

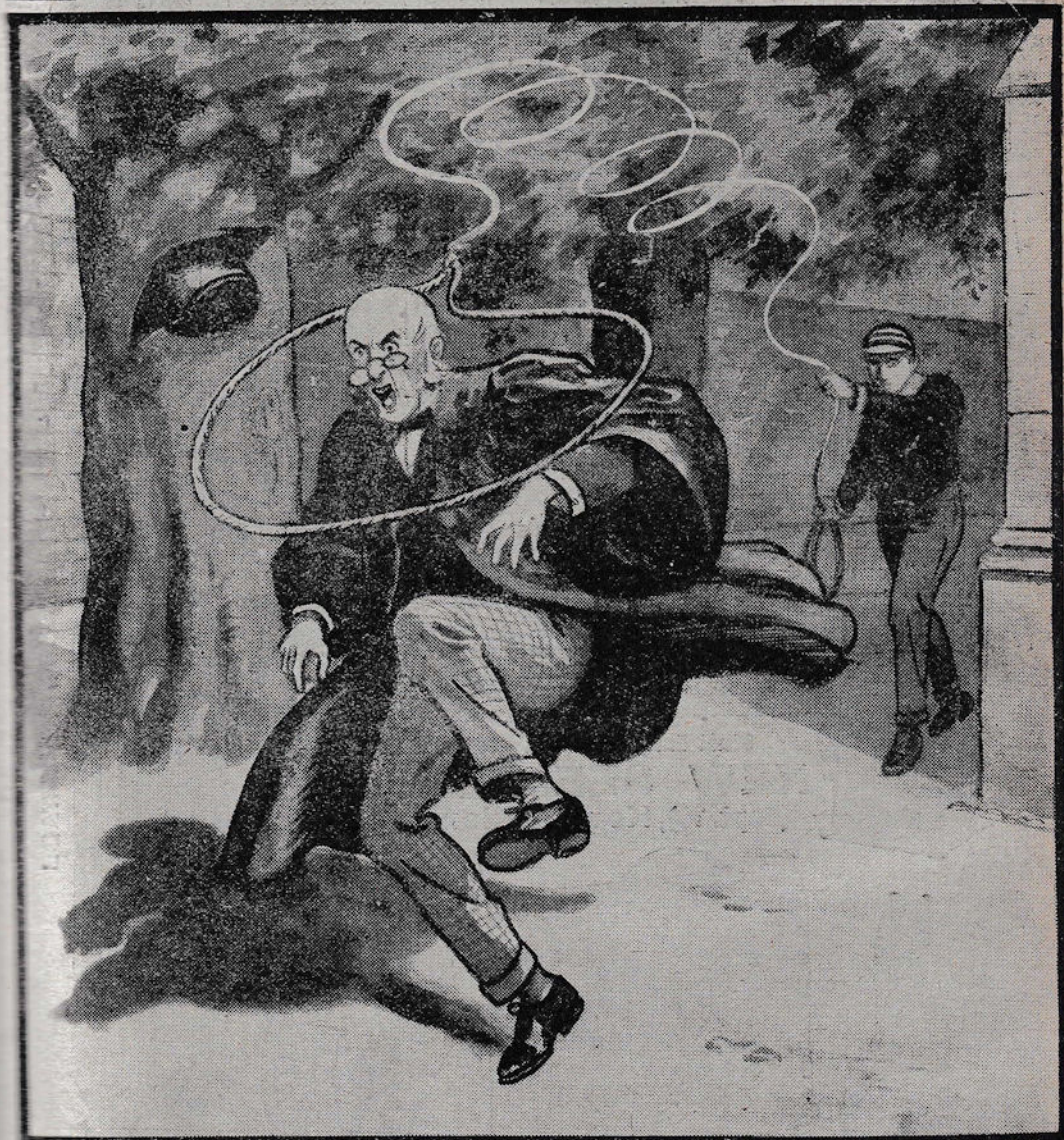
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WALLY D'ARCY'S DEED IN THE DARK!

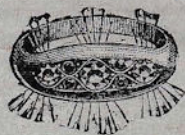
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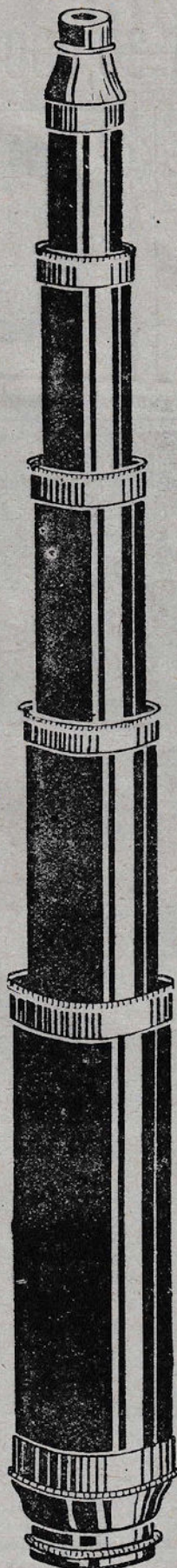
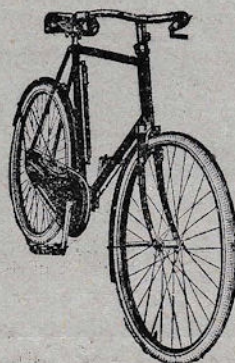
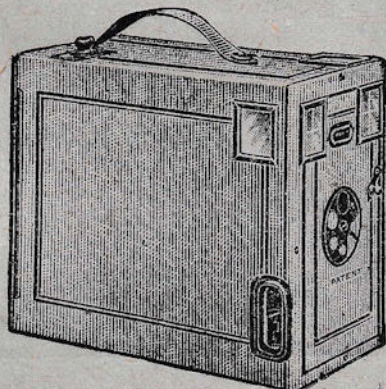
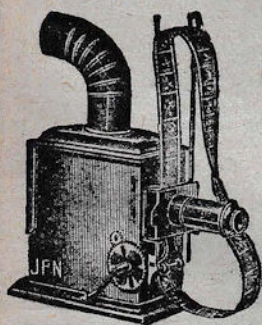
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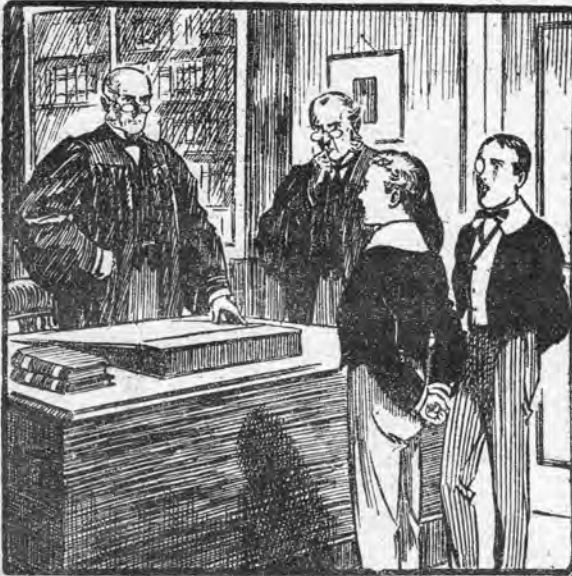
HIDDEN TREASURE AT ST. JIM'S!

Every

Wednesday.



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CHAPTER 1.

The Decision of the Court.

"I AM goin'!"
"No, you're not!"
"Weally, Blake—"
"Sit down!"
"I wefuse to sit down! I uttably decline to do anythin' of the sort! I am goin' to Mr. Selby at once!"
"Hold him!" said Blake.
There was the sound of a scuffle in Study No. 6, in the Fourth-Form passage, in the School House at St. Jim's.
Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, paused as they came along the passage. They looked at the closed door of Study No. 6, beyond which the scuffle was proceeding, and grinned.
"Seems to be trouble in the family," Tom Merry remarked.
Tramp, tramp, tramp! Bump, bump! There certainly did seem to be trouble in the Fourth-Form study; and the chums of the Shell were interested. The voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in suppressed tones, was heard again:
"Welease me, you wottahs!"
"Rats!"
"I am goin'!"
"No, you're not! You're staying!"
Scuffle, scuffle, scuffle!
Bump!
Tom Merry chuckled, and knocked at the study door. But with the scuffling that was going on inside, probably his knock was not heard—at all events, no one replied to it. Tom Merry opened the door and looked in, with Manners and Lowther looking in over his shoulders.

SHOULDER

- - - TO - - -

SHOULDER

A splendid, new, long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A peculiar sight met their gaze. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, the four occupants of the study, seemed to be trying to tie themselves into a knot on the floor. Wally D'Arcy of the Third, the young brother of the great Arthur Augustus, was sitting in the armchair looking on. Wally, who was usually the cheerfulest and cheekiest fag in the School House, was not looking so cheerful as usual now. His face was pale, and his eyes looked as if the unaccustomed tears had been there. There was a very suspicious redness about the lids.

"Hullo, what's the trouble here, my infants?" asked Tom Merry.

The heap of juniors on the floor disentangled itself, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emerged from it, panting for breath. He made a movement towards the door, and Blake, sitting breathless on the rug, yelled:

"Stop him!"

The Terrible Three barred the way.

"Pway allow me to pass, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I am goin' to Mr. Selby—"

"Stop him!" gasped Blake. "He's going to ask for the sack, and we're not going to let him!"

D'Arcy made a rush to get through the doorway. But the Terrible Three stopped the way, and they grasped him, and gently pushed him back into the study. Then they entered and closed the door after them.

"No hurry!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Let's know what's the matter, and we'll decide for you whether you go to old Selby or not. Old Selby isn't a nice man to receive visitors, you know—especially now. I've just seen him, and

Next Wednesday:

"HIDDEN TREASURE AT ST. JIM'S!" AND "SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE!"

No. 267 (New Series). Vol. 7.

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he looks as if he wanted to scalp somebody. Better keep off the grass."

"I am goin'!"

"Rats!" said Blake, as he picked himself up. "You ass, you'll get the sack from the school as sure as a gun!"

"I do not care! I—"

"But we care!" said Tom Merry. "What would St. Jim's be like without its one and only Gussy? My dear chap, how should we get on if the light of your countenance was withdrawn? Think of it!"

"Pway don't wot, Tom Mewwy!"

"What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry. "Tell us all about it, and leave it to your uncle!"

"I appeal to you fellows!" said D'Arcy. "I am sure, as sensible chaps, you will agree with me! Blake is an ass, and Hewwies is an ass, and Digby is an ass!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes; they're all asses in this study!" he agreed.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Now, what's the trouble?" said Tom Merry briskly. "Regard me as an old uncle, and tell me all about it."

Arthur Augustus dusted down his clothes. The scuffle on the floor had not improved them. Blake took up the tale.

"It's Wally," he said—"Wally, as usual!"

Tom Merry turned a severe glance upon the scamp of the Third.

"So you're in trouble again, Wally?"

"Yes!" growled Wally. "But I don't want Gussy to go to old Selby. He would only get himself into trouble, without helping me."

"I regard it as my duty, as your majah, Wally."

"Oh, rats!" said Wally disrespectfully.

"If you say wats to me, you young wastah—"

"Don't interrupt the Court!" said Tom Merry. "I'm here to judge this case, and I decline to allow interruptions from the public!"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther.

"Get it off your chest, Wally!" said Blake.

Wally grunted.

"It's old Selby, my rotten Form-master, again!" he said.

"You know that he's always down on me, for no reason—"

"Because you're such a nice, industrious, obedient kid," said Monty Lowther. "Yes, we know all about that."

"Well, I only drew a figure on the blackboard," said Wally.

"Chap with artistic tendencies ought to be encouraged, I think, not sat upon."

"What kind of a figure?"

"Well, it was something like Selby," admitted Wally.

"Just a picture of a man with a long, thin nose, you know, whacking a kid. Perhaps I made him rather uglier than Selby, if possible. I'm not a finished artist. It was meant as a gentle hint to Selby when he saw it; but the beast came in while I was doing it, and looked at it over my shoulder. You know the sneaking way he goes about without anybody hearing him."

"Yaas, watah! He is a spyin' wottah!"

"I suppose he wasn't pleased with his portrait?" asked Tom Merry.

Wally grinned a little.

"Well, no. He was waxy. I expected to be licked; but the beast needn't have licked me so hard! Look at my hands!"

Wally held out his hands for inspection. They were not especially clean. They showed signs of the caning Mr. Selby had given him. The Third Form-master had evidently laid it on. The Third-Former's hands were red and swollen from the savage lashes of the cane, and the juniors gazed at them with disgust and anger.

Whatever Wally had done, it was certain that no master had a right to cane him like that, and the Terrible Three understood Arthur Augustus's indignation.

"My hat," said Tom Merry, "what a howling beast!"

"The cad!" said Lowther.

"Worm!" said Manners.

"It was simply awful!" said Wally. "And then he gave me five hundred lines, and told me he'd cane me again if I didn't bring them to his study this evening. But I can't write with my hands like this. I can't hold a pen."

"The wottah!"

"You should be careful of Selby," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "He has an awfully bad digestion, and an awfully bad temper. But he certainly hadn't any right to lick you like that. If the Head knew, it would mean bad trouble for Selby. Blessed if I don't half think you'd better go and show your paws to the Head!"

"Not going to sneak!" said Wally.

"Well, that's right, but—"

"I found my minah blubbin' in the passage," said D'Arcy, "and I brought him here to make him tell me what—"

"I wasn't!" roared Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

"I was just—just sniffing a bit, perhaps," said Wally. "I jolly well wasn't blubbing! No one has ever seen me blub!"

"You were blubbin'!"

"I wasn't blubbing!" yelled Wally.

The juniors chuckled.

"Well, it was enough to make any fellow blub," said Tom Merry pacifically.

"I dare say it was; but I wasn't blubbing," said Wally obstinately. "And I wasn't going to tell Gussy anything about it. I'm going to pay out old Selby somehow myself."

"I wefuse to allow you to attempt anythin' of the sort, Wally."

"Oh, bosh!"

"You cheeky young wascal!"

"Order!" said Tom Merry, holding up his hand. "Silence in court! The question before the meeting is not whether Wally blubbed or not—the evidence seems to be contradictory on that point!"

"I didn't blub!"

"Order! The question is—what is Gussy going to do?" said Tom Merry.

"He's going to stay here!" growled Blake.

"I am goin' to Mr. Selby," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"I am goin' to tell him that I wefuse to have my minah tweated in this way, and to give my opinion of his conduct. I am goin' to point out to him that he is an uttah wottah, and unworthy to have a place as mastah at St. Jim's. I am goin' to wemark—"

"Great Scott! Do you think Selby will listen to all that?" demanded Monty Lowther. "You will be chucked out of his study!"

"I should wefuse to be chucked out of his studay."

"I don't suppose your refusing would make much difference," grinned Tom Merry. "Now, the Court is going to give its decision."

"Undah the circs—"

"Silence in court!" said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"The decision of the Court is—that old Selby has acted in a very rascally and reprehensible way, and that he ought to be made to sit up. The Court decides that all the gentlemen present shall put their heads together to make Selby sit up, and feel properly sorry for himself."

"Hear, hear!"

"But the Court refuses permission to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Esquire, to make an ass of himself!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Telling Selby what you think of him won't soften his hard heart, or touch his conscience. He's got a specially tough conscience that can stand almost anything. No good your getting sacked from the school for cheeking a Form-master. There are more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Esquire, is therefore called upon to obey the order of the Court."

"I wefuse!"

"A refusal will be considered as contempt of Court, and punished accordingly. All the silk hats belonging to the said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Esquire, will be taken out and separately jumped on!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Undah the circs—"

"The Court has decided," said Tom Merry. "We're all going to back you up, and make Selby wish he hadn't been a beast. That ought to satisfy any reasonable person. Now, Gussy, you're in a minority, and it's up to you to toe the line. This is where the noble manners of the House of Lords come in."

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"Well, weally, deah boys, if you considah—"

"We do!" said Blake.

"We does!" said Tom Merry.

"Vewy well. If it is agreed that Selby is to be wagged, and pwopahly punished for his dastardly conduct, I yield the

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Mr. Selby was left alone, tied to the tree in the deep darkness under the shadowy branches of the elms. As soon as he was sure that he was alone and that he had nothing more to fear from his assailant, he began to struggle with the rope. But it was useless. He tried to speak; but the oily rag in his mouth choked back all utterance. He could only gurgle faintly and glare. (*See Chapter 5.*)

point, and I will not go to him," said Arthur Augustus gracefully.

"Hear, hear!"

"That's settled, then," said Tom Merry. "Now to hold a council of war, and decide the best ways and means for making Selby sit up."

And a council of war was promptly held, within the locked study.

CHAPTER 2.

Mr. Selby Sits Up.

MR. SELBY entered his room in the School House with a frowning brow. It was evening, and the shades of night had fallen upon the old quadrangle of St. Jim's. There was a cheerful fire burning in Mr. Selby's room, and his slippers were placed near the fender, and an armchair stood in inviting readiness.

But Mr. Selby did not cheer up at the sight of the cosy room. Mr. Selby was not a cheerful person. He was troubled with the painful complaint of indigestion, and his temper suffered in consequence. A brisk walk round the quad. would have made him feel much better; but Mr. Selby

was not a believer in physical exercise. Mr. Selby's nose was of a crimson hue, a proof that his indigestion was troubling him more than ever; and Wally had had another proof of it in that severe caning. Wally was not a promising pupil, and certainly he was not the most industrious or the most respectful boy in the Third Form. But Mr. Selby's dislike of high spirits and free manners was constitutional. He disliked Wally because he was Wally, and the scamp of the Third was very frequently made to feel the weight of the Form-master's prejudice.

Mr. Selby sat down in the armchair, and removed his boots, and thrust his feet into the comfortable-looking slippers.

Then he gave a start.

Instead of feeling warm and comfortable, as they looked, the slippers seemed damp, and they gave his feet a sticky feeling.

The Third Form-master withdrew his feet hastily from the slippers.

There was a curious squelching sound as he did so.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Selby.

His face was a study as he looked at his feet.

They were reeking with treacle. His socks were soaked through with it, and his feet felt horrible.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

55 HIDDEN TREASURE AT ST. JIM'S!

A Magnificent Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The Form-master simply gasped.

Someone had paid a visit to his room, and filled his slippers with treacle, all ready for him.

"The—the wretches!" gasped Mr. Selby. "The—the insolent young ruffians! Who has done this? But I need not inquire—it was undoubtedly D'Arcy minor."

There were patches of treacle on the hearthrug where he had put his feet down. He jumped up, squelching treacle out of his socks. His first impulse was to rush downstairs in search of D'Arcy minor. But he could not go downstairs in his socks, and he could not put his treacle feet into his boots. He would have to wash his feet and change his socks before he could execute his vengeance upon the scamp of the Third. There was water in the room, but Mr. Selby did not like cold water. He reached over to the bell to ring for hot water.

The electric bell was beside his fireplace. Mr. Selby pressed it with his finger, and uttered a yell of agony.

"Oh! Wow! Oh!"

He had often pressed the button before, without any direful results. But there was evidently something wrong with it now. Mr. Selby had felt as if he were pressing his finger upon the business end of a tack.

He sucked his finger furiously, and then glared at the bell-push. It was thick with dried glue, and in the glue was set the end of a bent pin. There was not more than a sixteenth of an inch of it; but it had been enough to give Mr. Selby a very unpleasant feeling in his finger when he pressed it.

The Form-master gasped with rage.

"All D'Arcy minor's work!" he muttered. "I will punish him—I will punish him most severely! The young rascal!" Mr. Selby scraped the bell-push, and removed the bent pin and most of the glue. Then he pressed the button again.

Then he waited for the maid to come.

But the maid whose business it was to answer Mr. Selby's bell did not come. Mr. Selby waited a few minutes, and then, snorting, he pressed the bell again.

Still no reply.

"Disgraceful!" snorted Mr. Selby, when three minutes had elapsed, and the maid showed no sign of putting in an appearance. "This house is managed disgracefully! I shall complain to Mr. Railton. I hope Jane will be discharged! Probably chattering with the milkman at the back door, instead of attending to her duties. Disgraceful!"

He pressed the bell again.

But the maid did not come.

Mr. Selby, breathing fury, pressed the bell once more, and kept his finger upon it. The bell should now have been ringing continuously below stairs. If it were so ringing, certainly all the staff of the School House must have heard it. And yet the minutes elapsed and no one came.

"They are all in the plot!" shrieked Mr. Selby, beside himself with fury. "I—I will speak to the Head. I will have them all discharged. I will—"

Words failed the angry master.

He dashed across the room, leaving a trail of treacle after him, and tore open the door and rushed into the passage. He leaned over the banisters and shouted.

"Jane!"

Two or three fellows in the lower passage looked up, surprised to hear Mr. Selby shouting for the housemaid in so excited a manner.

"Jane!" roared Mr. Selby.

"Anything the matter, sir?" called up Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's.

"Yes," rasped out Mr. Selby. "Call that fool—ahem!—I mean, call Jane for me, please. I want some hot water. Someone has filled my slippers with treacle!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I—I mean, how rotten, sir! Can't you ring for Jane?"

"I have rung, but she must be deaf; she has not answered. I have rung twenty times," exclaimed Mr. Selby, exaggerating a little.

"That's queer," said Kildare. "I'll call her."

Jane came up from below in answer to Kildare. Mr. Selby shrieked over the banisters to her.

"Jane! Jane!"

"Yes, sir!" said the startled Jane.

"What do you mean by not answering the bell?"

"I wasn't rung, sir," said Jane.

"Do not utter falsehoods, woman!"

"Mr. Selby!"

"I have rung thirty or forty times!"

"The bell ain't rung, sir."

"It is false! How dare you say so, woman?" shrieked the infuriated Mr. Selby.

Jane flushed with anger.

"Don't you call me a woman, sir!" she shrieked. "I'll complain to the 'Ead! I'm a respectable girl, I am! Don't you call me a woman! I've never been so insulted in my life! Woman, indeed! Hoh!"

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"Bring me hot water!" yelled Mr. Selby.

"Woman!" said the indignant Jane. "Calling me a woman! Hoh!"

"Will you bring me the hot water, you wretched girl?" shrieked Mr. Selby.

"Don't you call me a girl, sir, I won't stand it!"

