Your Copy Early.

"That is the sheet, sir. It was taken from our study, sir, without a word being said, and poor old Glyn was working on a blank sheet the next mornin'. And why was it taken, sir? Because it was Bwooke's impot. paper, and this wottah wanted a sheet of Bwooke's papah to write that wotten, insultin' message on in Bwooke's handwritin'."

"But if the paper was Brooke's, may he not have taken it from the study himself?" the Head asked slowly.

"Imposs., sir!" exclaimed D'Arcy triumphantly.

"Why impossible?"

"Because Glyn wrote in the invisible ink after Bwooke had gone home, sir. He's a day-boy, you see. He had gone home, and the next mornin' Glyn tried to make the ink come up before Bwooke got here for lessons. He was awfully keen on the thing, you see, sir, and he went at it the moment he came down from the dorm."

Dr. Holmes nodded slowly.

"The othah fellows will bear out what I say, sir," said Arthur Augustus, adjusting his eyeglass carefully. "That sheet of papah was stolen from our study at a time when it was utterly imposs. for Bwooke to have had anythin' to do with it. That proves that a fellow in the School House wanted a sheet of Bwooke's impot. papah, and sneaked it, and the fellow who sneaked it, sir, wrote that wotten message upon it. I presume it cannot be supposed that he sneaked it to give to Bwooke the next day to write upon."

"No," said the Head, with a slight smile, "I think the matter is clear now. Glyn's peculiar inventions have sometimes given trouble in the House, but certainly this one has helped to right a great wrong. Levison, what have you to say now?"

The cad of the Fourth tried to speak, but he could not. What could he say? He was caught in the meshes of his own net. With all his cunning, how could he have hoped to foresee a contingency like this? He buried his face in his hands, and groaned.

Dr. Holmes gazed at him in stern contempt.

"Levison, you have forged your schoolfellow's hand; you have blackened him with shame, and almost ruined him! By chance—or, perhaps, I should say by Providence—your wicked scheme has come to nothing! Wretched boy! What caused you to do this?"

Levison did not reply. He reeled, and fell heavily to the floor. Mr. Lathom sprang towards him. The Fourth Form cad's face was white, his eyes closed, his teeth clenched.

"Good heavens, he is in a faint!" the Form-master exclaimed.

Dr. Holmes glanced at the boy.

"He cannot be punished in this state," he said. "Have him removed to the dormitory, Mr. Lathom. Brooke, your innocence has been established. You are clear in my eyes, and I shall explain the matter fully to the whole school! Give me your hand, Brooke, and forgive us all for doubting you."

"Oh, sir!"

Brooke shook hands with the Head. He left the study like a fellow walking on air. He could afford to forgive even Levison now. The shadow of shame was lifted. He could look his schoolfellows in the eyes again. The news spread over St. Jim's like wildfire, and from Kildare, the captain of the school, to the smallest fag, everybody congratulated Dick Brooke, and most asked his pardon. And that day the juniors of St. Jim's celebrated the clearing of Dick Brooke's name with a terrific celebration, and Harthar was the guest of honour in Tom Merry's study, in company with Dick Brooke. Levison, for the time, was forgotten, and all St. Jim's rejoiced that Brooke of the Fourth had been saved from the Shadow of Shame!

THE END.

NEXT WEEK.

"THE SCHOOLBOY MUTINEERS,"

Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of
TOM MERRY & CO., by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"AT THE MERCY OF THE RIVER,"

A Thrilling, Complete Frank Kingston Story, and

"WINGS OF GOLD,"

A WONDERFUL ADVENTURE SERIAL

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.

A Night Excursion—Monster versus Man.

"Haw, haw!" was the greeting of Crook as the king came aboard.

"Why not?" answered the king. "Haw, haw, Argarmi!" After shaking hands with Tooter and Morgan, he went down the corridor to the saloon. He had a painfully slow conversation with Von Haegel.

"How are you getting on, dad?" asked Lance from the depths of an easy-chair.

"Ach, I am only finding I am so ignorant!" sighed the professor. "It is ein fight or ein hunt he wishes us to see; but I know not which."

"Stick to it," said Maurice, "as the cook remarked to the flypaper!" He looked out of the porthole. "By Jove, it's a splendid night, and there's a ripping moon. I don't think I have ever seen a brighter one. Jackson seems jolly fit," as he heard the mouth-organ and a clatter of feet above his head, followed by the chuckling laughter of the cook.

"Ach! I think he wants us to fly up mit him, dear lads," said Von Haegel.

"You're a failure, daddy," said Lance. "I'll get Crooks." Crooks was whistled for. He fixed his bright eye on the king, and watched his gestures for exactly fifteen seconds.

"Why not?" he growled. "Up we go as high as the pyramid. That was easy. Then we look straight aft. That was still easier. Then we sees summat, and guesses the rest. Haw, haw!"

"Shaf! I, at least, did find it was to go opp," said Von Haegel.

"Clever man!" said Lance. "Crooks can talk the lingo better with his hat. Keep your heart up, daddy, and don't repine. You'll be chattering like a phonograph soon. Let us try the experiment."

Fordham had not exaggerated the beauty of the night. The moon was at full, vivid and clear. The purity of the atmosphere brought the peaks so close that they seemed ready to close in and crush the town.

"If there was any wind I'd say there was something in it," said Maurice.

Suddenly drums began to beat. A tramp of drilled feet answered the signal, and the warriors trooped out into the triangle. They carried spears of unusual length, and passed on. Others followed, bearing paddles. Instead of halting they swung away.

"Get her afloat, and let us see the game!" called Lance. The fans spun, and the vessel rose humming above the huts and ramparts that had impeded her view. The moat and channel gleamed in the silvery light. Like a stream of human water-rats the warriors sprang into the water.

"Hallo! They've got a regular fleet here!" said Morgan. "They're either going fishing or fighting."

The channel was packed with canoes. The king waved his hand almost impatiently.

