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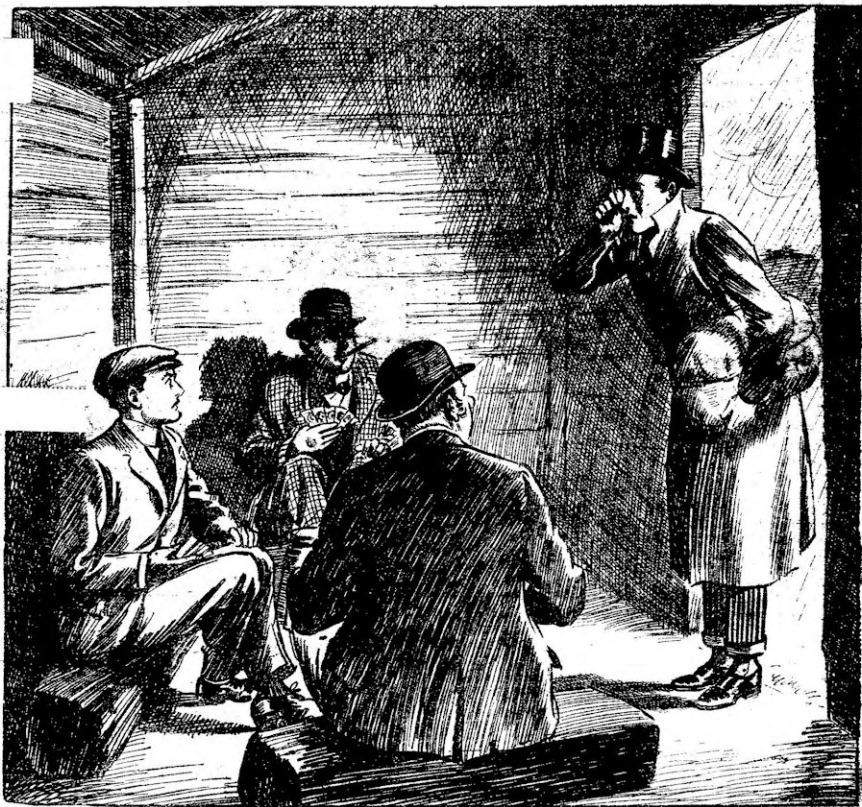


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LEVISON'S DOUBLE!

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By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



"Your call, Smith," said Banks, closing one eye to the junior in grey. "Righto." Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle more tightly into his eye, and regarded the youth in grey with very special attention. Was it Levison, or Levison's double? (See Chapter 4.)

CHAPTER I. Bagged at Last.

"LOOKS like trouble!" murmured Monty Low.
And Tom Merry and Manners responded simultaneously:
"What-ho!"
It did look like trouble—for somebody.
The Terrible Three were chatting in the hall of the

School House at St. Jim's with a group of juniors, when Kildare came in.

Outside it was a dark and blustery evening, and the wind was whistling through the old elms in the quadrangle. A gust of wind followed Kildare in, and brought an eddy of smoke from the fire. Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, banged the big door shut behind him, and looked round the lighted hall with a

frowning glance. Frowns were unusual on the handsome, good-natured face of the captain of St. Jim's, but he was looking very angry now. And his look evidently boded "trouble" for somebody.

"Has Levison come in?" he rapped out. He addressed nobody in particular. Tom Merry took it upon himself to reply. Evidently Levison of the Fourth was the object of Kildare's wrath.

"Haven't seen him, Kildare."
"Anythin' the mattah, dear boy?" ventured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form. "You are lookin' wathah watty."

Kildare's frown deepened.
"He hasn't come in. Well, when he does come in tell him he is to go to the Head's study at once."

"Bai Jove!"
"And tell him," added Kildare, "that I am going now to report him to Dr. Holmes, so he will know what to expect."

And Kildare strode away towards the Head's study.
"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Levison's lagged at last!"

Kildare left the crowd of juniors in the hall in a buzz behind him.

They heard the door of the Head's study open, and shut again. The captain of St. Jim's was with the Head now, making his report. The juniors had been talking football before Kildare came in. But they were talking football no longer. There was only one topic now—Levison of the Fourth, and the fact that Kildare had reported him to the Head.

"Lagged at last!" said Lowther.
"It was bound to come, deah boys!" said D'Arcy of the Fourth oracularly. "Weally, Levison could not expect anythin' else. But I wondah what he has been doin' for time!"

"Kildare's caught him, that's jolly clear," said Manners.

"And he looked awfully watty!"
"I guess Levison's number is up this time," remarked Lumley-Lumley. "It was bound to come."

"Yaas, wathah!"
That was the general view. Levison, the black sheep of the Fourth, had tempted Fate once too often, and now, as Blake put it, the chopper was coming down. And the juniors did not waste much sympathy on Levison. A fellow who smoked and played cards and broke bounds after lights out was bound to come a "mucker" sooner or later. In Levison's case it had been "later," for he had always shown a phenomenal cunning in extricating himself from scrapes, though he had had some narrow escapes. That Levison had been caught now in some rascality was evident, and the juniors were only curious to know what variety of rascality it might happen to be.

They waited with great curiosity for Levison to come in. It was getting near half-past nine, which was bedtime for the juniors. But the minutes passed, and the black sheep of the Fourth did not put in an appearance.

Kildare came back in about a quarter of an hour. He was still frowning.

"Hasn't Levison come in?" he demanded.
"No, Kildare."

"Pway what has happened, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We are weally on tentah-hooks, you know. I twust Levison has not been breakin' bounds."

"He has!" snapped Kildare. "I ran into him coming out of the Green Man. He dodged me in the lane coming home. I've suspected him for some time. I believe you fags know a good deal about it, too."

"Ahem!"
As a matter of fact, Tom Merry & Co. knew a very great deal about Levison's escapades. But it was not their business to give him away. It was Kildare's business, as head prefect of the School House, to "lag" him if he could, but it was the business of the juniors not to tell tales.

"Well!" snapped Kildare.
"Weally, Kildare, we have nothin' to say on that. THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 372.

subject. I should not think of statin' to a pwefect what I know concernin'— Yawoooooh! Oh, cwumbs!"

"Eh! What are ye yelpin' about, you young ass?"
"Wow! Some beast has twodden on my foot!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "The beast has twodden vewy hard!"

"What did you stamp on D'Arcy's foot for, Blake?" demanded Kildare.

"Did I?" murmured Blake.
"Yes, you did!"

"Well, I—I—I—ahem!"
"You feafuhl ass, Blake, I was not goin' to say anythin' about—" Arthur Augustus broke off with a gasp. "Talbot, you ass, what are you dwivin' your silly elbow into my wibs for?"

"Did I?" murmured Talbot.
"Yaas, you ass! I considah—"

Kildare looked at the juniors frowningly, and went to the door and opened it, and glanced into the quadrangle. But there was no sign of the missing Fourth-Former there. The captain of St. Jim's banged the door, grunted, and went to his study. The group of juniors broke up, still discussing Levison of the Fourth. The Terrible Three made their way up to their study.

"Levison's done it this time," Monty Lowther remarked. "Fairly caught in the act. This time he won't be able to wriggle out of it."

"No jolly fair!" said Manners. "If Kildare actually caught him—"

"It's rotten," said Talbot of the Shell, with a troubled look. "Levison is rather a blackguard, but he's got his good points."

"They want some findin'!" growled Manners.
"He has done me a good turn," said Talbot quietly. "I can't forget that. I hope he'll get out of this all right."

Tom Merry shook his head.
"He can't get out of it. He's jolly deep, but he can't make up a yarn this time. You see, he's been fairly caught in the act. I—why— My only hat!"

Tom Merry halted in blank astonishment.
The chums of the Shell were passing Levison's study in the Fourth-Form passage to get to their own quarters.

The study door was open, and a junior was seated at the table, writing lines.

The Shell fellows stared at him blankly.
For it was Levison of the Fourth.

He seemed to be very busy upon his lines, for he did not look up as the startled Shell fellows stared into the study.

"Levison!" gasped Tom Merry.
"Levison, by gum!"
"Then he's not out!"

The Fourth-Former glanced up carelessly.
"Hallo!" he said. "Do you want anything? I'm sorry I can't stop. I've got to hand in these lines to old Schneider before bedtime, and it's getting close on."

"How did you get in?" demanded Tom Merry.
"Eh!"

"We didn't see you come in!" exclaimed Talbot.
Levison stared.

"Nothing surprising in that," he said. "You could hardly see me come in when I haven't been out."

"You—you haven't been out."
"No!"

"Look here, what's the little game?" said Lowther suspiciously. "We know jolly well you've been out, or Kildare couldn't have caught you out of bounds."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Levison.
"But Kildare says he caught you!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He came in about twenty minutes ago, and said—"

"That he'd caught you coming out of the Green Man," said Talbot.

"And he's reported you to the Head!" added Manners. "And you're to go to the Head's study at once," went Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"What are you cackling at?" demanded the Shell fellows altogether.

"Your little joke!" said Levison. "I don't quite see

the joke, but I thought you expected me to laugh. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass——"

"Thanks!"

"But you've got to go to the Head!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Oh, chuck it," said Levison testily. "A joke's a joke, but don't keep it up when a fellow's doing lines. I've been nearly an hour over this blessed German already."

"But Kildare says——"

"Oh, rats!"

"He caught you——"

"Don't let's have it all over again," urged Levison. "I know you're trying to pull my leg, but I'm not taking any. You could get an ass like Skimpole to go to the Head's study for nothing, but you can't work that on me."

"But Kildare said——" roared Tom Merry.

"Bow-wow!"

"I tell you——"

"You don't mind if I go on with my lines while you're being funny?" asked Levison politely. "Old Schneider will be in a wax if they're not handed in to-night. I wish they'd intern him with the other blessed Bosches. But until they do, I've got to do my impot—see?"

And Levison bent over his task again, writing German with amazing rapidity, and declining to answer any further remarks from the Shell fellows.

CHAPTER 2.

The Benefit of the Doubt.

A CROWD of fellows gathered in the passage outside Levison's study.

There was a buzz of amazed voices.

The discovery that the black sheep of the Fourth was not out of doors at all, but in his study writing lines, astounded the juniors.

Of course, it was possible that Levison, after "dodging" Kildare in the lane, had "sneaked" into the passage by some back way, and ensconced himself in his study. But the juniors could not see his reason for so doing. He had to go to the Head all the same and face the music.

The crowd thickened outside the study, and fellows squeezed and shoved for room, to stare at the unperturbed Fourth-Former. Levison went on grinding out lines with perfect self-possession. For a fellow who was in imminent danger of the "sack," he was certainly remarkably cool and composed.

"Bai Jove, this weally beats the band!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he fixed his eyeglass on Levison. "Is it poss, deah boys, that Kildare made a mistake?"

"Bosh!" said Blake. "He knows Levison well enough, I suppose."

"How did you get in, Levison?"

"Why don't you go to the Head? Kildare will come for you if you don't."

Levison yawned, and laid down his pen.

"Done!" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah—you are done this time, Levison!"

"I mean, my lines are done," said Levison. He looked at his watch. "Twenty past nine! Just time to dodge them in to Schneider before I go to bye-bye."

"You've done those lines jolly quickly," said Digby. "You can't have been indoors half an hour."

"Eh? I've been doing lines for the last hour," said Levison.

"Then how did Kildare——"

"Oh, don't you begin," yawned Levison. "I've had that from those Shell bounders already. Is this a rag?"

"Weally, Levison——"

"Oh, keep it up," said Levison, rising from the table and collecting up his lines. "I'm off to see Schneider."

And Levison, with perfect coolness, left the study, and proceeded along the passage with his imposition in his hand. The juniors stared after him blankly.

"Well, this beats it!" said Tom Merry. "He must

know he's going to get a flogging, and very — the sack."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a dodge to prove an alibi," said Blake. "But it won't work—if Kildare saw him in the village. Levison's an ass!"

"He isn't an ass, whatever he is," remarked Tom Merry drily. "I suppose this is some deep game, though I'm blessed if I can make it out."

The crowd of juniors followed Levison downstairs. As he proceeded to Herr Schneider's study, Kildare met him. The captain of St. Jim's stopped him at once.

"So you've come in at last, Levison!" he exclaimed, with a dark frown.

"You, too!" ejaculated Levison.

"What do you mean?"

"I thought it was a joke of those fellows," explained Levison. "They're been pitching me a yarn. I haven't been out this evening."

"What!"

"Do you mind if I go to Herr Schneider now?" asked Levison. "He ordered me to bring him these lines before half-past nine. I've been slogging away at them for an hour, and he will double them——"

"How dare you tell me such barefaced falsehoods, Levison?" exclaimed Kildare, his voice trembling with anger. "An hour ago you were in Rylcombe."

"I suppose I mustn't contradict a prefect," said Levison; "but, really, Kildare, how could I have been in Rylcombe? I haven't a pass out of gates."

"You have broken bounds."

Levison shook his head.

"Whoever told you that was pulling your leg, Kildare."

Kildare made a threatening gesture.

"You know that I caught you myself, you lying young rascal!"

Levison looked astonished.

"You caught me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Where?" demanded Levison.

"Coming out of the Green Man."

"My only hat."

"You cannot mean to deny it?" almost shouted Kildare.

"Certainly I do," said Levison promptly. "I say, Kildare, it's rather misty this evening, and you may have taken somebody else for me."

"I won't bandy words with you," said the captain of St. Jim's grimly. "I know you to be a liar, Levison, but I never expected this. But it won't be much use to you. Come with me to the Head at once."

"Mayn't I take in my lines to Herr Schneider?" asked Levison meekly.

"Come with me at once!"

"Oh, all right."

Levison accompanied the captain of St. Jim's. He had no option, for Kildare's grasp was already on his collar. Tom Merry & Co. looked on with growing wonder. If Levison was guilty, he was displaying an extraordinary coolness. Was it possible that Kildare had made a mistake in the misty evening?

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus suddenly. "Pewwaps——" he broke off.

"Perhaps what, ass?" asked Blake.

"You wemembah what happened to Tom Mewwy once?"

"What happened to me?" said Tom Merry. "Well, what was it?"

"You wemembah, deah boy, you were suspected of pub-hauntin', and things like that, because there was a chap just like you hagin' around—your double, you know. Even I was taken in, so it is not surprisin' that the othah fellows were," said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps Levison has a double, too."

"Rats!"

"Piffle!"

"Bosh!"

"Weally, deah boys," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, rather taken aback by that uncomplimentary reception of his suggestion, "it is not at all impos. If Tom Mewwy has a double, why should not Levison have a

"double? It is said that every chap has his double, you know, if he could find him."

"Rubbish!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Lightning never strikes twice in the same place," said Blake. "The same things don't happen twice over. Bosh! Also piffle! Likewise rats!"

The door of the Head's study had closed on Levison. The juniors, intensely curious to know how the strange affair would turn out, waited for the black sheep of the Fourth to come out again. They were pretty certain that he would come out under sentence of a flogging or the "sack." And only Arthur Augustus considered it possible that Levison of the Fourth, like Tom Merry of the Shell, had a "double." That theory was really a little too "thick" for anyone but Arthur Augustus.

Dr. Holmes fixed a stern look upon Levison as Kildare brought him in. The prefect's report had deeply angered the Head, and his expression showed what the culprit had to expect. But Ernest Levison did not look nervous. He was quite cool and self-possessed as he faced the frowning headmaster.

"You are aware of what Kildare has reported to me, Levison?" said Dr. Holmes, in a deep voice that resembled the rumble of distant thunder.

"Kildare has just told me something about it, sir," said Levison. "I was not aware of it before that."

"What!" ejaculated the Head. "I do not understand you, Levison. You have broken bounds this evening, and you have visited a place that all boys of this school are strictly debarred from visiting—a low public-house in Rylcombe."

"I know Kildare says so," replied Levison.

Kildare flushed crimson.

"You young rascal," he began, "do you dare—"
"Leave this boy to me, Kildare," said the Head. "I am not likely to take his word against yours, especially knowing his general character as I do. I know from your Housemaster, Levison, that you are an untruthful boy."

"I am telling the truth, sir. I don't mean to say that Kildare isn't. We all know that Kildare wouldn't tell a lie. But I say that he has made a mistake."

"I did not make a mistake, sir," said Kildare. "I found Levison leaving the Green Man by the side-gate. I collared him there, and brought him back with me—but he dodged me in the lane."

"What do you say now, Levison?"

"I say that I have not been out of gates this evening, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"In my study, sir. Herr Schneider gave me two hundred lines this afternoon, and I have been writing them out this evening. I have them here," said Levison. "I was taking them to Herr Schneider when Kildare collared me in the passage."

The Head looked perplexed.

"Kildare collared somebody at the Green Man. I suppose, sir," said Levison. "We all know that Kildare wouldn't say this unless he believed it. But he must have made a mistake."

"Do you think I don't know you by sight?" exclaimed Kildare angrily.

"It may be somebody like me that you saw," suggested Levison. "You may remember that once, not so long ago, Tom Merry got into trouble, because a fellow just like him was seen doing things of this sort. Tom Merry very nearly got the sack over it. But it turned out a case of mistaken identity."

"That is true," said the Head slowly.

Kildare started.

"Yes, that is true," he said. "But—but it's too thick. I don't believe anything of the sort in your case, Levison."

Levison shrugged his shoulders. He saw that he had made an impression on the Head, and that was what he was chiefly concerned about. Remembering the case of Tom Merry and his double, the kind old Head naturally hesitated at the thought of committing such an injustice as had very nearly been committed in Tom's case.

"This fellow you collared, Kildare," said the junior.

"Did you speak to him by name?—I mean, did you address him as Levison?"

"You know I did."

"I don't know. And what did he say? If it was somebody else, I should think that you would tell you that his name wasn't Levison."

The Head looked inquiringly at Levison, who looked angry and uncomfortable.

"In what way did the boy address you, Kildare?" asked the doctor.

"He cheeked me, sir," said Kildare. "He said he didn't know me, and that I had no right to give him orders, and that his name wasn't Levison, but Smith. Of course, I took no notice of that and made him come with me."

Levison laughed slightly.

"It's a pity that you didn't bring him to the school," he remarked. "You would have found me writing lines in my study."

"I don't believe it for a moment," said Kildare. "You got away from me in the lane, and I thought you would come in later. But I suppose you really ran all the way home, sneaked in somewhere and got into your study."

"I can prove that I've been in my study a long time, sir," said Levison. "A lot of the fellows saw me there."