"Bring me hot water!"

"Bring it yourself!" said Jane, flouncing away. "I'm not going to be insulted, Form-master or no Form-master, and I'll tell the 'Ead so himself! Woman, indeed!"

And Jane flounced downstairs.

There was a loud cackle from end to end of the lower passage. The fellows there seemed to think the matter amusing. Not so Mr. Selby. He was boiling.

"The—the disrespectful hussy!" panted Mr. Selby. "I will have her discharged! I—I—"

"Perhaps there's something wrong with the bell, sir?" suggested Kildare mildly.

"Nonsense!" snapped Mr. Selby.

Kildare turned red. He did not like to have his suggestions characterised as nonsense, even by a Form-master. He walked away.

Mr. Selby, who could see that he would not get any hot water by means of Jane, stamped back with treacle feet into his room. He decided to look at the bell, though he had told Kildare that his suggestion was nonsense. It occurred to him that it might have been tampered with more than he had suspected. He unscrewed the push, and glared as he saw that the wire had been cut through at the terminal. The cutting of the wire, of course, had disconnected the bell, and Mr. Selby had been pressing it for nothing. It had not rung below.

Mr. Selby panted.

"Another trick. I will make that wretched boy suffer for it!"

He decided to wash the treacle off in cold water, after all. He swamped water out of the jug into his basin, and put it on the floor, and dabbed his feet into it and sponged off the treacle. Then he towelled them, and sought out new socks and put them on, and got his boots on at last. Then he rushed downstairs in search of D'Arcy minor. He was not in the least doubt as to the author of the outrages in his room. There was whispering and chuckling among the fellows below as Mr. Selby came hurtling down, his gown flying in the breeze he made by his rapid passage.

"Fancy old Selby getting squiffy like this!" muttered Cutts of the Fifth. "I didn't know he was a drinker."

"Drunk as a lord!" said Knox of the Sixth, with a glance at Mr. Selby's flushed face, as he flew by. "I wonder what the Head would say, if he knew that Selby was squiffy, and quarrelling with the housemaids."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Mr. Selby did not hear or heed. He rushed straight to the Third Form-room, where he expected to find D'Arcy minor. He found him there.

CHAPTER 3.

Very Rough on Wally.

WALLY was there!

There was a smell of cooking in the Third Form-room. Wally, and his inseparable chums Jameson and Gibson and Frayne, were cooking rashers before the Form-room fire. There was a smell of cooking, and a still stronger smell of burning. The fags were too busily engaged to hear Mr. Selby rush in. Wally seemed to have got over his late trouble; and he had been content to leave the work of vengeance in the hands of Tom Merry & Co. He was going to have tea now, he had dismissed Mr. Selby and all his works from his mind.

Mr. Selby recalled himself to the fag's mind violently.

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He grasped Wally by the shoulder, and swung him away from the grate.

"Hallo!" roared Wally, as the rashers tumbled into the grate. "You fathead, stop it!"

Wally was under the impression that it was a fag who was dragging him away from the fire, from a mistaken sense of humour.

"D'Arcy minor!"

"Oh!" gasped Wally. "Mr. Selby!"

"What did you call me?" thundered the Form-master.

"I—I thought it was somebody else, sir."

"I do not believe you!" shouted Mr. Selby. "You intentionally addressed me with gross disrespect, D'Arcy minor."

Wally's lips set obstinately. He did not like to have his word doubted, and he very nearly made a reply that would have been much more disrespectful than what he had said already. But he restrained himself.

"And that is not all!" thundered Mr. Selby. "You have committed outrages in my room! You have filled my slippers with treacle!"

"I haven't, sir!"

"You have affixed a pin upon my bell-push—"

"I didn't!"

"And disconnected the bell!"

"I haven't touched the bell, sir!"

"It is false—false!"

Wally's eyes gleamed.

"Well, if you don't believe me, it's no good my saying anything, is it, sir?" he said.

Mr. Selby shook him.

"You young scoundrel, you are lying!"

Wally was silent.

"I am going to punish you, D'Arcy minor," said Mr. Selby, in tones of concentrated rage. "Frayne, give me the cane from my desk!"

Joe Frayne hesitated.

"Do you hear me, Frayne?"

Frayne reluctantly brought the cane.

"Now D'Arcy minor, hold out your hand!"

D'Arcy minor did not move.

"Do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then obey me at once!"

"I've been caned enough for to-day, sir," said Wally, putting his hands behind him. "I'm not going to have any more."

Mr. Selby glared at him. He could scarcely believe his ears. Had he been calmer, he would not have thought of caning the boy, after the previous infliction. But he was not calm; he was very far from calm.

"Do you know what you are saying, D'Arcy minor?" he shrieked.

"Yes, sir."

"You refuse to obey me?"

"I won't be caned, sir."

"D'Arcy minor—"

Wally stood doggedly silent.

"I give you one last opportunity of obeying me, wretched boy!" said Mr. Selby hoarsely. "Will you hold out your hand?"

Wally did not stir.

Mr. Selby waited a moment—a short moment. Then he grasped Wally by the collar with his left hand, and swung him round, and thrashed him with the cane.

The fags looked on in horror. They were accustomed to displays of temper on the part of their Form-master, but they had never seen him in anything like this state before. The cane rose and fell with cruel lashes, and Wally roared with pain.

"Ow! Ow! Leave off! Leggo, you beast! Ow! Ow!"

"Let him alone, sir!" shouted Jameson, running forward.

"You've no right to cane him like that! Let him alone!" A back-hander from Mr. Selby sent Jameson reeling. Then the infuriated Form-master lashed at Wally again. Wally's yells rang through the Form-room, and outside it. The door opened suddenly, and Kildare strode in.

"What's all this row?" he demanded angrily. "What—Why—why—What are you doing, sir?"

"Don't you dare to interfere with me, Kildare!"

"Mr. Selby—"

Lash! Lash!

Kildare ran forward, and seized the Form-master's wrist in a grip of iron, and wrenched the cane away from him. He tossed the cane the length of the Form-room, and then faced the panting master with a flushed and angry face.

"I don't think you know what you are doing, sir!" he said sternly. "You have no right to cane a boy like that!"

Mr. Selby almost fainted.

"Kildare, how dare you—how dare you—"

"I dare to interfere to save a lad from being treated brutally, sir," said Kildare fearlessly.

"Give me that cane at once!"

"I shall do nothing of the sort!"

"I shall report this insolence to the Head, Kildare!"

"Report what you like!" said Kildare savagely. "I've a jolly good mind to report to the Head how you were using D'Arcy minor. And I will, too, if you lay a finger on him again!"

Kildare was very nearly as angry as the Form-master now. Mr. Selby's hands were clenched, and for a moment it looked as if he would hurl himself upon the captain of St. Jim's. The fags looked on breathlessly. There wasn't a fellow in the Third who would have hesitated to give a whole term's pocket-money to see Mr. Selby handled by the athletic captain of St. Jim's.

But Mr. Selby, fortunately for himself, restrained his temper. Kildare was quite in a mood to knock him flying among the desks.

"Kildare, that boy has played tricks in my room—filled my slippers with treacle, broken my bell!"

"You had no right to cane him like that, whatever he has done."

"I—I—"

"Wally didn't do it!" said Jameson furiously. "I've been with Wally ever since last lesson, and I know he hasn't been to Mr. Selby's room. Excepting when he was in Study No. 6, I was with him all the time. He never went near Mr. Selby's room."

"It is false!" rapped out Mr. Selby. "Kildare, you had no right to interfere here! I order you to leave this room!"

"And I refuse to obey you, sir!"

"Kildare, I shall report you!"

"Report, and be hanged!" said Kildare roughly. "You have acted disgracefully! If you were not a master, I'd lay that cane about you now yourself."

Mr. Selby stuttered with rage. But he had sense enough left to know that he dared not carry the matter before the Head of St. Jim's. Kildare was master of the situation; and it was only left for Mr. Selby to retreat. The Form-master, giving the Sixth-Former a last furious look, stamped from the room.

Wally had sat down on a form, his head lowered in his hands. He was shaking from head to foot with pain. Kildare put a hand upon his shoulder, and Wally looked up with a white, strained face.

"Thank you, Kildare!" he muttered.

"Has he hurt you much?"

"Oh, yes, the brute!"

Kildare's brows knitted.

"Come with me to the Head, kid! Dr. Holmes wouldn't allow anything of the sort if he knew. Come with me; I'll see you through!"

Wally shook his head.

"I don't want to sneak!" he said.

Kildare paused.

"Well, perhaps you're right, kid," he said. "It's better to stand things, if you can, and not tell tales. You're a little man!"

And Kildare slowly left the Form-room.

The fags gathered round Wally. In spite of his pluck, the scamp of the Third could not keep back the tears from his eyes. He was dangerously near to "blubbing" now.

"The awful brute!" said Jameson, in a white heat of indignation. "You ought to have let Kildare take you to the doctor, Wally."

Wally shook his head without speaking.

"We're not going to stand this!" said Curly Gibson.

Wally's eyes blazed.

"I'm not going to stand it!" he said. "I'll get even with Selby, if they kick me out of St. Jim's for it! Don't talk to me now; I can't stand it!"

And the fags left Wally alone.

Ten minutes later the Form-room door opened again, and the Terrible Three came in. They were grinning.

"Hallo, Wally!" said Tom Merry. "The campaign's started! Hallo, hallo, what's the matter with you, kid?"

Wally gave them a miserable grin.

"I suppose it was you played the goat with old Selby?" he asked.

"Yes; but—"

"He jumped to the conclusion that I had done it."

"But you could prove that you didn't!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You don't mean to say that he's licked you without any proof against you? Didn't you deny it?"

"He didn't believe me."

"The rotter!"

"Then he's licked you?" asked Monty Lowther.

Wally groaned.

"It was an awful licking!" said Jameson. "Kildare came in, and he chipped in, and took the cane away from Selby. Selby said he'd report him to the Head; but I'll bet he doesn't dare to do it!"

Tom Merry looked very glum.

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"I'm sorry, kid," he said. "We seem to have made matters worse instead of better. Not much good going for old Selby, if he's going to jump on you on suspicion every time."

"It's all right," muttered Wally. "I'll make him sorry for it."

Tom Merry looked at him uneasily. The fag's eyes had a strange gleam in them; and Tom did not like his look.

"What are you thinking of, Wally?" he asked.

D'Arcy minor was silent.

"Wally, old man, what have you got in your head? Don't do anything rash, old kid; that would only make matters worse!"

Wally did not reply. The Terrible Three left the Third Form-room with gloomy faces and worried minds. Some idea was evidently working in Wally's brain; and in his present mood he was only too likely to do something rash, which, as Tom Merry said, would only make matters worse. And the Terrible Three resolved that they would keep an eye on Wally that evening.

CHAPTER 4.

Looking After Wally.

"WALLY, deah boy—"

Wally grunted.

"Wally, old man, I twust you are not thinkin' of doin' anythin' wash?"

Another grunt.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wore a worried look.

The swell of St. Jim's had heard of his minor's second misadventure, and he had gone to look for Wally, and he had found him at last in the Third-Form dormitory all alone. Wally was sitting on his bed with a white face, and very bright eyes, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, thinking. There was very little evil in Wally's nature, wild young scamp as he was; but what there was, Mr. Selby had succeeded in fanning into a flame. There was no doubt that vengeance was in the fag's thoughts, and that he was in a reckless mood.

And Arthur Augustus was troubled. Although he generally adopted a severe mentor's attitude towards his young brother, he was really very fond of Wally, and he was very much concerned about him at the present moment. But Wally was evidently not in a mood for confidences. He only grunted in reply to the remarks of his major.

"You have been tweated wottenly, Wally," said D'Arcy sympathetically—"I know that."

"No need to tell me that," growled Wally.

"Selby is a beast!"

"He's a rotter!" said Wally.

"Yaas, watah! But I don't want you to do anythin' that would get you into twouble with the Head, Wally."

Grunt!

"You must not think of payin' out a Form-mastah, Wally, deah boy, as you fags call it. It is nessawary to gwin and beah it."

Grunt!

"What are you thinkin' about, Wally?"

Grunt!

"Are you thinkin' of goin' for old Selby in some way?"

"Yes," said Wally tersely.

"In what way?"

Grunt!

"Weally, Wally—"

Grunt!

"I wish you would confide in me, Wally, and let me advise you," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "I am afraid you are goin' to get yourself into twouble."

Grunt!

There was evidently nothing to be got out of Wally, and Arthur Augustus sighed and left the dormitory. Wally remained there alone, seated on the bed, with knitted brows and gleaming eyes, thinking bitter thoughts.

Arthur Augustus slowly made his way to Study No. 6. Blake and Herries and Digby were doing their preparation, and it was time D'Arcy did his; but his concern for his young brother had driven other thoughts from his mind.

"I am wowied about Wally, you fellows," he said.

"You generally are," growled Blake. "What's the matter with him now?"

"Selby has been lickin' him again. He thought it was Wally did those things in his room you know; the tweacle and so forth, and licked him."

"Beast!" said Blake. "Just like him to lick Wally with-

out asking for proof. Serve him right if Wally complained to the Head."

"Wally won't do that," said D'Arcy. "But I'm afraid he's thinkin' of somethin' wash. Of course, Selby deserves anythin', but it's no good Wally doin' something to get expelled fwom St. Jim's for."

"Oh, he's got too much sense for that!" said Herries.

"I weally wish I felt sure about that."

"Well, sense doesn't run in the D'Arcy family, I know," agreed Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Wally will get over it," said Digby. "He's a tough little beggar, and he'll forget about it by to-morrow."

"I twust so," said D'Arcy doubtfully.

And the swell of St. Jim's settled down to his preparation, with a wrinkled brow. He could not help feeling worried about his minor.

And if Arthur Augustus had seen Wally just then, he would have felt more worried still. Wally came down from the dormitory a little later, the same strange gleam still in his eyes, and a bulge under his jacket showed that he was concealing something there. He was going quietly downstairs when Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came upon him. The meeting was not by chance. Tom Merry had resolved to keep an eye on Wally, and he was doing it. The fag tried to slip by without speaking, but Tom Merry dropped a hand upon his shoulder, and he had to stop.

"Whither bound, kid?" asked Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Never mind."

"What have you got under your jacket?"

"Oh, rats!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Come into my study, kid," he said. "We've got some ripping roast chestnuts."

Wally shook his head.

"You like roast chestnuts, Wally?"

"I don't want any now, thanks."

"Oh, come along!" said Tom Merry. "Be chummy, you know."

"Yes, come on," said Manners. "I'll show you some of my photographs, Wally."

Wally grunted.

"Thanks; but I can't come."

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going out into the quad., if you must know," growled Wally. "Now let me pass."

"But what do you want out in the quad. now?" asked Tom Merry uneasily. "It's jolly near bedtime."

"I know it is."

"Then what are you going out for?"

"Find out."

"That's what I'm trying to do," said Tom, determined to keep good-humoured. "I hope you're not going to play some silly trick, Wally."

"Look here," said Wally, "I'm much obliged to you, but I know how to look after myself. I can mind my own business."

"Which means that I must mind mine, I suppose," said Tom Merry, smiling.

"Yes," said Wally bluntly.

"But look here, kid—"

"Oh, rats!"

And Wally jerked himself away from Tom Merry's detaining hand, and ran downstairs. As he ran, his jacket flapped open, and Lowther caught a glimpse of the object that was concealed under it.

"What is the kid doing with that rope?" he exclaimed.

"Rope!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes; he's got a rope hidden under his jacket."

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"He's up to something or other," he said. "Wally hasn't been quite himself this evening. I say, old Selby is out of doors. You know he always takes a walk round before bed. He is out there now."

The chums of the Shell exchanged serious glances.

"The young ass!" muttered Manners. "He can't be thinking of going for Selby."

"Pshaw!" said Lowther.

"He's wild enough for anything now, I think," said Tom Merry uneasily. "I—I think I'll just run out and see. I'll join you in the common-room."

"Right-ho!"

Manners and Lowther continued on their way to the common-room, and Tom Merry hurried to the door of the School House. It was very dark in the old quadrangle. Tom Merry looked out into the dim shadows of the elms.

Where was Wally?

The captain of the Shell scanned the shadowed quadrangle. There was a step beside him, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined him. The swell of St. Jim's had left his preparation unfinished.

"Lookin' for somebody, Tom Mewwy?" he asked.

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Tom Merry nodded.

"Have you seen Wally?"

"Yes. He's gone out into the quad."

D'Arcy started.

"What for, Tom Merry?"

"He wouldn't tell me."

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry raised his hand.

"Listen!" he muttered.

From the distant black shadows of the quadrangle, there came a sharp, though faint cry, barely audible to the ears of the two juniors standing on the steps of the School House, and yet conveying much to them.

Tom Merry and D'Arcy looked at one another with faces grown suddenly white.

"By Jove!" murmured Tom Merry.

They listened intently.

But the sound was not repeated.

"I'm goin' to look for Wally," muttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He hurried down the steps, and Tom Merry hurried after him. What was the cause of that cry in the distance? Had Wally really done something rash—had he—All kinds of thoughts crowded through the juniors' minds as they hurried out into the dark.

They did not call out to Wally. If he had done something foolish, they did not want to give him away. There were thick clouds on the sky, and hardly a glimmer of starlight in the old quadrangle of St. Jim's. Beyond the radius of light from the windows of the School House all was darkness. Across the quadrangle glimmered the lights of the New House. But under the old elms the darkness was pitchy black.

Where was Wally?

Searching for the fag in the dark quadrangle was like looking for a needle in a haystack. Tom Merry and D'Arcy hurried to and fro, not daring to call for fear of betraying Wally, and at the same time not knowing where to look for him. And a strange, oppressive fear was at their hearts—a fear of they hardly knew what.

CHAPTER 5.

Roped In.

MR. SELBY was feeling a little better.

It was a custom of his to walk round the quadrangle in the evening before going to bed; and as he crunched along the gravel path, the Third Form-master felt decidedly better. If he had taken more exercise, his digestion and his temper would both have been greatly improved. The Third Form-master was beginning to think, as he breathed in the fresh, keen air, that perhaps he had been a little hard on Wally. After all, he had had no proof that the fag had been concerned in the outrages, as he called them, in his room, and certainly he had punished him very severely on suspicion. Mr. Selby was not the kind of man to admit himself in the wrong by any means. But he reflected that perhaps he had gone a little too far, in his just indignation, and he intended to be a little easier with Wally the next day. He was thinking so when he heard a step on the gravel path behind him, and he glanced round.

A shadow loomed up for a moment, and then disappeared. Mr. Selby frowned. Some junior out of his House, he decided, after the hour when all boys of the Lower Forms should have been indoors. Mr. Selby immediately became the hard and stern master again, and he halted and retraced his steps a little, in the hope of discovering the delinquent. If it was a boy of his Form, there would be a caning for him; if a boy of another Form, Mr. Selby would report him to his Form-master. It never even occurred to Mr. Selby that it would ever be judicious or generous to close one eye occasionally.

"Who is that?" called out Mr. Selby.

He had reached the darkest part of the path, where it ran under the shadowy old elms. He peered to and fro in the darkness, but could see nothing.

His anger began to rise. It occurred to him that the boy, whoever he was, was dogging his steps, and watching him in the darkness, for what reason he could not possibly guess.

Mr. Selby frowned.

"Who is there?" he rapped out. "Answer me at once!"

The answer came—in an unexpected manner.

There was a whiz in the air, and Mr. Selby felt something settle over his head, and then over his shoulders.

It was a noose.

The rope glided down over his shoulders, and the lower rope tightened. Mr. Selby was transfixed for a moment. He knew what had happened. He remembered having seen Buck Finn, the American junior in the Shell, giving instruction in lasso-throwing to an interested crowd of fags only that morning. Buck Finn came from the Western States, and he had been brought up to the use of the lasso, and many of the St. Jim's fellows took a keen interest in his exhibitions of its use, and some of them had practised using it. Mr. Selby remembered it, and he felt the rope tighten about his body. Someone, with incredible audacity, had lassoed him, lassoed a Form-master—him—Mr. Selby!

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Selby, in amazement and horror.

He grasped at the rope as it tautened round his chest.

He intended to throw it off, and then to secure the offender, and lead him into house by his collar, there to suffer condign punishment.

But it was not quite so easy to throw off the rope.

The slip-knot had tightened, and Mr. Selby was a prisoner. As he dragged at the rope to loosen it, to throw it off over his head, there came a sharp drag upon it, and Mr. Selby rolled over on the gravel path.

He gave a sharp cry.

Bump!

He was rolling on the path now, helpless in the rope. There was a scuffle of feet, and Mr. Selby felt a knee pressed into the small of his back. His face was ground down into the gravel, and he gasped for breath. The rope was wound about his arms, and knotted again, the breathless and confused Form-master hardly struggling to resist. He could not see his assailant, with his face pressed in the gravel, the knee in his back keeping him there; and, in any case, the darkness was too thick for him to have recognised the wielder of the lasso.

His first thought was that it was D'Arcy minor again. But surely a fag would never dare such an outrage. A terrifying thought came into Mr. Selby's mind that it was not a St. Jim's fellow at all, but some ruffian—some burglar—who intended to rob, and perhaps to murder him. There had been burglars at St. Jim's only a few weeks before, as he remembered very well.

Mr. Selby gasped painfully for breath. He was not of the stuff of which heroes are made, and all his courage ebbed away at the thought that he might be in the hands of some sinister ruffian.

He was dragged over, and, as his face was freed from the gravel, he opened his mouth to cry for help. Then he gasped and spluttered.

A twisted rag was thrust into his mouth as he opened it—a rag that smelt, and tasted very strongly of oil. Mr. Selby spluttered into silence. It was some rag from the bike shed, probably, and it reeked with oil and dirt. It was jammed tightly into Mr. Selby's mouth, effectually keeping him quiet. Then he felt a length of twine being wound round his head, and tied, to keep the stuffed rag in place in his mouth.

He could not struggle now. The rope that formed the lasso was knotted round his arms, pinning them to his sides.

Who was the assailant?

He could see nothing but a dim shadow bending over him. Another twist of the rope, and it was knotted round his legs. Mr. Selby was a helpless prisoner now. Then he felt himself dragged away. He was dragged off the path, and under the thicker darkness of the elms.