"Move hon! Why not, Teddy?" said Cook. "Old Blackberry was in a hurry."

The foremost canoes loaded with men were already churning down the channel. If it was a fishing expedition it was one on a colossal scale. They saw no lines nor nets, but most of the spears were barbed, and the larger canoes carried great catapults in their prows.

"Great Scott! Can the chaps be after plesiosauri?" gasped Lance, aghast at the thought.

"Or ichtyosauri?" gasped Von Haegel.

"Or was they after tadpoles?" grunted the cook. "Perhaps it was sprats? Why not?"

Morgan rubbed his nose.

"By thunder! This will be worth seeing. Plucky beggars!"

"His Majesty King Blacklead was wantin' to get out and walk," said Crooks. And when Morgan brought the aeronef close to the ground, the cook added, as he chuckled his Majesty under the chin, "Haw, haw! Shall I lend you a pickle-jar to put 'em in? I 'opes you will have lots of bites. Don't get your feet wet, and be back to tea. Haw, haw!"

The king waved his hand, and took a flying leap into the largest canoe. His thunderous voice shouted back:

"Why not?" And then the paddles dipped, keeping perfect time, and the canoe rushed down the channel. The moon could not light the ravine, but with her powerful lamps blazing, Morgan fearlessly entered the black cleft. He kept high up. Where the lines of boulders were suspended fires burned, and men were on watch. Other fires, tended by sentries, also blazed along the edge of the water.

"One of these rocks would give even an ichthyosaurus a sore back," said Maurice. "I hope the ropes are sound. Good-night, old chap! Don't go to sleep and fall off!"

A sentry saluted as Wings of Gold skimmed past, and looked after her with dazzled eyes.

"I shouldn't like that cove's job as night-watchman," said the Cockney. "That ain't all beer and skittles. 'Ere's another of 'em. That trade takes the bun. Fancy a chap earnin' a livin' by sittin' out all night on a rock, waitin' to shy stones at fishes. That's a caution and not 'alf!"

When the aeronef's searchlight cleft the gloom of the abyss, the canoes were being poked through the narrow opening one by one. There were two other dams just below, and much time was spent in clearing them. Lance counted eighty-six canoes. They waited until only a few stragglers remained.

"They haven't made all those preparations for nothing, I'll wager, Teddy," said Forsham.

"Shouldn't wonder," replied the unexcitable engineer. Wings of Gold sailed out into the brilliant moonlight. The bosom of the lake heaved gently, and sent silver ripples dancing and flashing towards the shore. Canoe after canoe swept out of the channel, turning in order to the right and left. The great canoe with its forty oarsmen remained in the centre, the king's towering figure erect in the bows.

Big Ben leaned on a twenty-foot spear. The line of canoes grew longer and longer. Then they waited with upraised paddles.

It was hard to think those tranquil waters could conceal such terrible shapes. The onlookers felt their nerves tingle with expectancy. The cook's eye grew large and round and bright.

"What about the Maxim, sir?" he growled. "Why not? It might be useful."

Maurice gave a nod. This great fleet, crowded by spear-armed warriors, had not come out for play. But would they dare to attack the plesiosaurus, whose terrible paddles could splinter their largest boat to matchwood? And the ichthyosaurus? It seemed preposterous that puny men would have the audacity to face, in his own element, the largest, most ravenous, the most powerful of all the horrid monsters of the deep.

The king's great spear flashed. Paddles dipped, and drops fell like jewels from the shining blades. Then the stillness was broken by a murmur. The murmur became a swelling roar of voices singing in unison. The paddles churned the water into foam. They were challenging their deadly foe. They were calling upon the monster of the lake to rise and do battle.

"That's a bit weird, dad," said Lance. "Shaf, do not worry me just yet!" puffed Von Haagel, who was pencilling furiously.

He was scrawling down the music, for, like most Germans, the professor was a musician. Later on he hoped to get the words as well. The chant went on, and the paddles beat the water still more furiously.

"Behind you! Look behind!" yelled Tooter.

High above the shining water writhed the neck of a plesiosaurus. Though the neck twisted and swelled the great head was perfectly motionless. Its huge eyes, green and glassy, set deep among the plates of its lizard head, were turned towards the canoes. The warriors still continued to lash the water, although they had seen it.

The monster hissed, dived, and, rising closer to the shore, paddled swiftly away, a black and terrifying shape upon the burnished silver of the lake.

"It strikes me," said Morgan, filling his pipe, "that they're after something bigger, and it strikes me ditto, by thunder, that they've got more pluck than sense!"

Suddenly a line of fire ran down the canoes. A torch was blazing in the prow of each. How they obtained fire so easily and swiftly was so far a mystery. The smoke poured up in black clouds, filling the night air with an odour of burning pitch. The torches were fixed to long poles. They were thicker than a man's thigh, and blazed furiously.

Swiftly half the paddles were withdrawn, and replaced by glittering spears. The troubled waters became calm, and a hush fell. What did it mean? The warriors knew. A yell crashed out, triumphant, exultant, and menacing. The battle cry! The foe had come.

Right in the centre of the line, a bare two furlongs away, a white wave shouldered up, and shot forward. Still nothing could be seen, even from the deck, except the sudden commotion of the water. A second wave went rolling after the first, and a sound like that of a bursting shell boomed out.

The canoes at either end were moving, and the line had bent into a semi-circle.

"There's some there that won't see daylight again," said Morgan grimly.

"Let's tackle the thing ourselves," said Lance. "The brute will sink half of them before they kill it, if they ever kill it!"

"I shouldn't interfere, sir. They've brought us out purposely to see the show, and they mightn't like it. If it gets very bad for 'em we can put in our ear. What's your idea, cook?"

"It was their own business, why not?" growled Crooks. "There was no thanks ever got for minding other people's consarns. Let 'em alone. It was senseless. Haw, haw! What's the use of keeping a dawg and doin' your own barkin'? It was barminess!"