"That would certainly prove the matter in your favour, Levison," said the Head. "At what time did you see Levison in Rylcombe, as you have said, Kildare?"

"Half-past eight, sir."

"Can you prove that you were in the house at that time, Levison?"

Levison appeared to reflect deeply.

"Well, sir, I know I was in my study, writing lines. I don't know at exactly what time Tom Merry and the rest came in to speak to me. But it was a good time ago."

"Call Merry here, Kildare."

Kildare left the study, and returned in a couple of minutes with the captain of the Shell.

"Merry," said the Head, "Levison declares that you saw him in his study some time ago, at a time when Kildare believed him to be out of doors. Is that correct?"

"It seems so, sir," said Tom. "We found Levison in his study doing lines, after Kildare asked us about him. He certainly wasn't out of doors when Kildare came in."

"But it was after Kildare came in that you saw him in his study?"

"Yes, sir."

"Exactly," said Kildare. "He must have run home fast, and got here before me, sneaked in the back way, and got into his study."

"I certainly did not," said Levison. "Tom Merry will tell you that I was finishing my lines when he came into my study. I've done the two hundred in German. Did I look as if I had just come in when you saw me, Tom Merry?"

"No," said Tom.

Dr. Holmes looked worried.

"Have you ever heard, Merry, of a boy in this neighbourhood who bears a resemblance to Levison, and might be mistaken for him?"

"Never, sir. But it happened in my own case, as you will remember, sir," added Tom.

"I am aware of that," said the Head. "I am very anxious that an injustice shall not be done. If Kildare's charge shall prove to be well founded, I shall expel Levison from the school."

"Just as Tom Merry was nearly expelled, sir," said Levison. "It was only by chance that it was found out to be a case of mistaken identity."

"You, Kildare, are quite certain—that it was Levison?"

"I can only say that the boy was exactly like Levison, sir," said Kildare.

"Was he wearing St. Jim's clothes?" asked Levison.

"No; he was in a grey lounge-suit, and wore an ordinary cap," said Kildare. "But, of course, you would change your clothes after getting in."



A flying pedal caught Digby on the shirt, and he hopped and roared—and Manners was bumped over, and fell. But Tom Merry and Monty Lowther both had their hands on the rider, and in spite of his fierce-effort, he could not break away. (See Chapter 18.)

Levison laughed again.

"I hadn't much time," he remarked. "You say I dodged you in the lane, and I suppose you came straight home. I had to get in ahead of you, change my clothes, and get into my study somehow—all before you arrived here. If you think about it a bit, you'll see that it couldn't be done."

"It would be difficult," said the Head. "Levison, have you a suit of grey clothes in your possession?"

"No, sir."

"I will question the House-dame on that point," said the Head. "It it proves that Levison is not known to possess such clothes, Kildare, I think Levison must be given the benefit of the doubt."

"Of course, sir, it is as you think best," said Kildare, hesitating. "I did not believe for a moment that it was not Levison. But I should be very sorry indeed if I caused any injustice to be done."

"Quite so. You may go, Levison. If your statement about your clothes should prove to be correct, I shall hold you exonerated."

"Thank you, sir."

Levison quitted the study with Tom Merry. There was a buzz of questioning from the juniors waiting in the passage; but Levison hurried away at once to Herr Schneider's study to deliver his lines. Then it was bed-

time, and the juniors were shepherded off to the dormitories.

CHAPTER 3. Levison's Diary.

LEVISON was the cynosure of all eyes in the Fourth-Form dormitory.

He hardly seemed to notice it.

He sat on his bed, and proceeded to take his boots off with perfect calmness. His chum Mellish was regarding him oddly. Percy Mellish did not believe for a moment that Levison had been in his study at the time the captain of St. Jim's supposed that he had seen him in the village. But the other fellows were in a state of doubt and perplexity. Evidently Levison had escaped from his scrape. But whether he was innocent, or whether he had lied himself out of it in his well-known way, was a puzzle.

"How on earth did you fool the Head, Levison?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

Levison yawned.

"I didn't fool him," he said. "It turned out to be a case of mistaken identity—same as happened to Tom Merry once."

"Bow-wow!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I considah that we ought to take Levison's word," said Arthur Augustus. "It happened in Tom Mewwy's case—"

"That's what put it into Levison's head," said Blake sceptically.

"Bai Jove!" The simple Arthur Augustus had not thought of that obvious theory. "Bai Jove! Have you been pullin' our leg, Levison?"

"I guess there wasn't any mistaken identity," said Lumley-Lumley. "Anyway, we all know that Levison does go to the Green Man sometimes."

"You used to go with me," said Levison, with a sneer.

Lumley-Lumley coloured. He could not deny that. "Well, it's a jolly long time since I've done anything of the sort," he said.

"Same with me," said Levison.

"Oh, rats!"

"Faith, and do you mean to say that you've got a double, like Tom Merry, Levison?" asked Reilly.

"I don't say anything of the sort," said Levison.

"It's Kildare who says so. He told the Head that he collared a kid at the Green Man, who looked like me. The kid told him he didn't know him, and that his name was Smith. Kildare marched him off, all the same, and the kid dodged him and scooted for it. No wonder! He didn't want to be marched up to a school he didn't belong to. He wasn't even in St. Jim's clothes. Kildare says he was wearing a grey lounge-suit. All you fellows know that I haven't any grey clothes."

"Bai Jove! That settles it."

Mellish gave a chuckle. "Well, what are you cackling at, Mellish?" demanded Levison fiercely.

"Oh, nothing!" said Mellish hastily.

"Do you know whether Levison has any grey clothes, Mellish?" asked Herries.

"Oh, no!" said Mellish. "In fact, I know he hasn't."

"You all know I haven't," said Levison. "Of course, it's a case of mistaken identity. If it were anybody but Kildare, I should say it was a case of a thundering lie. But we all know that Kildare is quite straight."

"Thank you, Levison!" said Kildare's voice in the doorway, as the captain of St. Jim's came in to see lights out.

Levison looked round quickly.

"No offence, Kildare. I wasn't saying anything against you."

"Quite so! Turn in!"

The Fourth-Formers turned in, and Kildare put out the lights and retired. But there was a buzz of talk in the dormitory after lights out. That strange case of mistaken identity interested the juniors very much. Whether Levison really had a double, or whether he had cunningly invented a double to get himself out of a scrape, was a deep mystery. Certainly it was a remarkable coincidence, if the double really existed.

There was no doubt that Tom Merry had had a double, and that the double had been a fellow of rascally character, whose iniquitous proceedings had caused the captain of the Shell serious trouble. But it would be a remarkable coincidence indeed if Levison of the Fourth had a double, too—who also had come to Rylcombe, and who also was a fellow of blackguardly character. Some of the juniors thought that coincidence a little too steep to be believed in. What had happened once was not likely to happen again—but, on the other hand, what had happened was evidently possible, and so might certainly happen again. If Levison was playing a part, he was playing it very well—and many of the juniors, like the Head, gave him the benefit of the doubt.

The next morning Levison of the Fourth found himself the object of general attention in the School House. It did not seem to disturb him.

In fact, the black sheep of the Fourth seemed rather to enjoy the unaccustomed limelight.

At breakfast all the fellows looked round from their tables at Levison, as he sat with the Fourth. When he came into the Form-room, little Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, blinked at him curiously through his spectacles. Piggins & Co. of the New House, who had

"Well," snapped Kildare, "I have nothin' to

heard the story by this time, regarded him with great interest. Piggins & Co., who knew Levison very well, would not believe for a moment the story of the double. But Levison was quite indifferent to their opinion. So long as the Head gave him the benefit of the doubt that was all he wanted.

But the Head, though anxious not to commit an injustice, took every possible step to ascertain the truth. But no discovery could be made to Levison's disadvantage. The School House dame, Mrs. Mimms, of course, knew all about the clothes of the juniors, but to her knowledge, at least, Levison did not possess such a light-grey suit as Kildare described. Levison's box and his study were searched but nothing came to light to discredit him—neither cigarettes, nor cards, nor anything of the kind. Which was a marvel to his Form-fellows when they heard of it, and showed pretty plainly that Levison had foreseen that search and prepared for it carefully. For whether Kildare had spotted him at the Green Man or not, a good many of the fellows knew that he kept cards and cigarettes in his study, and that pink sporting papers were not unknown there.

But the black sheep of the Fourth was not to be caught napping; and the search, which was carried out by Toby the page, under the eyes of the Housemaster, revealed nothing. Or, rather, it revealed nothing to Levison's discredit—for the Housemaster made one or two discoveries of a quite contrary nature. In Levison's box was found a diary, with such entries as "Yesterday I was careless with my lessons; I must be more careful"—and "Mr. Carrington is a very just Housemaster; I like him better than Mr. Railton, though he was very kind"—and "This morning I was tempted to tell a lie, but I thought of Washington, and told the truth."

Nobody would ever have suspected Levison of keeping a diary like that; and the Housemaster naturally did not guess that Levison had foreseen the search, and prepared those interesting discoveries for him.

Mr. Carrington took the diary to the Head, who put on his glasses, and read over some of the entries with considerable surprise.

"Feb. 1: I spoke angrily to Wally D'Arcy this morning. I am sorry now, and I must make it a point to beg his pardon."

"Feb. 2: To-day a bad boy offered me a cigarette. I was tempted to smoke it, because I have never smoked in my life and was curious to know what it is like. But I am glad to be able to write in my diary that I resisted this temptation."

"Feb. 3: This day I have done a good deed."

"Feb. 4: To-day I have written to my dear father, to inquire after his gout. I must always be careful not to forget my dear parents while I am away from them. Only a very selfish boy would be ungrateful to his dear father."

"Feb. 5: To-day my Form-master spoke harshly to me. But I feel that I deserved it, and I will try to be better."

"Feb. 6: To-day I have sent my pocket-money to the Belgian Fund. I shall have no money for a whole week now, but I feel I have only done my duty."

"Feb. 7, Sunday: To-day Dr. Holmes preached to us, and I was moved to tears. I was afraid the others would see me crying, as I fear they would have made fun of me. How happy we are to have such a headmaster as Dr. Holmes!"

The Head read these precious entries with growing perplexity, and looked at Mr. Carrington, who seemed equally perplexed.

"This is very surprising," said Dr. Holmes. "I did not know that Levison was of this sort of boy. He has been convicted of untruthfulness, and suspected of blackguardly habits. Yet his diary would show that he is—ahem!—a most unpleasant little prig."

"Certainly it is very surprising, sir. Though I have not been long at school, I have observed Levison, and was far from supposing that he was the kind of boy to keep a diary like this. But I suppose it may be taken as evidence that Kildare's suspicion of him is unfounded."

"It would certainly seem so," said the Head. The Head glanced further through the diary, and was more and more puzzled. If Levison was, as his diary

say on the "THE PENNY POPULAR"

hunted, a "goodr-goody" prig, certainly he was not the kind of fellow to pay visits to the Green Man. The well-written of that diary might have been expected to hold up his hands in horror at the bare thought of such an escapade.

After lessons, Levison went to his box, and found his diary there. He was not told that it had been examined. But he knew that it had been, because he had left several pieces of cotton between the leaves, which had, of course, fallen out unnoticed when the book was opened and examined. Levison noted their absence and chuckled. Mellish looked into the dormitory and found him chuckling over the diary.

"What's the joke?" asked Mellish.

"Shut the door and look at this."

Mellish shut the door, and then scanned the diary. He opened his eyes wide.

"Whose is that?" he inquired.

"Mine!"

"Oh, my hat! What have you written that rubbish for?"

"For Carrington," grinned Levison. "I knew he'd be nosing among my things, looking for cigarettes and so on. This is what he found."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mellish.

Levison took out a fountain-pen, and proceeded to make a new entry in the diary. Percy Mellish watched him or with great interest.

"Yesterday I was unjustly suspected of visiting a dreadful public-house called the Green Man. Kildare, whom I respect highly, though he does not like me, made a dreadful mistake, taking some abandoned youth for me in the dark. I am very, very sorry for that wretched boy whom Kildare mistook for me, and I shall try to find him out and speak a word of warning to him. But for the great sense of justice of our kind headmaster, Kildare's mistake might have been very serious for me. N.B.—I must remember never to judge others harshly on mere appearances."

"My only hat!" gasped Mellish.

"How's that for high?" murmured Levison. "Next

Carrington comes nosing in my box, he can read

it, ha!"

Levison put his diary away with a chuckle. He was quite prepared for another search.

CHAPTER 4.

Levison or His Double?

"GWEAT SCOTT!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that exclamation quite suddenly.

That afternoon was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and for once Arthur Augustus had left the regular football-match to the tender mercies of Tom Merry & Co.—though with some inward misgivings as to the result. Arthur Augustus had been busy that afternoon. The swell of St. Jim's was a member of the "Lonely Soldiers' Guild," and he had been over to Wayland Town to do some shopping, and to despatch his purchases in a big parcel to the front. As Arthur Augustus was in funds, the parcel was a real "whacker," and as he started for home, Arthur Augustus reflected with satisfaction upon the pleasure it would cause when it arrived in the trenches in Flanders.

Then it came on to rain, and Arthur Augustus's satisfaction was diminished. He had his coat on, fortunately, so his elegant "clobber" was quite safe; but he hadn't his umbrella, so his shining topper was exposed to the fury of the elements. And Arthur Augustus promptly looked round for shelter.

He was taking a short cut home across a corner of Wayland Moor. He remembered the old shepherd's hut on the moor—the spot where Talbot of the Shell had encountered a German spy, as he remembered. And he promptly left the footpath, and hurried on in search of that hut. He reached it in a few minutes, and as he entered the dilapidated little building, he uttered that surprised exclamation, and stopped dead on the threshold.

The shepherd's hut was not unoccupied. There were three persons in the hut, seated on broken old beams

round an upturned bucket which served the purpose of a card-table. One of them was a fat, red-faced man, whom Arthur Augustus recognised as Mr. Banks the bookmaker. Another was a dingy-looking young man with watery eyes and flabby features, and a general air of dilapidation which comes of late hours, late rising, and too much stimulating liquor. D'Arcy had seen him before—he was employed in Wayland, and was a local "nut." His name was Stubbs, and he honoured a local estate-agent's office with his valuable services. But it was the third of the trio upon whom the astonished eyes of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were fixed.

That individual was a lad of his own age, dressed in light grey clothes, and wearing a cloth cap with no distinctive badge on it. But the face was perfectly well known to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Levison, bai Jove!"

The three card-players looked up.

"Your call, Smith," said Mr. Banks, closing one eye to the junior in grey.

"Right-ho!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle more tightly into his eye, and regarded the youth in grey with very special attention.

Was it Levison, or Levison's double?

The features were exactly Levison's, there was no doubt about that; and Ernest Levison had strongly-marked features that were not easily mistaken. His nose was a little prominent, and inclined to be aquiline. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could almost have sworn to that nose.

The youth looked a little stouter than Levison, that was all. Yes, now that D'Arcy observed him closely, he did look stouter than the black sheep of the Fourth—of a thicker build altogether.

But the resemblance was so remarkable that Arthur Augustus was not satisfied. But for the story of Levison's double, he would have been certain at once that this was Levison. But he remembered that that mysterious double had given his name to Kildare as Smith. And Mr. Banks had just addressed this youth in grey as Smith. And certainly Mr. Banks should have known the real Levison—they were very old acquaintances.

The three card-players, after a stare at Arthur Augustus, went on with their game quite regardless of his presence.

Arthur Augustus stood and watched them.

The trio were playing nap, and Levison, or Levison's double, whichever it was, seemed to be having a run of luck. He was bagging sixpences and shillings at a great rate, and Mr. Stubbs was looking very morose.

The greedy glitter in the junior's dark-brown eyes was very familiar, as he raked in the coins, and Arthur Augustus's doubts were dispelled.

"Bai Jove! It is you, Levison!" he exclaimed.

"Your deal, Smith," said Mr. Banks.

The junior in grey took the cards, and shuffled them.

"Levison, you wottah!"

The junior looked up, still shuffling the cards

"Hallo! Who are you?" he asked.

"Bai Jove! I know your voice, too, Levison. You

are perfectly well awah who I am."

"Don't know you from Adam," said the junior.

"You're something like the dummy in Mr. Wigg's

window in Rycombe."

"You uttah wottah—"

"You're the second silly idiot that's taken me for somebody called Levison," went on the junior. "I'm getting fed up with it. Who is this Levison, anyway?"

"You are Levison."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"You have probably changed your clothes outside the school," said Arthur Augustus.

The junior laughed.

"Yes, this is ripping weather for changing one's clothes out of doors," he remarked.

"Lam quite suah that you are Levison."

"Don't jaw then; you're interrupting the game."

"You would be sacked, Levison, if a mastah or a pwa-fect found you gamblin' in that disgustin' mannaah."

"Bow-wow!"

"Look 'ere," said Mr. Banks, looking round. "You wasn't asked to come in 'ere, Master D'Arcy—"

"I came in out of the wain." "Well, if you can't keep your 'ead shut, you'll go out into the rain again," said Mr. Banks. "Mind your own business, and don't worry my friend Smith."

"His name is not Smith, you boundah. He is Levison of the Fourth."

"Which he is something like Master Levison," admitted Mr. Banks, with a grin. "I noticed it myself. I used to know Master Levison, afore he turned his back on his old pals. But this 'ere young gentleman is 'Ebert Smith."

"Wats!" "Oh, get on with the game!" said Mr. Stubbs. "Never mind that tailor's dummy."

"Well, let 'im keep his 'ead shut," growled Mr. Banks. "He ain't wanted 'ere!"

"I refuse to keep my head shut. I will not stand by and see a St. Jim's fellow disgwain' himself in this mannah," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Levison, I appeal to you to chuck it, and come back to the coll with me."

"Oh, buzz off!" "If you refuse, Levison, I shall take you by the scowf of the neck."

"Rats!" "I refuse to allow these disgustin' pwoceedings to pwoceed," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as my duty to intahfeah. At one time, Levison, I had hopes that you had chucked up this wotten conduct. It is a vewy gweat shock to me to find that you are still a wewottin' blackguard."

"Is that chap woot up?" asked the junior. "Sounds like it," snorted Mr. Banks. "I know that if he ain't run down pretty soon he'll be run out of 'ere on his blooming neck!"

"I should refuse to be wun out of heah on my neck, Mr. Banks. I am goin' to do my duty, and if you chip in I shall stwike you. Are you comin', Levison?"

"Bow-wow!" "For the last time, you wottah!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Arthur Augustus did shut up then. He proceeded from words to deeds. He advanced upon the card-players, and seized the junior who so resembled Levison by the back of his collar, and dragged him from the beam he was seated on.