The Form-master was almost frozen with fear by this time. It could not be a St. Jim's fellow who was handling him like this, surely? What dangerous ruffian was it into whose merciless clutches he had fallen?

He bumped over the ground as his captor dragged at the rope. They stopped at last. It seemed an age to the Form-master, but it was really only a minute or two. Then the dazed and dizzy tyrant of the Third felt himself jammed against the trunk of a tree, and the rope was passed round the tree and tied there.

Mr. Selby tried to speak; but the oily rag in his mouth choked back all utterance. He could only gurgle faintly, and glare. A shadow passed before his eyes; there was a faint sound of receding footsteps. His assailant was gone. Silence.

Mr. Selby was left alone, tied to the tree in the deep darkness under the shadowy branches of the elms. As soon as he was sure that he was alone, and that he had nothing more to fear from his assailant, he began to struggle with the rope. But it was useless.

His arms and his legs were tied tightly, and he could hardly move them, and there was no chance at all of getting the rope off. As for breaking it, that was very far beyond

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the strength of the Form-master. It would have defied the efforts of a strong man to break it; and Mr. Selby was not athletic. He tried to expel the gag from his mouth; but his efforts in this direction were equally vain.

The string knotted round his head kept it in its place, and he could not chew the gag away. The mere taste and smell of it made him feel sick. As he tried to chew it, remnants of oil and grease were expressed from the rag, and glided down his throat, and he gurgled horribly.

How long was this to last?

His strength exhausted, the Form-master ceased his frantic efforts, and gave himself up to his fate. He peered about him wildly, in the hope of rescue; but the darkness about him was unbroken, and the intervening trees shut off the lights from both the Houses of St. Jim's.

The Form-master groaned inaudibly. He was evidently intended to remain there a prisoner. How long? He would be searched for if he was missed before bed-time, certainly; but he might not be found in that dark recess under the elms. Who would think of looking for him there?

Mr. Selby shuddered. He might have to pass the night in his present position. Probably he would have to. He thought of the night dews, of possible rain, of the cold wind, and of rheumatism, and he trembled. At that moment he would freely have forgiven his assailant as the price of release from his uncomfortable position.

Could it have been D'Arcy minor? Would a gag have dared?

If it was not D'Arcy minor, who was it that had handled him like this? He would find out. He would exact a crushing punishment. Would help never come? He waited.

He was feeling horribly upset, dizzy and sick. Would help never come? He felt that if he was left there all night he would never survive it.

There were footsteps at last under the old elms; lights glimmered through the darkness; but Mr. Selby did not see the lights, he did not hear the footsteps or the voices.

He had fainted!

CHAPTER 6.

The Discovery.

"WALLY!" Tom Merry uttered the name suddenly as a figure dashed by him in the darkness of the quadrangle.

He caught at it, and Wally halted, panting.

In the dimness, Wally's face showed up very white, his eyes gleaming.

"Let me go—let me go!"

Tom Merry tightened his grip.

"What have you done, Wally?"

"Let me go!"

"Have you seen Mr. Selby?"

"Let me go!"

"Wally, you young ass," muttered Arthur Augustus, clapping a hand upon his minor's other shoulder, "what have you done?"

Wally panted.

"You fools, will you let me go?"

"Wally—"

"I mustn't be found here, you idiot!"

"What have you done?"

"Find out!"

"Wally, old man—"

"Will you let me go?" Wally's voice was suppressed and furious. "I tell you I mustn't be found here! It'd mean the sack!"

"You've done something!"

"Don't ask questions! You'd better not know! If you want to ruin me, you've only got to keep me here!" said Wally sullenly.

Tom Merry released him.

"Cut off!" he said abruptly.

Wally vanished into the darkness.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood quite still, very pale.

"What has he done, Tom Mewwy?" muttered the swell of St. Jim's huskily.

"Goodness knows!"

D'Arcy looked after his brother. The juniors, from where they stood, could see the open door of the School House, with the light shining within.

"He hasn't gone in," said D'Arcy.

"He's gone round the house," said Tom Merry hurriedly. "He didn't want to be seen going in. He'll get in at the back somewhere."

"Yaas, I see."

"He must have done something to old Selby. Goodness knows what!"

"Tom Mewwy"—D'Arcy's voice was husky—"he—he can't have hurt him much?"

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"No, no; some jape, I suppose; but enough to be sacked for."

"The awful young ass!" groaned D'Arcy.

"Well, he was provoked," said Tom Merry. "It's no good blaming Wally. He's a reckless young ass; but Selby brought it on himself. He's been a brute!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We must keep it dark about seeing Wally out here, Gussy. If Selby doesn't know, we've got to be careful not to give Wally away."

"Yaas, yaas!"

"Let's get out of the quad," said Tom Merry. "It will save us trouble, if we're not questioned."

"Yaas, but—"

"But what?"

"What about Selby?" faltered D'Arcy. "It's time he was in, you know. Why hasn't he come in? What has Wally done?"

Mr. Selby had indeed been an unusual time in the quadrangle—more than twice the time he usually spent upon his evening constitutional. Why had the juniors heard only one cry, and then silence? What had happened to Mr. Selby? Was it possible that Wally, in his feverish excitement and resentment, had hurt the Form-master?

Tom Merry tried to drive the idea from his mind; but it would not be driven.

"Somethin' must have happened, Tom Mewwy," muttered D'Arcy miserably.

"I wonder what?"

"Mr. Selby must have some reason for not comin' in." D'Arcy tried to pierce the darkness with his eyes, in vain.

"What has happened to him? Oh, the young ass—the young ass!"

Tom Merry hesitated.

If anything had happened to Mr. Selby, it would be heartless not to look for him; but if the juniors allowed it to become known that they had been in the quadrangle at the time they would be questioned, and then how were they to shield Wally?

"What's to be done, Tom Mewwy?" asked D'Arcy hopelessly. "We mustn't give Wally away. Not a word about seein' him out here!"

"Not a word," said Tom Merry.

"But—but Selby—"

"We'll get in, and give Blake a hint to look round the quad," said Tom Merry. "Blake will understand that something's on, and he won't ask questions."

D'Arcy brightened up.

"Jollay good ideah!" he exclaimed. "I wondah I didn't think of that! Let's get in, deah boy!"

They hurried into the School House. But their luck was out. Kildare of the Sixth met them on the threshold, and he gave them a severe glance, and signed to them to stop.

"You should not be out of the house at this time!" he exclaimed. "You young rascals, I suppose you have been raiding Figgins over the New House? Is that it?"

"Oh, no!" said Tom Merry.

"Not at all, Kildare, deah boy!"

"You have been up to something, I'll be bound!" said Kildare.

"Weally Kildare, I twust—"

"Well, cut off, and don't go out again to-night," said the captain of St. Jim's good-naturedly.

The juniors cut off gladly enough. Two or three fellows in the hall had looked at them while Kildare was speaking to them.

Then ran upstairs to Study No. 6.

"No good twyin' to keep it dark that we were in the quad, deah boy, now," Arthur Augustus whispered.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No. Kildare knows that. And Gore was there, too, and Cutts of the Fifth. They looked at us when Kildare stopped us. It's rotten luck!"

"But not a word about Wally, deah boy, even if we get licked."

"What-ho!"

D'Arcy opened the door of Study No. 6. Blake and Herries and Digby were gathered round the study fire, cooking and eating chestnuts. They looked round as the two juniors came in.

"Hallo," said Blake. "there are some left! Pile in!" Then his expression changed as he looked at their faces.

"What's happened?"

"Wally—"

"Oh, Wally again!" sniffed Blake. "We seem to get nothing but Wally now. You don't mean to say that Selby's been going for him again?"

"Worse than that," said Tom Merry.

"What's happened?"

"I'm afraid that Wally has gone for Selby this time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake.

"Tell us about it," said Digby, getting up.

"Better not," said Tom Merry. "There will a lot of questions asked about this bizney, I'm afraid, and you'd better not be dragged into it. But I wish one of you would go out into the quad, and look round, and—"

"And what?" asked Blake and Herries and Digby.

"And see if you can see anything of Selby."

"Hasn't he come in yet?"

"No."

"You—you don't mean to say that—that he can't come in—that Wally has—has—"

Blake faltered, and did not finish. "Goodness knows!" said Tom Merry. "We don't know any more than you do. But I think Selby ought to be looked for, if you don't mind."

Blake picked up his cap.

"We're going over to see Figgins about—about the footer match next week, or about ragging the Grammarians, or something," he said. "Come on, kids!"

And Blake hurried out of the study, with Digby and Herries at his heels.

Tom Merry and D'Arcy remained in the study, anxious and miserable. Why did not the master of the Third come in? What were Blake and his friends destined to discover in the dark quadrangle?

"Poor old Wally!" groaned D'Arcy at last. "It was Selby's fault—he drove him to it whatever it was."

"That's true enough, Gussy. But—but what has Wally done? Good heavens, I wish Selby would come in!"

Tom Merry crossed to the study window, and opened it. From the window of No. 6 there was a view of the greater part of the quadrangle. Tom Merry's keen eyes caught the twinkling of a light out in the darkness of the quadrangle.

"That's Blake," he said. "He's got a bike lantern."

"I trust they'll find him."

"Hark!"

It was a call from the quadrangle. Tom Merry could not hear the words, but he understood the tone. Blake had made a discovery, and it had startled him.

"Oh, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "What is it? Can you make them out?"

"Not yet."

"Let's go down, deah boy."

"Better stay here. We don't want to be questioned. They know we were in the quad."

"Look over the banisters, then."

"All right."

They looked down over the banisters into the hall from above. There was a hubbub of voices below now, and they caught sight of Mr. Selby being carried in.

D'Arcy clutched Tom Merry's arm. A dreadful question was on his lips, but he could not utter it. But a voice came floating from below:

"He's fainted."

"That's all," whispered Tom Merry. "We shall know all about it soon."

"Oh, deah!"

Blake came upstairs as Mr. Selby was carried into Mr. Railton's study below. Blake was looking pale and troubled.

"What was it?" asked D'Arcy in a whisper.

"He was tied to a tree, gagged and bound with a big rope—trussed up like a turkey, and couldn't move or call out, and he had fainted."

"Great Scott!"

"The rope!" murmured Tom Merry. "That was what Wally had under his coat, the young ass! There'll be a frightful row over this."

"Mum's the word," said Blake.

"Yaas, yaas!"

"Anybody know you fellows were out just now?" asked Blake.

"Yes, some of them saw us come in—Kildare, Cutts, Gore, and two or three others."

"Rotten! They'll ask you questions, and—"

"Well, we didn't see Wally do anything, after all—we can say that."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Mind, it will mean the sack for Wally—perhaps worse—if it gets out," said Blake. "Not a whisper, whether they ask you questions or not."

"Not a syllable," said Tom Merry.

The captain of the Shell returned to his own study with a clouded brow. They would ask him questions; that was certain. What could he say? He could not deny that he had seen Wally in the quadrangle if they asked him, and if he refused to answer his refusal would be as bad as speaking, for it would prove that he was keeping silent for Wally's sake; silence would be as inculcating as speaking. He could not deny that he had seen the fog there without telling a lie. And Tom Merry had never told a lie in his life. Could he begin now—to save Wally?

CHAPTER 7.

Before the Head.

THE School House was in a flutter of excitement.

What had happened flew over the House in a few minutes, and it caused the most intense excitement throughout the House.

It was an utterly unprecedented happening at St. Jim's.

A week or two before, certainly, Monteith, a New House prefect, had been tied up by the juniors of his House, and left to pass a night most uncomfortably. That had caused a furore in the school. But that was nothing to this. A Form-master lassoed in the quadrangle, tied up to a tree, and gagged with an oily rag—it was almost incredible! The School House fellows could hardly believe their ears when they heard of it. At St. Jim's even an unpopular master was always treated with outward respect, and for a fellow to lay hands upon one was quite unknown. It was admitted that Mr. Selby was a most irritating master, continually interfering with somebody or other, and he certainly was not liked in the House. But nothing could excuse such an act of rebellion; nothing could palliate such an outrage as had been committed. Almost all the fellows agreed upon that. And if they could have found excuses for the offender, certainly the Head would not. The fellow who had lassoed Mr. Selby and tied him up was as certain of being expelled from the school as he could be of anything in the world. And the probability was that he would be flogged before being "sacked."

"What mad idiot could have done it?" said Cutts of the Fifth, amid the excited crowd outside Mr. Railton's study. "Must have been a School House chap, I suppose."

"His own Form don't like him," said Gore.

"A fag couldn't have done that," said Kangaroo of the Shell.

"I should think not."

"Must have been a senior, to be able to handle him," said Gore. "One of the Fifth, perhaps."

Cutts sniffed.

"The Fifth haven't got anything up against Selby," he said. "He doesn't get at us. One of us might have handled old Ratcliff like that, if we'd got a chance, but not Selby. It was a fag in the Third, or else some of their friends in the lower Forms."

"Young Wally, very likely," said Gore, who had had his rubs with the scamp of the Third. "He's cool enough for anything."

"But Selby was lassoed, somebody says," remarked Kangaroo. "You're the champion lassoer, Finn. Do you know anything about it?"

Buck Finn, the American junior, shook his head.

"I guess not," he said. "I've lassoed bison and antelopes out in Arizona, and I've lassoed posts and dogs here, but I've never roped in a Form-master yet, and don't expect to. I guess I can't enlighten you."

"Here comes the Head!"

Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, came sweeping towards Mr. Railton's study. Dr. Holmes had been acquainted with what had happened, and his face was very grave and stern. There was a hush as he passed through the crowd and entered the Housemaster's study. As the door opened, the curious crowd caught a glimpse of the interior, and of Mr. Selby sitting in the Housemaster's arm-chair, looking very pale and worn.

"Looks as if he'd been through it," said Gore.

Mr. Selby did indeed look as if he had been through it, as Dr. Holmes came into the study and closed the door behind him.

"Don't trouble to rise, Mr. Selby," said the Head kindly, as the Third Form-master made a movement. "I have been told that an utterly unheard-of and unprecedented outrage has taken place. Please tell me the facts yourself, if you feel able to talk."

Mr. Selby's thin lips closed in a tight line for a moment.

"I am quite able to talk, sir," he said, "and I think that the offender should be sought out and punished immediately."

"Undoubtedly, Mr. Selby."

"It is a most extraordinary happening," said Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House. "I can hardly credit it now. I have never heard of such a thing before. I am afraid that the perpetrator had the idea from the foolish action of Figgins and Kerr and Wynn with regard to Monteith."

"Possibly," said the Head. "But that is no excuse for him. Pray tell us exactly what has happened, Mr. Selby."

"I was taking my stroll as usual in the quadrangle, sir, when I was attacked. Someone threw a noosed rope over me, and I was made a prisoner before I had a chance to resist. I was, in fact, lassoed."

"Some of the juniors have been practising lassoing lately," said Mr. Railton, as the Head looked astonished. "They have been instructed by Finn of the Shell."

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "HIDDEN TREASURE AT ST. JIM'S!" A Magnificent Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"I was bound hand and foot," said Mr. Selby. "The rope was wound round me and knotted. I could not move a limb."

"Did you not call for help?"

"A gag was thrust into my mouth, sir, and tied there—a filthy, oily rag," said Mr. Selby, with a shudder.

"Outrageous!"

"Then I was dragged away, and tied to a tree in one of the darkest places in the quadrangle."

"I am amazed—utterly amazed!"

"I was left there, sir, doubtless for the night, but some juniors found me—some Fourth-Formers, I think. I do not know what they were doing in the quadrangle at such an hour," added Mr. Selby, as an afterthought. "That should be inquired into, as I can identify them."

The Head frowned. Mr. Selby did not seem to be troubled with any sentiments of gratitude towards the juniors who had released him from his exceedingly uncomfortable predicament. He was only thinking of identifying them, in order to have them punished for being in the quadrangle at forbidden hours.

"I think we can let that pass, Mr. Selby," said the Head, somewhat tartly. "The juniors should certainly have been indoors at this hour, but you might have remained out there all night if they had not found you."

"Yes, that is true," admitted Mr. Selby.

"I certainly think it would be the height of ingratitude to punish those juniors," exclaimed Mr. Railton warmly. "They would not have been discovered out of doors if they had not betrayed themselves by releasing Mr. Selby."

"Quite so," said the Head.

Mr. Selby coloured a little at the Housemaster's tone.

"Certainly, certainly; let that pass," he said somewhat hastily. "The person to be found and punished is the young rascal who treated me in such a manner."

"Undoubtedly," said the Head. "I gather that it was too dark for you to recognise him?"

"Yes, that is so."

"You think it was somebody belonging to the school?" asked the Head, hesitating.

Mr. Selby set his teeth.

"I am quite certain of that, sir," he replied.

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"True, it would have been difficult for any outside person to be within the gates," he said, "and I could not think why any person outside the school should come here and commit such an outrage, unless you have some private enemy, Mr. Selby."

"Impossible, sir!"

"Then you are satisfied that it was a St. Jim's boy?"

"Quite satisfied."

"It only remains to find him, then," said the Head. "You say that you did not recognise him?"

"It was impossible to do so in the dark. That was why he attacked me at night," said the Third Form-master.

"Then it will be difficult—"

"But I have a shrewd suspicion as to who it was," said Mr. Selby. "In fact, I may say that I have no doubt at all upon the matter."

"That clears the air, then," said the Head. "Of course, we cannot act upon suspicion. In the case of such an unheard-of outrage as this, we must have the most positive proof before inflicting punishment. The offender, of course, will be publicly expelled from the school. There can be no question about that."

"I am quite sure of the person, sir."

"Then please tell me his name. The first step will be to question him, and if he is guilty, he will probably confess."

"It is D'Arcy minor, sir."

The Head raised his eyebrows.

"A boy in your own Form, Mr. Selby?"

"Yes."

"But—but surely a boy in the Third Form could not have handled you like that," Mr. Railton exclaimed, in astonishment.

Mr. Selby coloured again. He did not like to explain that he had been terrified with all sorts of fears, out there in the darkness under the trees, and that he had yielded in the most pusillanimous manner to his assailant.

"I was so taken by surprise, that I had no chance to resist," he said. "And—and, in fact, when I was lassoed, I fell, and—and I was very much dazed."

"Yet it seems extraordinary that a boy in the Third Form could perform such an action," said the Head. "I shall be very much surprised if it proves to be so. What motive could D'Arcy minor have had for acting in this way?"

"I had occasion to punish him to-day, sir, twice, for most outrageous offences," said Mr. Selby, his brow darkening.

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"He is certainly the worst boy in the School House. I was put to the greatest trouble and inconvenience by tricks played in my room, and I had to punish D'Arcy minor somewhat severely. I have not the slightest doubt that the wretched boy has done this in revenge."

Dr. Holmes pursed his lips.

"Please send for D'Arcy minor, Mr. Railton," he said. "We had better question him at once, unless we are in your way here," the old gentleman added courteously.

"Not at all, sir."

Mr. Railton stepped to the door and looked out into the passage.

"Will you fetch D'Arcy minor here, please, Cutts?" he said to the nearest boy.

"Certainly, sir," said Cutts.

Five minutes later there was a tap at the study door, and it opened to give admission to D'Arcy minor. Cutts closed the door again from the outside, and the scamp of the Third, with a sullen lowering brow, stood facing the three masters.

CHAPTER 8.

The Lie

WALLY did not look directly at the Head.

His eyes were on the floor, and he shifted uncomfortably with his feet on the carpet. There was an unusual expression upon his face. Sullenness was not a characteristic of the scamp of the Third, but Mr. Selby had succeeded in making him sullen.

Dr. Holmes fixed his eyes upon the boy, with a not unkindly glance.

"I have sent for you, D'Arcy minor, in connection with what has just happened," he said. "You have heard of how Mr. Selby was found?"

"Cutts told me, sir, when he fetched me here," said Wally.

"I was going to bed."

"You knew about it before Cutts told you!" snapped Mr. Selby.

The Head made a gesture.

"Pray allow me to question the boy, Mr. Selby," he said, in a polite but very firm tone.

"Very well, sir."

"You say that Cutts told you about this, D'Arcy minor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was that the first you had heard of it?"

There was an imperceptible hesitation before the fag answered. Then his answer came sharply.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Selby started. He had declared that D'Arcy minor was the worst boy in the School House. But that he did not really believe so was evidenced by the fact that he believed that he would tell the truth when questioned. He was convinced that Wally had made that attack upon him, and he had not expected the fag to tell a lie.

Dr. Holmes's look became very grave now.

"Then you had no hand in the attack upon Mr. Selby, D'Arcy minor?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Where were you at the time?"

"I do not know when it happened, sir."

"It happened about half an hour ago," said Mr. Selby, looking at his watch. "As I am convinced that you know perfectly well, D'Arcy minor."

"No one is to be considered guilty until he is proved to be so, Mr. Selby," said the Head drily. "Pray leave this matter in my hands."

Mr. Selby coloured and was silent.

"Where were you half an hour ago, D'Arcy minor?" the Head resumed.

"In the dormitory, sir."

"Why? It was not bedtime."