No doubt the cook and Teddy Morgan were right. This terrible hunt had been arranged in their honour, this awful struggle between monster and man. Lance loaded his elephant-gun. The leviathan had not showed himself. He was hidden in the waves and spray of his own making, and every stroke of his tail was like the roar of a field-piece.

Jackson was almost delirious with excitement. The little Cockney was nearly as pugacious as his bantam, and gloried in a fight. The canoes crept closer. Then the last wave rolled by. For one brief instant they held their breath. The monster lay in an eddy, one hundred and fifty feet of iron-plated flesh and bone and muscle. The water gushed in a torrent from either side of its closed jaws. Like green lamps the round eyes shone. He rolled as if at play, and then swept round with the speed of a train and was gone.

"Good heavens, Morry, they can't fight that!" gasped Lance. "It's worse than murder!"

"Ach, they are mad—they are mad, dear lads!" puffed Von Haagel. "And yet it is glorious! It thrills me, dear lads! Shaf! Man is der lord of der world! He cares not even for der awful ichthyasaurus—der dreadful ichthyosaurus! In his little cockleshell mit his miserable spear, he sail out und say: 'Come to battle mit me. I am naked, und weak und very small, but I am a man. You are great, und pig, und terrible, but you are ein reptile. Fight me, and see who shall be master of der sea und der land!' Ach, it is grand to be ein man, it is suplime, it is wonderful!"

"Haw, haw!" sniggered the cook, and then, seeing that the professor was glaring at him, he pretended to cough.

"Did you make ein remark, cook?"

"Why not? I was—"

"There he is—there he is!" shouted Jackson.

The great brute had risen. With those enormous and immovable eyes, formed of layers of transparent plates, it stared at the circle of torches. The king stood erect. There was a sudden burst of flame that illumined his black skin, and then he drew a bow to its full stretch. The monster opened its cavernous jaws. A six-foot arrow ablaze from barb to plume, hissed into its gaping mouth.

"Hurroo!" growled Crooks. "That was 'ot! Haw, haw!"

Again they held their breath. The brute had vanished in a seeth of spray. Big Ben snatched up the torch. The picked men in the bows of the nearer canoes did the same. Von Haagel turned sick. Three canoes rolled away like water from a duck's back, swamped, and overturned. Down the slope of the great billow rushed the king's canoe. At the foot those wide-opened jaws were ready to engulf it.

A yell, a sudden frantic effort by those steel-muscled warriors, a thrust, so well-timed and cleverly-executed that it seemed miraculous, and the king had driven the blazing torch into the brute's eye. The great canoe leapt over the crest of the next wave, the men paddling like fiends.

"By thunder!" said Teddy Morgan, drawing a deep breath.

The ichthyosaurus had sounded. Several of the canoes were picking up the swimming men. The king had lighted another torch. His warriors were clashing their spears and yelling their applause.

"Great Scott!" said Lance. "Talk about nerve and skill! Would you have dreamed of anything like it?"

"I thought they were booked!" said Fordham, with a shiver. "He's blind in one eye. I hope it has knocked the fight out of him."

So did Lance. It was a splendid, blood-firing spectacle, but it was too hazardous.

"There was 'Ercules," said the cook. "He was a bit late."

Another canoe, slightly smaller than the king's, shot under them. The giant in the bows waved his hand in greeting. Then the huddled canoes, less in number by four, spread out again.

"He's chucked it up," said Lance, when five minutes had gone by, "and I'm jolly glad!"

"By thunder! What are they waiting for, then?" asked the engineer. "They know the habits of the ugly brutes better than we do."

"Yonder he is, sir," said Tooter.

And he was there, a mile away, and evidently in agony, for he beat the spray high in the air and made the peaks boom as he smote the water with his tail.

"He was a big coward!" growled Crooks. "Why not? He could swaller 'em all except little Willie. Willie was too 'airy. Haw, haw!"

A fierce yell of joy greeted the monster's reappearance. "Shaf! Hearken!" said Von Haegel. "It is mit joy dey shout! Ach, shall I pity der savages because they are savages? Der brave mans was der brave mans always. They know not fear. Ach, how I love ein brave man!"

"I don't know, dad," said Lance thoughtfully. "The bravest thing alive is a dog. This is mere madness!"

"Dear lads, you are mistaken!" said Von Haegel. "I haf studied man. Der dog is brave. For his master, when told, he will fight the bull, der bear, or der tiger till he die. It is his instinct to obey; he think not of death or wounds. Der man think of both. Der thought of both brings terror. He cannot help it dot dey bring terror, for he has ein brain. Und so he fight der fight twice over. He brave man; he is ten million times braver than the bravest beast. Hoch, hoch, hoch!" he yelled, giving the German "Hurrah!" "Hoch, hoch! I, too, Lance, dear lad of mine, haf fought. Laugh not, dear lad! I was but ein man, ein young man, when we did invade France. Und on mine breast did der grandfather of der present Kaiser pin der Iron Cross, which mit us is your Victoria Cross. Hoch, bravely, bravely!"

The canoes were advancing. Lance clasped the professor's hand. It was quite new to him that Von Haegel had won the Iron Cross, looked upon by Germans as the most coveted distinction in the world, for no distinction is so hard to win. The canoes were moving to the attack. Wings of Gold followed, keeping pace with them. The pluck of these men—these savages—was astounding. They laughed and cheered and yelled.

"By Jove!" cried Maurice. "What couldn't we do with a regiment of them?"

Again they held their breath. The ichthyosaurus had turned. He tore through the water like a ship under full steam. There was a canoe between its awful jaws. Its ribs cracked like so many bones. The timbers seemed to clog its teeth. It shook its horrible head, as if to free itself, and bellowed.

All was chaos. Tossing, jumping, and dancing, the canoes were around and above it. Dozens of men were in the water, but scores of spears had pierced its armour. Then, driven by fifty paddles, the king's canoe dashed full at its neck. There was one red streak of flame. Then the canoe, shedding paddles, spears and men hung for a brief instant in the air and fell into the seething water.