"Leggo!" roared the junior. "Wats! You've got to come."

The junior kicked out frantically as he was dragged backwards. The upturned pail was kicked over, and the cards went scattering in all directions. With a snort of wrath Mr. Banks leaped to his feet, and Mr. Stubbs followed his example. The junior in grey was struggling with Arthur Augustus, and the two men promptly went to his aid. Three pairs of hands grasped Arthur Augustus at the same moment.

"Kick 'im hout!" roared Mr. Banks. "Outside, you cheeky sweep!"

"Bai Jove! Welceme me! Fair play, you wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he was propelled violently towards the door. "I will thwash you all one aftah another! Oh, cwumps! Gweat Scott! Yawoooh!"

"Bump! Splash!"

Right through the doorway the elegant form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went hurtling, and he landed in a puddle.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Mr. Banks, as D'Arcy rolled in the rain and mud.

"Oh, cwikey!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

Arthur Augustus leaped up like a jack-in-the-box. For once he forgot his clothes. He charged back into the doorway of the hut like an infuriated rhinoceros. But there were three against him, and he had no chance.

Promptly he was collared again and hurled forth, and again he reposed in the puddle.

This time he lay gasping for breath, and the three gamblers returned to their game, chuckling.

CHAPTER 5. Levison at Home.

"H, cwumps!"

Arthur Augustus sat up dazedly. He had been pommelled pretty severely, and hurled forth, with a heavy bump, and he was dizzy and breathless. But he realised that he was sitting in two inches of water and an inch of mud, and he scrambled to his feet.

He cast a dismayed glance down at his coat and trousers. They were simply smothered with mud. And his elegant topper had sailed away, and was reposing in another puddle. Arthur Augustus collected it up sorrowfully, and shook some of the wet mud from it. He did not charge into the hut again. The swell of St. Jim's was as brave as a lion, but he realised that he had no chance against three at a time.

The rain was still falling, and Arthur Augustus took shelter under a tree near the hut.

"The uttah wottah!" he muttered to himself, as he wiped his muddy topper with his handkerchief. "The feahful pweawicataah. I will not lose sight of him. I am quite suah that it is Levison, and I will make the wottah own up. I will shadow the disgustin' wottah back to St. Jim's, and then give him a feahful thwashin' for twyin' to deceive me!"

And Arthur Augustus placed the tree between himself and the door of the hut, and remained on the watch.

He had a long time to wait.

It was a good hour before the three rascals came out of the shepherd's hut. When they appeared in the doorway, Arthur Augustus flattened himself behind the tree.

Mr. Banks and Mr. Stubbs started off by the footpath towards Wayland, and Arthur Augustus had a view of their backs as they disappeared over the heath.

The junior in grey remained standing for some minutes in the doorway of the old hut, looking about him. Arthur Augustus heard him chuckle.

"Two quids! Two quidlets for little me! Stubby was looking as if life wasn't worth living. Ha, ha, ha."

"The wottah! He's been winnin' money!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

There was a sound of squelching footsteps in the mud, and from behind the big tree Arthur Augustus saw the junior in grey walking away. He was not going towards Wayland like his companions. His path took him across the wet moor, towards the wood, through which a footpath led to the lane near St. Jim's. The direction he was taking was another proof that he was really Levison.

Arthur Augustus looked after him, and hesitated. To prove that the fellow was Levison, he had only to follow him, see him change his clothes, and see him down as far as the school.

But the idea of following anybody and watching him was very repugnant to the mind of the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

But he remembered how Levison had deceived the Head, how he had tried to deceive all the fellows—and he banished his scruples.

He was justified in shadowing the cad of the Fourth in order to prove his deception. Of course, he had no intention of "sneaking" on the subject. But for the satisfaction of himself and his friends it was necessary that Levison's trick should be revealed. Under cover of his supposed "double" Levison of the Fourth was playing the blackguard, and taking risks that would only end ultimately in disaster. A ragging from his fellows would be an excellent thing for him, if he was bowled out; and once it was established that he had no double, he would not be able to tell that the hood again.

So Arthur Augustus came cautiously out from behind the tree, and followed upon the track of the fellow in grey.

The rain was still drizzling, but D'Arcy hardly noticed it in his eagerness and excitement.

The junior in grey did not look back.

If it was Levison, he seemed to be unusually simple and unsuspicious. Levison of the Fourth might have been expected to be very wary, and to keep his eyes very wide open.

But the fellow in grey was not on his guard at all, evidently, for he did not glance back once, and did not even hear, apparently, the occasional squelch of the amateur detective's boots in the puddles on the moor.

About twenty yards ahead of the swell of St. Jim's, he entered the footpath through the wood and disappeared among the trees.

Arthur Augustus broke into a run.

He was quite sure that the junior in grey did not suspect that he was shadowed. But if Levison "scouted" through the wood the track would be lost.

D'Arcy ran in among the trees.

It was a narrow footpath, a mere track winding among the trees, still almost leafless, but some of them showing the first green of spring.

The junior in grey had vanished.

Arthur Augustus ran down the footpath at the risk of overtaking the shadowed junior and putting him on his guard.

But the junior was gone.

Evidently he had taken to the trees on one side or other of the footpath, and the thickets and brambles hid him from sight.

Arthur Augustus halted, breathing hard.

He had shadowed the young rascal so carefully that he was sure that he had not been suspected. He did not think, therefore, that Levison was purposely dodging him. Doubtless Levison had cut off to some secluded spot where he was to change his clothes before returning to St. Jim's.

"The wottah!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "The uthah wottah! I have lost him. But it's all right. I'll return to St. Jim's and be there befoah him. He won't be able to say that he was in his studay doin' lines this time."

And Arthur Augustus hurried off towards the school.

From Wayland Moor to St. Jim's was a good long walk, and the swell of the school was very nearly breathless when he arrived at the gates, having run part of the way, and walked the rest as fast as he could.

He was determined to be in before Levison, so that he could confront him on his arrival.

If the black sheep of the Fourth stayed in the wood to change his clothes, however quick he was, he could hardly reach the school ahead of D'Arcy. D'Arcy was much more fit than Levison, and a quicker and better walker. And he had not lost an instant.

He came in breathlessly at the gates, as the dusk was falling. He paused a moment at Taggles's lodge to speak to the porter.

"Taggles, deah boy!"

"Allo!" said Taggles.

"Have you seen Levison come in?"

"Which I ain't," said Taggles. "Ain't seed 'im go out, for that matter."

"Vewy good."

Arthur Augustus hurried on. A voice hailed him from the tuckshop.

"Here he is! Come and have a ginger-pop, Gussy!"

"Sowwy, Blake, I can't stop."

"Fathad! We've beaten the New House!" shouted Blake. "Talbot kicked the winning goal. Come and booze with us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus stopped then. "You have weally won the match without me in the team, deah boys?"

"Yes; easier than usual," said Tom Merry. "Take a little walk every time we have a House match, old chap, and we shall knock the New House skyhigh."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We're celebrating!" called out Talbot. "Come and have a ginger-pop, Gussy!"

"I am in watah a huwwy. I have spotted that boundah Levison," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose you fellows haven't seen him come in?"

"No," said Tom Merry, in surprise. "What has he been up to now?"

"Playin' cards with two disgustin' boundahs, and pwetendin' that he was his own double," said Arthur Augustus. "I have huwwid back heah to make suah of bein' in befoah the wottah gets back. I'm goin' to his studay now. When he sneaks in by the back way I shall be waitin' for him there, and he won't be able to tell any more whoppahs about that."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake. "We'll come with you."

Quite a crowd of juniors accompanied D'Arcy into the School House and up to the Fourth-Form passage. Arthur Augustus explained to them as they went his adventure of Wayland Moor; and all the fellows were keen to bowl Levison out. His impudent claim to have a "double," upon whom to lay his misdeeds, would be knocked on the head if he found the juniors waiting for him when he came in.

"Heah we are, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, as they reached Levison's study. "Now we'll just see that he isn't there—Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus had opened the study door while he was speaking.

The study was not empty.

There were two juniors there—Blenkinsop and Levison! And the crowd of fellows in the passage gasped, with one voice:

"Levison! My hat!"

CHAPTER 6.

Trial by Jury.

LEVISON glanced round carelessly.

Arthur Augustus's eyes almost devoured him.

Levison was dressed in Etons, as usual. Arthur Augustus looked at his boots. There was no mud upon them—none of the mud that must have been left on the boots of the fellow in grey, after his tramp on the moor. Merely a few stains, such as he might have picked up in the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!"

"Levison!"

"Hallo!" said Levison. The black sheep of the Fourth had a chessboard on his knees, and a newspaper cutting in his hand. He was apparently working out a chess problem. He seemed surprised by that sudden visit of so many juniors.

"Dear me!" said Blenkinsop. "What is the matter?"

"Levison, how on earth did you get in without bein' seen, you wottah?"

Levison looked surprised.

"What are you driving at?" he inquired.

"You know vewy well what I am dwivin' at. I expected to be back at the school befoah you, but you got ahead somehow."

"Have you been out?" asked Levison.

"You know vewy well I have, you boundah."

"How should I know? You don't expect me to watch your outgoings and incomings, do you?" asked Levison, looking astonished.

"You know vewy well that I met you on Wayland Moor."

Levison laughed.

"What are you cacklin' at, you wottah?"

"I'm cackling at you, if you must know," said Levison cheerfully. "Perhaps you've been interviewing my double."

"Wats!"

"Well, I haven't been on Wayland Moor," said Levison lazily.

"You were there playin' cards with Mr. Banks and that wottah Stubbs of Wayland."

"Anything else?"

"And you all three piled on me and chucked me out when I stovore to take you away from your disgustin' pursuits," exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, pile it on!"

"And I followed you across the moor as fah as the wood."

"Keep it up!"

"You disappeared in the wood, and I know vewy well that you went somewhah to change your clothes."

"Hear, hear!"

"And then, somehow or othah, you got in ahead of me," said Arthur Augustus, breathing hard through his aristocratic nose.

"Bravo!"

"And I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin', you disgustin' wottah!" shouted the swell of St. Jim's, utterly exasperated by Levison's humorous reception of his accusation.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, catching the excited swell of the Fourth by the arm, as he was rushing to the attack. Levison had jumped to his feet, and picked up the poker.

"I refuse to hold on, Tom Mewwy!"

"Hold hard!" said Talbot of the Shell. "Let's have this out before you begin punching noses, Gussy."

"Oh, let him begin!" said Levison coolly. "I've got the poker ready; and one end is hot—very hot. Let him run on!"

"You uttah wottah!"

"Let's have this out," said Blake. "I'm blessed if I quite believe in that double. But Levison's entitled to the benefit of the doubt."

"Wubbi!"

"Blessed if I see that it's any business of you fellows!" yawned Levison. "Gussy has been dreaming dreams, of course, but it's none of your business."

"It is our business if you disgrace our House," said Tom Merry, "and it's our business if you tell the Head barefaced lies."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But there's nothing proved against Levison," said Talbot of the Shell. "Give him a chance!"

"Oh, wats!"

"Choose it, Gussy! Every chap is entitled to a chance," said Monty Lowther. "Come into the study, all of you, and shut the door! We don't want any beastly prefects nosing into this."

"The juniors crowded in, and the door was shut."

"Yaas; that's all wight," agreed Arthur Augustus. "I have no desiah to give Levison away to the prefects. I only want to thwash him."

"We'll deal with the prisoner at the bar ourselves," said Blake. "If Levison has been doing what Gussy describes, he's a disgrace to the House, and I propose that we take the matter in hand, and rag him bald-headed."

"Hear, hear!"

"A jolly good lesson now may save him from getting the sack later on," added Blake. "It's really for Levison's own good. But if the chap's got a double it ought to be established, so that he can't be dropped on, like Tom Merry was, for something his blessed double has done."

"It's only fair," said Talbot.

"Yaas, but—"

"We'll have it all out," said Monty Lowther. "Levison is entitled to a fair trial. Are you willing to appear before the court, Levison?"

"Oh, rats!" said Levison.

"If the prisoner at the bar refuses to plead before the court he must be adjudged guilty, and punished according to law."

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Levison, with a laugh. "As a matter of fact, I'd be glad to have it thrashed out. That double of mine may get me into serious trouble some day if the thing isn't established. You remember what happened to Tom Merry?"

"We remember," agreed Blake. "That was what put it into your head to start a double—eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you can't take my word—" said Levison loftily.

"Bow-wow!"

"Wats!"

"We'll give Levison a fair trial," said Monty Lowther. "This is the judge's seat, and I'm the judge." He sat on the table. "Now, prisoner at the bar—"

"Adsum!" grinned Levison.

"You are accused of having played the giddy goat on Wayland Moor with two other beastly blackguards. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty, my lord!"

"The witness may now speak!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"But you must not make a speech. Cut the assle and come to the hoses. The witness declares that he saw Levison at the shepherd's hut on Wayland Moor!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How was he dressed?"

"In gwey."

"Did you address him as Levison?"

"Yaas, wathah; and I jollay well collahed him!"

"Did he admit that his name was Levison?"

"Wats! No. He pwetended to be his double."

"Did he state his name?"

"He told a beastly whoppah about his name bein' Herbert Smith."

"Must be the same chap that Kildare saw in Rylcombe the other evening," remarked Levison, in a thoughtful sort of way.

"It was you, you wottah!"

"Rats!"

"You uttah wascal!"

"Order! Personalities are not allowed in this court of law!" said Lowther severely. "If the witness is guilty of contempt of court again I sentence him to be hanged by the feet until he is red!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass—"

"Order!" thundered Lowther. "Witnesses are not allowed to jaw ad lib. in this court. You state that you followed the prisoner at the bar home?"

"Yaas; and lost him in the wood."

"What did you do then?"

"I luwried like anythin' to get back to the school befoah that wotten boundah, so that I could show him up to the fellows."

"And did you arrive at the school first?"

"Appawently not, as we found Levison in this studay. The wottah must have wun like anythin' to get home first!"

"Is that all your evidence, witness at t—"

"Yaas, exceptin' that I am goin' to give 'em a thwashin'!"

"Fathead! That isn't evidence!"

"I refuse to be called a fathead, Lowthah, and I considah—"

"What you consider is not evidence!"

"I considah that—"

"Remove that witness!"

"You uttah ass! I considah— Leggo! Blake, if you dwag at my yah like that, I shall stwike you! Talbot, I should be sowwy to have to thwash you, but I shall do so unless you welease my othah yah immediately!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful boundahs! Welease me! I considah— Leggo! Yow-ow!"

The witness was dumped into the armchair, and held there, gasping, by several pairs of hands, and the prisoner at the bar was called upon for his defence.

CHAPTER 7.

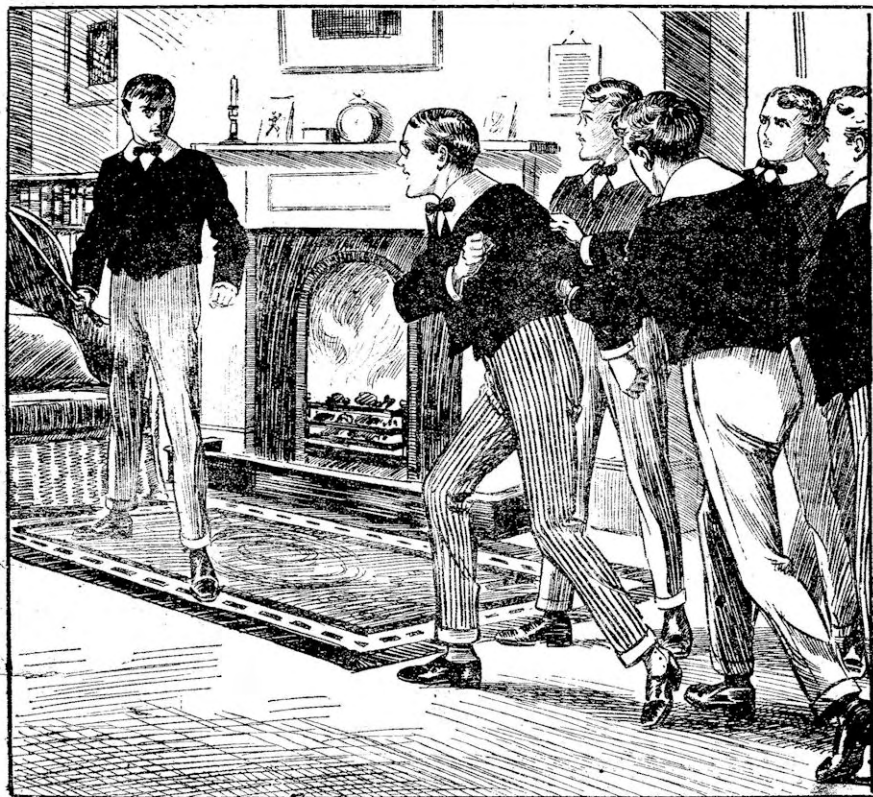
Not Guilty!

MONTY LOWTHER regarded the prisoner at the bar with a severe glance. He had placed a duster on his head in imitation of a judge's wig, in order to lend additional solemnity to the judicial proceedings. Levison did not seem to take the proceedings solemnly, however. He was grinning. There were also smiles for the jury. The judge looked round with a portentous frown.

"Silence in court! This court is not a place for ribald merriment! In court the public are allowed to laugh only when the judge makes a joke. Then the clerk of the court gives a regular signal. I have not made any jokes yet. Silence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Another disturbance like that, and I will have the court cleared! The court shall be clear even if the case is not clear! There, you can laugh now! That is



"Hold on," said Tom Merry, catching the excited swell of the Fourth by the arm, as he was rushing to the attack. Levison had jumped to his feet, and picked up the poker. "I refuse to hold on, Tom Merry!"

(See Chapter 6.)

humour from the Bench. Laughter in court! Good! Silence! Prisoner at the bar!"

"Hallo!"

"You do not say 'Hallo' to a judge. You say 'Yes, my lord!'"

"Yes, my lord," said Levison.

"That's better. Do you plead guilty to playing the giddy goat and disgusting blackguard under the circus stated by the witness D'Arcy?"

"No, my lord."

"What explanation have you to offer?"

"I beg to submit the well-known fact that the witness D'Arcy is practically dotty, and at least three-quarters off his rocker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you uttah wottah! Lemme gewwup!"

"Keep that witness quiet. The Court authorises the jury to sit on the head of the witness if he will not keep quiet!"