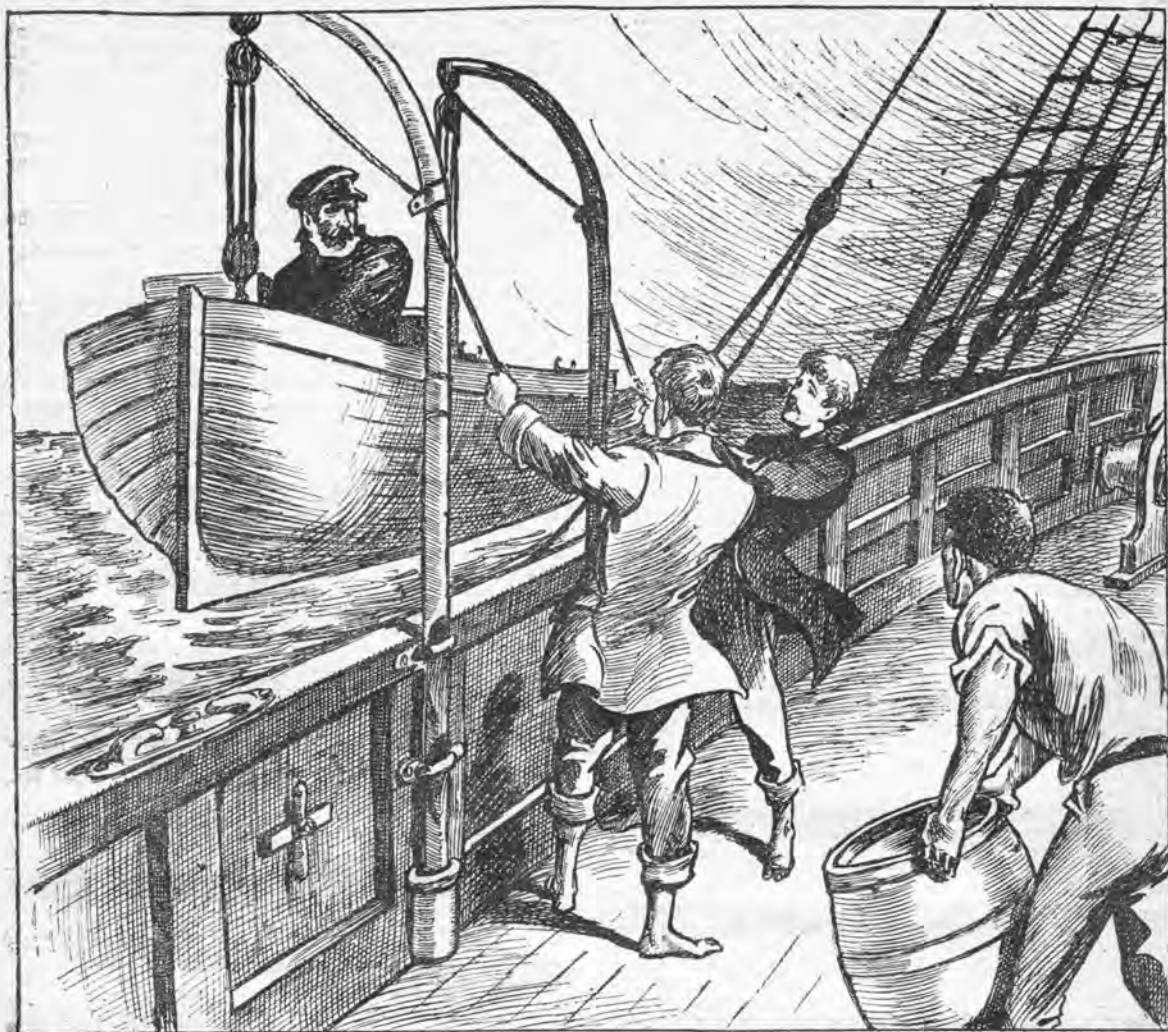
"Mr. Selby had been licking me, sir, and I was hurt. I went to the dormitory to stay there, because I didn't want the fellows to see how—how I looked."

The Head noted the redness of the fag's eyelids, and understood. He knew very well what a point of honour it was among the juniors not to be seen to "blub."

"Was anybody with you, D'Arcy minor?"

"No, sir."

"That is unfortunate. Of course, you must not think that I mean to doubt your word, my boy," the Head said kindly. "But this matter must be thrashed out most thoroughly. An action has been committed for which the offender will be expelled from the school. I am determined to get to the facts. You must answer all the questions that I put to you, freely and frankly."



After the wounded captain had been helped into the boat, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry released the falls carefully, and the boat slid into the water. From the opening of the fo'castle the mutinous seamen watched them, but they did not venture out. (An incident taken from the splendid long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, which appears in our grand companion paper, "The Magnet" Library, this week. The title of the story is "CHUMS AFLOAT," by Frank Richards, and every "Gemite" should make a point of reading it. This week's "Magnet" is on sale everywhere. Price One Penny.)

Wally flushed for a moment.

"Yes, sir," he said, in a very low voice.

"You were, then, alone in your dormitory?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did no one see you there at all?"

"My brother came to speak to me, sir."

"Ah! At what time?"

"About half an hour ago, sir. I can't remember exactly."

"If it was exactly half an hour ago, it would prove an alibi," said Mr. Railton. "That point is important, sir."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"Yes. Half an hour ago it was half-past eight. Are you unable to say whether it was after half-past eight that your brother came to the dormitory, D'Arcy minor?"

"I couldn't be sure, sir."

"D'Arcy major will perhaps be able to settle the point," said the Head. "Mr. Railton, might I ask you to go to D'Arcy and ask him? I would not have him brought here, as sympathy for his brother might—ahem!—might perhaps affect his memory. I do not mean to imply that he would speak untruthfully, but it is easy to make a mistake of a few minutes."

"I will go at once, sir," said the Housemaster.

And he quitted the study.

There was silence until he returned. D'Arcy minor stood uneasily, shifting his feet every moment. Mr. Selby sat with a hard, cold face; the Head with a troubled look. Wally's

denials had not changed Mr. Selby's opinion in the least. He felt quite certain that his unseen assailant was the fag before him, and probably no weight of evidence would have shaken his certainty on that point.

Mr. Railton returned in a few minutes.

He looked very grave as he came into the study.

"Well, Mr. Railton?" said the Head.

"I have asked D'Arcy major what time he saw his brother in the Third-Form dormitory, sir," said the Housemaster quietly. "He tells me that it was some time before half-past eight."

"He is sure of that?"

"Yes. He returned to Study No. 6 afterwards to do his preparation, and after that he heard the half-hour from the clock tower."

"That is definite upon that point, then," said the Head. "The outrage was committed after your brother visited you in the Third-Form dormitory, D'Arcy minor?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"Did anyone else come to see you there?"

"No, sir."

"You declare to me that you were in the Third-Form dormitory all the time, and that you did not leave it after your brother left?"

Again an almost imperceptible hesitation. But Wally's answer came straight and clear when it did come.

"Yes, sir."

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A Magnificent Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"HIDDEN TREASURE AT ST. JIM'S!"

A Magnificent Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"You were not concerned in this attack on Mr. Selby?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know who was?"

"No, sir."

"You know nothing whatever about the matter?"

Mr. Selby could not restrain a gesture of impatience. The Head turned to him, with a very sombre look.

"D'Arcy minor has answered very straightforwardly; Mr. Selby. Do you still think that he was the person who attacked you?"

"Most decidedly I do, sir," said the master of the Third.

"I believe that every word he has uttered is false!"

Dr. Holmes's brow clouded.

"If he was the person who attacked you, Mr. Selby, he has certainly spoken falsely in denying it. But the investigation must be thorough. The proofs must be of the clearest before anyone is punished. All the boys in the House must be questioned as to whether D'Arcy minor was seen outside the Third-Form dormitory after half-past eight, and especially as to whether he was seen in the quadrangle. As the Lower Forms have now gone to bed, the investigation had better be postponed till the morning. Then every boy in the House shall be separately questioned."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Selby. "I feel sure that someone must have seen the boy, either in the passages or in the quadrangle. I have no doubt that the truth will be brought to light in the morning."

"Then, for the present, the matter ends here. You may return to your dormitory, D'Arcy minor."

"Thank you, sir."

Wally left the study.

His heart was as heavy as lead. All the boys in the School House were to be questioned in the morning as to whether they had seen him outside the Third-Form dormitory—as to whether they had seen him in the quadrangle. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had seen him outside the dormitory. Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus had seen him in the quadrangle. He was lost!

He had lied!

It was Mr. Selby's fault that he had lied. Wally was a truthful boy; there was no creature he despised so much as a liar. Mr. Selby had called him a liar when he was speaking the truth, and that insult had cut deep. The fog was in no state of mind for calm reasoning. Mr. Selby had called him a liar—well, he would lie, then. If he was to be condemned as a liar, he would be one—so far as Mr. Selby was concerned. That was how the unhappy boy, feverish and excited, had worked it out, and the blame lay not so much with him as with the suspicious and unjust man who had driven him into it.

But—but he had lied. He had writhed inwardly with shame under the Head's kindly eyes as he lied. And now—now the lie was coming home to roost. For on the morrow, when questions were asked, he could not expect his brother and the chums of the Shell to lie as he had lied—that was out of the question. Poor Wally realised miserably enough:

"What a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive."

He had lied; and the falsehood would not serve his turn. He would be found out, and condemned, not only for what he had done, but as a liar, too. The tears came into the wretched boy's eyes as he went unsteadily back to his dormitory.

CHAPTER 9.

The Burden of a Lie.

TOM MERRY went to bed with the Shell; but he did not go to sleep. His thoughts were too troublesome for sleep to visit him. He knew that Wally had been called before the Head, and he wondered what had happened. Had it all been found out? If so, Wally's career at St. Jim's was at an end—there was no doubt about that. And troublesome young scamp as Wally was, the chums of the School House all liked him, and it was miserable to think of his being dismissed in disgrace from the school.

Manners and Lowther were thinking about it, too; but they did not speak on the subject. There was no need to let the other fellows know what they knew.

But the other fellows were curious. Gore had not forgotten seeing Tom Merry and D'Arcy come in shortly before the discovery was made in the quadrangle. And Gore wanted to know.

"Did you have a hand in tying up old Selby, Tom Merry?" he called out, after Knox the prefect had seen lights out and departed.

"No!" snapped Tom Merry.

"Didn't you see anything of him?"

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"No."

"Well, you were out in the quad. at the time," said Gore—"I know that. And I've a pretty good idea of who treaded old Selby's slippers, though Wally got licked for it. I know you're up against Selby."

"Rot!" said Kangaroo. "Tom Merry wouldn't be ass enough to do a thing like this! It means the sack for the chap who did it!"

"And a flogging, too, most likely!" said Vavasour.

"It was awfully thick, even on old Selby," remarked Bernard Glyn. "Surely young Wally couldn't have been ass enough—"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Gore. "Anybody know where Wally was?"

No one answered.

"Did you see anything of him in the quad., Tom Merry?"

"Oh, don't bother!" said Tom Merry.

"That means that you did, I suppose?"

"Find out!"

"I don't see what you want to be secretive for. I'm not going to tell Selby," said Gore. "Why can't you give a plain answer?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Did you see young D'Arcy in the quad.?"

"Rats!"

"Yes, shut up, Gore!" said Monty Lowther. "The less that's said about it the better. If Wally has been playing the giddy goat, no one wants to get him sacked for it. The poor kid has been through it enough lately!"

"Oh, I don't want to hurt D'Arcy minor!" said Gore. "He's a cheeky young rotter; but I don't want to get anybody sacked. But among ourselves—"

"Least said, soonest mended," said Kangaroo.

"I don't see why Tom Merry can't say yes or no."

"I'll say good-night," said Tom Merry. "And if any fellow here knows anything about the matter, I advise him to forget it."

And Tom Merry refused to speak again.

The Shell fellows dropped off to sleep one by one; but the Terrible Three did not sleep. They were too worried about what they knew. Eleven o'clock had struck when Tom Merry sat up in bed.

"You fellows asleep?" he asked, in cautious tones.

"I'm not," said Lowther.

"Same here," said Manners.

Tom Merry slipped out of bed. The rest of the Shell fellows were fast asleep. The captain of the Shell began to dress himself quietly.

"Where are you going, Tom?" asked Lowther, in a whisper.

"I'm going to see Wally."

"Won't he be asleep?"

"Not likely, considering the trouble the young ass has got himself into. I must know what he's told the Head. We're certain to have questions asked to-morrow, and we must know what to say. He was called into Railton's study before the Head, I know; and I don't know what he's said. Of course, they've got no proof against him; and I want to tell him that he can rely on us. He must be worrying about that."

"Well, you can set his mind at rest on that point," said Manners. "Nobody's likely to give him away."

"No fear!" said Lowther.

Tom Merry slipped quietly out of the dormitory. It was not likely that D'Arcy minor would be asleep. He had done a thing that he would be expelled for if it could be proved against him, and that would be more than sufficient to keep him awake. Tom Merry made his way cautiously to the Third Form dormitory.

The upper passages in the School House were quite dark; but Tom Merry could have found his way about the old building with his eyes shut. In a couple of minutes he had reached the sleeping quarters of the Third.

He opened the door softly. There was a sound of steady breathing in the Third Form dormitory. The greater part of the fags were asleep, at all events. Tom Merry stepped in.

"Wally," he said softly.

He heard a gasping sound in the darkness.

"Who's that?"

"It's I—Tom Merry!"

"Oh!"

"I thought you'd be awake."

Tom Merry thought he heard a sound very like a sob in the darkness of the dormitory.

"Not likely to sleep, considering what's going to happen to-morrow," said Wally, in a low, wretched voice.

"What's going to happen to-morrow, Wally?"

"The sack for me."

Tom Merry had groped his way to D'Arcy minor's bed. There was no sound, save steady breathing from the other

fags. The whole dormitory was fast asleep, with the exception of D'Arcy minor.

The Shell fellow sat on the edge of Wally's bed. Dimly, in the gloom of the dormitory, he made out the pale face and burning eyes of the unhappy fag.

"Did they find you out, Wally?"

"Not yet."

"You think that to-morrow—"

"I don't think, I know!"

"Mr. Selby suspected you?"

"Yes."

"He told the Head so?"

"Yes."

"But they can't prove it, Wally."

"I'm done for. The Head asked me out straight if I'd done it, and where I was at the time."

Tom Merry caught his breath.

"What did you say, Wally?"

"Told him lies," said Wally bitterly.

"Wally!"

The fag burst into a scoffing, miserable laugh.

"You're shocked at that, of course?" he said.

"I am, Wally," said Tom Merry, very gravely. "I shouldn't have thought you'd do it. It wasn't right to lie to the Head. It was a rotten position; but lies won't make it better. I didn't think you'd do that."

"I didn't think myself I'd do it till to-day. But old Selby called me a liar; he said everything I said was false. Well, if I'm going to be called a liar, why shouldn't I be one? If he's going to say I'm not speaking the truth, I don't see why I should take the trouble to speak it. As well have the game as the name."

Tom Merry was silent. He understood; and he was not the kind of fellow to be hard on anyone who was down. He would not have lied himself; and, under the circumstances, he knew that Wally would have "faced the music" without dreaming of sheltering himself behind a falsehood. It was Mr. Selby who was responsible for this—responsible for Wally's folly in the first place, and for his falsehood in the second place.

"I know it was rotten," said Wally. "It was Selby's fault; but it was rotten. But that man would turn any chap into a cad. I feel sick enough about it, and I'm going to get what I deserve. I don't deserve anything for ragging old Selby; it served him right. I'd do it again, too. But that whopper to the Head does stick in my throat, I'll admit. I felt like a disgusting cad! I was one, of course. And it won't do me any good either."

"They can't prove it was you now, Wally," said Tom Merry heavily.

"Yes, they can."

"How?"

"Because they're going to question every boy in the House to-morrow morning. Every fellow's going to be asked separately whether he saw me in the quad."

"Oh!"

"Well, you and Gussy saw me in the quad, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"If you hadn't, it would have been all right. I could have lied myself out of it," said Wally, with a bitter self-contempt that was painful to hear. "I could have grown as big a liar as Levison or Mellish, with practice."

"Don't talk like that, Wally!"

"It's all up now," said Wally. "They'll ask you in the morning a plain question you can't fence with. Did you see me, or didn't you? You'll have to say that you did, and that will settle me. You and Gussy will have to say you did see me, and that will get me the boot. Serve me right. Not for what I did to old Selby, mind. That wasn't so bad as what he did to me. But for telling rotten lies. Any fellow ought to be kicked out of a decent school for telling lies!"

Tom Merry pressed his hand to his brow; his head was throbbing.

What was to be done?

Wally had lied. He had said that he was not in the quadrangle, when Tom Merry and D'Arcy major had seen him there. And if they told the truth, out of their mouths would come the fag's condemnation, not only for the attack upon Mr. Selby, but for the untruth he had told the Head.

There was a long silence.

"Can't anything be done?" Tom Merry said at last.

"Not unless you and Gussy start in business as liars, as I've done," said Wally.

Tom Merry almost groaned.

"You don't want us to do that, Wally?"

"Of course I don't. You wouldn't if I did."

"I—I don't know."

"You couldn't," said Wally. "If you did, you'd feel after it the same as I do, and I shouldn't like that. You'll have to answer, and you'll have to tell the truth. I'm going to be sacked. I wonder what the pater will say when I get home?" Wally's voice broke.

"Oh, Wally, old man!"

"It can't be helped," said Wally. "Get back to bed."

"I—I wish—"

"There's nothing to be done; only for me to take my gruel. It's all Selby's fault; but that won't help me much. Good-night!"

Tom Merry got off the bed.

"I—I'll think about it, Wally," he muttered. "There may be a way yet. I don't know. I—I'll see if I can't think of anything. You sha'n't be sacked from St. Jim's, if I can help it!"

"You can't help it," said Wally.

"Don't give in yet; you never know. I'll do some hard thinking; and—and I'll speak to Gussy."

Tom Merry left the Third Form dormitory, leaving a sleepless, wretched lad there, to lie awake with restless limbs and staring eyes through the long hours of darkness waiting for the morning, and the sentence that the morning was to bring.

CHAPTER 10.

Tom Merry's Dilemma.

TOM MERRY was down first of the Shell on the following morning. He had slept very little, and he was looking pale and troubled. He looked out for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and found that the swell of the Fourth was already down. Arthur Augustus was in the quadrangle, walking under the trees, and making little vicious slashes in the air with his gold-headed cane. The elegant Fourth-Former was evidently worried, and his face looked more troubled than Tom Merry's.

He nodded dolorously to the captain of the Shell.

"You're down early, Tom Mewwy," he said.

"So are you."

"As a matter of fact, deah boy, I've hardly closed a blessed eye all night," said Arthur Augustus. "It's wotten."

"Same here," said Tom ruefully.

"It's vewy kind of you to wowwy about my minah, deah boy," said D'Arcy gratefully. "I—I suppose there's a chance he'll come out of it all right?"

"I don't know. I saw him last night in the Third Form dorm," said Tom Merry abruptly. "I'm afraid there's some rotten trouble this morning, for all of us. The Head is going to have every boy in the School House questioned on the matter—whether he saw Wally in the quad. after half-past eight last night."

D'Arcy's jaw dropped.

"Oh, cwumbs!" he said in dismay.

"It will come out that we were in the quad," said Tom Merry. "A lot of fellows saw us come in. Kildare spoke to us when we came in, you remember."

"I wemembah."

"They'll ask us whether we saw anything of him."

"And if we did—"

"That settles it."

"I don't know," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "Wally might have been in the quad. without touchin' old Selby, you know. We were there, and we didn't touch him. There's as much pwoof against us as against him, for the matter of that."

"That's not it," groaned Tom Merry. "Wally's denied being in the quad, at all after half-past eight."

Arthur Augustus gave a jump.

"Denied it!"

"Yes."

"Imposs," said D'Arcy. "He was there."

"Yes, I know he was there."

"Then how can he have denied bein' there?" demanded the swell of St. Jim's. It did not occur to the simple mind of Arthur Augustus for the moment that his minor had prevaricated.

"I'm afraid he lied, Gussy, old man."

"What?"

"That's how it was, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus clenched his hands. His eye gleamed behind his eyeglass.

"I don't want to punch your head, Tom Mewwy," he said, in measured tones, "but if you hint that my minah is a liab, I shall have no othah wresource."

"I'm not rotting, Gussy. Wally told me so himself."

"He told you he had lied to the Head!" said Arthur Augustus, in a tone of incredulous bewilderment.

"Yes."

Arthur Augustus seemed dazed.

"Wally—my minah—lied to the Head! Imposs."

"He told me so."

"He must have been dweamin'," said D'Arcy, in great agitation. "Wally isn't a liab, or funk eithah. He'd take his gwuel if he had to—he wouldn't tell lies to get out of a swape."

"It was all Selby's fault. He'd been chippin' Wally about

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telling lies, when he hadn't done anything of the sort. And Wally was excited—he didn't think what he was doing, and he lied to the Head."

"Bai Jove! The young wottah! The awful young wascal! I'll go to him and—"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "No good rubbing it in to the poor kid now, Gussy. He feels as rotten about it as anybody could feel."

"I should think he does," said Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I'm howwibly disgusted. I shouldn't have thought that Wally was capable of it. I don't care what Selby said to him. He had no wight to disgwace himself by lyin'."

"The question now is, what's going to be done?" said Tom Merry. "When we're called upon for evidence, what are we going to say?"

"The twuth, I suppose."

"Yes, I suppose so."

D'Arcy gave the Shell fellow a startled look.

"You—you wouldn't think of tellin' a whoppah to get Wally out of a scwape, Tom Mewwy?" he said, in a suppressed voice.

Tom Merry coloured.

"I don't know what to do," he said. "If Wally hadn't told a lie it would be all right. And if we hadn't been looking after him it would have been all right—we shouldn't have known anything. We wanted to help Wally by going out to look for him, and now we've settled the business for him. If we couldn't give evidence against him, he couldn't be proved to be the fellow who biffed Selby. But now—it's us, Gussy, who are going to get him sacked from St. Jim's."

Arthur Augustus groaned.

"Oh, that's howwible, Tom Mewwy!"

"That's how the case stands, though."

"I—I say, couldn't we wefuse to ansawah, deah boy?"

Tom Merry smiled faintly.

"We could," he said.

"Of course, we should be licked, but I don't mind a lickin'. It isn't fair to ask you to take a lickin' for my minah, I know, but—"

"I shouldn't mind the licking, Gussy; it isn't that. But it wouldn't do Wally any good. If we refuse to answer, they'll know the reason—that we don't want to give evidence against Wally. It will prove that we saw him in the quad, and won't say so, just as bad as if we did say so."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that."

"That's how it stands. We've got either to tell the truth, and get Wally sacked from the school—and shown up as a liar, too—or else we've got to—to—to—"

"To become liars ourselves."

Tom Merry nodded.

There was a long and painful silence.

"That's why I was looking for you," said Tom Merry at last. "We must decide what we are going to say. I needn't pile it on about it's being dishonourable and cowardly to tell lies. A liar makes me feel sick. But are we going to help get Wally kicked out of St. Jim's? That's what it amounts to."

"Oh, Tom Mewwy!"

"If we say we didn't see him in the quad, it will save him."

D'Arcy shivered.

"But that will be a—a—a—"

"A lie!" said Tom Merry.

"It's howwible!"