"Clean through the other eye, by thunder!" roared Morgan. "I saw it!"

Once more, mad with pain, and blinded, the tyrant of the lake dived. Again the canoes were picking up the swimmers. Crooks howled when he saw the burly form of the king dragged into his brother's canoe. Big Ben put his hand to his mouth.

"Why not?" he thundered.

"Haw, haw!" screamed the delighted Crooks. "Why not? He was bottled now!"

This time the brute did not remain long below. He came up nearer the shore. Like wasps the canoes darted after him. The fight was cruel, terrible, and perilous. With stupendous skill the canoes avoided the blind rushes of the monster. They were around him driving in their spears.

Once Hercules fired a great pointed stake from his catapult. It sank a yard deep into the mighty carcass. But the dawn was paling before it was over. Ropes were fastened to the spears, and the water was red with blood. To add to the horror of it, scores of screaming pterodactyls were flapping high up against the whitening sky.

The king leapt upon the quivering carcass and the ropes tightened. Slowly the great mass moved towards the shore. The last star flickered out.

"Shaf!" said Von Haegel. "It is ein grand thing to be ein man!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 221.

DON'T MISS "HONOUR BEFORE ALL!" The Splendid, Long, Complete School Story appearing in this week's number of the "MAGNET" LIBRARY, 1st.

But the ichthyosaurus had taken its toll of the dead. They knew that, for several canoes were searching the lake for bodies. The reptiles stranded in the shallow water, and Morgan brought down the aeronef. With a grin on his face the king came up the ladder.

"Why not?" he said, holding out his hand to Crooks.

"Haw, haw!" said Crooks.

"Haw, haw!" answered the giant.

Crooks patted him on the back. Crooks winked, and pointed to the monster as much as to say: "That's nothing! We kill 'em twice that size where I come from!"

"Bless you, Tar-Barrel!" he growled. "That was nothing! Why not? I once went fishing, and I forgets what kind we was arter. Now, what was the name of them? They must have been whoppers, 'cos we was using chaps like the one you've just caught for bait. Haw, haw!"

The king looked surprised at the roar of laughter that followed the cook's untruthful statement.

"Why not?" chuckled the cook.

The Arrival of Mr. Tarrytop.

At daylight the slain ichthyosaurus was photographed, measured, and carefully examined by Von Haegel. A learned description of the terrible lizard, written by the great professor, and illustrated with drawings, diagrams, and original photographs by Lancelot Morton, Esq., filled one quarterly issue of the "Paleontological Journal," and was published in eleven languages. To this the inquiring reader is referred. The canine teeth, each twenty-six and one-eighth inches in length, may be seen in the Humboldt Museum, Kinderstrasse, Berlin, usually surrounded by a crowd of old gentlemen, who chatter together in numerous tongues on the subject of a bygone world and the creatures that inhabited it. They left the pterodactyls to their banquet, and before ten o'clock Wings of Gold had settled down beside the great pyramid, and four of her crew were sound asleep.

Mr. Crooks did not retire. He did not mind work when it had to be done, but he did not see why he should work so much when he could get help. In some unknown way he made his wants known to the king. Teddy Morgan was nodding in the deck-chair. Opening his eyes, he was surprised to see a procession of about twenty half-naked young gentlemen file up the ladder and halt in a line. They were followed by the king's magnificent figure.

"Stand at hease, why not?" growled the cook. "Whoa! Steady, you tarry villains!"

"By thunder! What are you going to do with this nigger minstrel troupe?" asked Morgan.

"I was lookin' for a valet, why not?" grinned the cook.

"Come an' help me to pick, Teddy. I want a chap to wash pots and saspans. There was no wages attached to this job. Which of this black-leaded tribe was I to take?"

There was a grin on every dusky face that even the awe inspired by his Majesty's presence could not suppress. Teddy got up. Tooter also awoke from Dreamland to watch the selection, and the bantam perched itself on the grating, and looked extremely wise.

"Now then, No. 1—you with the razor beak," began Mr. Crooks, as he faced the applicant—"look at me! You was a rummy object, why not? Your mouth was too big. Haw, haw! The sugar and gravy would go too fast. Wanish!"

Crooks, for various odd reasons that kept Tooter and Morgan chuckling, rapidly reduced the number to three.

"There was three little nigger boys," he growled. "One was plump and two was as fat as kippers. Why not? Lean 'uns, not fat 'uns, eat most wittels. Fat 'uns will take more rope's-ends and kicks. Why? They was well padded. He will look a credit to the larder and the grub. Haw, haw!"

"You ain't going to have that thing aboard, surely!" said Mr. Tooter.

"I was. Why not, Mr. William of the Ginger Locks?" growled Mr. Crooks.

"And I'm expected to eat after him?"

"No, you was not, William. You was not required to eat at all. All you need to keep them whiskers a-growing was careful weedin', rollin', and watering. I was choosin' the valet. Liquorice, you are duly elected to this important position of trust. Haw, haw! Your wages will be paid punctual on the thirty-second of each month, barrin' February, when they'll be paid on the thirtieth. Tarrytop was your name, and I was your boss. Benjamin, that was my selection."

"Why not?" smiled the king. "Haw, haw!"

(Another grand, long instalment of this thrilling serial story in next week's issue of "The Gem" Library.)



- THE - RED GRANGE MYSTERY!

A Grand, Short, Complete Story, Introducing
FRANK KINGSTON, Detective, and
DOLORES—His Pretty Lady Assistant.

Next
Thursday: "AT THE MERCY OF THE RIVER!"

CHAPTER 1.

Mrs. Summers' Visit—Kingston on the Trail.

FRANK KINGSTON, the famous detective, walked into his consulting-room, and a lady who had been sitting there rose to her feet and extended a black-gloved hand.

"Thank you so much for finding time to see me, Mr. Kingston!" she said, in a quiet voice. "I know how busy you are, and was half afraid—"

She paused, and Kingston smiled.