"Gwooooooooh!"

"The prisoner's statement with regard to the mental condition of the witness cannot be admitted," said the judge. "Prisoner at the bar, where were you this afternoon?"

"I've been taking a stroll," said Levison. "I've been round the lanes towards Abbotsford."

"Wats!"

"Keep that witness quiet!"

"Gwooh!"

"I beg to point out that the witness D'Arcy, although off his rocker, has exonerated me by his own evidence," submitted the prisoner at the bar. "He states that he followed an unknown person in grey from the hut on the moor."

"Yaas, wathah! It was you, you wottah!"

"I beg the Court's permission to cross-examine the witness."

"Go it—I—I mean, you may proceed."

"The witness followed this person in grey to the wood, and missed him there. I ask whether he was an ass enough to let himself be seen by the chap he was following?"

"Wathah not. I was awf'ly deep."

"Then if the person in grey did not know he was being followed, and if he belonged to this school, he would have come straight on, and you would have followed him here, and proved your case."

"Ya-a-a-s; I pwesume so."

"Rubbish!" said Blake. "If it was Levison, you can jolly well bet that he knew he was being followed."

"Weally, Blake—"

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"LOYAL AND TRUE!"

NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"And he dodged into the wood because he knew it, fathed!"

"Bai Jove! It is quite poss, though I was vewy careful indeed."

"The point raised by the prisoner at the bar is of no importance," pronounced the judge. "The witness being well known to be a silly ass, it is most likely that he gave away the fact that he was shadowing the fellow in grey."

"So we find the prisoner guilty!" said Herries.

"Hold on!" said the prisoner. "I'm not finished yet."

"Buck up, then! It's tea-time, and we've got to find you guilty before tea!" said Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I object to the presence of that juror in the box," said Levison; "he's prejudiced."

"Quite right," said the judge. "Herries will stand aside. This court dispenses with his services as a jurymen."

"Look here!"

"Silence in court! If you have anything more to say, prisoner, buck up, as we're getting pretty hungry—I mean it is nearly time for the court to adjourn."

"D'Arcy states that he came directly back to the school."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Did you dawdle on the way?"

"Certainly not! I wan quite hard most of the way, in ordah to get in first."

"While the fellow in grey was changing his clothes somewhere, if he was the person you suspect?"

"Yaas, of course."

"In that case you had the start of him?"

"Of course I did!"

"And you are a better runner than I am?"

"I should jolly well say so!" said Arthur Augustus, with a sniff. "I don't smoko filthy cigawettes. I would win you off your silly legs any day."

"Very well. You had the start of the person who had to change his clothes, you are a faster runner than he is, and yet when you arrive at the school, you find me in my study doing chess problems. I submit that the witness D'Arcy's own evidence proves that I could not be the person he followed into the wood."

"Bai Jove!"

"I also call Blenkinsop, here present, as a witness that I had been in this study a considerable time before D'Arcy arrived with you fellows."

"Wate!"

"The witness Blenkinsop may speak. Buck up, Blenky!"

"Oh, certainly!" said Blenkinsop, in his mild way. "Levison had certainly been in the study ten minutes when you fellows came in."

"Bai Jove! Ten minutes?"

"Yes; perhaps more."

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

"I had been in the library before then," said Levison. "But as I was alone there, I will leave that out. I leave my case to the court. If I were the fellow in grey, D'Arcy had the start of me, I had to change my clothes, get ahead of a faster runner than myself, and arrive ten minutes before him. I submit to the court that that is impossible."

"There was silence in court. Arthur Augustus's face was a study. He had come back hot-foot to St. Jim's to prove that Levison of the Fourth and the fellow he called his double was one and the same. And his evidence had proved exactly the opposite."

"Well," said the judge, after a pause, "has the witness D'Arcy anything more to say?"

"Bai Jove!"

"That is not evidence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Neither is that evidence."

"Laughter in court!"

"The case, therefore, goes to the jury to decide," said Lowther. "I suggest to the jury that Levison has proved his case, as it is impossible for him to be in two places at once. Remarkable as it seems, Levison has a double—or, at least, there is a chap like him—like enough to

deceive Kildare in the dark, and an howling ass like Gussy in the daylight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Hold on!" said Herries.

"You are not on the jury. Shut up!"

"Then I'm a witness," roared Herries, "and I've got a suggestion to make. I suppose the rotter had his bike with him. Then he could have done it."

"Bai Jove! That's weally a valuable suggestion, Hewwies. Of course, the boundah had his bike in the wood."

"The opinion of the jury veered round again. For the moment it had seemed impossible that Ernest Levison could have been the fellow in grey. But if he had had his bike in the wood, that put quite another complexion on the matter."

"What have you to say, prisoner at the bar?" demanded the judge.

"Only that a dozen fellows know that I sold my bike the other day," said Levison calmly.

"That's so," said Manners. "I know Levison hasn't a bike now, anyway."

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

"True, O King!" said Jack Blake. "I know where he sold it—at Hanney's in Wayland."

"That settles it," said the judge. "Herries, you are a rottener witness than you are a jurymen! You are simply no good in a court of law, and if there wasn't any better witnesses and jurymen than you, nobody would ever be found guilty, and lawyers and judges and prison warders would have to work for their living. And a nice state of affairs that would be! The court hereby censures the witness Herries!"

"Oh, rats!" said the witness Herries.

"Gentlemen of the jury, guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty!" said the gentlemen of the jury, with one voice.

"Prisoner at the bar, you are discharged! The court sentences the witness D'Arcy to three bumps on the study carpet, for keeping us late for our tea with his ridiculous accusations against a respectable—ahem!—person."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bai Jove! I was only—I weally—undah the cress—Let go! I ordah you to release me at once! I utterly refuse to be bumped! I—I— Yawwoh! Help! Ow!"

"Bump, bump, bump!"

"Gentlemen, the court has now finished business, and adjourns for tea. The prisoner leaves the court without a stain on his character, though I am sorry to see that there are tobacco-stains on his fingers. The court, therefore, orders the prisoner to be bumped also, as a hint of what would happen if he had been found guilty."

"Hear, hear!"

"Rats! Chuck it!" roared Levison. "Why, you silly idiots— Oh, my hat!"

"Bump, bump, bump!"

"Oh, crumbs! You dangerous lunatic! Ow, ow! Yow!"

"The court is now adjourned, and I'm jolly hungry," said the judge, jumping off the table. "Let's go and get some tea, for goodness' sake."

The legal proceedings closed amid howls of laughter from the court and deep groans from the prisoner and the witness.

"One moment," said Talbot of the Shell. "I say—"

"You want to be bumped, too?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No," said Talbot, laughing. "I was going to suggest that, now it is proved that Levison has a double, we all keep ready to speak up for him, if he should be accused as he was before. That's only cricket."

"Good for you," said Tom Merry. "Next time you're found out, Levison—I mean next time you're accused, call on us, and we'll walk up like one man and speak up for you."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake. "Of course, we won't say what we know of your character, Levison, that would get you the sack at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooh!" mumbled Levison. "Get out of my study, you silly idiots!"

And the court broke up and dispersed to tea.

CHAPTER 8.

A Really Good Idea.

THE trial by jury held in Levison's study had been of a somewhat humorous character. But the finding of the court was very useful to the black sheep of the Fourth. For it was soon talked about in the School House; and it came to the ears of the prefects and then to those of the Housemaster.

The next day Mr. Carrington sent for Tom Merry and questioned him about the matter. Tom gave a frank description of the trial, which had established beyond doubt in the mind of the juniors the fact that Levison of the Fourth had a double. Mr. Carrington listened to him with great attention.

"You believe yourself, Merry, that some young black-guard resembling Levison is staying in this neighbourhood?" he said.

"Certainly, sir!" said Tom. "Unless Levison could be in two places at once, he couldn't be the fellow D'Arcy saw on Wayland Moor. It was barely possible he might have been the fellow Kildare saw the other night, though how he could have got back to the school in time is a mystery. But this time there isn't any doubt—he simply couldn't have done it."

"I am very glad that this has been established," said the Housemaster. "I have been told of your case, which happened before I came here, Merry. It is very remarkable, indeed, that practically the same case should happen over again."

"Well, we thought it fishy at first, sir," said Tom. "But it's proved beyond the shadow of doubt now, and we think it a bit hard on Levison to have been suspected. Quite so. Send D'Arcy to me, please."

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry quitted the Housemaster's study, and in a few minutes Arthur Augustus D'Arcy presented himself there. The swell of St. Jim's was looking very grave.

"Kindly tell me exactly what you saw on Wayland Moor yesterday afternoon, D'Arcy," said the Housemaster.

"Very well, sir. As it has been proved not to be Levison, there is no harm in tellin' you, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, otharwise, you would not expect me to sneak about a chap in my Form."

"Ahem! Go on, please."

Arthur Augustus gave a description of his adventure.

"Ah, you say this boy's companions addressed him as Smith?" said Mr. Carrington.

"Yaas: I heard them do so."

"Yet you say that he was exactly similar to Levison in appearance?"

"Ah, exactly, sir, exceptin' that he was a little stoutish."

"No there, that's difference! You do not believe now that the boy in question was Levison?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Impossible, sir! I was goin' to apologise to Levison for suspectin' him."

"Quite right, D'Arcy, if you are convinced that you were mistaken."

Mr. Carrington shook his head very seriously when the swell of St. Jim's was gone. The affair was so strange that he hardly knew what to make of it. The fact that Tom Merry had a double was proof enough that the thing was possible. Yet that the same thing should happen twice to boys in the same school was extraordinary. It was much more probable that the fact that Tom Merry had a double had put this "dodge" into the cunning head of Levison of the Fourth to screen himself from punishment for his rascalities. Yet he had succeeded in convincing the School House fellows of the reality of the double, and the Housemaster could not find fault with the evidence which had satisfied them.

Arthur Augustus looked for Levison that day after lessons. The swell of St. Jim's felt that he owed Levison an apology, and he could not possibly leave a debt of that kind unpaid.

"I'm awfully sorry, deah boy!" he said when he found the black sheep of the Fourth in the quadrangle. Levison looked at him curiously.

"Sorry they bumped you yesterday?" he asked.

"Sowwy I suspected you," said Arthur Augustus.

"As it turns out to be a mistake, I apologise to you as one gentleman to another."

Levison grinned.

"Oh, that's all right. I'm really very much obliged to you," he remarked. "You see, you've established the fact now that I have a double. That make it much safer for me, when I—when he does anything rotten in the future."

"Yaas, that's wathah satisfactoriy," said Arthur Augustus, with a nod. "But I've got a proposal to make to you, deah boy. It's wathah dangewous for you to have a wottah just like you hangin' about. You wemembah that wottah who was just like Tom Mewwy; he got Mewwy into lots of twouble. We all agreed at that time to hunt the wascal down, and wag him till he got out of the neighbourhood. I'm goin' to suggest doin' the same for your wotten double, and I'm suah all the fellows will back me up. And you had bettah come along with me, you see, or we may bump you by mistake sometimes."

"Oh, never mind that," said Levison. "I dare say he'll clear off of his own accord. Most likely he's only stayin' round here for a holiday."

"But we could wag him, and make him clear off immediately."

"Not necessary," said Levison. "I'm safe enough now, now that the whole school knows that I've got a double. I don't want to be hard on that kid. He must have been very badly brought up to act in that way."

"Ahem! Yaas, but—"

"He has caused me some trouble already, but I forgive him," said Levison. "I don't feel a bit of spite against him. I'm only sorry for him."

"Bai Jove, that is weally vewy decent of you, Levison! All the same, we should be quite willin' to hunt the wottah down and wag him."

Levison shook his head.

"No, let him alone, as far as I'm concerned," he said. "I don't want him to be hurt. I don't bear any malice."

And Levison walked away, leaving an excellent impression upon the simple mind of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But when D'Arcy related that conversation to Blake and Herries and Digby, the chums of Study No. 6 were not equally impressed.

"Why doesn't he want his blessed double to be looked for?" growled Herries. "Looks fishy to me."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"It is a bit odd," said Digby. "Tom Merry was very keen to have his double cleared off when that rotter was about here. And Levison's a spiteful chap, too—much more than Tom Merry ever was."

"Yaas; but it is wathah noble of him."

"Oh, how-wow!" said Blake. "When a fellow like Levison starts being noble it makes me a bit suspicious."

"Wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wogard Levison's conduct as vewy noble and forgivin'. We have been wathah hard on Levison. But I'm goin' to make a suggestion, deah boys. We won't tell Levison, because he doesn't want his double to be wun down, but we're not goin' to be so forgivin' as all that. We'll make it a point to wun the wottah down, just as we did Tom Mewwy's double, and wag him baldheaded. And I shall make it a vewy special point to give him a black eye."

"What on earth for?"

Arthur Augustus smiled the smile of superior wisdom. "Don't you see, deah boy? When Levison's double has a black eye, and Levison hasn't one, that will simply be pwoof positive. Even Kildare will be satisfied then."

Arthur Augustus's chums surveyed him admiringly.

"Where does Gussy get these ripping ideas from?" said Blake, addressing space.

"Some fellahs think of things, you know," said Arthur Augustus modestly. "Some fellahs are wathah brainy."

"Yes, but you're not one of that sort," remarked Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"It's a good idea," said Herries. "If we give Levison's double a black eye, and then we see Levison afterwards with a black eye, that will show he has been spoofing us."

"You are labahin' undah a misapprehension, Hewwies. The ideah is to pwove that Levison has not been spoofin'."

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us, and prove it to the prefects too. I am quite awash that Kildare has a very suspicious eye on him."

"Yes, Kildare's no fool," agreed Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, you are takin' quite the w'ong view. We gave Levison a fair twial by jowy, and cleahed him completely."

"Yes, that's all very well; but—"

"There is no 'but' in the case, Hewwies. A chap is cleahed or he is not cleahed. I suppose you admit the cwushin' evidence in Levison's favah?"

"Yes," said Herries. "But Towser—"

"Towser!"

"Yes, Towser!"

"What on earth has your wotten bulldog got to do with it, Hewwies?"

"Towser isn't a rotten bulldog," said Herries warmly.

"Towser's a splendid animal, and much better in every way than a pure-bred bulldog. Why, Towser—"

"Don't let's have a list of Towser's good qualities now, for goodness' sake!" said Blake imploringly. "Life's too short, Herries, old man. Admitting that Towser is a first-class beast—in fact, a super-bulldog—what has he to do with Levison?"

"He doesn't like Levison?"

"Bai Jove!"

"You can trust Towser," said Herries confidently.

"Towser always knows when a fellow isn't straight. I know Levison's made out his case awfully well. He always does. Still, Towser doesn't like him."

Herries made that statement as if it was a clincher, and quite finished the argument. But his chums did not look at it in that light.

"Blow Towser!" said Blake and Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! All I know about that wotten bulldog is that he has no respect for a fellow's twousahs. I wogard you as an ass, Hewwies."

"Well, we shall see what we shall see," said Herries.

"Yes, nous verrons ce que nous verrons," said Digby, who was great on French.

"Eh? What do you mean with your nooverrong circus nooverrong?" asked Blake. "Is that Latin or Greek?"

To that question Digby replied only with a snort. But it was agreed that Levison's double should be found, and licked, with a black eye if possible, and they entered into it heartily. Only Herries, basing his opinion upon the well-known judgment of his bulldog Towser, held to the belief that if Levison's double were given a black eye Levison of the Fourth would be seen with a black eye afterwards.

CHAPTER 9. Sefton Chips In.

KILDARE of the Sixth wore a worried look.

The captain of St. Jim's was in his study, where he was receiving a visit from Sefton of the New House.

Sefton was in the Sixth Form, and a prefect. At the time when Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, had been "up against" Kildare, and making all sorts of trouble between the seniors of the two Houses at St. Jim's, Sefton had been one of his heartiest backers. Now that Monteith and Kildare were on good terms with one another, and the two Houses pulled well together, Sefton found his occupation gone. He disliked Kildare and Derrel and the rest as much as ever, but he found no encouragement from Monteith in stirring up strife.

It was unusual for Sefton to call on the head prefect of the School House, and Kildare was surprised to see him come in. He was still more surprised when he listened to what Sefton had to say.

"Of course, this isn't exactly my business as a New House prefect," Sefton was saying. "I don't want to The GEN LIBRARY.—No. 372.

interfere. Of course, it's your business to look after the juniors of your own House, Kildare. Still, when I see disgrace being brought on the old school, I feel that something ought to be done. I've heard you say sometimes that the seniors on both sides ought to pull together for the good of the school."

"I've said it, and I mean it," said Kildare.

"Quite so. I know you're a fellow of your word. Still, if I took a junior of your House by the scruff of his neck, and marched him in to the Head, I'm afraid some fellows on this side would regard it as interfering."

Kildare looked at his visitor sharply. He knew Sefton pretty well, and although he was willing to give him every possible credit, he could not help suspecting the cad of the New House of trying to score over him.

"If you've dropped on something that concerns me, as Head of the School House, you may as well mention it," he said. "I suppose I can carry out my duties without assistance from the other side. A fellow can't see everything that goes on. If you've come on something, and you're not making a mistake—"

"Not much mistake about it," said Sefton drily. "I've seen a junior of your House buying cigarettes in the tobacconist's at Rylcombe."

"Name?"

"Levison of the Fourth."

"Oh!" said Kildare.

"I've seen him on another occasion, a jolly good deal more serious," said Sefton. "If you care to hear about it, as a prefect—"

"Please go on."

"Well, last night I took a short cut across the fields behind the Green Man. And I happened to see in one of the windows at the back. It was lighted, and I couldn't help seeing in. Levison was there, playing cards."

"You are sure?"

"Quite sure."

"You might have collared him and brought him in." Sefton shrugged his shoulders.

"As I say, I don't want to interfere. I don't want to be told that I'm meddling in the affairs of the School House prefects. Still, I don't want to see a junior disgracing the school and keep my mouth shut."

"Quite right," said Kildare. "But I think this can be explained. The fact is, it seems to be pretty well established that there is a fellow just like Levison hanging about this neighbourhood who has been taken for him several times."

Sefton sneered.

"In fact, it is quite well established," said Kildare, nettled. "His Housemaster is satisfied about it, and so am I."

"Well, if you're satisfied, I've nothing more to say."

said Sefton, with a shrug of his shoulders. "This having a double must be mighty handy to the fellows of your House. We don't allow juniors to have doubles in the New House."

"I suppose you mean you don't believe it?"