"There's a difference between telling a lie for oneself and telling it to save another chap from getting done in," said Tom Merry. "It isn't quite so mean. I don't say I like the idea. But are we going to sacrifice Wally to our sense of honour? That's what it amounts to."

D'Arcy groaned again.

"I nevah was in such a howwid posish before," he said miserably. "It would be awful for Wally to be sacked. It would cut up the patah and the match feahfully. And for me to have a hand in it—"

"It's rotten!"

Another long silence.

It seemed to the two troubled juniors that they had come to the parting of the ways.

It was a terrible dilemma.

There was no one they could ask advice of in that emergency; it was a matter that they had to settle with their own consciences. What were they to do?

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Both of them remembered perfectly well their fixed views on the subject. A fellow who told lies was an unclean outsider. Their contempt for fellows like Mellish and Levison of the Fourth was chiefly founded upon the indifference of those fellows to the truth. They had not prided themselves upon it; they had taken it as a matter of course that they should speak the truth, and they had never thought of doing anything else. There was no need to lie; even in a scrape lying only led to more trouble in the long run. And if their own word was not to be depended on, how could they ever feel secure in taking the word of others? It was all simple enough—till now. Now it was not a question of a falsehood to save or benefit themselves—they would have scorned that without pausing a moment to reflect. It was a question of saving a younger lad, who had been hurried into wrongdoing by the anger and indignation excited by injustice. What were they to do? Wrong lay upon one side, and injustice upon the other—for it would certainly be unjust to Wally if he were expelled. What should they do?

It was impossible to find a satisfactory answer to that question, which had to be answered, nevertheless, and in a short time.

To tell the truth, whatever followed it—that was the natural impulse. If it had been punishment to themselves that was to follow it, they would not have hesitated for a moment.

But it was not that; it was the ruin of another—another who, taking everything into consideration, had been more sinned against than sinning.

If Wally had not been accused of lying when he had told the truth, he would not in his angry indignation have lied. The fault lay at Mr. Selby's door.

But the knowledge of that did not help the juniors now. The question remained to answer—what were they to do?

To save Wally, at the expense of their own honour, and to feel ever afterwards that they could not look other fellows in the face?

Or to think of honour first, and self first, and let Wally go? "What are we goin' to do, Tom Mewwy?" asked Arthur Augustus at last. "I—I don't know what to do. I—I can't tell lies, old chap."

"I know."

"And you can't, either—and Wally's not your brother—"

"I don't know what we ought to do," said Tom Merry honestly. "Gussy, I won't undertake to advise you. I'm an older chap than you, and I suppose I ought to say: Tell the truth, and let everything else go hang. But Wally—"

"That's the wub. Wally—"

"I don't know what to say."

A bell rang.

"That's for bwekker," said D'Arcy. "They'll be asking us questions afah bwekkah. What in goodness' name are we to do, deah boy?"

Tom Merry was silent. They walked towards the School House without speaking. They had come to no decision; they could come to none. Kildare, of the Sixth, met them as they came in, and he beckoned to them to stop.

"You two fellows were in the quad, last night after half-past eight," he said.

"I remember the time you came in."

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"Go into the Head's study immediately after breakfast. Dr. Holmes has told me to find any boys I can who were out of doors after half-past eight. It may save having to question the whole House."

"The—the Head's study!"

"Yes, after bwekker."

And Kildare turned away. He did not ask any questions himself; that was very like Kildare. Perhaps he could read the trouble in their faces, and guessed what it implied. Tom Merry and D'Arcy went into the dining-room. But, needless to say, both of them made a very poor breakfast that morning.

CHAPTER 11.

Up Against It.

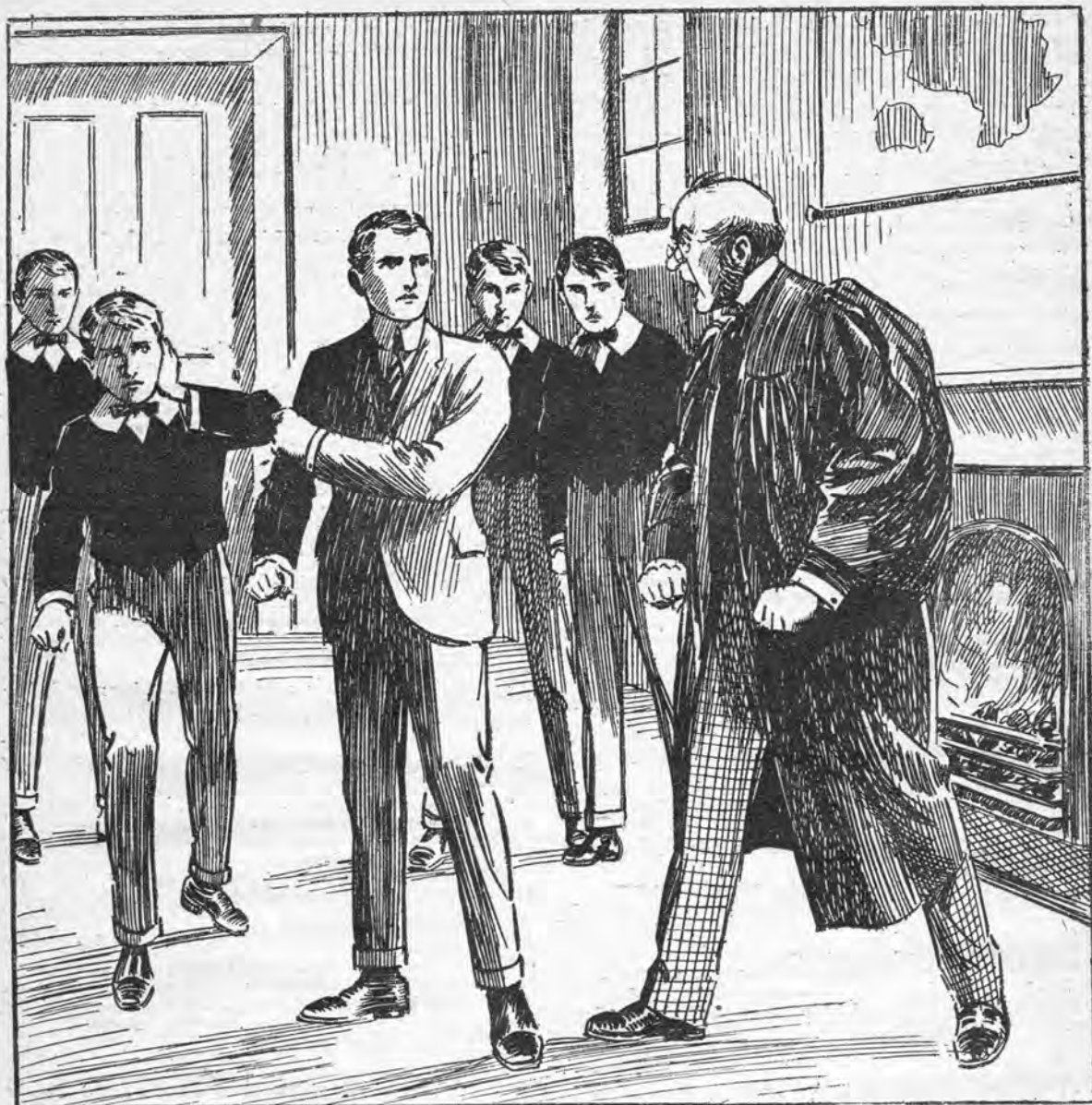
DR. HOLMES was in his study, when there came a timid tap at the door. Dr. Holmes raised his head; his face was very grave and quiet. There was a very unpleasant task before the Head of St. Jim's. He shrank from it; but justice had to be done. The assailant of the Third Form-master had to be discovered and punished. And

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Kildare faced the panting master with a flushed and angry face. "I don't think you know what you are doing, sir!" he said sternly. "You have no right to cane a boy like that!" Mr. Selby almost foamed. "Kildare, how dare you—how dare you—" (See Chapter 3.)

the Head was forcing himself to go through the disagreeable matter.

"Come in!" said the Head quietly.

Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the study. Dr. Holmes nodded kindly to them.

"Kildare said you wished to see us after breakfast, sir?" said Tom Merry.

"Quite so."

There was another tap at the door, and Mr. Selby came in. The Third Form-master was looking very much his usual self now. He had apparently got over the effects of his very unpleasant experience of the previous evening. But his little greenish eyes were glinting with a spiteful light. His temper was very bitter that morning; he was not in a forgiving mood. Punishment, punishment, hard and heavy and unsparring for the offender—that was Mr. Selby's only thought.

The Head bade Mr. Selby good-morning. Then the Form-master glanced somewhat curiously at the two pale and despondent juniors.

Dr. Holmes explained.

"I have made inquiries as to whether any boys were known to be out in the quadrangle after half-past eight last night, Mr. Selby. It appears that Merry and D'Arcy were there. This may save the unpleasant business of questioning the whole House."

"I understand, sir."

And Mr. Selby's eyes glinted again.

Even Mr. Selby, suspicious as he was, would not have cared to say that Tom Merry of the Shell was untruthful; the contrary was too well known.

If Tom Merry, at all events, had seen Wally in the quad., he would say so. And that would condemn the scamp of the Third. He would be guilty of having lied about his whereabouts, and that would be proof positive of his guilt.

Dr. Holmes turned a kindly glance upon the juniors.

"I have a few questions to put to you, my boys," he said. "I am sure that you will answer me frankly."

"Will you allow me to speak, sir?" said D'Arcy.

"Certainly, my boy!"

"I undahstand that this mattah concerns my bwothah, sir?"

"Yes, D'Arcy minor."

"And a gweat deal depends upon it, whethah he is expelled from St. Jim's or not?"

"Yes, D'Arcy."

D'Arcy drew a deep breath.

"Well, sir, undah the circs., is it quite fair to ask me for information on the subject, considewin' that the chap is my bwothah, sir? Is it weally playin' the game?"

Tom Merry caught his breath, and Mr. Selby stared angrily at the junior. The Head was silent for quite a long time.

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Certainly no junior of St. Jim's had ever ventured before to suggest to the reverend Head that he was not "playing the game."

D'Arcy stood looking firmly and fearlessly at the Head. He felt that he was in the right, and he felt that Dr. Holmes, as a "sport," ought to acknowledge it.

"You should check your insolence in the presence of the headmaster, D'Arcy," said Mr. Selby, breaking the silence with his harsh voice.

"I did not mean to be insolent, sir, and I am sure that Doctah Holmes undahstands that," said D'Arcy.

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I quite understand that, D'Arcy," he said, "and there is certainly something in what you say. It is most unpleasant to ask you to give evidence against your own brother. But you must remember that your brother had denied having been concerned in the attack upon Mr. Selby, and your evidence may clear him if he is innocent."

"D'Arcy evidently does not believe his brother to be innocent," said Mr. Selby bitterly.

D'Arcy flushed.

"One moment," said the Head quietly. "I understand, from Kildare, that you two juniors came in from the quadrangle a very short time before the discovery was made of Mr. Selby bound to a tree?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Were you together all the time you were out of doors?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then the evidence of one will be as good as the evidence of two," said Dr. Holmes. "D'Arcy, you may retire from the study, and I will speak to Tom Merry only."

D'Arcy hesitated. He had not intended this—he had not wanted to put the trouble on Tom Merry's shoulders only, and the burden of a lie, if a lie was told, upon the Shell fellow.

"I—I didn't mean that, sir," he stammered. "I—I want to stand by Tom Mewwy."

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"However, I shall ask you no questions, D'Arcy. As you were both together all the time, Merry can say all that is necessary."

"We have only Tom Merry's statement to the effect that they were together all the time, sir," hinted Mr. Selby.

Tom Merry turned crimson.

Dr. Holmes glanced at Mr. Selby, with a glance that made the master of the Third feel extremely uncomfortable.

"I rely entirely upon Tom Merry's word, Mr. Selby," he said. "There is no reason whatever for suggesting that he may not have told the truth."

"But, sir—"

"I know Merry to be a thoroughly honourable lad."

"I admit that, sir; but under the circumstances of what is impending over D'Arcy minor, even a usually truthful boy might—"

"I decline to entertain the idea."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Selby, closing his lips very tightly.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. He understood Wally's feelings now better than before. While he was speaking the truth, the Third Form-master cast doubt upon his word. What was the use of telling the truth to a man who looked upon him as a liar?

"Now, Merry—" began the Head.

Arthur Augustus was still hesitating. He did not want to desert his chum.

"May I remain in the study, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly, if you wish!"

"Thank you, sir!"

Tom Merry gave D'Arcy a quick glance as a hint that he had better go; but the swell of St. Jim's declined to see it. First and foremost in his code of honour came the firm conviction that he ought never to desert a chum.

"Now, Merry," resumed the Head, "I understand that you were in the quadrangle last night before half-past eight, and for some time afterwards?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why were you out of doors? You may speak freely. There is no question of punishment for any breach of House rules now. I only want to get at the facts of this matter, and other details will pass."

"I went out to see whether D'Arcy minor was there, sir."

"You thought he was there?"

"I did not know where he was, sir, and I wanted to speak to him, and I looked for him in the quadrangle, and could not find him."

"Yaas, wathah! I was helpin' Tom Mewwy look for Wally, sir, and we could not find him."

The Head looked relieved.

So far, the juniors had kept within the truth. They had looked for Wally in the quadrangle, and could not find him. That was perfectly correct. It was later, and by chance, that they had seen the fag on his way back to the House. Were

they called upon to mention that without being specially asked? And but for Mr. Selby the matter might have ended there. The Head seemed satisfied.

"That settles the matter, so far as these juniors are concerned, Mr. Selby," said Dr. Holmes. "They were actually looking for D'Arcy minor in the quadrangle, and could not find him. The obvious explanation is that D'Arcy minor was, as he has declared, in the Third Form dormitory all the time, and that was the reason they could not find him in the quadrangle. The other boys shall be questioned, of course; but I am glad to say that so far the evidence upholds D'Arcy minor's statement."

Tom Merry and D'Arcy felt utterly wretched. They had not lied; but they had not told all the truth, and they were certainly allowing the Head to deceive himself. But they thought of the unhappy fag, with the sentence of expulsion hanging over his head, and they were silent.

Mr. Selby looked spitefully disappointed. He had hoped to get convincing evidence from Tom Merry and D'Arcy, and he had got nothing. But Mr. Selby was not so easily satisfied as the good old doctor.

"May I ask why Tom Merry and D'Arcy were looking for D'Arcy minor in the quadrangle at an hour when all boys were supposed to be in their Houses?" he asked.

"We wanted to see him, sir."

"For what purpose?"

"To speak to him."

"What about?"

"Really, Mr. Selby," interposed the Head, "I think all this is beside the purpose. No one has a right to inquire into purely private affairs of the boys."

Mr. Selby's lips tightened.

"I do not wish to pry into the boys' private affairs, sir," he said coldly. "But it appears to me that this has a bearing on the subject. These two boys must have had reason to suppose that D'Arcy minor was in the quadrangle, or they would not have looked for him there at such an unusual hour."

"What they may have supposed cannot be regarded as evidence," said the Head, somewhat sharply. "We need inquire no further here, I think."

"One word more, sir. I cannot regard Merry's answer as entirely frank. He declares that he looked for D'Arcy minor in the quadrangle, and did not find him."

"That is correct, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Doubtless. But answer this question directly. Did you, or did you not see D'Arcy minor in the quadrangle at all?"

It had come at last. The direct question had been asked, and a reply had to be given.

The Head was looking very impatient; evidently he did not approve of Mr. Selby's inquisitorial methods.

There was a short silence in the study.

If the Head had put that question, Tom Merry felt that he could not have given an untrue answer; but Mr. Selby was different. We do not excuse Tom Merry, for there can be no excuse for a falsehood, whatever the motive. But there were extenuating circumstances. Mr. Selby had caused the whole trouble by injustice and cruelty; and he doubted Tom Merry's word when he was telling the truth. And the fate of a persecuted boy hung in the balance. Tom Merry, at that moment, felt nothing but a bitter animosity against the Third Form-master, and a desire to baulk him of further vengeance upon his victim.

And his answer came sharply.

"No!"

It was a lie—the first Tom Merry of St. Jim's had ever told. And wrong as it was, the blame lay more upon Mr. Selby's shoulders than upon his.

Arthur Augustus turned quite white.

Tom Merry had lied for his brother's sake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy felt that it was up to him to stand by the pal who had done that for his sake and his brother's.

And in a clear voice he made the same answer, a moment after Tom Merry had spoken:

"No!"

"That finishes the matter," said the Head sharply. "You may go, my boys."

The two juniors went from the study, leaving the Third Form-master with a catfish look on his face, and the Head looking very relieved.

In the passage outside, when the door was closed, the two juniors looked at one another.

"Thank you, Tom Mewwy, old man!" said D'Arcy huskily.

"I had to say it, Gussy," muttered the Shell fellow. "But—but you needn't have done it, too. Why couldn't you keep quiet?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I wasn't goin' to have you do it by yourself," he said. "If you could do it, I could do it—it was up to me, deah boy. But how howible it is!"

"I couldn't have lied to the Head," said Tom Merry, in a

wretched whisper. "But—but somehow it didn't seem so bad with that cad Selby—"

"Yaas, wathah."

"But—but—" Tom Merry choked. "Oh, Gussy, I feel a frightful rotter!"

"So do I, deah boy."

"Let's get out of this."

They hurried away. Lowther and Manners met them at the end of the passage with anxious looks.

"How has it gone?" asked Lowther anxiously, startled by the look upon Tom Merry's face.

Tom Merry groaned.

"Don't ask me!"

And he hurried on.

CHAPTER 12.

More and More.

MR. SELBY had been baffled so far.

But he was not finished yet.

The examination of Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had drawn blank. Now it remained to question the rest of the School House boys. No other boys of the School House, it appeared, had been out of the House at that special time; but there was one chance left of convicting the culprit. D'Arcy minor had declared that he had not been outside the Third-Form dormitory. Even if he had not been seen in the quadrangle, he might have been seen outside the dormitory, if he had left it, as Mr. Selby firmly believed that he had. And if he had been seen outside the dormitory, he would be convicted of having lied, and Mr. Selby's accusation would be made good.

And so the School House boys were questioned.

There were only two who looked forward to the questioning with uneasiness. They were Manners and Lowther.

Tom Merry's two chums had met D'Arcy minor on the stairs, when he was going out into the quadrangle, and they had seen the rope concealed under his jacket—the rope with Mr. Selby had been tied up.

Manners and Lowther would be questioned with the rest—and what were they to say? The two juniors discussed the matter. Tom Merry had not said a word of what had passed in the Head's study—he could not. But D'Arcy had explained to the chums of the Shell. Lowther and Manners had gone up to their study to talk it over, and they were discussing it when Tom Merry came in. Lessons were being delayed that morning, so far as the School House fellows were concerned. The New House boys were already in the Form-rooms.

Manners and Lowther looked at Tom Merry as he came in. Tom avoided their eyes.

"Don't look so cut up about it, Tom," said Lowther, in a low voice. "It—it couldn't be helped."

"You had to stand by Wally," said Manners.

Tom Merry smiled bitterly.

"It's good of you chaps to talk like that," he said. "But you know as well as I do that I've acted like a sickening cad."

"Oh, rot!" said Lowther uneasily. "It was all old Selby's fault—hang him!"

"I can't expect any fellow to take my word again," said Tom Merry. "You fellows even will feel like that, too—in the long run."

"Rot!" growled Manners.

"I wouldn't have said it to the Head," muttered Tom Merry. "But—but Selby—I couldn't let that cad get the upper hand of Wally."

"Of course you couldn't," said Manners, but not very heartily. "It was a rotten position, Tom. We should have done the same."

"Would you?"

"Well, I—I suppose so. It's hard for a fellow to know what he would do, without going through the same thing; but—but I think so."

"I'm sure of it," said Lowther.

Tom Merry did not reply. He knew that his chums were trying to reassure and comfort him, but it was not much use.

"The question is—what are we going to say?" said Manners, after a pause. "They're beginning the dashed inquisition already. We shall be called down to be questioned in a few minutes, if we don't show up. And—and they're going to ask if we saw Wally outside the Third-Form dormitory at that time. Well, we—we—"

"We did see him," said Lowther.

"Exactly."

"And—and if we say so, it undoes all you've done, Tom."

"The young ass has fairly put his foot in it!" groaned Manners. "What we have to say will be as bad for him as what you'd have said, Tom, if—if—"

"If I'd told the truth," said Tom Merry grimly.

"Well, yes. And—and if it comes out that you were with

us when we saw Wally on the stairs—and it will, because old Selby will question us specially hard. He knows we're always together."

"He'll simply hammer questions at us," said Lowther wretchedly. "What's going to be done?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I can't advise you," he said. "If I did, I should say, tell the truth, and don't do as I've done."

"But Wally?"

"Then Wally will have to take his chance."

"But—but you too!" said Lowther, hesitating. "If we answer all that Selby asks us, it will come out that you were with us, and saw Wally, and—and saw him go into the quadrangle. It will show you up as having—having—"

"Lied!" said Tom Merry.

"Well, won't it?"

"Yes. Selby will ask you everything he can think of. If you saw Wally—if you saw where he went—if I was with you and saw where he went. He won't leave a single loophole. It will all come out," said Tom Merry.

"And we shall show you up?"

"Yes."

"We're not going to do that," said Lowther quietly.

"You can't help it."

"Yes we can, if—"

"If you do as I've done?"

"Yes."

"You can't," said Tom Merry. "You sha'n't! I won't have you dragged into it: it's bad enough for me. You sha'n't tell lies on my account."

Manners and Lowther were silent.

It was said of old that one lie makes many. Wally's falsehood in the first place had called forth more, and now these were calling forth more in their turn. Where was it to end? What a network of lies was growing out of the one first lie. It seemed to the juniors, usually so honourable and straightforward, that they were surrounded by an atmosphere of prevarication and deceit from which there was no escape.

The study door opened suddenly, without a knock, and the Third-Form master came in. The Terrible Three fixed their eyes upon Mr. Selby. All the masters at St. Jim's knocked at a door before entering even a junior study, excepting Mr. Selby. But Mr. Selby did not waste courtesy upon juniors, and that fact alone was sufficient to put their backs up. The Form-master's expression was very disagreeable.