"I am seldom too busy to see prospective clients!" he exclaimed, placing a chair for his visitor. "I presume, Mrs. Summers, your call is connected with the disappearance of your son?"

"Yes, yes! Oh, Mr. Kingston, I feel certain he is not dead!" cried Mrs. Summers, bending forward eagerly. Her veil was lifted, and the detective saw she was a ladylike woman of forty or forty-five. An anxious look was in her eyes now.

"Will you be good enough to let me hear the whole story?" asked Kingston. "The newspapers have been very meagre in their reports of the affair, and I know practically nothing."

"There is not much to tell. My two sons, Ralph and Harold, both boarded at the same school in Surrey—a small, private establishment known as Red Grange School. They were fourteen and fifteen respectively, and the elder, Harold, disappeared the day before yesterday."

Mrs. Summers paused, and tears entered her eyes.

"A—search resulted in the masters of the school finding poor Harold's cap caught against some reeds in the river," she said. "They searched all through the night, but it was useless. Yesterday the river was—was dragged, Mr. Kingston, but no sign of my dear boy could be found."

"The police, I think, are convinced of the lad's death?" asked Kingston gently.

"Yes," answered the distracted woman. "They tell me there is no hope. But because his cap was found, it does not say that Harold has been drowned. Oh, I believe that he is alive! I believe you could find him!"

Kingston looked sleepily out of the window.

"I will do my best," he answered quietly.

Mrs. Summers bent forward eagerly.

"You will take up the case?" she cried. "Oh, Mr. Kingston, this is kind of you! I was half-afraid you would not think the matter of sufficient interest—"

"On the contrary, my dear madam, I am deeply impressed by your visit, and assure you I will do my very utmost to recover your son—if he is, indeed, still living," said Frank Kingston gravely. "I am fairly busy at present, but I will put my work on one side and look into this sad matter without delay."

Mrs. Summers was effusive in her thanks, and departed, with a look of hope in her moist eyes.

Kingston had rung for Tim to show her out, and the instant the consulting-room door closed he darted to his laboratory and donned a wig. A lightning disguise followed, and five-and-twenty seconds after Mrs. Summers had departed Kingston stepped into the street and saw her walking in the direction of the Strand.

"Now, my dear Mrs. Summers, I intend to find out what your game is, if possible," he murmured to himself. "You think you have taken me in nicely; but I know, as sure as I'm living, that your grief was false—that you are aware of much more than you profess."

For, strange as it may seem, Frank Kingston had instantly seen that Mrs. Summers was far from sincere. The detective had remarkable powers, and his will was so strong that it was practically impossible to deceive him; he could tell when a man was speaking the truth, and when he was lying. Mrs. Summers had acted extremely well, but not well enough to hoodwink Kingston.

"I may possibly be wrong," thought the latter, as he strolled along the pavement under the warm blaze of a May sun, "but I don't think so. Mrs. Summers' tears were real enough, but they were forced."

His late visitor was walking fairly fast, but Kingston's stroll kept him at nice distance behind. Up the Strand for some little way, then Mrs. Summers came to a halt outside

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the Gaiety, and entered into conversation with a tall gentleman in top-hat and frock-coat. He wore a black, waxed moustache with the ends turned upwards.

"H'm! The lady does not appear to be so very sad now," thought Kingston, as he watched Mrs. Summers smiling. "Evidently she thinks she took me in completely. I think it would be advisable to follow the man from this point if they part company."

Mrs. Summers and her companion remained talking a few minutes more; then a taxi was called, and she drove away. Kingston walked carelessly by, and took a careful though unobtrusive survey of the man with the waxed moustache.

"By Jove," he thought, "the fellow is Geoffrey Lanmore! I thought his face seemed familiar, although it is cleverly disguised, when I saw him first."

The close scrutiny, however, had told Kingston that the man was a clever crook who was being searched for even then by the New York police. Kingston had been shown his photograph, and he was quite sure he had not made a mistake.

"Well, it proves that my suspicions with regard to Mrs. Summers were right," he murmured complacently. "Apparently she thought, by coming to me, she would do herself some good; she is under the impression I was deceived by her acting. Well, the affair looks like panning out well."

He followed Lanmore some little distance on foot, then the man boarded a motor-bus bound for Waterloo. Lanmore had no suspicion he was being shadowed, and Kingston quite easily heard what station he took ticket for. It was Wallfield, a village thirty miles distant.

In the train the detective changed his disguise. Kingston was nothing if not thorough, and he did not want any hitch to occur. By altering his appearance there would be no chance of Lanmore suspecting the truth.

"Wallfield!"

The solitary porter called out the name, and Lanmore, Kingston, and two other people stepped out on to the dimly lighted station. The time had been evening when Mrs. Summers had called, so now darkness had fallen. Fleecy clouds covered the sky, and as there was no moon the night was black.

Lanmore lighted a cigar, and stepped out on foot down the dusty country road. Kingston followed at a considerable distance, for, as the road was deserted, he had no difficulty in shadowing his quarry. Besides, if he got too close, Lanmore might have suspected something.

Kingston was aware that the man was bound for some place in the vicinity of Red Grange school, for Wallfield was the station for the school. For perhaps a mile the two proceeded onwards; then Lanmore turned into the gates of a gloomy farmhouse set back from the road. Before entering he glanced up and down; but Kingston had been too quick, and was crouching in the hedge. Lanmore saw nothing.

Kingston cautiously advanced until he arrived at the gates. His eyesight was marvellously keen, and he was able to take a survey of the surroundings. The old house lay a hundred yards from the road, and was surrounded by tall trees. Apparently it was deserted, for grass and weeds grew everywhere, and several windows were smashed and boarded up. Anything more definite than this it was impossible for Kingston to see, so he quickly came to a decision.

"I must go in and make a closer inspection," he told himself. "Lanmore wouldn't come to a place like this if it wasn't for some profitable object."

He leapt over the gate and cautiously crept towards the house.