"Well, it is rather thick, isn't it?" said Sefton, laughing. "Some time ago there was talk of Merry of the Shell having a double—"

"That was proved clearly enough, as the fellow was seen here by the whole school, in the presence of the Head, and yourself, too," said Kildare tartly.

"Yes, I admit that. But these things don't happen a second time. Has Levison ever been seen at the same time as his precious double?"

"Not that I know of. The kid doesn't belong to the place, I believe, and he dresses quite differently from Levison; doesn't seem to be a schoolboy at all, certainly the likeness is striking. I was taken in myself."

"Well," said Sefton, "I'll tell you what I think. I think that Levison has taken advantage of that story of

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Tom Merry's double to invent a double for himself, to cover up his precious goings-on. And I don't think the matter ought to be left where it is."

"I don't see what's to be done."

"That means that the prefects of this House aren't going to take the matter up?"

"I don't see how they can, as the kid, Smith I think his name is, doesn't belong to the school, and we have no authority over him."

"I don't think the matter ought to be dropped. I am willing to make a suggestion."

"Make it."

"Keep a watch for the fellow, and spot him some night, and bring him to the school," said Sefton. "That will prove the matter."

Kildare made a gesture of repugnance.

"Keeping watch isn't much in my line," he said. "And I don't feel inclined to hang round pubs of a night spying for a fellow."

"You mean to say you won't move in the matter."

"I don't see how I can."

"Then," said Sefton, "I will!"

"Oh, you will, will you?" said Kildare, getting nettled again. "I don't see that it's your business. You can leave our House affairs alone."

"Yes, I expected that," said Sefton.

"But as you've said yourself, it's up to both sides to think about the good name of the school. If the School House prefects won't take this matter up, it's up to a New House prefect to do it. And I'm going to do it."

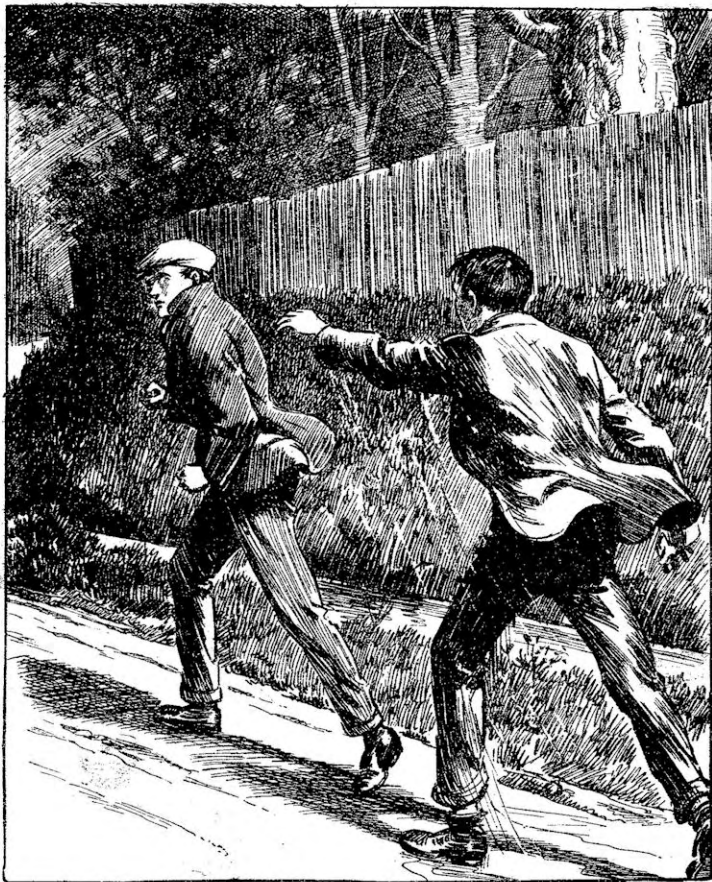
"You can do as you like, I suppose. I should think it would come easier to mind your own business."

"You mean that the Head won't be exactly pleased with you if it's left to the New House to do your work," sneered Sefton.

"I don't mean anything of the sort, and you know it. I think you'd better go, Sefton. We shall quarrel at this rate," said Kildare, trying to keep his temper.

"I'll go. But I mean to do what I think my duty, all the same."

And Sefton went, with a sneering smile on his face which made Kildare long to kick him through the doorway. However, he restrained that longing, and the New



A figure in grey flitted past the drenched and muddy prefect, as he gouged mud from his eyes, and scraped it from his features. Sefton spotted the glimmer of grey in the dark, and made a wild rush at it. "Levison! Stop! I—!" (See Chapter 11.)

House prefect departed in peace. Kildare was left in a very worried and thoughtful frame of mind.

After some cogitation he sent his fag for Tom Merry.

The captain of the Shell entered the study with a somewhat wary look. Being sent for by Kildare sometimes meant trouble.

The gloomy expression on Kildare's face increased the junior's apprehensions. He assumed his softest manner and his sweetest smile.

"Nothing wrong, Kildare, I hope?" he murmured.

"Yes," grunted Kildare. "Sefton's just been here."

"Yes, I saw him," said Tom. "But how the deuce did he know? I—I say, Kildare, it was only a joke, you know."

"What was only a joke?" demanded Kildare, with a stare.

"Besides, you know Sefton is always chipping in

where he has no business," said Tom. "You must have noticed that. Of course, we wouldn't play any tricks on our own prefects. We wouldn't put jam in your topper, Kildare, or old Darrel's. We—we'd be chopped up before we'd do it. But—but Sefton's—"

Kildare burst into a laugh. "You young ass, Sefton hasn't been here to tell me anything about jam in his topper!"

"Oh, good!" said Tom Merry, much relieved. "Then—ahem!—you can consider that I haven't said anything, Kildare. I was—ahem!—speaking generally."

"So you've been putting jam in a prefect's topper," growled Kildare.

"Well, you see, he cuffed young Wally, and he's only a New House cad," said Tom, in extenuation. "And the jam was—well, it wasn't any use. Blake had put ink into it, and we couldn't eat it after that, now could we? We were going to chuck it away, and—and then we thought of Sefton's topper, so—so we—"

"You young rascal," said Kildare, "you will take fifty lines. I sent for you to ask you about Levison."

"Oh, Levison!" said Tom.

"Yes, I understand that you threshed the matter out the other day, and proved up to the hilt that Levison couldn't be the chap who does pub-haunting round here, and has been spotted and taken for him."

"Proved quite conclusively," said Tom. "It was rough on Levison. If we found that he had spoofed us, we'd give him such a ragging that he wouldn't want to go pub-haunting again. But it was all right. Unless Levison had wings, or could be in two places at once, he couldn't possibly be the chap."

"You're quite sure of that?"

"Quite sure. We gave him a fair trial by jury, and he proved an alibi. Gussy was the accuser, and he was quite satisfied, and he's apologised to Levison."

"I suppose that settles it," said Kildare musingly. "But Sefton thinks—well, if he watches the Green Man, and catches a perfect stranger, and hauls him up here, it's his own business. There'll be a row about it, I suppose. I can't help it. You can cut off."

"But I say, Kildare, Sefton has no right to take the matter up at all!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly. "He's only a New House prefect."

"I know he hasn't," said Kildare gruffly. "But he's going to. Still, if he chooses to make a fool of himself, that's his own look-out. Clear off!"

Tom Merry cleared off in a state of great indignation. And a meeting was promptly called in the study in the Shell passage, attended by the Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6, to discuss that new example of New House cheek, and to take measures for making Sefton of the Sixth sorry that he had "wedged" himself into School House affairs.

CHAPTER 10.

So Does Tom Merry.

"UTTAHL! F wotten!"
"Fearful cheek!"
"That fellow's got neck enough for anything."
"Rott!"
"Cad!"

Such were the remarks in Tom Merry's study, when the captain of the Shell unfolded to the meeting what he had discovered from Kildare.

"The cheeky wottah!" said Arthur Augustus, with burning indignation. "We can stand Figgins & Co. playin' the ruddy ox, callin' their mouldy old House the cock-house of St. Jim's, and all that wot. But for a New House prefect to chip in and take Kildare's business out of his hands—"

"Awful nerve!" growled Herries.

"Didn't Kildare punch his head?" demanded Blake.

"No. He was ratty," said Tom. "But these blessed prefects have such a blessed idea of their dignity. Now I should have punched his head."

"Same here," said Muxes. "Why, even if it was Levison, it's no business of a beastly New House prefect!"

"Wathah not!"

"Kildare ought to have resented it," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Old Kildare is a jolly good deal too easy-going. He lets those New House bouncers take advantage of him. Now, we always make it a point to keep Figgins & Co. in their place."

"Hear, hear!"

"The question is," said Tom Merry, "are we going to stand it?"

"Never!"

"Well, hardly ever!" murmured Lowther.

"Nevah!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Bwitous nevah shall be slaves. Why, we might as well knuckle undah to the disgustin' Pwussians, as to a New House prefect."

"That's how I look at it," said Tom Merry. "As far as I make out, Sefton doesn't believe in Levison's double, and he's going to spy round the Green Man to catch that chap Smith, and yank him up to the school, and prove that he's Levison. Even if he was Levison, it isn't Sefton's bizney. Let him stick to the New House. There's lots of things there for him to look after. As a matter of fact, we know that Sefton smokes himself, and that he drops in at the Green Man sometimes. He's been seen."

"And I shouldn't wonder," said Monty Lowther sagely, "if that's got something to do with his blessed zeal now. When he drops in at the Green Man, he doesn't want to risk running into a junior there—especially a fellow like Levison, who would hold it over his head."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Of course, we know it isn't Levison—that's been proved," said Tom. "Sefton is chipping in where he's got no business to. Besides, if he should bring a perfect stranger here by the scruff of his neck, there would be a row about it. The young cad ought not to be doing such things; but a stranger can't be brought into this school for judgment."

"Ha, ha! No."

"So if we spoil Sefton's little game we shall really be doing him a good turn, and saving him from making an ass of himself," argued Tom Merry.

"And teaching him to mind his own business is more to the point," remarked Blake.

"Hear, hear!"

"Then it's agreed?" said Tom. "Sefton's going stalking Levison's double—spying round that pub to catch him out. Of course, he only wants to score over old Kildare, and make out that Kildare isn't up to his business, and get him into a row with the Head. He would do that, if he caught Levison there, after speaking to Kildare on the subject, too. He's a deep beast. My idea is, that when Sefton goes stalking Levison, we should go stalking Sefton."

"Hurrah!"

"And give him a fearful thwashin'," said Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Ahem! I don't know about thrashing a prefect," said Tom; "but we can give him a jolly good ragging, and pitch him into a ditch."

"Bravo!"

"I'll speak to Figgins about it," said Tom. "Figgins & Co. are up against Sefton because he's a beast and gives them lines for nothing. Figgys will tip when Sefton goes on the war-path, and then we'll drop over the wall and go on the war-path too."

"We should have to bweak bounds, deah boy."

"Well, in a good cause we can break a rule for once," said Tom.

"Hear, hear!"

And so it was agreed; and Tom Merry promptly walked over to the New House to consult Figgins & Co. on the subject. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were in their study, and they looked warlike as the School House fellow came in. But Tom Merry held up his hand in sign of peace.

"Pax!" he exclaimed; and Figgins reluctantly dropped the cushion he had picked up.

"That's all very well," said Figgins. "What do you want, you School House bouncer? What are you doing on the decent side of the quad?"

"I've come into your mouldy old House—"

"What?"

"My mistake—I mean your mouldy New House," said Tom Merry, "to ask you a little favour."

"You're going the right way to get a thick ear!" said Figgins darkly.

"Is it a feed?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Rats! No."

"Then you can go back to your rotten House and eat coke!" said Fatty, all his interest in Tom Merry's visit evaporating at once.

"The fact is," said Tom, "among your other bright specimens in this house you've got a specially caddish cad and a beastly bully named— Yaroooh!"

Tom Merry did not really mean to say that that was the name of the cad and the bully. He uttered that as the three indignant heroes of the New House seized him and bumped him on the study carpet.

"Yow-ow! Leggo, you fatheads!" he roared.

Bump! Bump!

"You—you rotters! I called pax!" howled Tom Merry.

"You can't call pax and then slang our House," grinned Figgins. "Give him another!"

Bump!

"Now put ink down his neck, unless he apologises for slanging the cock-house of St. Jim's."

"Hold on!" yelled Tom Merry. "Let me explain, you asses! I was speaking of Sefton."

Figgins stopped the inkpot just in time.

"Oh, that alters the case," he said gracefully. "You can call Sefton anything you like. He's a first-class beast. We've got lines from him to-day for sliding down the banisters. What were banisters made for, I'd like to know?"

Tom Merry was permitted to rise, very red and considerably ruffled. He looked for a moment as though he would charge at the grinning New House juniors; but he remembered in time that he had come to ask a favour.

"I won't lick you this time," he said, breathing hard.

"Oh, pile in!" said Kerr. "We don't mind."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's about Sefton," said Tom, ignoring Kerr's invitation. "The beast has taken to chipping into our House affairs, and, of course, we're going to stop him."

"I don't see that," said Figgins. "You want some brains over in the School House. It's only right for the cock-house to give you a leg up occasionally. I don't think much of Sefton myself, still, you might be obliged to him for taking matters in hand for you. I really think that!"

"You silly ass!"

"Hand me that inkpot, Fatty."

"I—I mean—hold on! Look here, Figg, Sefton's a beast, and you know it. He's going sneaking and spying to catch Levison's double. You've heard of Levison's double?"

"Yes, and we think it's a pretty tall story," grinned Kerr.

"Oh, it's proved!" said Tom. "Sefton will catch that blessed double, and make a fool of himself, and the laugh will be up against your House, you see. We want to know when he goes out stalking Levison's double, and we're going to drop on him outside, and make him sit up. If the cad's given you lines, you ought to be glad. You can't go for him yourselves, as you're in his House."

Figgins nodded. He admitted the force of that observation.

"Quite right," he agreed. "If you want to rag Sefton, rag him, with my blessing; and if we can help you, you can count us in."

"Good!" said Tom heartily. "Now, look here, he's going out spying in the evenings to catch Levison's double. We want you to keep an eye open, and let us know when he goes sneaking out. We're going to shadow him and give him lip. See?"

"Good egg! We're on."

"Heard, heard!"

Tom Merry left the New House in a state of satisfaction. Matters were going well. And the heroes of the School House, that very evening received the benefit of their temporary alliance with their old rivals. The Terrible

Three were just settling down to prep in their study when Figgins came in with an excited face.

"He's off!" he announced.

The Shell fellows jumped up.

"Sefton?"

"Yes. He's gone out in his coat and muffler, and I saw him borrow Baker's electric torch to put in his pocket. That looks like business."

"What-oh! Thanks, old chap! You can rely on us to make him wriggle for those lines he gave you. We'll give him something for you as well as for ourselves."

Figgins grinned and disappeared. Manners looked rather doubtfully at the unfinished work on the table.

"What about prep?" he asked.

"Blow prep!"

"But old Linton in the morning?"

"Blow old Linton in the morning!"

"Oh, all right," said Manners, resignedly.

"Come on to Study No. 6," said Tom Merry. "There's no time to lose. This is where the egregious Sefton gets it in the neck."

And within five minutes seven determined juniors were on the war-path.

CHAPTER 11.

Sefton's Luck.

SEFTON of the Sixth gave a subdued chuckle. Sefton was in luck.

Not for a moment did Sefton believe in the existence of the mythical Herbert Smith, who bore so strange a resemblance to Ernest Levison of the Fourth. He was quite certain in his own mind that it was merely a dodge of the cunning Levison to cover up his tracks while engaged upon forbidden relaxations.

And the idea of "bagging" a School House junior in the very act of committing an offence for which he must be expelled from the school was joy to Sefton. It would be "one in the eye" for Kildare and his friends, who always treated Sefton with a kind of politeness which did not conceal their contempt for his character.

The Head would be frightfully ratty, and he would certainly take the view that the School House prefects had been careless in their duties; and Kildare, as head prefect, would get the worst of his vials of wrath.

And that was just what the amiable Sefton wanted. It was the biggest of big scores over the captain of St. Jim's, whom he had never liked, and whom he disliked now more than ever.

And he was in luck. He had been prepared to waste several evenings—as many as were needed, in fact—in the not ungenial task of playing the spy, in the hope of catching the School House delinquent "out." And lo and behold, here was luck on the very first evening! As he "sneaked" round to the back of the Green Man, in the dusky garden by the side path, he caught the glimmer of light from a back window, through the shabby old shutters. He approached on tiptoe to them, and discerned a cheery, if somewhat dingy, company within.

Sefton grinned as he watched through the chink in the shutters.

For a prefect who was so zealous to punish a junior for wrong-doing, Sefton seemed to have a remarkably keen knowledge of the purlieus of the Green Man. Perhaps he was not a complete stranger to that delightful resort himself. Perhaps, as Monty Lowther had so sagely suggested, he had a double motive in view—not only to score off Kildare, but to make his own little excursions safer by excluding a junior from the scene. For if Sefton was in the bad habit of dropping in at the Green Man, certainly he could not continue to do so while Mr. Joliffe & Co. received Levison there—without getting under that young rascal's thumb.

Speaking to Mr. Joliffe on the subject would have been no good. So long as Levison had any money, the hospitable doors of the Green Man would have remained open to him, whatever Sefton might have said. All was grist that came to Mr. Joliffe's mill. And the young rascal evidently had money now, though it was rather a puzzle where he had obtained it, as Levison was known to have a very small allowance. Until the latest frequenter of

The Green Man was "stony," it behoved Sefton to keep away from that quarter. And so it was an excellent opportunity for showing his zeal as a prefect, and, incidentally, scoring off Kildare.

There was no doubt about it—he was in luck. In the room with the shuttered window he could see Mr. Banks and Mr. Joliffe and another man playing cards with a junior in grey, and if that junior in grey was not Levison, Sefton would have been willing to allow his head to be used as a football.

True, the blackguard of the Fourth had changed his clothes, and he looked a little stouter. Yes; he certainly was stouter. That puzzled Sefton for a few moments, but his cunning brain seized upon what had doubtless escaped the other eyes that had beheld Master Herbert Smith.

"Of course, he doesn't change his clothes," he murmured. "Of course not! He shoves those grey things on over his Etons. It makes him look stouter, and it saves him the trouble of changing. He simply has to slip them off, and—there you are! Easy enough to buy a suit a few sizes too large for him. And it saves him wearing a coat; he's warm enough with two suits on. And his coat might be recognised. Oh, the deep young rotten!"