"I presume you know that the School House boys are now being questioned with regard to D'Arcy minor?" he said harshly.

"Yes, sir," said Lowther.

"Why are you not downstairs with the rest?"

"Because we're here, sir," said Manners.

"Don't be impertinent, Manners. I thought I should find you here, and I have some very special questions to put to you," said Mr. Selby.

"Indeed, sir."

"Yes, indeed," snapped Mr. Selby. "Merry has stated that he did not see D'Arcy minor last night, and I do not believe him."

Tom Merry bit his lip.

"As you three are always together, you probably know as much of the matter as Tom Merry does," pursued Mr. Selby.

"Probably, sir," assented Lowther.

"Where were you at half-past eight last night?"

Lowther reflected.

"In the common-room, sir, or else going there," he said.

"I didn't notice the time specially, sir. You see, a chap can't foresee these happenings; but on future occasions, if you like, sir, I will look at my watch every few minutes during the day and night so as to be able to account for all my movements."

Mr. Selby frowned.

"You are impertinent, Lowther."

"I only want to be obliging, sir."

"Was Tom Merry with you at half-past eight?"

"About that time, sir. Couldn't say within a quarter of an hour or so."

"Were you in the quadrangle with him?"

"No, sir."

"Excepting when he was in the quadrangle, were you with him?"

"Most of the time, sir."

"You cannot give me an exact answer, I perceive, Lowther."

"That's owing to my not being able to foresee future events, sir," said Lowther, with an air of great simplicity. "If I happened to be a prophet, sir, or a fortune-teller, I should know when these things were going to happen, and then I'd make a special note of the time, and—"

"Take a hundred lines for impertinence, Lowther."

"Thank you, sir," said Monty imperturbably.

"Did you, or did you not, see D'Arcy minor outside the

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Third-Form dormitory at that time last night, and was, or was not, Merry with you?" asked Mr. Selby categorically.

"No, sir," said Monty Lowther, without hesitation.

"And you, Manners?"

"No, sir."

It was to save their chum, and Manners and Lowther joined the ranks of the liars without even stopping to think.

Mr. Selby's look was very bitter.

"I do not believe you," he said.

The chums of the Shell made no reply to that.

Mr. Selby, with bitter disappointment and chagrin in his face, quitted the study. There was a long silence after he had gone.

"Well," said Lowther, at last, "we're all in the same boat now—giddy liars, all of us! I believe that man would have made a liar of George Washington, if he could have got at him. No good crying over spilt milk, you chaps, or looking down in the mouth. We must try to forget all about it, if we can."

If they could. But each of them knew in his heart that he never could.

CHAPTER 13.

Remorse!

THE mystery of the attack upon Mr. Selby remained a mystery.

All the School House fellows had been questioned, and the result had been nil.

No information was forthcoming from any quarter.

Mr. Selby was forced to give up the hope that the culprit would be discovered and punished.

He remained firmly convinced in his own mind that it was D'Arcy minor.

But his conviction on that point counted for nothing. Before a fellow could be expelled from the school, the proof against him had to be of the clearest; and there was no proof whatever against Wally, thanks to the peculiar methods of his friends in shielding him.

The Head declined to listen to mere suspicion on the subject.

Mr. Selby could not say that he had recognised his assailant.

And Wally's statement that he was in the Third-Form dormitory at the time could not be disproved, and was probable enough in itself. He had been seen there just before the outrage; and he had not been seen outside, so far as was known. It was only fair to give Wally the benefit of the doubt.

That the Head did, much to the dissatisfaction of Mr. Selby.

Wally had escaped.

But Wally was not happy.

True, his Form-master was no harsher with him now than he had been before. Mr. Selby had always been as unpleasant as possible.

But the fag's conscience was at work.

He had spoken falsely, and he had caused others to do the same. Mr. Selby would have been astonished if he had known how much that worried the scamp of the Third. Wally, who was not in the least sorry for the way he had handled his Form-master, was suffering from remorse for having told a lie about it, and his remorse hurt him more than a flogging would have done.

Jameson and Gibson and Frayne, his chums in the Third, knew very well that he had done what Mr. Selby accused him of. He had not told them, but they knew it, and they knew, therefore, that he had lied to the Head.

They did not tell him, but Wally was growing morbidly self-conscious on the subject, and he felt that they regarded him as a liar.

He became very touchy and irritable, especially suspicious that fellows did not take his word.

And while Wally was worried and miserable, there were clouded faces in the Fourth and the Shell.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had lost his cheerfulness, and Tom Merry's sunny smile seemed to have vanished for ever. Manners and Lowther, too, wore worried looks.

Lowther had recommended that they should forget about the whole matter. But he could not follow his own advice. The chums of the School House could not help thinking about it.

In the two or three days after the occurrence it remained a burden upon their minds. They did not speak about it much, but it was always in their thoughts.

They avoided Wally, and they began to some extent to

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avoid one another. Fellows who knew one another to be liars felt their mutual trust and confidence shaken. And the unhappy juniors had a miserable feeling that sooner or later they would be shown up, and that they deserved to be. For there is no end to a lie; until confessed it is like a ghost that haunts the liar, always calling for new lies to bolster it up and avert discovery.

They had not realised it at first, but they realised it now. Tom Merry had always held his head high among his school-fellows. Fellows like Levison and Mellish and Crooke he had always heartily despised. But he felt miserably that he had sunk to their level now, and, what was worse, they knew it! Levison's manner towards the captain of the Shell had already become different. To Tom Merry's eyes it seemed as if the cad of the Fourth was assuming a familiarity, as with a fellow after his own heart—one of his own sort. The mere thought that he had become as "rotten" as Levison made the captain of the Shell feel almost physically sick.

Levison of the Fourth had no conscientious scruples on those points. He did not believe that anybody had, and he had always regarded Tom Merry's views as a kind of skilful hypocrisy.

And he was not slow to say so.

A few days after the affair of Mr. Selby, when Tom Merry came out of the Shell Form-room after morning lessons, he found a group of Fourth-Formers in the passage. Jack Blake was giving Levison his opinion of him in the plainest of plain English, and Levison was listening to it with his usual cynical grin.

"Hallo, what's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake snorted.

"It's Levison. He set a cracker in Mr. Lathom's desk, and there was a row. And he stood up and denied knowing anything at all about it, telling lies like clockwork. He made me feel ill. I was jolly near to giving him away."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I suppose I wasn't called upon to take a licking, was I?" said Levison savagely.

"Yes, you were, rather than tell barefaced lies," said Blake. "It was simply sickening. Any decent fellow would have stood a licking rather than do what you did. You're a disgrace to the House."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I'm not the only disgrace to the House, if you come to that," he said.

Blake clenched his hands.

"If you mean that I'd have done it, Levison, you'd better say so, and I'll wipe the floor with you," he exclaimed.

"I didn't refer to you. There are other fellows here who can tell lies on occasion, and roll 'em out to order," said Levison. "Fellows who hold their blessed noses very high, too, and pretend to look down on that sort of thing."

Tom Merry felt a strange sensation at his heart.

D'Arcy changed colour.

Levison was looking at them, with a bitter sneer upon his face. Several fellows saw his look, and understood it, and looked surprised.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Kangaroo of the Shell. "I'll bet there isn't such a giddy fabricator as you in the House, Levison, unless it's the Mellish."

"I know what I mean," said Levison, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Well, we want to know what you mean, too," said the Cornstalk junior. "You're accusing somebody, and you'd better speak out."

"Oh, I don't want to do that."

"No, you never want to speak out," said Noble scornfully. "But you've got to now, or else take a thick ear. Whom were you speaking of?"

"Well, Tom Merry's one."

"Rot!"

"Rats!"

"Don't be an ass."

Levison sneered.

"Punch his head, Tommy," said Bernard Glyn. "Wipe up the floor with the cad. I'll hold your jacket."

Tom Merry did not move. The juniors crowded round, looking at him, amazed by the pallor and misery in his face. Kangaroo nudged him.

"Did you hear what Levison said, Tom Merry?"

"Yes," said Tom, in a low tone.

"Well, why don't you bump the cad?" demanded the Cornstalk. "I suppose you're not going to let a worm like Levison call you a liar, are you?"

"He can say what he likes."

"Eh?"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Don't be an ass. Wallop him!"

Tom Merry shook his head, and walked away. Kangaroo

gave a low whistle. The other fellows looked surprised and uncomfortable.

Levison burst into a sneering laugh.

"Well, what do you say now?" he asked. "Tom Merry doesn't deny it. He can't. It's true."

"You wottah, Levison!"

"And you're another," said Levison at once. "You're as big a liar as Tom Merry, Arthur Augustus Adolphus Classy-D'Arcy! You can tell lies as well as anybody else when it's a question of getting your minor out of a scrape."

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy's face was crimson.

"Oh, that's lies, Levison, and you know it is," said Kangaroo. "Gussy simply couldn't do it if he tried."

"Rather not," said Clifton Dane. "Shut up, Levison. I don't know why Tom Merry's let you off, but I'm fed up with you, for one. If you say another word I'll bump you."

"I'll say what I like. I—"

Bump!

Levison descended upon the floor, and roared, and the juniors walked away and left him there.

Tom Merry had gone to his study. He threw himself into a chair, with his face buried in his hands. What he was suffering at that moment was worse than anything he had hitherto experienced in his young life.

What had he done?

He had saved Wally, and had placed it in the power of a cad and a rank outsider like Levison to insult him as much as he chose. He could have licked Levison, true, but that would have been of little use. What Levison had said was true; he had lied, and Levison knew that he had. He had no right to touch the cad of the Fourth for saying what was true, and it would have been no comfort to him to lick Levison. That would not have removed the bitter sting of the insulting words. The insult hurt him, because he had no defence against it—it was true!

The study door opened, and Tom Merry did not look up—he did not hear. It closed again; Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in the study. He touched Tom Merry lightly on the shoulder.

The Shell fellow looked up with haggard eyes, into a face as miserable as his own.

"Hallo, Gussy!" he said.

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy—" D'Arcy paused.

"Well?"

"What's going to be done?"

"Nothing."

"We—we can't stand that kind of thing."

"We've got to," said Tom Merry bitterly. "Levison is in the right; he's a cad, but he's in the right this time. We're liars, and he knows it."

D'Arcy winced.

"I—I've thought of somethin', Tom Mewwy. It—it's been wowwyin' me frightfully evah since. We—we could wipe it out one way, you know."

"I don't see how."

"By confessin' to the Head."

"And giving Wally away!"

D'Arcy gave a kind of groan.

"I suppose that would be bound to follow, Tom Mewwy?"

"It would be quite certain."

"What's to be done?"

"Nothing. We've got to grin and bear it." Tom Merry rose to his feet. "I—I wish I could get out of St. Jim's," he said wretchedly. "I feel as if I can't look the fellows in the face. I feel rotten—rotten!"

"Same here, deah boy. I never felt so wotten in my life," said D'Arcy. "I—I think that somethin' will have to be done. I shall speak to Wally."

"Don't ask the kid to give himself away," said Tom Merry hastily. "That wouldn't be fair play. We got into this with our eyes open, and it would make matters worse than ever to go back on Wally now."

"But—but how can we stand this?"

"We've got to."

They had to, but it was a dreary prospect. The lies that had been told had come home to roost, and it seemed as if they were destined to shadow always the lives of the unhappy juniors.

CHAPTER 14.

The Only Way.

"WALLY, old man!"

Jameson of the Third tapped his chum on the shoulder. Wally did not reply. He was sitting on the end of the fender in the Form-room, staring hard into the fire. Jameson shook his chum by the arm.

"Wally!"

The fag looked up at last.

"What is it?" he asked miserably and irritably.

"Don't mope here like this," said Jameson. "You've

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

been like a giddy boiled owl the last two or three days. Come down to the tuck-shop with us."

Wally shook his head.

"Oh, do come," said Jameson persuasively. "Curly's got a postal-order, and we're going to blow it. We want you to help us."

"I can't come."

"Oh, rot; you can if you like."

Wally flushed.

"Can't you take my word?" he demanded.

"Don't be so jolly touchy, Wally. Of course I can," said Jameson. "But—"

"Well, then, leave me alone."

"Well, I must say you're a ripping fellow to chum with—I don't think!" said Jameson in disgust. "About as cheerful as an undertaker's mute, ain't you?"

"Oh, rats!"

Jameson snorted, and left the fag alone. Wally remained staring into the fire. The fag was thinking things out; he had been doing some very hard thinking for the last day or two.

The subject of his reflections was, of course, the troublesome Selby affair. Wally had come to the conclusion that the present situation was intolerable. He felt that he could not stand it any longer.

"It's too rotten!" muttered Wally, when he was alone. "Jameson and Curly are very decent about it, but they must think me a rotter. And poor old Gussy, and Tom Merry, I know what they're feeling like. It's not good enough. I've dragged them into this, and now I've got to drag them out, if I can. But—but how can I do it?"

That was a troublesome question. Wally had thought that he would be able to dismiss the matter from his mind, but it refused to be dismissed. And, after a few days of it, the unhappy fag had come to the conclusion that it would be better to be expelled from the school than to continue as he was going on now. But the more he thought about it, the more of a tangle he seemed to be in. For it was not only his own falsehood that had to be considered now. He had caused others to speak falsely, and he could not make his own confession without the risk, at least, of betraying them.

Wally rose to his feet at last. He left the Third-Form room, and made his way slowly to Study No. 6. He found his major there. Arthur Augustus was looking out of the study window. Blake and Herries and Digby had gone over to tea with Figgins & Co. in the New House; but Arthur Augustus had not felt inclined to go with them. He looked round wearily as Wally came in.

"More trouble, Wally?" he asked.

"No. Same old trouble."

"That's all ovah now, kid," said D'Arcy kindly. "It's settled. Nobody will evah find out now who woped up Mr. Selby."

"The trouble is, that it isn't all over," said Wally. "I—I wish you'd left me to chance it, Gussy, instead of saving me in the way you—you did."

"Wally!"

"I don't want to seem ungrateful, Gussy. But—but I feel as if I can't stand it any more," said Wally, with a break in his voice. The fag was dangerously near to "blubbing" at that moment.

"I'm sorry, Wally. What's twoublin' you now?"

"Everything," said Wally desperately. "It was old Selby's fault I lied to the Head; but—but I can't rest under it, Gussy. If—if it wasn't for dragging you fellows into it, after what you've done for me, I'd go straight to the Head and confess about it."

D'Arcy looked at his brother very curiously.

"Do you mean that, Wally?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Goodness knows I do."

"Suppose we were willin' to do the same?"

"You couldn't—you couldn't own up to—to—"

"That would wipe it out," said D'Arcy, "as a mattah of fact, kid, it's the only relief I could get—to go and confess it all to the Head."

"But it would mean disgrace!"

"That's bettah than feelin' as I do about the mattah."

"You might get sacked as well as me."

"I shouldn't care, if I could only get this wotten wowwy off my mind."

Wally was silent for a minute.

"Does Tom Merry feel like that about it?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"Has he said so?"

"Yaas."

"There's Manners and Lowther, too," said Wally. "They can't be given away. And—and if part of it comes out, Gussy, it will all come out. Once we start the Head on the track, he'll have the whole story out in a jiffy."

"I suppose so. But let's go and see the Shell chaps, and

see what they say," Arthur Augustus suggested. "We could all go to the Head togethah, and own up."

"It's a rotten thing to go through."

"Bettah than feelin' like a wotten worm."

"That's how I look at it," said Wally. "But the others—"

"Let's go and see them."

The Terrible Three were having tea in their study when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his minor entered. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther looked at them grimly. It was not in human nature for them to feel very kindly towards Wally just then. He had brought upon them the blackest trouble of their experience. Other troubles they felt they could have faced with equanimity, but self-scorn is hardest of all to bear.

"Well, what do you want, young shaver?" asked Lowther. "Gussy will tell you."

"The fact is, deah boys"—D'Arcy hesitated, and then went on—"Wally's as sick of the pwcenent state of things as we are. If—if you fellows are willin', he wants to go to the Head and get it all ovah."

Tom Merry started. His face brightened up wonderfully.

"Honest injun, Wally?" he asked.

"Yes," said Wally steadily. "I'd rather be sacked than go about feeling a rotten worm, and feeling that I've dragged you fellows into the same thing."

"I haven't persuaded him," said D'Arcy. "He came to me of his own accord in my studey and said so. Didn't you, Wally?"

"Yes."

Tom Merry rose from his unfinished tea.

"If you mean it, I'll be jolly glad to go with you, for one," he said; "and I think Manners and Lowther feel the same."

"Yes, rather," said Lowther.

"For goodness' sake let's make a clean breast of it," said Manners. "I don't care what the punishment is; let's get the matter open and above board, and we can face the rest."

"Yaas, wathah."

"You've thought it out, Wally?" asked Tom Merry slowly. The fag nodded.

"I've been thinking of nothing else for days," he said.

"You know what it means?"

"I shall be sacked, you mean?"

"Yes."

"I know that; and I'd rather have that, than this!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Then let's go to the Head together and get it over," he said.

CHAPTER 15.

A Clean Breast of It.

"COME in!" said Dr. Holmes.

The good old doctor glanced up as his study door opened, and an expression of surprise came over his face at the sight of five juniors—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell, D'Arcy of the Fourth, and D'Arcy minor of the Third.

"Come in, my boys!" said the Head. "What is it?"

The juniors came in, and then they hesitated.

It was not an easy thing they had come to say.

They looked at the Head, and looked at one another, and grew very red in the face; and Dr. Holmes's surprise increased every moment.

"What is it, my boys?" he asked. "I need not tell you that my time is—ahem!—valuable. Can I do anything for you?"

"If—if you please sir—"

"Yaas, wathah, sir; if—if you please—"

"We—we've—"

"Yes," said the Head.

"We've come to confess, sir," blurted out Tom Merry desperately.

The Head smiled.

"Indeed! You have been playing some prank, I suppose, and you have come to tell me about it. That is very right. What have you done?"

"It—it is worse than a prank, sir."

The Head's brow grew a little sterner.

"You have done something wrong?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very wrong?"

"Yes, sir."

"You had better tell me about it," said the Head quietly. "You are surely not the kind of lads to have done anything very wrong, I think. I hope you exaggerate. But tell me what it is, and we will see."

"It—it's about Wally, sir—D'Arcy minor," stammered Tom Merry.

"I—I did it, sir!" gasped Wally.

"You did what?"

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"Roped up old Selby, sir—I—I mean, Mr. Selby!"
 "You!"
 "Ye-es, sir."
 Dr. Holmes's brow grew quite terrific.
 "You told me that you did not, D'Arcy minor?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "Do you mean to say that you deliberately deceived me?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "Good heavens! And why have you come to tell me so?"
 "Because—because I can't stand it any longer, sir!" gasped Wally.

The doctor's face softened somewhat.
 "Ah! I am glad to see that your conscience has troubled you about it, at all events, D'Arcy minor. But what have these other boys to do with it? Surely they did not have a hand in such an outrage on a Form-master?"
 "Oh, no, sir!" said Wally hastily.
 "Then what—?"
 "We knew Wally had done it, sir," said Tom Merry, in a low voice. "Gussy—D'Arcy and I met him in the quad, after he had done it."
 "But you told me you had not seen him there?"
 Tom Merry hung his head.
 "I—I didn't tell you so, sir. I—I told Mr. Selby. I—I know it was an untruth, but that was not quite so bad."
 "And we told Mr. Selby we hadn't seen Wally outside the Third-Form dorm. that evening, sir," said Manners.
 "And—and we had seen him. But—but it was Mr. Selby we told, sir, not you."
 The Head regarded the juniors with a very queer expression.

"Do you wish me to understand that you would not have spoken falsely to me, although you did to Mr. Selby?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir," said all the juniors at once.
 "I do not see the distinction. A falsehood is a falsehood, whosoever it is told to, I presume?"
 "It was different, sir. We know it was wrong. But—but you are straight, sir—"

"What?"
 "I—I mean you are a—a sportsman, sir," said Tom Merry, seeking for words. "You wouldn't doubt a chap's word. But—but Mr. Selby told us we were liars, and—and after that it didn't seem so bad to tell him lies. That's how it was, sir."

"I see," said the Head, very gravely.
 "We don't make that an excuse, sir. We've come to confess to you because it worried us so much. But that was why it was, sir. So it was with Wally. Mr. Selby punished him for playing tricks in his room, when he hadn't done it, and wouldn't believe him when he said he hadn't done it. He said he was lying—"

"You are sure D'Arcy minor did not play those tricks in Mr. Selby's room?"

"Quite sure, sir."
 "How can you be so sure?"
 "Because I played them myself, sir," said Tom Merry.
 "And we helped," said Manners and Lowther together.
 "Oh!" said the Head.
 "Mr. Selby accused Wally of lying and thrashed him awfully, sir. Kildare interfered because he was going for him so much, and took the cane away."

"Indeed! I knew nothing whatever of this," said the Head gravely.

"It's only fair to tell you, sir, if you're going to expel Wally for what he did."

"Quite so; tell me everything!"
 "Kildare will bear out what I said, sir. And—and after Wally roped up Mr. Selby, he—he was questioned, and then—"

"Then I remembered that old—that Mr. Selby called me a liar when I wasn't one, and I thought I might as well live up to it, sir," said Wally. "Only—only since, I—I've been thinking about it—"

"You have decided, I hope, that it is wrong to lie, whether your word has been doubted or not by the person concerned?"

"Yes, sir."
 There was silence in the study. Dr. Holmes's brows were contracted, and his eyes dwelt upon the juniors with a peculiar searching expression.

"This is a very, very great shock to me," he said at last.
 "You especially, Tom Merry, I have always regarded as the soul of honour. It is a very painful shock to me to find that you are capable of falsehood."

Tom Merry's face went crimson.

"You can't think any worse of me than I think myself, sir," he said miserably. "I've felt like a low cad since."

"And what was your object—to prevent D'Arcy junior from being punished, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Even after his outrageous conduct?"
 "We didn't blame him for that, sir."
 "You did not blame a boy for laying violent hands upon his Form-master?" said the Head, raising his voice a little.
 "No, sir, not in this case," said Tom Merry fearlessly.
 "Wally had been treated very badly—all the fellows know it. I've told you, sir, that Kildare had to interfere, because Mr. Selby was treating him so brutally. Wally's still got the marks of the cane on his back, though it was four days ago."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Remove your jacket, D'Arcy minor," said the Head very quietly.