CHAPTER 2.

What Kingston Overhead—Dolores Helps.

NOT a sign of life was visible as Kingston neared the old farmhouse, and he wondered where Lanmore had entered. Very carefully Kingston walked round to the back; then he paused and smiled. One of the windows directly facing him was closely shuttered, but through a crack a gleam of light appeared.

"Well, upon my soul, I should never have suspected Lanmore of such carelessness!" murmured Kingston. "Still, since he has chosen to supply this spyhole for my benefit, I see no reason why I shouldn't take advantage of his generosity."

A minute later Kingston was close against the shutter. The crack was small, but he could just manage to see Lanmore, seated on the corner of a box, conversing with another man, who was shabbily dressed.

"Don't you worry, Geoff," the latter was saying, while he loaded a blackened pipe. "The cops ain't got the slightest idea what's become o' the kid. They think 'e's drowned, same as the school chaps do, an' I'll lay a quid nobody don't ever see Master Summers again."

"No, Webber; I think our plans are too carefully laid for that," said Lanmore coolly. "Where's Jameson?" he added.

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"Downstairs, in the cellar with the kid. I s'pose you've seen the old gal to-day, an' arranged things?"

"Yes. She's been to Frank Kingston, the detective, and—"

"Frank Kingston!" echoed Webber blankly.

"Yes; but you needn't look scared, man. Kingston's clever, but before he is able to get on the trail young Summers will be well away from here. I pride myself I'm as smart as Kingston, and I know positively well that he'll draw blank on this occasion."

"I ain't so sure—"

"Well, I am sure, Webber; and I don't want any grumbles from you," said Lanmore sharply. "I pay you to do as I want. Kingston won't even suspect anybody of being in this house. It's three miles from the school, and right away from the river. After a thorough investigation, he must come to the same conclusion as the police—that the youngster has been drowned."

"All right, Geoff; don't git yer rag out!" grinned the rough-looking man, lighting his pipe. "But what's the plans? We ain't goin' to stop 'ere longer than to-night, are we?"

"At exactly half-past twelve Mrs. Summers will arrive here in a closed landaulette," said Lanmore easily. "I shall be driving, and I shall expect you to have the boy drugged and quiet all ready for us. The car needn't stop more than a minute, and we can all clear off at once, without leaving a single trace."

Kingston caught his breath in a little, and smiled triumphantly. For a few minutes longer he remained outside the shuttered window, listening, but no more was said which was useful to him; so he carefully picked his way across the garden to the road again.

"I think I can see the plan of the excellent Mrs. Summers," he murmured, as he walked sharply towards the station. "She thought she would strengthen her position by coming to me this evening. In reality it will mean the ruin of her scheme. By Jove, what a silly idea it was!"

When he was nearing the station he heard a train in the distance, so, quickening his pace to a sharp run, he arrived just as the train steamed in. It proved to be bound for Waterloo, and soon Kingston was travelling Londonwards. At the terminus he chartered a taxi.

"Hotel Cyril!" he ordered.

The vehicle drove off, and Kingston leaned back comfortably. In the train he had removed his disguise, and was now himself. He had also come to a decision with regard to what he would do, and very soon was talking with Miss Kathleen O'Brien, his fiancée.

Dolores—as he called her—resided in a magnificent suite of rooms at the Hotel Cyril, and was delighted to see her lover. He had called to ask her to assist in the case, but she made a suggestion herself.

"Why shouldn't I go down to this old farmhouse, heavily veiled, as Mrs. Summers?" she asked eagerly. "Fraser would be at the wheel, and, as Lanmore has his plans all cut and dried, the two men at the farmhouse would ask no questions, but would simply place the boy in the car. Then Fraser could drive to the nearest police-station."

Kingston was doubtful.

"The idea is splendid if it worked out satisfactorily," he said. "But it's risky, little girl—very risky. Of course, I should have the other car stopped, and we should catch the whole bunch. But, still, I don't like the idea of your going alone."

"I sha'n't be alone, you silly!" exclaimed Dolores. "Fraser will be there, and between the two of us we could easily get the better of those two men, couldn't we?"

In the end Kingston agreed to do as Dolores requested, and at half-past eleven the detective's big landaulette, with Fraser at the wheel, set out for Wallfield. A slight drizzle was now falling, and the night was not exactly pleasant. At last the car came to a halt at the gate of the old farmhouse, and a black form emerged from the trees and approached.

"Everything ready?" asked Fraser in a whisper, which did not betray his voice. "We must hurry up and be off."

An exclamation escaped the lips of the approaching man. He advanced quickly, and as Dolores stepped to the ground whipped out a revolver, and brought the butt of it down with stunning force on Fraser's head. The chauffeur fell forward without a cry.

"Quick!" exclaimed the man. "Help here!"

At the same moment he grasped Dolores, and before she could struggle free two other forms dashed up and held her secure. Geoffrey Lanmore laughed softly, and peered into the body of the car.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "This must be some trick or other. These two people came here with the intention of forestalling us. Who are you?" he added, turning to Dolores angrily. "Who arranged this affair?"

Dolores set her lips, and determined not to answer any questions. By some unforeseen circumstance Lanmore had arrived early, and Kingston had failed to stop him, as arranged. But Dolores knew quite well that Kingston would not leave her to face these scoundrels alone, and was probably even now hurrying to her assistance.

"You won't answer—eh?" said Lanmore fiercely. "Well, we'll get indoors and have a look at you in the light. Webber, bring the car inside, and put the lamps out."

Dolores was marched into the gateway in the grasp of Lanmore and the other man, Jameson. She saw, against some trees, the dim outline of another motor-car, also with its lamps extinguished.

"You see," exclaimed Lanmore, "we suspected something was up when we heard your car approaching. As a matter of fact, we were just starting off, so put the lights out quick, and backed the car in here, so that nothing could be seen from the road. You were tricked nicely, although you were bent on tricking us."