Sefton watched, grinning, through the chink in the shutter. He made a mental note that he would have an eye to that tell-tale chink the next time he was enjoying a little game in that back-parlour. It really wasn't safe.

He was in luck; he had run down his prey. But exactly how to proceed now was a little perplexing. To stride into the place and march Levison away by the scruff of his neck would have been easy enough for Kildare or Darrel. But Sefton had no desire for an open quarrel with Mr. Joliffe and his friends; they were his sporting companions on other occasions.

He decided to wait till Levison came out, and collar him in the garden. Then he had to decide which way Levison would come. Certainly he would not dare to leave the house by the front in the lighted village street. But there were several doors at the back; and if he spotted Sefton, he might escape by the path down to the river, or into the next garden, and if he got home to St. Jim's first he had only to repeat his story of a double to clear himself from the accusation.

Sefton decided finally to take cover in the side-path of the public-house, which led into the lane out of the radius of the lights. Levison was certain to come that way, unless he suspected that he was being watched—and certainly he did not suspect that.

The New House prefect, after a final glance into the lighted room, slipped quietly away from the window and trod cautiously into the side-path, where the thick shadow of trees fell, effectually concealing him.

There he waited. Levison could not be long now. Levison—if it was Levison—must have broken bounds after calling over, getting out over the school wall, trusting to luck not to be missed till bedtime. But he would have to be back in time for bed, or discovery would follow. Seton heard nine o'clock strike from the village church. The rascal could not be long now.

Sefton chuckled. The junior in grey would come along the path in the dark, and the prefect's hand would fall on his shoulder, and he would take care not to let go again till they were within the gates of St. Jim's. There Levison would hardly care to repeat that his name was Herbert Smith; it wouldn't be much use if he did. Sefton chuckled aloud at the thought.

The sound of his chuckle was followed by a cautious footfall, and he started. Under the trees it was intensely dark; he had chosen that spot so that Levison should not see him when he came by. The sound of footsteps was guide enough for Soften. He peered through the gloom and dimly made out a form—certainly not high enough to be that of a man.

That was enough for Sefton. Like a lion from his lair, he rushed forth, and his grip fell upon a shoulder and closed there like a vice.

"Got you, you young cad!" he exclaimed.
What happened next seemed like an earthquake, a
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cyclone, and a nightmare all rolled into one to the unfortunate Sefton.

Dim forms started up on all sides. Hands were laid upon him in the darkness. He was wrenched away from his captive, and bumped heavily on the ground.

Five or six fellows at least were piling on him in the dark, and Sefton went down under them, dazed and breathless and gasping.

"Grooh! Let go! Let go! Levison, I know you! I'll report this to the Head! Let me get up, hang you!"

Setton, to his rage and disappointment, was whirled off the ground, and bumped down on it again—hard. He struggled furiously and tried to hit out, but his wrists were being held in a tenacious grip, and his struggles were useless.

And his assailants did not speak a word—not a syllable. Sefton guessed that they were afraid to give themselves away by their voices, and that was enough to tell him that they belonged to St. Jim's. Evidently there was a gang of them, friends of Levison's, of course—his companions in vice. Sefton thought he could guess whom they were. He knew Levison's friends well enough.

"You young hounds! Ow! Grooh! I know you—Gore, Crooke, Mellish—yow-ow—and Pigott! Gerrooogh! Lemme go, you young fiends!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!
There was a subdued chuckle from the unseen

assailants. After the last bump Sefton felt himself dragged along. He struggled desperately, but he was dragged, rolled, and bumped along the dark path towards the ditch. He knew what was coming, and he yelled desperately for help.

"Gug-gug-gug-ug!"

Sefton's yells were cut short in a wild gurgling splash deep into the ditch. It was flowing with water from recent rain, and under the water was soft mud. Sefton went right in.

He floundered and gurgled and guggled in the drink, and, as he did so, there was a laugh and the sound of rapidly-retreating footsteps.

The maddened prefect scrambled. Water and mud squelched out of his boots, and ran down in pools from his clothes. There was an unpleasant smell about him too; the mud in that ditch was not fresh.

"Oh—oh! Grooh! The young hounds! Grooh! I'll have them sacked! Yow-ow! I'll have them flogged! Gerroogh! I'll report this to the Head. Oh, my hat!"

A figure in grey flitted past the drenched and muddy prefect as he gouged mud from his eyes and scraped it from his features.

Sefton spotted the glimmer of grey in the dark, and made a wild rush at it.

"Levison, stop! I—"

The figure vanished. Sefton heard running feet and panting breath in the dark lane. Heedless of the mud that clung to him and the water squelching out of his boots, he rushed desperately in pursuit. His assailants had escaped, but at least Levison should not escape.

Clank! Jingle! Whirr! In the darkness of the lane there was the sound of a bicycle, and the figure in gray vanished.

Sefton halted, with an imprecation.
 "The young hound! He had his bike here! No go!"
 It was evidently no go! The cyclist had already vanished.
 And Sefton, drenched and dripping, muddy and furious,
 tramped a weary way home to St. Jim's, not feeling that
 he had been so very lucky, after all.

CHAPTER 12.

Two Lovely Black Eyes.

"WUN like anythin', deah boys!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Put it on!" gasped Tom Merry.

The seven juniors were speeding up the dark lane as if they were on the cinder path. The scheme had worked like an oracle.

They had tracked Sefton to the Green Man, they had

found him in cover, they had bumped him and ducked him, and they had scudded off while he was extricating himself from the ditch. All they had to do now was to get back to the school before they were missed, and before Sefton could overtake them. That was easy enough with the excellent start they had.

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled breathlessly as they ran. From their own peculiar point of view they were fully justified in handling the interfering New House prefect. They were really standing up for the rights of old Kildare. If Kildare wouldn't take the trouble to keep his end up against interfering New House cads—why, it was up to Tom Merry & Co. to keep it up for him. There wasn't a young scamp in the party who was not perfectly convinced of that.

All the same, they knew that the powers that were would not look upon it in that light. Ducking a prefect—even an interfering prefect—would be found to be a decidedly serious business if it came out. And Tom Merry & Co. put their best foot foremost to get back to the school. It would be necessary to prove a very strong alibi that evening. By the time Sefton came squealing his way in, all those good boys had to be quietly doing their preparation in their studies.

"And the uttah ass called us Goah and Cwooke, and the west!" chuckled Arthur Augustus, as they slackened down a little at last to take breath. "The frightful duflah thinks he is on Levison's twack, and so he supposed it was Levison's friends!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He'll accuse them when he comes in," grinned Lowther; "and they'll be able to prove that they haven't been out of doors since locking-up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he can't suspect us," sniggered Digby. "That's the best of being known to be such nice boys. Even Sefton wouldn't suspect us of hanging round the Green Man."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ting-a-ling-a-ling—buzzzz!"

It was the ringing of a bicycle-bell close behind them in the distance. The juniors looked round hastily.

"Some widin' without a light!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Get aside!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors had almost reached the cross-roads, where a lamp shed a dim light over the four turnings, glimmering under a signboard. They all looked indignantly at the cyclist as he swept up without a light.

Tom Merry uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Levison's double!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Collar him!" yelled Blake.

There was no doubt about it. The cyclist, as he came pedalling desperately on, came into the radius of the road-lamp, and the juniors all saw the grey clothes, and the aquiline face that was so like Levison's.

They closed round the cyclist at once.

They knew that Sefton was still far away, and there was no chance of his coming up for some time. They had been running like the wind. And it was an opportunity that might never occur again for dealing with Levison's double. As we know, they had laid a deep little scheme all ready for their next meeting with Master Herbert Smith, who had the cheek to resemble so strongly a St. Jim's fellow.

"Stop!" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, watah! Halt, you wascal!"

The cyclist did not stop. Though the juniors were all round his machine, he made a desperate effort to pedal on at full speed, and so desperate was it that he almost succeeded.

Blake and Herries reeled away from the wheel as it crashed on them, and yelled with pain, and a back-handed blow sent Arthur Augustus staggering, with the "claret" oozing from his noble nose.

A flying pedal caught Digby on the shin, and he hopped and roared, and Manners was bumped over, and fell.

But Tom Merry and Monty Lowther both had their hands on the rider, and, in spite of his fierce effort, he could not break away.

His machine curled round, and he was dragged off into the road, and the bicycle rolled in the dust.

The junior in grey struggled fiercely. But the other fellows were quickly all round him again, excepting Digby, who was nursing his shin and groaning.

"Got the wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, holding his damaged nose with one hand and the prisoner's ear with the other. "Hold the cad tight, deah boys!"

"We've got him!"

The junior in grey panted.

"Let me go! I don't know you! How dare you stop me on the road! If you want to rob me, I—I—"

"We don't want to wob you, you wottah?"

"Let me go!"

"What's the hurry?" smiled Tom Merry. "We're rather in a hurry ourselves; but you can't be pressed for time, as you generally go home with the milk in the morning, don't you, Master Herbert Smith?"

"I—I've got to get home!"

"Wubbish! Stand woud in a wing, deah boys, while I give him a feahful twashin'! It won't take me long to twash a smokin', boozing, gamblin' cad!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "Leave him to me!"

"Wubbish! He has the cheek to be exactly like a fellow in my Form. He is not the beastly double of a Shell fellow. Besides, he twated me with gwoss dis-wospect last week. Thwe of the bwutes chucked me out in the wain and spoiled my clobber. This cad gave me a feahful knock while the othah bwutes were holdin' me. I am goin' to twash him!"

"Well, buck up, or Sefton will be here," said Blake, with a glance down the road.

There was no sign of Sefton yet. Having lost his victims, the New House prefect was returning at a walk, and it was a long road.

"Look here, I'm not going to fight you!" exclaimed the junior in grey savagely.

"Wats! You laid hands on me when there were thwee of you, and you are a disgustin' blackguard, and you wequire a lesson!"

"Buck up!" said Manners.

The juniors had formed a ring round the two, and there was no escape for Master Herbert Smith, if that was his name. He cast a hunted look round, but every way of escape was barred.

"I won't fight!"

"Wats! I'm goin' to give you a black eye, for a vewy particulah weason! I am sowwy if it is disagweable to you, but I have a vewy particulah weason for wantin' to give you a black eye—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly idiot—"

"The wottah has the cheek to have a voice just like Levison's, too," said Arthur Augustus, in wonder.

"I ain't satisfied that it's not Levison," growled Herries. "I know Towser—"

"Oh, wats! Look here, Master Smith, are you goin' to put up your hands?"

"No, I'm not!"

"Bai Jove! I wegard you as a funk!"

"Let me go!"

"What's to be done, deah boys? I can't hit a fellow who won't put up his hands. I wegard it as disgustin' bad form on his part, when I've told him stwaight that I have a particulah weason for wantin' to give him a black eye."

"All serene!" said Blake. "More ways than one of killing a cat. We'll cut off some of his front hair with my penknife—that will settle it just as well. Better, in fact."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus, with a nod, "pewwaps you're wight, Blake. Cut off plenty of his hair—it's just like Levison's hair, too."

"Stop it!" yelled the boy in grey. "I—I—I won't have it! I—"

"You can't help it, my son," grinned Lowther. "You're in the hands of the Amalekites, you see. You've got the nerve to be too much like one of our chaps—"

"I—I can't help that."

"Xanno; but you can help being a gambling blackguard. If you were decent, it wouldn't matter; if you were clean, you could resemble me if you liked, and I wouldn't say a word," said Lowther generously. "As it

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

is, we've got to crop your mop a bit, to make a distinction, see?"

"I—I— Keep that knife away! I—I'll fight that silly idiot, if you like," panted the junior in grey.

"Oh, all right! Take your choice," said Blake, closing his penknife. "I'm not much of a barber, anyway, and I don't want to scalp you."

"Put up your hands, you wotah! I warn you that I am goin' to give you a fearful thwashin'!"

"It's understood, you let me go if I fight this chap?" exclaimed the junior in grey, with a hurried glance down the dark lane, as if he, too, feared pursuit.

"Honour bright!" said Tom Merry.

"Without cutting my hair, or anything?"

"That's understood."

"Good! I'm ready!"

And the junior in grey rushed to the attack before Arthur Augustus, who was always deliberate in his movements, had time to put up his hands. His fist crashed into D'Arcy's eye, and the swell of St. Jim's went down with a heavy bump.

"Oh! Gwooh!"

"Here, fair play!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "D'Arcy wasn't ready, you cad!"

"Oh, my eye! Bai Jove! Why, I'll make wibbons of the wotah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, scrambling to his feet. "I gegard that as a foul blow! Howevah, I'm weady now."

And this time it was Arthur Augustus who rushed to the attack. One of his eyes was closed, but the other was glittering with the light of battle. The junior in grey met his attack savagely, but there was no resisting the swell of St. Jim's, whose blood was at boiling-point. He knocked Master Herbert Smith right and left.

After a couple of minutes hammer and tongs, Arthur Augustus's right came home in the young blackguard's left eye, and Master Smith went down as if he had been shot.

He lay gasping on the ground, and the warlike Gussy pranced round him like a war-horse, calling on him excitedly to come on.

"Had enough, you cad?" demanded Blake.

"Groo! Oh, yes! Oh, my eye!" groaned the junior in grey.

"Wats! I'm not finished yet."

"Yes, you are," grinned Blake. "You don't want to commit cadslaughter, Gussy! And if he doesn't have a prize black eye after that whack, I'm a Prussian! Let's get on; we shall have Sefton here jolly soon, unless he stays to comb the mud out of his whiskers."

The junior in grey staggered to his feet. He clutched at his cycle, threw himself into the saddle, and rode away without a word, but at a breathless speed. The juniors did not raise a hand to interfere with him. The fellow was evidently an utter cad, as the foul blow he had struck testified; but he had had his licking, though not so complete as he deserved.

"Kim on!" said Blake.

The juniors hurried on their way. Arthur Augustus caressed his eye tenderly. There was no doubt that he, as well as Levison's double, would have a beautiful black eye on the morrow. That had not been part of the programme at all, and so Arthur Augustus was not wholly satisfied. Tom Merry looked back, and in the light of the lamp they had left behind he spotted a muddy figure tramping on.

"Sefton!" murmured Tom Merry softly. "We haven't been any too quick. Run for it, my infants!"

"Yaas, wathah—wun like anythin', deah boys!"

The juniors ran hard. The cyclist had vanished before them on the dark road, and they did not see him again.

But they covered the ground very quickly, and reached the school wall. To climb it and drop down into the quadrangle was the work of a very few moments. Then they strolled into the School House with an easy air, as if they had just come in from a "sprint" round the quad.

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CHAPTER 13.

A Startling Discovery.

"WHAT? Who is that?"

Mr. Carrington uttered the question in shocked tones, as a muddy figure tramped into the doorway of the School House. The Housemaster gazed at it in amazement. Through the daubs of mud on a red, furious face he could barely recognise Sefton of the New House.

"Sefton!" exclaimed Kildare. "What the deuce—"

"Sefton, be jabers!" ejaculated Reilly of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a ripple of laughter among the School House fellows. Nobody liked Sefton, and there wasn't the faintest sympathy for him in his plight. In fact, the School House fellows seemed to regard his horrid plight as a first-class joke. Even Kildare was grinning. Mr. Carrington made a gesture, and the laughter died away, but there were still subdued chuckles.

"What does this mean, Sefton?" asked the Housemaster.

Sefton was spluttering with fury.

"I have been ducked in a ditch by boys belonging to this House!" he hissed. "I come to you, sir, exactly as I have had to walk home."

"Shocking!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"I have seen a boy of this House, sir, smoking and playing cards in a low pub in the village," said Sefton. "It was Levison of the Fourth. I was about to take him forcibly to bring him here, when I was set upon by his friends, and treated like this."

"If that is true it is very serious," said Mr. Carrington drily. "You are probably aware that there is a boy strongly resembling Levison."

"I do not believe that, sir. I know it was Levison."

"It has not been proved," said the Housemaster.

"However, if you can prove that it was Levison you are behaving disgracefully, it is your duty to do so. Kildare, will you see whether Levison is in the house."

"Certainly, sir."

Kildare ran up the stairs to Levison's study. There was a big crowd in the hall now. Curiously enough, seven juniors, who were generally well to the fore when anything was "on," were absent just now. The Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 were in their quarters, grinding away at their preparation. They discreetly deemed it wise to keep away from public observation just then, and, besides, they had their prep to do, or as much of it as possible.

It was not likely that Sefton's suspicions would turn upon them, as they were known not to be friends of Levison's, and he believed that Levison's friends had lain in wait for him outside the Green Man. Still, it was only prudent to keep out of the limelight for a bit, as Blake sagely remarked.

Kildare came downstairs alone.

"Is not Levison in the house?" exclaimed Mr. Carrington, with a start.

"Yes, sir; he's gone to bed."

"Indeed! It is not bedtime yet."

"He says he has a headache, sir. I found him asleep; he said he had been in bed for an hour or more. Shall I tell him to dress?"

"Did anyone know that Levison had a headache?" asked Mr. Carrington.

"Faith, he told me he was going to bed early, I remember," said Reilly. "Sure, I asked him at tea if he'd have a game of chess this evening, and he said he didn't feel quite equal to it, sir."

"I do not think it is necessary for Levison to get up," said Mr. Carrington quietly. "You have evidently mistaken another person for him, Sefton."

"It was not a mistake. He got away from me on a bicycle, or I should have caught him and brought him home with me!" exclaimed Sefton savagely.

"Sure, Levison hasn't a bike," said Reilly. "We all know that he sold it at Hanney's a couple of weeks ago at least."

"That's so, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley.

"I do not see how a boy could take out or bring in

a bicycle after the gates were locked, and Levison was certainly present at calling-over after locking up," said Mr. Carrington. "You will see that you are mistaken, Sefton."

"It was Levison, and he had a bike," said Sefton obstinately. "He may deceive you, but he can't take me in. And the others—perhaps they've gone to bed, too—the fellows who jumped on me in the dark!"

"Have you any idea of their names?"

"Levison's friends, of course—Mellish and Crooke and Gore."

"I haven't been outside 'he house!'" yelled Mellish excitedly. "Blenkinsop knows; he was in the study with me. We've done our prep together."

"And I've been doing mine with Talbot and Skimpole!" exclaimed Gore indignantly.

"And I've been playing draughts with Noble!" exclaimed Crooke.

"And we've only just left off to come out and see what the row was!" corroborated Kangaroo of the Shell.

Sefton's jaw dropped.

He had jumped to that conclusion, but it was only too evident that he had made a mistake. He had nothing more to say.