Wally hesitated.
 "Do you hear me, D'Arcy minor?"
 "Ye-es, sir! B-b-but I—I don't want to sneak," said Wally. "If—if I had been going to complain to you, I could have done that in the first place, and—and—"

"I am sorry you did not," said the Head. "Remove your jacket at once. I command you to do so. I am the best judge in this matter."

"Very well, sir," said Wally meekly.
 The fag removed his jacket, and unfastened his shirt. The Head looked at the marks, still showing red and angry upon the skin, after a lapse of four days since the thrashing Wally had received at the hands of his Form-master. Dr. Holmes's brow grew very dark.

"That will do, D'Arcy minor," he said, in an altered voice.

Wally replaced his jacket.
 "And now, my boys," said Dr. Holmes, "D'Arcy minor's offence was a serious one, whatever provocation he may have received, and he knows how he will be dealt with. As for you, you others have done very wrong. I can make allowances for the fact that Mr. Selby provoked you by doubting your word in the first place, and also for a chivalrous desire to shield a boy to be severely punished. But you did wrong—very wrong! There is no possible excuse for uttering a falsehood. The fact that you have come to me to confess shows me that you realise this yourselves."

"Yes, sir."
 "Then you may go!"
 "Thank you, sir."
 "I—I—I suppose I'd better go and pack my box, sir?" faltered Wally, trying to keep back his tears.

"I shall consider your case, D'Arcy minor. There are evidently circumstances in the matter that I had not heard of before. I shall weigh the matter very carefully, and shall consider what is best to be done. You may go now."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"
 The juniors left the study. Their hearts were lighter now, and their faces were brighter. And Wally seemed to be walking on air.

"I'm not going to be sacked," he said, with conviction.
 "Now the Head knows what a beast Selby was, he won't sack me. He's a good old sport. He wouldn't raise my hopes if he meant to sack me after all at the finish."

"It will be a flogging, at least, then," said Tom Merry.
 "Oh, blow the flogging!" said Wally. "It won't be any worse than what I've had from Selby. I can stand lickings—I don't care!"

"The Head's a bwick!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a deep breath. "Bai Jove, I feel bettah now that I've got that off my chest, you fellows!"

"We've had a lesson," said Tom Merry soberly, "and I don't think that any of us will be likely to make the same mistake again."

"Wathah not."

Wally was right; he was not sacked. Dr. Holmes had an interview the same evening with Mr. Selby and with Kildare. Kildare did not conceal anything when he was questioned, and Mr. Selby had a very uncomfortable quarter of an hour with the Head. Dr. Holmes spoke with such exceeding plainness that when the Third Form-master left the study, he was quite pale, and there were beads of perspiration upon his brow. And although his affection for D'Arcy minor was probably not increased by that painful experience, Mr. Selby showed himself more careful after that in his treatment of the scamp of the Third. Wally was flogged for what he had done, as he certainly deserved; but the flogging did not trouble him very much—it was the "sack" he had dreaded. Open confession, it is said, is good for the soul; and certainly the chums of the School House felt better now that it was over, and they could hold up their heads again. It had been a bitter experience, but the lesson was not likely to be lost upon any of them.

(Another splendid long complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. next Wednesday, entitled "Hidden Treasure at St. Jim's," by Martin Clifford. Please order your copy of "The Gem" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "HIDDEN TREASURE AT ST. JIM'S!"

A Magnificent Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's.

Great New Public-School Serial!

Sir Billy, of - - - - Greyhouse!

*A Magnificent New Serial Story
dealing with Public-School Life.*

By R. S. WARREN BELL.



WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

Sir William Percival Travers, Bart.—to give him his full title—is a slight, fair lad of twelve when he is first sent to "Fighting Greyhouse" by his guardian. His Form-fellows in the Lower Fourth are considerably older than "Sir Billy," as the youngster is soon nicknamed, and he has to put up with a good deal of bullying. His great hero is Wardour, the captain of the school.

Sir Billy, with his friend Carew—usually known as "Parsnip"—takes part in the big school paper-chase, but the two ultimately fall out of the running and find themselves with a long walk back to the school in front of them. They are shortly joined by Wardour, who has fallen out of the run with a twisted ankle. The three are crossing a field, when suddenly, from behind a haystack, appears firstly, a stout man with a flaming face, carrying a heavy whip—evidently a farmer; secondly, a big mastiff; thirdly, a farm-labourer with a pitchfork.

(Read on from here.)

In Durance Vile.

"Hi, stop!" said the yeoman. "What may you be doin' in my field?"

"I suppose we may walk across your field if we like?" retorted Wardour.

"Don't you haw haw me, my young man!" said the farmer, advancing a step or two, with a very ugly face. "My name is Jenks, and this is my field, and there's no footpath across it, and there's a board in the far corner which says: 'Trespassers will be prosecuted!'"

"Look here," said Wardour, "we come from Greyhouse—"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Mr. Jenks; "I know where you come from—there's no need to tell me that. You Greyhouse coves seem to think that all the rest of the world is dirt beneath yer feet, and I'm a-goin' to give you three a lesson."

"You'd better be careful," said Wardour. "You will be very sorry for whatever you do. We have permission from all the farmers in the neighbourhood to run over their land—"

"Yes—from all except me!" shouted Mr. Jenks. "I'm the only one that stood out. The other fools round here are just tenants, and they give in because the lord of the manor asks them to—he bein' a pal o' your master's, I suppose. Well, now, this is my field, and I own it, and I never gave permission to anybody to run over it, and I never will!"

"Very well," said Wardour quietly, "we are trespassing. I will give you our names, and then you can issue a summons—"

The farmer laughed.

"Summons? Oh, no, you don't, my young chaffer! I've had names given to me before, and when I've called on your master to get justice, I've been told that there's no chaps o' those names in the school. Oh, no! That game won't do for me!"

"I've had enough of your insolence," said Wardour haughtily. "I am captain of the school, and not likely to

mislead you. The names of these two are Carew and Travers. So now, perhaps, you will kindly let us go on our way."

But Wardour's tone had stung the farmer to the quick. He was purple with rage.

"Way! You go on your way!" he shouted, with an oath, as he raised his whip. "You say another word and I'll give you the best hiding you ever had in your life, my cock-a-hoop young bantam! Captain of the school! What do I care for you? You're not captain o' me! Now then, I'll just tell you what I'm a-goin' to do. I'm going to take you three along and lock you up in my barn, and then I'm goin' to fetch the police and give you into custody. Now then, march along quick, if you don't want a dose of this whip!"

Wardour turned on the farmer with blazing eyes. "You dare to touch us—" he was beginning, when the dog uttered a low growl, and the man with the pitchfork advanced a step or two.

The farmer laughed.

"It's no use your usin' 'igh words," he said, with a sneer. "I guess we's one too many for you—"

"A dog and a pitchfork too many, you mean!" replied Wardour. "You're a brave fellow to fight with such weapons!"

The farmer saw that Wardour was hurt, for the handkerchief round his ankle was soaked with blood, but he had not a vestige of pity in his composition. Indeed, Wardour's words only fanned his rage.

"No more o' your voice!" he shouted, with another curse. "On you go—march!" and once again he raised the whip, and again the dog growled.

Wardour perceived that the situation was hopeless. They were absolutely at the man's mercy. He nodded to the two juniors, and then all three followed the man with the pitchfork.

The farm buildings proved to be quite near. As the procession entered the yard, the farmer's wife emerged from the back door. Directly she saw the boys, a look of sympathy passed over her hard-work-lined countenance.

"What's the matter, Bill?" she asked her husband.

"What's the matter doesn't matter to you!" roughly replied the man. "I found these three young cubs trespassin', and I'm goin' to lock 'em up, an' fetch the police!"

"Oh, Bill, be careful!" cried the good woman. "The little boys must be perished with cold in them bits o' things, and—oh, dear me, the tall gentleman has hurt himself! Look at the blood!"

"Go back to your pots and pans, woman!" roared the farmer. "Now, then"—as he turned to the prisoners—"into that stable!"

There was nothing for it but to obey, and in a few moments the luckless three found themselves securely locked up. They could hear the farmer's wife remonstrating with Jenks, and warning him that he would get into trouble for this, and they could hear his brutal replies. Then there were steps, and the farmer's voice sounded on the other side of the door.

"Listen to me!" he bawled. "I've told my man to saddle my horse, and when it's ready I'm going to ride into

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Petershall and fetch the police. It's not far from here. You cry out or try to escape, and I'll come and warm your hides for you; so look out!"

Having delivered this surly speech, he turned away and went indoors.

A Mad Race.

The three Greys were certainly in a desperate fix—locked up in Farmer Jenks's stable, with the prospect before them of spending the night in a police-station. Hitherto, excitement and exercise had kept them warm, but, now that they had nothing to do except await the turn of circumstances, all three shivered with cold.

"Well," said Wardour gloomily, "I've led you two fellows into this, and I must say I'm very sorry! By Jove," he added savagely, "I should like to have five minutes alone with that brute! I didn't care a hang for his whip, but the mastiff and pitchfork were too much!"

Parsnip seemed the least concerned of the three. There was some hay in the corner, and he went and sat down on it. Sir Billy, whose teeth were chattering, joined him. Wardour was just tall enough to be able to see out of the barred window.

"I suppose the old beast's coolly having his tea?" he muttered. "I should like to pelt him with his own crockery. His wife's a real good sort, though, and when this is all over I will thank her for what she said."

Keeping at his post at the window, Wardour watched the farm buildings and the back door of the house. By this door Mr. Jenks had entered, and from this door, Wardour surmised, Mr. Jenks would emerge when he had satisfied himself with hot toast and tea. The mere thought of it made the captain ravenous.

"Here comes that labourer Johnny, leading a horse!" he reported to the other two. "I suppose he's going to saddle him, and then old Jenks will ride off to Petershall. I had no idea we had wandered so far away from the school."

Just as the labourer reached the back door, the farmer appeared.

"Hey, Jim," he called, "it's just struck me that I'd better take a cart, so go and put the mare in. If I'm to fetch the police," he added, "I may as well have summit to bring them back in." Then he caught sight of Wardour's face gazing at him through the bars of the open window. "Yes, you can watch!" he cried, shaking his fist. "I'll have the law on you, Mr. Captain of Greyhouse! I'll teach you to talk to me, you cub! You won't come near my land again in a hurry, I'll wager!"

With a disgusted look Wardour turned away. He was not an adept at bandying words with anybody. He couldn't shout back abuse at this vulgar man. The fact that he took no notice of the farmer must have irritated the latter, for Jenks walked up to the window and peered through at his captives.

"Now, then, get off my hay," he growled; and it is hardly necessary to add that Sir Billy and Parsnip hastened to obey him. "If any of you three give me one word o' sauce, I'll come in and hide you, I will. I don't care a hang who you are!"

"You talked about the law just now," retorted Wardour. "I hope you know that what you have done to us is illegal. You have no right whatever to shut us up in this way, and that you will learn very shortly."

The farmer, who had evidently been drinking something stronger than tea, treated him to another volley of abuse, and then went back to the house. Wardour's eyes roved desperately round in search of a method of escape.

Exit was impossible, either by the door or the window; one was locked on the outside, the other strongly barred. But what was this? A ladder leading to the loft above. He determined to explore.

"Here, Carew, roll that tub up to the window and keep an eye open," he said. "If the old brute appears, just warn me."

Parsnip having placed himself in position, Wardour ascended the ladder. To his surprise, he found that the door by which hay was taken into the loft from the farmyard was open.

"Now," thought he, "it would be quite an easy matter to drop to the ground from here, and scoot; but what good would that do? That beast of a dog is sure to be somewhere around, and although I might be able to tackle him myself, these kids wouldn't be anywhere. I'm afraid it's no go," he added sorrowfully, as he descended the ladder and joined his companions in distress.

Another five minutes elapsed before Jim, the labourer, returned, leading a smart-looking cob, harnessed to a light gig. Mr. Jenks appeared.

"Now, look here, Jim," he cried, "the other cart's down at the smithy in the village. You just saddle Sandy"—Sandy

was the horse originally brought into the yard, and discarded in favour of the mare—"and ride down to the village and bring it up. If we've got to take these three young spadgers into Petershall when I've fetched the policemen, we shall want something bigger'n this here gig."

Jim having gone to saddle Sandy, the farmer went indoors again to get his coat, hat, and gloves. Thus the horse and gig were left unguarded.

Then a sudden thought struck Wardour. It was their only chance.

"Come along, you chaps, up this ladder as fast as you can sprint!"

In half a minute all three had gained the loft.

"Now, look here," he said hurriedly, "I am going to drop to the ground, and you two must follow me. I'll see you don't come to any harm. Then we will hop into that trap and make a dash for it. If the dog comes—well, we must chance that!"

He lost no time in carrying out this plan. Dropping softly and silently to the ground, he broke Parsnip's fall by grabbing at him as he alighted, and caught Sir Billy bodily in his arms.

"In case it's wanted," said he, snatching a pitchfork out of a heap of hay. "Now—for your lives!"

All three sped across the yard. Wardour caught up Sir Billy and chucked him into the back of the gig as if he had been a bundle of grocery.

"Now, Carew!" he whispered.

Then he jumped up himself. Seizing hold of the reins and the whip, he set the mare going towards the gate. At this moment the labourer appeared with Sandy's saddle and bridle. Seeing the three boys in possession of the trap, he dropped his burden and ran into the house to give the alarm, charging into the farmer, who was just coming out.

"Mr. Jenks, they've took the gig!" bellowed Jim.

The mare, in strange hands, had jibbed slightly at first, but by this time Wardour had got her to the gate. Mr. Jenks rushed after them with a loud cry, and Wardour, seeing that things were getting desperate, lashed the mare with all his might across her smooth flank, with the result that she practically leapt out into the high road. Wardour had already decided to drive in the direction of Petershall, as Greyhouse was miles further the other way.

"Now, you fool, saddle that horse—quick!" yelled the farmer to his man, and then rushed after the trap.

"Stop!" he cried. "Stop, will you!"

For answer Wardour simply waved the whip triumphantly, and administered further—and, under the circumstances, pardonable—castigation to the mare, who was putting her heels up in fine fashion, and simply flying along the road. As the gig sped round the bend, Parsnip and Billy, gazing back, saw the farmer coming out of the farmyard on the back of Sandy. So now it was a race indeed.

Already the night was falling; not a pedestrian or a vehicle was in sight. The three Greys had got a good start of the farmer, and by far the best horse; but, on the other hand, their nag had to pull a gig and three people, whereas Sandy had only the farmer to carry. The two juniors glued their eyes on their pursuer as he thrashed on Sandy to fresh efforts. Luckily, the road was pretty level just here, so it was a fair field and no favour; but Wardour knew well that there were one or two stiff hills ahead.

On they went, the mare's pace devolving credit on the farmer's judgment when he bought her—she was a rare one to go; but Mr. Jenks, owing to an energetic use of whip and heels, was lessening the distance between them considerably.

Wardour drove with a fairly slack rein. He saw the mare liked to have her head if she was to be kept in a good temper. And the mare, with equine sagacity, knew that there was somebody on the box who took the trouble to study her feelings. Therefore, she did not need any further application of the lash, but raced along with all the willingness in the world.

Now a hill hove in sight. Wardour slackened down to a short canter, whereas the farmer, spurring Sandy in his rage, breasted the hill at full gallop. He was now within a hundred yards of them.

"I'm afraid it's no go," muttered Wardour, as he encouraged the mare to smarten her pace. "But if the worst comes to the worst, I'll fight the beggar. Now, my beauty!"

They reached the brow of the hill, and the farmer was so close that they could hear his ejaculations quite distinctly as he pounded along in their wake.

"Stop, will you!" he cried. "Stop! That's my property! Do you hear? That's stealing—that gig belongs to me."

What gave Mr. Jenks further concern was that the mare had been out of sorts of late, and he knew that being sent along at this rate would not do her any good. He had entered her for some local races that were to be held in a

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A Magnificent Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

week's time, and he knew that she would not be able to do much if she were driven at this killing pace much longer. In addition to this, a great desire for revenge was on him. He wanted to send that great lash of his whirling round the bare legs of the schoolboys. The thought of the marks it would leave filled him with wicked joy, so again he cried:

"Stop! Stop! Stop!"

But Wardour only waved the whip at him, and urged the mare on to fresh efforts. Down the hill they went at a rare pelt, and the farmer groaned in his fury—if the mare fell, her knees would be spoilt beyond mending. He hammered old Sandy relentlessly, and Sandy unwillingly obeyed the tyrant on his back. At the bottom of the hill came another nice stretch of level road. The farmer was within fifty yards of the gig now. A mile hence was situated a little hamlet, and here the road took a sharp and nasty turn round the centre building of the place, which was the Three Swallows public-house. The mare was fast tiring, and Sandy was fresh compared to her. Mr. Jenks was catching up materially. It was clear that he must soon be level with the gig. He knew, moreover, that along the village street there were usually grouped at this hour of the evening a number of louts, many of whom were naturally hostile to anyone of the nature of public schoolboys. These fellows would lend the farmer all the assistance in their power.

"If I can only get though the village," thought Wardour, as the hoof-strokes of Sandy smote on his ear, "I'll take on Mr. Jenks!"

Round the sharp corner they flew, and bang, crash! The gig's near wheel struck a dog-cart standing by the door of the public-house. The dog-cart reeled up against the building in a foolish fashion, but the little gig went over. When the owner of the dogcart ran out he found two boys lying on the ground, and the third standing by the wreck of the gig, ruefully surveying the climax of his headlong drive. Just at that moment Mr. Jenks arrived on Sandy, pulled up and alighted all in one movement, and rushed at Wardour.

"Now, then, you young hound!" he shouted. "I'll make you pay for this!" He slashed at Wardour with his heavy whip, but Wardour, rushing in under the curling lash, smote Mr. Jenks a blow between the eyes which laid the farmer flat on his back.

Feeling much damped by this surprising exhibition of strength and skill, Mr. Jenks slowly rose to his feet, picked up his whip, and turned towards the door of the public-house. He found that he was being regarded by no less a person than Mr. Soames, the well-known county solicitor, whose prowess in local courts of law the farmer had reason to know.

"Good-evening, Mr. Jenks!" said the solicitor. "This is a new amusement of yours—chasing schoolboys about."

Parsnip and Billy had been somewhat dazed by their fall, but by this time they had risen to their feet and were examining their bruises.

"I'm a-goin' to have the law on 'em," said the farmer in a surly fashion, but keeping well away from Wardour, for he had no desire to make acquaintance with the Greyhouse captain's fist again. "Do you think that I'm a-goin' to have tuppenny-apenny schoolboys like that trespassin' on my land and then runnin' away with my cart? I'm a-goin' to have the law on 'em. Look at that there vehicle!" he concluded, with a gasp.

"A very nice gig," said Mr. Soames. "Seems to have had a little paint knocked off it." (I should explain that the cob had been got on to its feet again, and that the Three Swallows ostler was looking after both horse and trap.) "Not much harm done," continued Mr. Soames, "except perhaps to the wheel of my dogcart. However, that's all right. I'll pay the damage, whatever that is."

"No," thundered the farmer, "I'll make their parents pay it, and then they'll have a hot time of it at Christmas when they go home!"

"Well," said Mr. Soames, with a smile, "as I stand in loco parentis to this young gentleman"—pointing to Sir Billy, of whom the farmer, like everybody else in the neighbourhood, had heard—"I will pay for him. The young gentleman who displayed a knowledge of boxing just now is the son of Major Wardour, of Petershall, and a great friend of mine. The third young gentleman," concluded Mr. Soames, glancing at Parsnip, "I do not know."

Wardour had hurriedly explained to the solicitor what had taken place, who now approached the farmer, and said in a low tone:

"See here, Jenks, joking aside, you're in the wrong. You had no right to shut 'em up in your barn; your proper course was to issue a summons if you found them trespassing. You won't do any good by going to law, and you might get into a great scrape. And if my ward is laid up through having been kept about in the cold with hardly anything on, in that case, Mr. Jenks," concluded the solicitor, in a sterner

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tone, "you will hear from me promptly, and in a way that you will not like."

Then Mr. Soames turned to the three boys.

"Come along in now," he said to them, "and get something warm inside you, and we will see if we can find you some coats. Good-night, Jenks!" he added, nodding to the discomfited farmer. "I think you have over-reached yourself a little. Go home, and don't forget what I've said."

An hour later the headmaster of Greyhouse received the following telegram:

"Wardour, Carew, and Travers arrived here safely. Return in the morning.—SOAMES, Petershall."

Trouble Brewing.

Of the three hounds whose big run ended in a somewhat unusual manner, Wardour alone was the worse for his afternoon's outing. In the excitement of the encounter with Farmer Jenks he almost forgot his injured foot; but later on, when he had cooled down, his wound made itself felt in a most uncompromising manner. Wardour was not one to make a song about a bodily pain; he did not mention his hurt to Mr. Soames, as, having borrowed coats and wraps from the landlord of the Three Swallows Inn, he and his companions bowed along to Petershall in the solicitor's dogcart. A bath, a good dinner, a sound sleep, and the three turned up smiling at Greyhouse after breakfast on the following morning.

The brief account Wardour gave the seniors of his movements bloomed into a blood-curdling narrative in the mouth of Parsnip, when that youth really let himself go in the juniors' room of South House. The fact that the captain of the school had been mixed up in the adventure lent additional interest to Parsnip's story, which was listened to with breathless interest by Greys of all Forms and sizes.

That night Wardour was missed from his usual place in chapel, and the word went round that he had been "docked" for repairs to his ankle. As a matter of fact his wound, owing to lack of attention, had developed symptoms which led to his instant banishment to the infirmary, where he was told to keep the foot as quiet as possible if he wished to get out by term-end.

Now it is just possible—such was his hold on the school—that, if Wardour had not been laid up, this particular story would never have been written. Wardour knew that a spirit of revolt against the new Head's rule was abroad in the school; and he knew that the fellow who was temporarily acting as captain was the last man in the world to have been entrusted with head-monitorial duties at such a stormy period.