Dolores for a moment saw a face at the window of the other car, and guessed that it was Mrs. Summers. Probably she had the unconscious form of her son with her. Dolores was hustled indoors, but no amount of threats would wring a word from her lips. She stood there, just a little pale, but defiant, realising that by keeping silent she was gaining time.

"Very well," snarled Lanmore at last. "This is no time for gentle measures. Our liberty depends upon what this girl says, for there may be a trap for us somewhere, and we must learn of it."

He gave some orders, and Dolores found herself growing pale and cold as she listened to the words.

CHAPTER 3.

Lanmore's Threat.—Frank Kingston Arrives.—The Plot Revealed.

GOFFREY LANMORE stood looking at his fair captive with a sneering smile on his lips. Dolores was tied to a ring in the wall of one of the back rooms of the old farm-house. The apartment was deserted, save for an old barrel, and, close against Dolores, some wood shavings, two cans containing oil and petrol, and an overturned chair.

"Now," said Lanmore, "I must request you to answer my questions. If you still refuse to do so, we will set fire to these oily shavings, and leave you to your fate. In a second the place will be a raging furnace, and not a soul will ever know of your disappearance!"

As Lanmore said this he winked slightly at Jameson. But he spoke with terrible conviction, and Dolores wondered if he really did mean what he said. Of course the scoundrel was only bluffing, and had not the slightest intention of harming Dolores. All he wanted was to gain the information which he thought Dolores possessed. He imagined Dolores knew what the plans of her companions—presumably Scotland Yard men—were, and that she could warn him against a surprise attack.

And so he had prepared this dramatic scene, thinking that Dolores, being a woman, would immediately get hysterical, and blurt out everything. But Dolores was not of that type, and she stood there fearless. Not a word had she spoken since she had stepped from the car, and she wondered now whether it would not be advisable to invent some story to gain more time. Surely Kingston would arrive soon—

"Hands up, the pair of you!"

The voice was quiet enough, and Lanmore turned round with a muttered curse on his lips. In the doorway stood Frank Kingston, undisguised, and as cool as ever. A revolver was in his hand, pointing straight at Lanmore.

"By Heavens, you—"

"Silence!" ordered Kingston. "Hold up your hands, or I'll—"

This time Kingston himself was interrupted. A sudden blow from behind had sent his revolver flying. The next minute he was grappling with Webber, who had seen the detective arrive, and had followed him.

Instantly the other two scoundrels sprang to the assistance of their companion, and, to Dolores' amazement, Kingston was overpowered in practically no time, and held secure.

"Got you!" panted Lanmore. "I thought you were smarter, Kingston—I did, really! Hold him tight, boys; we must bind him to that ring!"

Kingston glared fiercely at Lanmore as the latter rose and crossed to Dolores. But still he stood helpless in the grasp of the two men. Helpless? At least, it appeared so. In reality, Kingston could have overpowered the three in less than a minute, and he was inwardly chuckling.

His scheme had been to stop Lanmore's car containing Mrs. Summers two miles distant from the old farm-house. But owing to an alteration in the scoundrel's plans the detec-

tive had been too late. With him he had four Scotland Yard men in plain clothes. Kingston had been in a difficulty; he knew Dolores had gone, and realised that she would be in great danger.

So he set off for the farm at a run, the Scotland Yard men following as quickly as possible. They could not hope to keep up with Kingston, for his speed was amazing. Now, when Kingston found himself attacked by the three men, he realised that it would be his best policy to pretend he was defeated—this would allow the four Scotland Yard detectives time to arrive.

Had Kingston fought it out then and there, in all probability one or two of the villains would have escaped. Consequently Kingston behaved in a manner that surprised Dolores. But he felt exceedingly light-hearted. His fears regarding Dolores had proved groundless, for he found her safe and sound.

In a few moments he found himself roped, as Dolores had been, to the ring in the wall, and Lanmore, who was in evening dress, placed his hat on squarely and looked at the captive.

"We will bid you good-evening, Mr. Kingston," he said with a sneer. "That's right, Webber—escort the lady outside."

Webber grasped Dolores roughly, and forced her towards the door. She half turned and looked at Kingston questioningly, but he made no sign. For at the exact moment he had caught sight of a face against the window—the face of one of the Scotland Yard men. They had arrived.

"I don't think you'll succeed in getting free just yet," began Lanmore easily. "At least—"

He never completed the sentence, for, with a snap, the thick rope which had bound Kingston parted like thread. It had required an enormous effort to break the rope, but Kingston had been capable of it.

Before Lanmore could recover from his surprise, the "helpless" captive stepped forward, and delivered a crashing blow on the scoundrel's sneering face. Lanmore went down like a log, and Kingston snatched off the gag which had been tied round his mouth.

"This way, you chaps!" he roared. "We've got the whole bunch!"

Simultaneously with his shout, other cries were heard. The four official detectives got to work immediately, and short work they made of it, too. At the end of two minutes Kingston met the chief of the plain-clothes' men.

"We've got the lot, Mr. Kingston!" cried the latter exultantly. "A cleaner sweep I never saw. We found Mrs. Summers and the boy out in the car. She was too frightened even to run away."

"I don't think she meant to go so far as this, Brown," said Kingston gravely. "Events marched too quickly for her, and I expect she wishes now she had never started the game."

Fraser had come round very soon, and although he complained of a bad headache, he insisted upon driving the car back to London.

"I knew you were bluffing, Frank, when you allowed yourself to be captured," said Dolores. "But—oh, for a minute I almost thought—"

"Never mind what you almost thought, dear," smiled Kingston. "Our arrangements all went wrong, but everything has turned out all right in the end, as you know."

"But what was the original plot, Frank?" asked the girl furiously.

"It is exceedingly simple. About a year ago Mrs. Randall, a widow, married Mr. Summers, a widower with one son—Harold. She only married him on account of his money. And when the old chap died, three or four months ago, he left the bulk of it to his son. But, in the event of Harold dying, the money would be inherited by Ralph, the woman's son. She hated her stepson, and thought of this plot."