"You see that you are mistaken, Sefton," said Mr. Carrington coldly.

"I—I suppose so, sir," stammered the prefect.

"You were evidently attacked by persons who do not belong to this school at all—perhaps friends of the boy you took for Levison," said the Housemaster. "You should be careful before making these accusations, Sefton. I must add that it was not specially your business to be looking after boys belonging to this House. The School House prefects are quite equal to their business."

Kildare smiled. Sefton had evidently carried out the scheme he had announced in the captain's study, but it did not seem to have been a howling success. The bully of the New House did not reply to Mr. Carrington. He swung away, and tramped out of the house, baffled. Indeed, he was beginning almost to believe in Levison's double himself now. He left a muddy pool where he had been standing in the hall.

Talbot of the Shell looked into the Terrible Three's study a few minutes later. He found that trio of worthy youths hard at work on their prep.

"Nearly finished?" asked Talbot, with a smile.

"Sha'n't get finished at all," said Manners.

"Somebody's been ducking Sefton in a ditch," said Talbot, laughing. "I rather expected to find that you fellows hadn't done your prep."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He was after Levison's double," explained Tom Merry. "Thought it was Levison, and thought he would do Kildare's work for him, and get him slanged by the Head. So we chipped in. Did he look muddy?"

"He was simply swimming in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah; it's wathah funnay, you know!" chimed in Arthur Augustus's voice at the door. "But look at my eye, deah boys!"

"Behold, it is black but not comely!" grinned Monty Seather.

"I haven't done my pweep," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall get into a wov with old Latham in the mornin'. That doesn't mattah so much, but I shall have a howwid black eye. It will look disgwaceful!"

"Go and get a beefsteak from the House-dame," said Talbot. "Mrs. Mimms is a good sort."

"Bai Jove, that's a wippin' ideah!"

Arthur Augustus hurried away to the housekeeper's room. Mrs. Mimms looked at him severely when he made his request.

"I hope you have not been fighting with Master Levison," she said.

"Wathah not," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm on wippin' good terms with Levison now. 'I've been standin' up for him, in fact. Can I have a beefsteak?"

"I am sorry; I have none," said the House-dame. "I had to tell Master Levison the same."

"Levison!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, jumping almost clear of the floor. "You—you don't mean to say that Levison has a black eye, ma'am!"

"A dreadful black eye—worse than yours," said Mrs. Mimms. "That is what made me think you had been fighting. Deary me, Master D'Arcy, what ever is the matter?"

Arthur Augustus looked as if he were going to faint for a moment. But he pulled himself together.

"You are quite sure that Levison has a black eye?" he said dazedly.

"Certainly!"

"Which eye, ma'am?" asked Arthur Augustus, with a gleam of hope. If it turned out to be the right eye, it was still all serene. He remembered very clearly, "plugging" Levison's double in the left eye.

"The left, Master D'Arcy."

"Oh, gweat Scott! The uttah wottah! The awful spoofoh! The disgustin' cad!"

"Master D'Arcy!"

"Sowwy, Mrs. Mimms! I weally beg your pardon, but that spoofoh wascal—Where is he?"

"He has gone to bed."

"Oh, all sewene! All wight. I'm afwaid I made a little mistake in my statement just now, ma'am, and it was Levison I have been fightin' with aftah all. Sowwy, you haven't a beefsteak. Good-night, Mrs. Mimms!"

And Arthur Augustus hurried away, in a state of suppressed excitement and exasperation. It was bedtime now, and Arthur Augustus just caught the Terrible Three as they came away from their study, and their unfinished prep.

"You fellahs come along to our dorm aftah lights-out," he whispered.

"Anything on?"

"Yaas, wathah! Make it ten o'clock, so that we shall be safe from the beastly pweepets. Don't fail; it's awf'ly important."

"A feed?" asked the Terrible Three together.

"Wats! No."

"Then what's on?" demanded Tom Merry.

"The twial and punishment of a disgustin' spoofoh," said Arthur Augustus sternly. "I have made a shockin' discovery."

"Well?"

"Levison's got a black eye!"

"My only hat!"

And as the prefects came along to shepherd the juniors off to bed, nothing more could be said just then. But the chums of the Shell did not forget that appointment in the Fourth-Form dormitory.

CHAPTER 14.

The Way of the Transgressor.

"NOW, then, turn in!" said Kildare.

The Fourth-Formers turned in. Levison was already in bed when the rest of the fellows arrived in the dormitory. Apparently he was asleep. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had not said a word yet to any but the Terrible Three. But his noble brow was very stern.

His ripping idea had worked, but not in the way he had intended. With a simple faith in Levison's assurances, and in his supposed proofs, he had believed in the existence of the black sheep's double. His idea of giving Master Herbert Smith a black eye, so that it would be clearly demonstrated to everybody that he was quite a different person from Levison of the Fourth, had worked out backwards, as it were. He had given Master Smith that black eye, and Levison of the Fourth had brought it home to St. Jim's.

Kildare turned out the lights and retired from the dormitory. There was the usual chatter from bed to bed, but Arthur Augustus did not join in it. He wanted the prefect on duty to be quite clear before proceedings were started.

Not a sound came from Levison. D'Arcy did not believe that he was asleep. Having failed to obtain a beefsteak, Levison had no means of curing his black eye. It would show up plainly enough on the morrow. The cad of the Fourth was probably thinking it over, as he lay feigning slumber, trying to devise some scheme for accounting for it. Possibly he would get up before

rising-bell, and contrive a fall downstairs to account for the black eye. By going to bed before the others, he had succeeded in keeping it secret for that evening; or so he believed. And that gave him a respite—time to plan a "dodge." For he knew what to expect if his precious story of a double was bowled out. The juniors would not betray him to the Housemaster, much as he deserved it. But they would make him suffer for his sins, and the useful double would have to vanish for good. And without that cunning invention, Levison's little games would be too risky to be kept up.

D'Arcy could guess the thoughts that were in the mind of the cad of the Fourth. But he gave no sign. It was not till the buzz of voices was dying away, and the juniors settling down to sleep, that the swell of St. Jim's chipped in.

"Pway don't go to sleep yet, deah boys."

"Why not?" yawned Blake. "I'm sleepy."

"Wait till ten o'clock, deah boy."

"What on earth for?"

"The Shell fellows are comin' in."

"My hat! What are they coming for?"

"To see justice done," said Arthur Augustus mysteriously.

Blake sat up in bed, in great astonishment, and peered through the gloom at his chum.

"Are you off your rocker?" he demanded.

"Wats! Levison has a black eye."

"What!"

There was a gasp from Levison's bed.

"And we're goin' to see justice done," said Arthur Augustus. "It's all wright; there goes ten o'clock!"

"Here we are—here we are—here we are again!" sang a whispering voice, recognisable as Monty Lowther's.

The Terrible Three came quietly in, and closed the dormitory door after them.

A match flickered out, and Blake lighted a candle-end. Herries lighted another. All the juniors were sitting up in bed now, excepting Levison. He lay trembling. D'Arcy's unexpected revelation had completely knocked on the head the half-formed plans in his mind. The game was up now, with a vengeance.

The chums of Study No. 6 jumped out of bed.

"Levison!" said Blake, in an ominous voice.

Snore!

"He's asleep," chuckled Tom Merry. "I'll try the water-jug."

Levison sat up in bed.

"What do you want?" he growled sullenly.

"We want you, my pippin," said Blake. "Get out of bed!"

"I won't!"

Bump! Levison rolled out of bed, propelled by energetic shoves. He picked himself up, gritting his teeth. In the candle-light his black eye was only too prominent.

"Touch me, and I'll yell for the prefects!" he said.

"Good!" said Lowther. "We'll be glad to see them here. They'll be glad to see Master Herbert Smith, and know that his right name's Levison."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison panted. He was fairly caught. He dared not call the prefects on the scene. He cast a hunted look round the dormitory. All eyes were upon him.

"Faith, and phwat's the matter?" asked Reilly.

"What has Levison done?"

"Lied and sneaked and rotted, and taken us all in!" said Blake. "He's lied to the Head. He's lied to the Housemaster. He's lied to Kildare! He's lied to us! And now he's going to pay the piper."

"But what in thunder—" began Lumley-Lumley.

"Listen, and I will a tale unfold," said Tom Merry. "Gussy had a brilliant idea: you know what brilliant ideas Gussy has—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"His idea was to find Levison's double, and give him a black eye, as a conclusive proof that Levison's double wasn't Levison. Well, we found him, and Gussy gave him a black eye. He gave Gussy one, too, but that doesn't matter—"

"Bai Jove! Doesn't it? It was a foul blow——"

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OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND" "THE MERRY" "THE PRAISEWORTHY" "THE BERRY"

"Order in court! Gussy gave Levison's double a black eye, and Levison's got it!"

"My hat!" said Hammond. "Then there ain't a double!"

"There is not! Levison has been lying like a Prussian, all along the line. Now he's going to have another trial, and he's going to pay for his manifold crimes. Gather round!"

All the juniors were out of bed by this time. They gathered round Levison, who was looking pale and scared. The black bruise round his eye showed up to great advantage on his white face.

"We've got no time to waste, or some nosey prefect will see the light, and come nosing in," said Blake. "But we'll be fair. We're going to treat the cad fairly before we slaughter him. Have you got anything to say, Levison?"

"I—I—I got this black eye—er—falling downstairs," said Levison, with trembling lips.

"That might have passed in the morning," said Tom Merry; "though I don't know about even that. But it won't wash now. You are the fellow we met on the road, who pretended he was your double."

"I—I wasn't! I—I haven't been out!" muttered Levison desperately. "I—I'm telling the truth. I—I fell downstairs, and—knocked my eye on the banisters——"

"When?"

"Nearly an hour ago."

"You told Kildare you'd been in bed an hour," said Lumley-Lumley; "and that was well over half an hour ago."

"I—I mean—I forgot—it was about—about eight o'clock——"

"Whoppers!" said Lumley-Lumley. "I was talking to Hammond at the foot of the stairs when eight o'clock struck, and you jolly well didn't fall down then."

"No need for him to tell out any more lies," said Blake briskly. "Now, Levison, we'll give you a chance to make a clean breast of it. You're not going to disgrace your House, and make a general mystery, and tell us all lies, and get off scot-free. You're stopped. You can confess, and we'll punish you on go on telling lies, and tell 'em to the Housemaster. I give you my word that if you don't own up we'll take you before Mr. Carrington!"

That was enough for Levison.

"I—I—I—I don't mind owning up," he stammered.

"It—it was a lark."

"You've not got a double?"

"N-n-no."

"Then why did you say you had?" demanded Blake.

"Well, Tom Merry had a double, you know, and—and it occurred to me that—that a fellow with a double could do things rather safely, you know, so—so——"

"Such things as smoking, and gambling, and going into pubs—what!" demanded Herries. "You rotten blackguard! Didn't I tell you fellows all along that it was spoof? Towser——"

"Look here," growled Levison, "tain't your business, anyway."

"My dog Towser——"

"Never mind Towser," said Tom Merry. "As the prisoner at the bar has confessed, Towser's evidence is not required by the prosecution."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All the same, Towser——"

"Oh, blow Towser!" said Tom. "Out with it, Levison. You've told enormous lies, and, worse than that, you've made us parties to them. We've helped to back up your lies, because we thought they were true."

"Yaas, wathah! That is the wottenest part of all."

"How did you get back in time the day Gussy spotted you?" demanded Blake.

Levison grinned faintly.

"On my bike," he said.

"But you sold your bike," exclaimed Lumley-Lumley.

"You see, I was hard-up," said Levison, "and—and

(Continued on col. 2, page 26.)

THE FIRST CHAPTERS OF OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY.

OFFICER AND TROOPER.



An Enthralling New
Story of Life in the
British Army.

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By
BEVERLEY KENT.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.

Bob Hall, a fine, strapping young fellow, succeeds in joining a famous Fusilier regiment, known as the Die Hards. After Bob has been in the regiment for some time his ne'er-do-well cousin, Captain Lascelles, joins also. Bob finds that, so far from being friendly, Lascelles is constantly endeavoring to get him into trouble, with the object of having him dismissed from the Service in disgrace. Bob, however, with the help of his many friends, is successful in defeating the villain's schemes. Bob comes into contact with the Earl of Dalkeith, who finds that Bob is some connection of his family's, and promises to have investigations made. It transpires that Bob is heir to a large fortune, of which Lascelles is in enjoyment. After plotting the downfall of two other officers in the regiment, and being exposed by Bob, Lascelles is compelled to send in his papers and resign his commission. Bob Hall is promoted to the rank of lance-sergeant. One of his duties is to take charge of the canteen accounts, as the non-com, who previously did this duty is going on furlough. When Bob comes to examine the books, he finds the accounts have been tampered with, and that twenty pounds is missing. Bob will have to replace the money, and as he has not got twenty pounds, he is distracted. (Now go on with the Story.)

On the Trail.

The blow at finding that Bryant, whom he had trusted, was nothing better than a rogue, was bad enough. But Bob had been a friend of Bryant's, they had been constantly together; would not anyone say that Bob had been a partner in Bryant's crime, and had reaped the evil benefit? And now that twenty sovereigns had disappeared on the night that Bryant had disappeared, and after Bob had signed the takings as correct, who would believe that the lad, too, was not dishonest? They would say that he had been hand-in-hand with Bryant.

"Well, Hal, studying astronomy? I didn't know that you went in for star-gazing?"

Bob turned and saw Haines, dressed in evening-dress, chuckling softly. The subaltern was on his way back to his rooms after dining with civilian friends in Edinburgh. A ray of hope came into the poor lad's heart.

"Will you—will you, sir, accompany me to the canteen?"

"Certainly, Hal! What's up? By Jove, you do look bad! I hope nothing has gone wrong?"

"I've got something awful to tell you, sir!" Bob murmured, as he led the way. "I'm in a desperate hole, and I'm afraid I'm ruined!"

He opened the door as he spoke, and then turned on the gas. Haines' whole manner had changed. From the rollicking, light-hearted subaltern he had quickly become the grave and earnest friend. He knew Bob, and thought more highly of him than the lad himself was ever likely to know as long as the exigencies of the Service demanded that they should keep their respective ranks. Now he locked the door, and smiled encouragingly.

"Let's hear the trouble," he said kindly, as he flung his cloak and hat on the counter. "The accounts wrong—eh? Don't worry, if that's the case, Hal. Why, we know you're as good as gold!"

"Bryant has bolted faltered. 'What's and he's let me in for

books are all cooked." Bob told twenty pounds to-night,

"Where's he gone?"

"I think to London."

"Then you go after him by the first train in the morning, and be sure to communicate every day with us. I'll see that your absence is explained. The adjutant will listen to me. Mind, though, not to neglect reporting yourself. Now we'll look over the accounts together, and when I'm convinced that Bryant is a thief, I'll have a warrant issued for his arrest at once. Don't be downhearted, Hal. All will yet come right!"

Some hours later, Haines and Bob left the canteen, and the latter, having changed into mufti, hurried to the station. A revengeful pair of eyes watched him on the platform, and a few seconds later Briggs had wired to Lascelles. With a sigh of relief, Bob lay back on the cushions as the train glided out of Edinburgh. How was he to know the danger that lay ahead?

The train crossed the Border and rolled along the length of England, whilst Bob sat, wide-eyed and consumed with feverish anxiety, longing for the moment when he should reach London, and be able to engage in active pursuit of the man whose villainy threatened the destruction of his hopes. At last, as the evening was drawing in, the train stopped at Willesden for the collection of tickets, and a few moments later it slowly glided into Euston Station.

Bob alighted quickly, and crossed the platform to a taxi. During the journey he had racked his brains in search of some plan by which he might succeed in overtaking Bryant, and the thought had occurred to him that he would do well to seek the support of Sergeant Gibson, through whom he had enlisted, and with whom he had corresponded since joining the Die Hards.

As Bob put his foot on the step a tall, dark man, who had been eagerly awaiting the arrival of the train, brushed past the lad, dropped his stick, and stooped slowly to pick it up.

"St. George's Barracks, and drive as hard as you can!" Bob cried to the driver.

The man watching Bob moved on, jumped into another cab, and gave his instructions.

"Follow that taxi on ahead, and don't let it out of your sight," he directed. "I'll double your fare if you keep up with it."

Leaning back on the cushions, Bob sighed with pleasure as, passing under the arch, the taxi sped down to Tottenham Court Road, and shaped its course for Trafalgar Square. Behind, at a distance of forty yards, followed the other, and in a long procession cabs and motors, piled high with luggage, rolled also out of the station in a continuous stream. Amidst the usual din and clatter Bob had no reason to surmise that he was being deliberately followed.

The lights of London, the hurry and scurry, the long streets of gorgeous shops, the rumbling of the 'buses, the mighty roar which hovers always over the vast city, were all calculated to quicken the pulse and bring elation to the heart of one like Bob, whose early days had been passed in the centre of England's great metropolis. Amidst the familiar scenes, with the thousand memories they stirred to life again, the forebodings of a few hours ago faded away like an ugly nightmare, and gave place to a keen relish in the chase, and the

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"LOYAL AND TRUE!"

ESSAY

WEDNESDAY

a firm belief that it would be crowned with success. The hours of suspense had passed, and the moment for action had come.

The taxi glided up to St. George's Barracks, and Bob alighted and hurried to the gate.

"Has Sergeant Gibson passed out yet?" he demanded eagerly of the sentry. "I'm Sergeant Hall, of the Die Hards, and I want particularly to see him."

"He's in the barracks still. You can go," the sentry replied.

And Bob hurried forward, whilst the sentry, resuming his walk, eyed the young sergeant with the critical look of an expert.

"Seems a smart young chap!" he murmured. "Brisk and well set up. The Die Hards are a good crowd, too. He can't be a mug to have won promotion so young!"

Bob rushed open the door and entered the large, bleak room into which Gibson had ushered him on that eventful day when he had left his civilian life behind for ever. The room had been crowded with men of every class and condition of life—some wan with hunger, some timid, some laughing, some downcast; clerks, costers, country bumpkins, gairdies, all jostling together. Though long since forgotten, their faces seemed to creep out mistily from the shadows in which the room was shrouded.

What had been their luck? he had wondered, as he realised the great change that had come over his own life since then. Then he was hoping to be accepted as a recruit; now he was a sergeant, and the equal of the small knot of non-coms, talking and laughing together in the far corner after their day's work was over.

Bob crossed the floor, and the sergeants looking in his direction knew at a glance, though Bob was in mufti, that it was a cavalry soldier who was approaching.