The new Head, with a zeal which would have been worthy of all praise had it been kept within reasonable bounds, had been carrying on a ruthless campaign of reformation, regardless of the Greys and their affection for old-established privileges and customs. Dr. Leicester, the late Head, whose rule had been of the fine old English gentleman type, had no doubt left a lot for his successor to do in the way of sweeping up and dusting; and the new Head had, as it were, set about his task with a new broom in each hand. He had decided that there were far too many whole holidays, and promptly cancelled the lot. The seniors had too much liberty; so he made a law to the effect that hereafter only the Sixth were to enjoy "leave west" of the school, that was to say, village-wards. And so on, and so forth, curtailing and cutting down, flogging, gating, and "lining," until it became apparent to both masters and monitors that unless the Head held his hand Greyhouse would break into open mutiny.

And that, eventually, was exactly what Greyhouse did do.

The last straw was a rumour, not entirely unfounded, that when the present football season was over, Greyhouse was to change its game to "Soccer." Now, if there was a thing which Greyhouse was proud of, it was its prowess at Rugby football. The new Head—so ran the rumour—considered that "Rugger," especially as they played it at Greyhouse (and Greyhouse certainly played a roughish game), was "a brutalising sport," whereas Association Football he considered to be a far more gentlemanly pastime.

The masters themselves were dead against the proposed change of rules. Mr. Forbes, the second master, who had been at Greyhouse twenty years, and loved the old place almost as he loved his mother, had all along warned the Head that he was adopting too drastic measures. But the school's new chief listened with but half an ear.

"You might as fitly whitewash Westminster Abbey as make Greyhouse play Association," said Mr. Forbes.

"You are too sentimental, Forbes," murmured the Head. "I at least understand Greyhouse, sir," retorted the second master, who had seen with bitter regret one old custom after another banished beneath Patterson's rule.

And so, just about the time of Wardour's mishap, Greyhouse was very ripe for mischief. The Sixth—barring War-

Jour and Hallam—were a weak lot, numbering many scholars but few athletes. Wardour and Hallam were the only monitors who played for the First Fifteen, the Upper Fifth, on the other hand, being full of big duffers who couldn't construe, but whose ability at Rugger was unquestionable.

The second monitor, Farrar, was a pale student, who denied himself fresh air and sleep in order to wallow in Plato and Thucydides. Farrar wore glasses, was nervous, and no more dreamed of playing football than of essaying a trip across Channel in a balloon. His authority was openly flouted by the lubbers in the Upper Fifth, and even with undisguised contempt; for most of them were at least good enough to play "footer" for their Houses—which, if it wasn't anything very great, was something.

Plotting a Plot.

Round the fire in the seniors' room of Headmaster's House stood six young gentlemen whom Greyhouse could well have spared. The ring-leader of this gang was Bannerman—an exceedingly handsome fellow, always well supplied with funds, and heir to his great-uncle's peerage. His father was dead, and his great-uncle simply let him do as he liked. His happy band—the other five—were Sadie, Jewell, Fredericks, Black, and "Chips," otherwise Littlewood, an emaciated, pink-eyed, pigeon-breasted giant, who was always in mortal fear of Bannerman, and did exactly what he was told, in spite of the fact that he was over six feet high. These six young gentlemen, it should be mentioned, were all members of the Upper Fifth. The Sixth-Form fellows in Headmaster's usually gave the common-room a wide berth, as Bannerman never went out of his way to be very agreeable to them.

"Chips," said Bannerman, without turning round, "cut—we want to talk."

"Oh, I say, you know, Ban, old chap—"

"Don't call me Ban; and do as I tell you."

"But why should I go?"

"Because you're a babbler, and can't keep anything in—that's why. You can come in again when we've finished jawing."

"But, hang it, Ban, what am I to do all the time?"

"I don't know—play hymn-tunes in the chapel if you like. Now then, outside!"—this ferociously, as Littlewood was still lingering. Littlewood shot out just in time to avoid a book that Bannerman heaved at him. Meeting an extremely small boy in the corridor, Littlewood pulled his hair viciously and felt better.

"Now that braying ass has gone," said Bannerman, walking to the door and opening it suddenly, to see if Littlewood was listening at the keyhole (but for once Littlewood wasn't), "I can talk. I suppose we are all of the same mind here? I'm a bit doubtful about the tribe of Levi," Bannerman went on as he turned his dark-eyes full on Jewell, who shuffled somewhat under the other's steady gaze; "but, as I owe him four pounds, I don't think he will desert from my banner until I have paid him; so now to business. As you know, I'm going to persuade the old man to take me away from this rotten place at Christmas, and I mean to have a good fling at Pat before I go. I want to get back on the beast all I can—especially for stopping our leave west. I believe you fellows all do as well, although"—with another glance at the conspirator suspected of faintheartedness in the cause—"as I said before, I have my doubts of Mr. Jewell."

The others laughed as Jewell coloured up. As a matter of fact, Bannerman, always a keen judge of character, was correct in his estimation of Jewell, who always sided with the stronger man, and would have deserted Bannerman in a moment had a more powerful leader arisen.

"But to proceed," said Bannerman. "We're all sick and tired of lines and gatings, and 'Wednesday afternoons,' so what we have to do is to go steadily to work and get the rest of the chaps to act with us."

"Suppose they won't?" ventured Fredericks.

"Then we can't do anything," replied Bannerman, "because if only the Upper Fifth stood out against Pat, the governors would expel the lot, whereas, if all the school stand out—why, they can't expel the whole school, can they?"

"No," agreed Fredericks, "unless they want to shut the old shop up altogether."

"My idea is," said Bannerman quietly, "that if the school kicks up a row the governors will conclude that Pat is not strong enough for the post. That," concluded Bannerman sweetly, "is how I wish to get back on Pat."

"What price Wardour?" inquired somebody, after a short silence.

"Safely docked," replied Bannerman; "I heard yesterday that he won't be able to put foot to ground till Christmas."

"Doddie must be considered," urged Fredericks.

"Doddie," said Bannerman, "is going to town for a few days—urgent family affairs, y'know. Told me so himself; it's a lawsuit, I believe."

"Doddie," otherwise Mr. Dodson, was Form-master to the Lower Fourth. A notable man was he, and a mixture. None of his pupils will ever forget Doddie. He was an immense favourite with the Lower School and a few of the Upper. Some of the big fellows understood him and liked him, but the majority detested him. He was a harum-scarum soul, was "Doddie," notable for the wild whoops he gave when he was playing at three-quarter, and for the disastrous rapidity with which he lost his temper. There was no doubt of this—Doddie was far too free with his hands. In the case of a youngster this didn't much matter, as Doddie would smack a chap's head and pour balm on the wound in the shape of half-a-crown all inside of a short Caesar lesson. On Monday he would lick a misdoer until the misdoer's legs were marked all the way down; on Tuesday he would bear that criminal off to the tuckshop and treat him to tarts until, as a certain Scots Grey once informed him, he could "eat nae mair." Such was Doddie—quick-tempered, impetuous, but really good and kind at heart. He was red-haired, unfortunately, and sensitive about it, and his close-cropped poll—he cut off as much of the hair as possible—was a fine fat object for satire in the mouths of those that hated Doddie—and there were a good many of them. Half-a-crown will heal a lump on a kid's head, but not so often on a big fellow's. For Doddie dealt out his smacks very impartially, and, as he was tremendously strong and wiry, though not over tall or broad, his victims had to grin and bear them.

Mr. Forbes, the second master, Doddie, and Wardour were the governing strength of the school. Patterson, the new Head was regarded as a tyrant; had it not been for the triumvirate above-mentioned, things would have come to deadlock long before they did.

As it was, when Wardour was laid up in hospital, and Doddie was called to town over his law business, the ring-leaders saw their chance. The athletic, unlearned Upper Fifth had long been writhing beneath the lash; now was the time to rise against the best-hated preceptor that had ever misgoverned Greyhouse.

The monitors knew something was brewing, but with the exception of Hallam they were a poor weak lot now that they were deprived of Wardour's leadership. Farrar, the temporary captain, rarely emerged from his study save for meals and schools, so engrossed was he in the manufacture of a lengthy Latin oration on the virtues of a very long deceased Roman Emperor.

The Outbreak.

One bitter December night, then, the embers of sedition which had been smouldering so long broke into a roaring flame. That evening a gentleman living in the neighbourhood gave a grand ball in celebration of his eldest son's coming of age. The Greyhouse masters were invited, and all, including the Head, attended it except three—Doddie (absent in town); Mr. Kitt, the music-master, whose duty week it was; and the chaplain.

The Head went off with his staff, feeling quite easy in his mind about the orderliness of the school he was leaving in charge of Mr. Kitt. For some little time there had been a noticeable improvement in the conduct of the school; but the Head did not know that this was all part of the subtle programme drawn up by Bannerman & Co.

The masters were not expected back before some small hour in the morning. Till that period, then, the order-keeping of Greyhouse was left to poor Mr. Kitt, who was as perfect a musician as he was an imperfect disciplinarian. His idea of controlling turbulent spirits was to pile heavy impositions on some offenders, and report a long roll of others at the following day's muster in Big School at "twelve-twenty."

Greyhouse kept all mum and good as gold—so good that Mr. Kitt heaved a deep sigh of relief—for some time after the masters had driven off. Prep, took place in Big School—the two lowest Forms sat here—the class-rooms, and studies, a monitor being told off to supervise the proceedings in each class-room. In Big School, Mr. Kitt sat at the centre, or headmaster's desk, and a probationer at either end. It so happened, on this particular night, that the probationers assisting Mr. Kitt in Big School were Bannerman and Littlewood. Bannerman kept his end as quiet as mice by merely looking at anybody who moved; Littlewood, on the other hand, found it necessary to be constantly on the move round the different desks, pulling ears, rapping heads with his vicious, sharp knuckles, and in other ways administering sly torture.

Suddenly a kid uttered a cry. Littlewood had hurt him rather more than he had intended to.

"Littlewood!" Mr. Kitt was really a gentle and kind-hearted soul, and hated bullying. He was glaring at Chips now.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 267.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "HIDDEN TREASURE AT ST. JIM'S!" A Magnificent Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's, By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Oh, shame on you, Greyhouse! Restive mustangs, bitten by scorpions, could not have leapt about more madly than did that big schoolful of Greys after poor little Mr. Kitt's ignominious flight. The air was full of Latin Grammars and inkpots and wild shoutings; the imps of schoolboy mischief, let loose, were holding high carnival 'neath the ancient rafters. Fellows pranced up and down the passages or tore in tens and twenties through the dormitories, pulling beds to pieces, smashing crockery, and by illegitimate means letting the night air through the windows. Some frightened ones slunk into bed, hoping to lie there unnoticed till the storm of misrule had spent itself. But they were seen and dragged forth, and soured with icy water, and, by way of drying, tossed in blankets to the ceiling. And then these miserable wretches, released at last, crept under their beds, and lay there trembling, while the rioters romped on in search of fresh victims.

But these were the minor fry. The big fellows invaded the pantries, which were situated close by the Hall, and gorged themselves with pastry and appetising dishes intended for to-morrow's top table. Here, too, were bottled beer and wine, and these liquids they walked into with great gusto. The servants, roused from their supper by the unwonted clamour, cast apprehensive glances at them from a distance. Cripps, the school porter, and the other menservants endeavoured to argue with the boys, but they were pelted with potatoes and hunks of bread. Finally, all the servants, male and female, retired to the great kitchen, and locked themselves in. There was a brief council of war. Cripps was for fetching the police, but Greyhouse village boasted but one policeman; you had to go to Belser to obtain constabulary in any quantity. At last Mike, the boot-boy, was told off to mount his bicycle and ride post-haste to the house where the hall was being held, and inform the headmaster of the outbreak. But the servants had reckoned without their hosts. Bannerman had placed sentinels outside, and these, seizing Mike, flung his crock of a wheel into the Head's garden, and held Mike prisoner. But the servants knew not of this, and sat waiting for Mike to return, little dreaming that he was locked up, a captive in his own boot-shed.

The monitors, quite unable, and decidedly unwilling, to cope with this rowdy crew, had retired to their studies. Hallam alone stood his ground. Every fellow he saw he ordered to bed, and every fellow who disobeyed him he stolidly added to a long list he was compiling.

News of this was brought to Bannerman. Now, Greyhouse had a great respect for Hallam; for Greyhouse felt that Hallam would, in his turn, make a first-class captain. True, he formed part of the Sixth's tail, but he was in the Sixth—that was the thing. And he was a jolly good sort—that was another thing.

Bannerman turned to his followers. "This is awkward," said he, "old Hal's chalking down names."

"He won't put you down, Ban."

"Don't know so much. Hal's dogged. Still, I'll go and see."

So Bannerman, who was not wanting in pluck, approached the monitor.

"Bannerman, why are you out of your room?" asked Hallam.

"That's my business."

"Are you going to your room?"

"No."

"Then I shall report you to the Head. I shall report every fellow I see out of his room."

"Then you'll be a beastly sneak."

"I'll settle that remark with you another time. Meanwhile, let me tell you that this business, if it continues, will bring the school lower than anything that's ever happened. You can quiet the fellows down if you like."

"Well," retorted Bannerman, "let me tell you this. We've had enough of Pat's tyranny. He's goaded us until we can stand no more. They won't let him remain Head after this, and that's all I care. They can expel me to-morrow, if they please—I don't care twopence. But I'll settle Pat's hash—he shan't be headmaster of this school any longer."

"I don't like Patterson any more than you do," said Hallam stolidly; "but this row won't help matters, and it was a cruel shame to set on Kitt as the fellows did. The ringleaders will have to answer dearly for it in the morning."

So saying, and realising that further argument was useless, Hallam turned on his heel and went off to see how Farrar was getting on—for Farrar's face had been badly hurt.

Bannerman, however, was not to be daunted. He meant to carry the rebellion right through to the bitter end—for, as he had said, he was utterly regardless of the consequences, and didn't care a button what happened to himself personally.

(Another long, interesting instalment of this public school serial in next Wednesday's "Gem" Library.)

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl, English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

E. Hanna, 258, Church Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with boy readers living in the British Isles, age 15.

Miss F. Drew, Office, Emporium Chambers, Liverpool Street, Hobart, Tasmania, wishes to correspond with a boy reader, age 20-23.

C. G. K. Coulrough, 97a, La Salle Road, Verdun, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Scotland, age 16.

Miss M. Sarginson, 27, Brighton Villa, Church Street, West Maitland, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with British readers, age 16.

H. Hardy, Suite 3, Goldberg Block, St. Andrews, North Vancouver, British Columbia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 18.

Will G. Bealing, Shaftesbury, please reply whether he has received letters sent to him by E. Sargent, 29, Vernon Street, Basford, Nottingham.

E. Taylor, care of Hotel Brandon, Brandon, Manitoba, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England.

Miss A. Highet, 387, Tenth Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, wishes to correspond with a boy reader living in Scotland or Ireland, age 15-16.

Miss B. Barnes, 4a, Signington Avenue, West Toronto, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers living in England, age 15-16.

C. S. De Jouy Millne, Dominion Road, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a reader who is interested in horses and outdoor sports.

J. Blain, Fraser Avenue Post Office, South Vancouver, British Columbia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England or Scotland, age 17-18.

M. Thomas, 450, Thirteenth Street, N.W. Calgary, Alta. Canada, wishes to correspond with a reader living in New Zealand or South Africa interested in stamps.

P. S. Fitzgibbon, 2080, Esplanade Avenue, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 15-18.

F. Courtland, 337, Victor Street, Winnipeg, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps and postcards.

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J. Jarratt, 75, Regent Street, Wilton Avenue, Toronto, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers living in Newport, I.O.W., age 16-17.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Wednesday.

"HIDDEN TREASURE AT ST. JIM'S!"
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

This magnificent, extra-long, complete school tale of the chums of St. Jim's deals with the finding of an amazing document by Tom Merry, containing the clue to a hidden treasure of immense value.

Though at first hardly able to believe in their good luck, the juniors embark upon the treasure-hunt with a will. The chums of the New House, for reasons of their own, refuse to be drawn into the business; but Knox, the unpopular prefect, feels bound to have a finger in the pie, with results that are far from satisfactory to him, when the true facts about the

"HIDDEN TREASURE AT ST. JIM'S!"
come out!

AN INTERESTING QUESTION ANSWERED.

"Enfield."

"Dear Editor,—I am one of your staunch boy readers, though I am eighteen years old, and I want to put a straight question to you. I must say first, without wishing to boast, that I am rather good at football (Association), and have been told by some that I would be able to hold my own in a League team. Now, there is nothing I should like better than to be a professional footballer, so I want to ask you whether you know of any big football clubs who run 'nurseries' for training young fellows who wish to become 'pro's.' If not, how can I get taken on to play for a professional team? I know you will help me if you can, for I think the matter is an important one for me."

"SOCCER."

This is a query which is put to me in various forms a good many times in the course of each football season, so I am answering it in the Chat page instead of through the post, in the hope that what I say may be of assistance to any other of my chums who happen to be situated as "Soccer," of Enfield, is.

I am sorry to tell my chum that I do not know of any club which has a nursery for young players. The chief reason for this is the fact that the rules of the Football Association are very stringent, and this sort of thing is not countenanced by them.

The only way in which "Soccer" can enter the professional ranks is by joining some strong amateur club, and if his play warrants it he will soon find himself noticed by some club manager looking round for young talent. He may possibly in this way get an offer to sign on with one of the big professional clubs as a member of their team.

It seems, perhaps, rather strange that Association football, as it is now played, should have no parallel to the Colts' match which every county plays at the commencement of the cricket season.

In these matches, which are usually played under the auspices of the county club, any promising young cricket talent is tried in a team of twenty-two or less versus a poor eleven.

But football—at least, Association football—has nothing like this, and the only way my young friend can strengthen his chance of becoming a professional is by keeping on playing amateur football until his ability attracts the notice of some big club manager.

Replies in Brief.

Ray Cohen (Australia).—Your friend is quite right; the value of the stamps do vary.

Scout W. R. (Whitehaven).—Any newsagent will bind your "Gems" for you at a very moderate price.

"Staunch Gemite" and "Anti-Magnetite" (Australia).—I am sorry you do not care for our companion paper, "The Magnet" Library, but I can assure you that the majority of the Gemites hold exactly the opposite opinion to yours on this point. What do you think of our new companion paper, "The Penny Popular"?

C. A. Matthews (Surrey).—The great charm of an autograph book lies in the originality of the inscriptions therein. Why not make up a verse yourself?

A. Hughes (Warrington).—I am very sorry to say that your idea is far too complicated. I am afraid that my readers would find it too difficult to carry out.

"Two Girl Guides" (Birkenhead).—Very many thanks for your letter and sketches, which I will keep by me.

HOW TO BECOME A FIREMAN (L.C.C.).

Intending firemen should make personal application at the Head Fire Station, Southwark Bridge Road, London, S.E., at nine o'clock in the morning any day, with, of course, the exception of Sunday. A fireman must, on joining, be over twenty-one and under twenty-six. His measurement round the chest must not be less than twenty-seven inches, and his height at least five feet five inches in his socks. His character must be a good one, and he must be smart and active, and an educated man. Married men are only in special cases taken on.

A test is then set, being one that principally requires strength, and is followed by a medical examination. Certificates of birth, character, previous trades, services, etc., for at least four years must be shown. A man born in London has more chance than a countryman, and to be able to show good previous records of work is always a great advantage.

A man when first attached receives 24s. per week, and can rise to about 56s. per week, after having served for a while.

A fireman can rise to be a superintendent, when he is paid £245 per year. Firemen are provided with their uniform free of charge; and when a man has completed his service with the brigade, there are excellent arrangements whereby he can receive a pension, and also gratuities. Firemen out of London are paid slightly lower wages than in London County Council brigades, and all applications for such situations should be sent to the local stations.

(Next Week: How to Become a Gardener.)

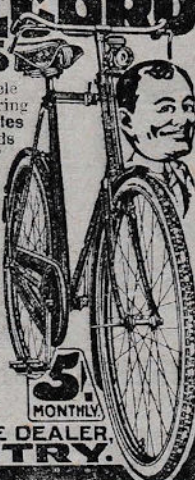
THE EDITOR.

WORLD'S RECORD 166,000 MILES

Mr. Revell, of Middleton, Suffolk, bought a cycle from me ten years ago, and writes:—"During most of the time I had it I rode over 400 miles a week. The total distance I and my friends covered was no less than 166,000 miles." This is the kind of cycle I sell. I supply **HIGH-GRADE CYCLES for £3 10s. cash** (Makers' Price, £6 6s.). Also **BEST QUALITY FINEST-GRADE CYCLES**, guaranteed for 12 years (Makers' Price £9 9s.), the same as supplied to Mr. Revell, for only 10/- deposit and 18 monthly instalments of 7/11. Brand new 1913 HUBBER, COVENTRY-CHALLENGE, QUADRANT, ROVER, SINGER, PROGRESS, PREMIER, SWIFT, etc., supplied from 5/- Monthly. Only a small deposit required before I dispatch a machine on ten days' approval. Money returned if not satisfied. Thousands of Testimonials. Write for Lists.

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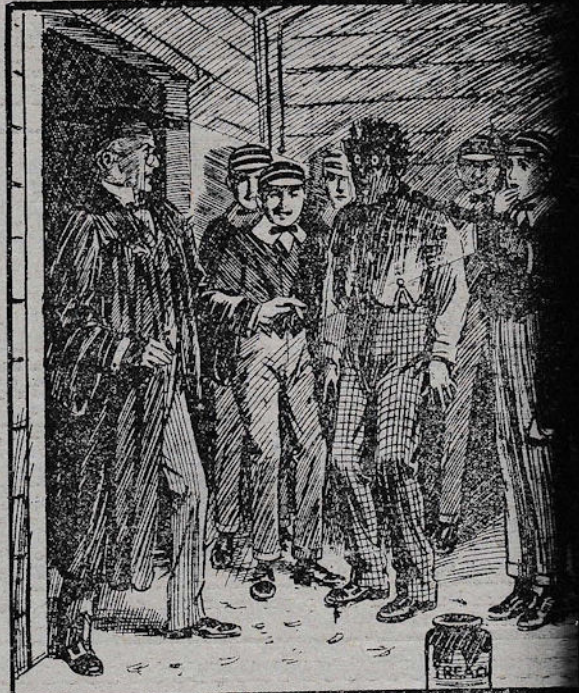
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