"I think I understand," said Dolores thoughtfully. "Mrs. Summers is not altogether bad," proceeded Kingston. "Instead of having the boy killed, she arranged that he should be taken away on a ship, and landed in the wilds of Australia, penniless. Once there, there would be little hope of his reaching England again. Mrs. Summers commissioned Lanmore to do the work, and the other two scoundrels were, of course, Lanmore's men. What their arrangements were for placing him aboard the vessel I don't know, but really that has nothing to do with the case."

"But if Mrs. Summers had not been so rash as to pay you that visit, her scheme would have worked out to perfection," added Dolores. "She wanted to make everything look fair and square, I suppose, and thought that if she came to you nobody could say that she had left a stone unturned in the finding of her stepson."

THE END.

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To All My Readers.

In spite of the notice already published notifying my readers of the closing down of the "Free Correspondence Exchange," I continue to receive requests for correspondents which my readers ask me to publish under this heading. From this I conclude that there are a number of my readers who are still unaware that this "Exchange" has been discontinued, so that I am referring to the matter again for their benefit. It was indeed a great disappointment for me to have to take the step of discontinuing a feature which had won for itself, in THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries, an immense measure of popularity, while I hardly dare think of the effect this drastic step must have had upon hundreds of my chums who were thereby precluded from taking advantage of the splendid "Exchange." The action of a few—happily a very small minority—of my readers in abusing the privileges I freely offered them through the "Exchange," left no alternative but to inflict a cruel disappointment upon myself and hundreds of loyal readers. It was another case of the many having to suffer for the sins of a few, and I hope my disappointed readers will realise that I took the only honourable course open to me in closing the "Exchange" down forthwith.

Replies in Brief.

Wilfred M. (Manchester), F. C. Lerne, and others. The recipe for making a copygraph appeared in GEM No. 204. I am sorry space does not allow of my publishing it again.

T. Griffiths (Hadnall).—Thanks for letter. You can obtain all information about joining the Army, including height, regulations, conditions of service, etc., from any police-station.

A Gordon Gay Serial?

For many months now I have been in receipt of persistent requests, from readers living in every part of the British Isles and Colonies, for a "Gordon Gay" serial in THE GEM. So numerous and earnest have these letters become, that I am being driven to the conclusion that there is a large section amongst my readers which is mightily interested in the lively youths of Rylcombe Grammar School, and which will not be satisfied until a story dealing with their manifold, interesting, and amusing adventures appears in THE GEM Library in serial form. The present serial story, "Wings of Gold," is proving itself wonderfully popular, but all good things must come to an end at last, and when this splendid adventure story is finished, perhaps I may be able to oblige my clamorous "Gordon Gayites." I must think about it, and, meantime, I shall be glad to have any and every reader's opinion on the matter. A postcard will do, just to guide me in my never-slackening efforts to give my readers just what they want in the way of good reading.

Back Numbers Offered and Wanted.

S. Taylor, of Perivale, Maumberry Way, Dorchester, Dorset, wishes to obtain as many "Magnets" as possible.

F. Williams, 3, Drayton Road, North End, Portsmouth, wishes to obtain Nos. 60 and 172 of "The Magnet," and No. 155 of THE GEM.

Buying a Second-Hand Bicycle.

The cyclist who contemplates the purchase of a second-hand mount is first of all advised to use the greatest caution, more especially if it is his first transaction of the sort. In fact, the novice would be wise not to attempt the purchase without first getting an expert friend's advice upon the desired machine; and if the friend aforesaid can be persuaded to make a thorough examination of the machine for himself before giving an opinion on it, it will be so much the better. Another plan is that of hiring the machine in question for a few days, if the owner is willing to let you have it, or taking it on approval against a small deposit.

The prospective purchaser will then be able to examine and test the machine at leisure, and obtain the opinion of various friends upon it.

Now then, for the lines upon which the examination of a second-hand machine should be conducted. Presuming that you are satisfied with the general appearance of the machine, go over all the bearings in turn in search of wear. Test the wheels, pedals, steering-head, etc., for "play"—that is, grasp the different parts firmly with one hand, while you hold the bicycle firm with the other and test for "wobble." Another test which should not be omitted is that of the alignment of the front and rear wheel. These should make a single, perfect track when the steering-head is set absolutely straight. If out of alignment, the wheels will not "track" dead true, and the machine will be found to be prone to skid when ridden on greasy roads. The tyres and chain should next be examined for wear, the inner tubes, of course, not being omitted. If the tyres are new, or nearly so, see that the covers bear the name of some reputable maker. Sometimes cheap new covers will be put on to a second-hand machine for selling purposes, only to give the new owner endless trouble later on. The chain should be readily flexible, without any rollers broken or missing, and should run over the sprockets easily and without noise. The weight of the machine is a point which the intending purchaser should consider. A growing lad should have a fairly light bicycle, but it will often be found that a machine on the heavy side will wear better in ordinary use than an ultra-light one.

The brakes should come in for a share of careful attention, since the safety of the rider will often depend upon his ability to pull up sharply in an emergency. See that the blocks of the rim-brake are not very badly worn, and that the brake does not "chatter." The free-wheel must also prove itself in perfect working-order. The saddle should be tested for comfort in a fairly long ride before being "passed," while it should be ascertained that the adjustable seat-pillar is capable of giving just the saddle position required by the prospective purchaser. The tool-bag should be inspected, to ascertain that the necessary oilcan, set spanners, adjustable spanner, and repair-outfit are contained therein, and the accessories, such as the tyre-pump and the lamp, should be tested for efficiency. If all seems in order after a preliminary inspection, let the actual riding test be the deciding factor. If the machine runs easily, is comfortable, and, above all, is free from "shakiness" when running fast downhill, the tester will be quite safe in giving a reasonable price for it. It is often better to give a fair price for a sound second-hand machine of first-class make, than to buy a lower-grade new one for the same money.

THE EDITOR.