"Sergeant Gibson here?" Bob cried.

"A'! Who wants him?"

Gibson stepped out from the cluster and eyed Bob curiously in the semi-darkness.

"You don't remember me," Bob laughed. "But then so many chaps go through your hands that—"

"Half a mo!" Gibson interrupted solemnly. "I know your face, though it's altered since last we met, and before long I'll put a name on you. I'm better at faces than names, though. Still, still—Ah! How do you do? You're the chap as I sent on to the Die Hards—eh? You came straight from an office in the City? You're Hall—Bob Hall—eh? Well, old man, I take it as friendly of you to look me up; though, of course, I might have guessed on that, for you've written to me more'n once, and glad I was to hear you liked the life. Chaps, this is Bob Hall—Corporal Hall. I don't know as—"

He stopped and looked questioning at Bob, whose hand he still retained in his strong grasp.

"Sergeant Hall?" Bob laughed. "I got another rise since last I wrote to you, Gibson."

"Bravo! Sergeant Hall, of the Die Hards! I guess that's a good enough introduction to any soldier. Well, Bob, what's brought you to London, and how long do you mean to stay here?"

Bob shook hands cordially with the other sergeants, and then he turned again to Gibson.

"I hope these fellows won't think too badly of me," he laughed; "but the fact is, Gibson, I've only just arrived in London, and I came on straight here to ask your private advice about a very ticklish bit of business. If you could spare me a few minutes, and if these chaps would excuse us, I'd—"

"Cut along, the pair of you!" an artillery sergeant grinned good-humouredly. "Don't stand on ceremony on our account. Biz is biz, and it don't do to neglect it. We're clearing out of this anyhow, so—"

"All right, Culper," Gibson assented. "I'll see you again in the morning. Come along, Hall! We'll go to some quiet place where we can have a talk in peace."

He led the way out of the room, and then he shot a swift, friendly glance at Bob.

"What's the trouble?" he inquired. "I could see you were trying to bottle up your feelings afore those chaps. You ain't in a scrape—eh? You haven't overstepped your furlough, or played any other silly game? Folks do forget themselves at times, and—"

"No, it's nothing like that; but, still, it's awfully serious," Bob explained, growing grave and anxious now, "that the moment had come on which so much depended. The canteen sergeant has bolted, and I want you to help me to find him. He's lower down the barracks, and he's let me in for the trouble. Bryant is his name, and he has friends here in London; so I've come down after him, with the consent of my squadron subaltern."

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Gibson whistled.

"That's bad!" he muttered. "What a cur the scoundrel must be to let you in! Help you? Of course I will, my lad! But I don't know as I can be of much use. When did Bryant get here?"

"This morning. He's had about ten hours' start of me."

"Humph! A bloke can do a lot in that time, if he's got his plans cut and dry. Just as like as not, though, Bryant has only come to London in the hope of hiding himself in this huge hive of a place. You're looking famished, and we have to talk this thing over before we can set to work, so we may as well have a meal whilst we're exchanging ideas. Push open that door. We'll find a spare table easy enough. I know the place of old."

Gibson marched into a restaurant, nodding cheerily to the proprietor, and selected a table at the farther end of the hall, fanned off, like the rest, by a high partition. Hardly had the friends taken their seats when the door again was opened, and the tall, dark man who had followed Bob from Euston walked slowly and softly up the carpeted floor, and sat down at the table adjoining Gibson's, so that their backs were only separated by the partition. Then, ordering his dinner, the stranger, left to himself and out of general observation, turned to one side, craned his neck, and listened eagerly to the conversation between Bob and his chum.

Bob was narrating the facts in connection with Bryant's roguery, and Gibson was listening in silence. When at last down his knife and fork and spoke in reply.

"I wouldn't do for you, Bob, to start off on your own account and search all Bryant's old haunts," he remarked decisively. "You'd be bound to knock up with his pals, and they'd give him the tip that you were on his tracks. A soldier's a soldier, whether he's in mufti or not, and the chaps would soon twig what you were up to."

"Then what's to be done?" You can't help me much in that case," Bob replied. "If I could know that I am a soldier, you'd have no chance of hiding the fact that you're another," he continued, with a grin. "Why, you see, I've the military stamp that I have, and no wonder! So—"

"It's not my idea that either of us should appear upon the scene until we can lay hands on Bryant for certain," Gibson explained. "No, I mean to work the job as I got a pal—a private detective—who'll get me the goods. I wonder of a fellow. He can take up anything he likes from experience how to get hold of info. without exciting suspicion. I'll put him on to work at once, and when he tracks down Bryant I'll wire to you. My friend Cooper don't waste time; he's like a terrier after a rat. I'll be off now, and do you call at Charing Cross Post Office about midnight and inquire if there's a telegram for you."

"Like as not Cooper will have come up with Bryant afore then, and if so, I'll wire to you. From what you've told me, Bryant is pretty certain to be hanging about the Mile End Road, and if that's the case, Cooper will have spotted him within an hour from now. Come along! We've no time to lose. No, you don't! You're my guest, old man, and I'll pay the reckoning."

Despite Bob's protests, Gibson insisted on standing treat; and, having settled the bill, the two friends hurried away.

The tall, sinister individual at the next table grinned evilly as he watched their retreating figures. He lit a cigarette, and lay back contentedly. Evidently he had no wish to follow Bob farther.

For several minutes he smoked and rested; then, having written a few notes in a pocket-book, he too sat up, took account and strolled out into the night. Hailing a cab, he was driven to the Mile End Road, and there he entered a post-office and despatched a telegram. Then he drove back to the West End and met Lascelles.

Meantime, Bob tramped the streets in an effort to kill time and curb his excitement until the hour should arrive when he could hope to hear from Gibson. Sharp on the stroke of midnight he entered the Charing Cross Post Office, and was handed a brown envelope.

Instantly he observed the telegram, he glanced at the contents. The wire, he had expected, had been sent from the Mile End Road. The telegram ran as follows:

"Go at once to 46, Gwalior Street. Bryant is there."

Trapped.

Down the Mile End Road the taxi rattled, Bob sitting grim and determined inside. At last the taxi was pulled up suddenly, and the driver spoke through the tube.

"Gwalior Street is two turnings to the right from here," he explained. "You told me not to leave the Mile End Road. Shall I go on, or will you get out now?"

For answer the lad sprang out to the pavement, and paid his fare. Then, grasping his stick tightly, and following the

(Continued on col. 2, page 26.)

directions he had received, he turned away from the main thoroughfare, and walked towards his destination.

Gvalior Street! Yes, there it was, the name written on the signboard, the street itself long and narrow, the houses tall and old, the road thick with mud, and the sidewalks unpaved and slippery—a mean, sinister-looking street, silent as the grave, badly lit, and badly kept.

The lad walked slowly down, seeking out the numbers. But most of the houses were wrapped in darkness, and he had often to strike a match before he could ascertain the one he sought.

At last he came to it—No. 46! There was a light in the hall, a light in the rooms above; the building gave signs of life and animation at variance with the forbidding darkness in which the rest of the street was cloaked. Bob mounted the steps and knocked at the door. Then he stood and listened eagerly.

Slipped feet crossed the hall, the door was opened, and a tall, thin man protruded a querulous face.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"Sergeant Bryant is here, I'd like to see him for a moment," Bob remarked lightly, though his heart was thumping with suspense.

The man seemed to hesitate, so the lad promptly put one foot inside the doorway.

"This ain't no time to come callin' on folks," the janitor growled. "Bryant was here, but I spects he's gone home. Anyhow—"

"I'll wait whilst you go and look," the lad retorted coolly. "I've come a long way to see him, and I can't chance missing him. There's a good chap, go along and ascertain for me if he's still here; and if he has left, kindly ask some of his friends where I'd be likely to find him."

As Bob spoke he availed himself of a chance to step into the hall, and the man closed the door and walked up the stairs. Presently he returned.

"You can go up to the first landing," he explained. "The folks there will tell you anything you want to know."

Swiftly mounting the stairs and knocking at a door, the lad entered a large, shabbily-furnished room, to find himself standing face to face with a couple of rough, evil-looking characters.

"I've come to see Sergeant Bryant, and I understand that you, perhaps, can give me his address," he began. "If so, please—"

"I'm sorry," one of the twain grinned at Bob Hall?

"You know me!" he cried. "Then Sergeant Bryant must have been here and have spoken about me, else how could you be able to identify me? I never saw either of you before, and—"

"You've got the telegram all right, anyhow," the ruffian interrupted. "We've been told to expect you, so we've been waiting up. Sit down and make yourself comfortable. I won't be long after the captain comes."

"The captain! What do you mean?"

"Captain Lascelles, of course! Ain't you his cousin? He's coming along to have a jaw with you."

Bob cast one swift glance at the door, whilst the terrible truth flashed upon him that by some mysterious means he had been trapped, and that he was in the clutches of a gang of villains. His apprehensions did not pass unobserved. The ruffian divided his thoughts, and one of them sprang forward and grasped his shoulders.

Shaking him off, the young sergeant planted a well-aimed blow on the point of his chin, and he crashed to the floor, splintering a table in his fall. With a cry of rage, the other dashed at Bob, who made for the door. Before he could reach it it banged and locked on the outside, and as he flung his weight against the panels the second scoundrel gripped him by the neck and dragged him back. Planting his knee against Bob's back, he bore him to the floor, and then, with his confederate, who had regained his feet, he struggled to pinion his stalwart young captive.

But the task was no easy one. Healthy exercise and a robust frame had made the lad as strong as a lion, and time and again he flung his assailants aside. They were on to him at once again, however, and the trio, with heaving chests and laboured breathing, rolled to and fro in the grim and desperate struggle.

Every moment Bob felt his strength decreasing, yet he fought on doggedly, hoping to wear down his captors, who gave strong signs of exhaustion, and it is possible that he would have got escaped had not the door been flung open again, admitting Lascelles, who dashed to the assistance of his hirelings.

Producing a pair of handcuffs, Lascelles slipped them over Bob's wrists, and then, walking to the door, he closed it once more, and shot a couple of bolts into their sockets.

"Let him up!" he drawled languidly. "He can't do any more mischief."

The men sprang away, and Bob, with manacled hands, rose with difficulty and faced Lascelles.

"You cur!" he gasped. "You low, mean hound! How dare you ensnare me like this? Do you think you will gain anything by it? I tell you, this is the worst night's work you've ever done!"

Lascelles, tapping a cigarette on his thumbnail, and then placing it in his mouth, smiled cynically as he struck a match.

"I told you I'd get even with you before long," he hissed. "But when I said that, I'd no reason to hope that such a lucky chance as this would come my way. You see what sort these fellows are," he continued contemptuously, waving his hand. "For a few pounds they'd do anything, and they've sunk so low that I can speak about them as I like so long as they know that they must look to me for payment. You're in rather dangerous company, and you won't gain much by bluster. I don't mean to revenge myself on you, though. I've come here to talk business and to make an offer, and somehow, I hardly think you'll be such a fool as to refuse my terms."

Bob was trembling with rage.

"To make me an offer?" he cried. "What sort do you think I am? It's—"

"Yes, an offer," Lascelles repeated, drawing a long envelope from his pocket. "You know that I'm out of the Service, and that means that my creditors are down on me more than ever. I can't stave 'em off any longer; I must either settle with them or go under. So, as you claim to be heir to what would come to me without difficulty and at once for free, or for you, I'm prepared to buy you out. You have no claim in point of law, but still you can keep as much of the property for a time at least, and I can't afford to wait. Therefore, I've had a deed drawn up, and if you sign it I'll give you five hundred pounds to-night. If you refuse—"

He looked at the two villains listening eagerly to his words, and then shrugged his shoulders.

Bob laughed scornfully.

"What if I refuse?" he scoffed.

Lascelles' face grew dark.

"If you refuse, I leave you to the mercy of our friends," he hissed; "and, in that case, I save five hundred pounds, and can claim the property at once," he continued meaningly. "I have no alternative, and I am a desperate man."

"So I'm to part with my birthright for five hundred sovereigns?" Bob suggested. "Because you're a desperate villain I'm to lose all that I'm entitled to. Captain Lascelles, do you want my answer? I need no time to think, for my mind is made up irrevocably."

The lad's eyes were shining brightly. He stood straight and defiant, his hands clasped together, his shoulders thrown back, and a look of contempt stamped on every feature of his manly young face. There was no trace of fear in his attitude or bearing; all other thoughts were merged in an overwhelming disdain of the cowardly scoundrel who would rob him so unblushingly and heartlessly.

"Perhaps you'd better wait and listen to me," Lascelles replied. He had begun to see that Bob was not made of the clay that yields to threats. "There's no use in being hasty. You're young, and you've got your life before you, and it's not easy to die before one's time. I speak plainly, for I'm driven to what I mean to do by circumstances that are too strong for me. I do not—"

"My mind's made up, I tell you. There's no use in talking any more. Do you want to know my answer?" Bob interjected icily. His eyes now were blazing, but his voice was still under his control.

"Then be careful what you say. Yes, what is your answer?"

"It is this!"

As Bob spoke, he took one step forward, raised his manacled wrists, and struck Lascelles full in the face. The coward staggered back, uttering a cry of pain, and raising his arm to his face. Then, swept away by passion, he sprang forward again. Again Bob struck him, and again he nearly fell.

"Seize him!" he gasped. "Keep him away! Overpower him! Kill him! He's a fiend, he's—"

One of the villains seized and raised a club. As Bob rushed at Lascelles again the ruffian delivered a blow from behind, and the lad fell with a groan. The scoundrel's accomplice stepped forward, his face blanched with fear.

"You've killed him!" he cried. "You fool, this is a swindling job. I told you to bring a sandbag in case of trouble. You—"

The three started and gazed at one another in terror. A loud knocking had arisen at the door below, and as Lascelles hurriedly blew out the lamp, the light from a balcony lantern flickered across the ceiling.

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"LOYAL AND TRUE!"

LOYAL AND TRUE!

"The police—they're below—they're in the street!" Lascelles gasped. "They'll find us here, and—and they'll see him. Why are they coming? Who are they after? Ah! There, they're thumping at the door again; they'll have it down in a few seconds! What's to become of us? What—"

"Keep your wool on, guv'nor!" one of the ruffians grumbled. "Joe Spence don't lead such a blameless life as that he's always ready to knock up against the bobbies! He don't walk into any traps—not much. Look sharp, and hold your row! We can get clear of this if half the Metropolitan Police were blocking up the whole of Gwalior Street."

"Ay; but they'll be on our tracks afore long," the other growled. "They'll be red-hot when they see—" He pointed to the prostrate figure on the floor.

Lascelles gazed down at Bob and shuddered. Then, seized with a sudden thought, he stooped down, unlocked the handcuffs, searched the lad's pockets, took away all tokens of identity, and unlocked the door. Spence beckoned to him to follow, and walking to a wall he pulled open a press built into the bricks. Stepping inside and pushing some clothes to one side, a door was disclosed, and through this door the three villains disappeared, as the knocking below became more insistent and peremptory.

There was the sound of the wrenching of wood, a babel of voices in the hall, hurried and heavy footsteps on the creaking stairs, and the door was flung open.

A sergeant, in helmet and regulation coat, paused on the threshold, and, pushing back the screen, allowed his lantern to play about the room.

The light shot swiftly from wall to wall, then it danced across the floor, until it rested on Bob's pallid face as he lay with arms outstretched, staring with glassy eyeballs at the ceiling.

"Help, here!" the sergeant thundered. "We've got the chap, but I'm afraid that he is dead!"

The lights were lowered, and the long, bare room was almost dark. Along the walls men slumbered, or turned and tossed in pain, or groaned aloud. Outside, the foot-oot of a belated taxi drowned for the moment the sullen roar that tells, night and day, of the feverish life of London, and in the room on slight, girlish figure moved softly from couch to couch, dully soothing the aching head, or whispering words of hope and encouragement.

Bob Hall awoke, and gazed in mute surprise around the scene.

Where was he? What had happened? He missed the loud laugh, the clang of spurs, the melodious call of the silver trumpet, the vibrant command, the hurry and scurry of the barracks.

Instead, all was peace, yet all was pain. He struggled to rise. The effort sent shooting throbs like hot bars of steel through his brain, and with a groan he fell back on the pillow, and wondered still.

A small, cool hand alighted on his temples, and a gentle voice addressed him.

"Feeling better? That's right! Now close your eyes and go to sleep."

Instead of obeying this command, Bob promptly struggled to rise again, and this time he succeeded in resting on his elbow.

"Why am I here?" he gasped. "What place is this? I don't remember how—"

"You must keep quiet," the nurse insisted gently. "You are in hospital, and you have been very ill. You met with an accident, and—and—"

"Ah, I remember now!"

The lad sank back on the pillow, and his mind began to work with feverish energy, and the quicker his thoughts travelled the more his head ached. Yet he couldn't stop. A fever of anxiety had set in.

"Have they caught him?" he urged. "Have they run him down? Do you know anything about this business? Has anyone called here to inquire for me, or has the colonel been told that—"

"Hush!"

As the nurse spoke a burly figure approached from the doorway, and came across the room on tiptoe. The big man, wearing a helmet, seemed ludicrously out of place in that atmosphere of sickness and pain as he blundered along, despite his efforts to walk softly; whilst his creaking boots caused more than one sufferer to start and murmur in his dreams.

(Another long instalment of this magnificent serial will appear in next Wednesday's issue of the GEN LIBRARY. Order a copy from your newsagent TO-DAY.)

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LEVISON'S DOUBLE.

(Continued from page 22.)

I wanted a bit of a fling, you know. I sold my bike to Hanney's for seven pounds. Then I bought a second-hand old crock for a pound. It wasn't worth much, you see, but it was good enough to ride on, and it didn't matter if it was left in the open air at night—it was an old crock. I've kept it in the wood. Then, then, with the rest of the money, I had a bit of a fling. I—I bought that grey suit, and—and I used to wear them over my own clothes. It made me look stouter, and—and it was less trouble to change. The—the bike's in a thicket not a hundred yards from the school now. It—it was really only a joke."

"Nuff said," said Tom Merry. "As judge—"

"Hold on!" said Blake. "I'm judge."

"Rats!"

"Look here—"

"Order!" said Monty Lowther. "We don't want the prefects here. Go it together, and see if you can keep in tune."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, as judge," said Tom Merry firmly, "I sentence you to be shown up to the Housemaster, if you ever tell another whopper about having a double."

"As judge," said Blake, "I endorse the sentence of my respected colleague on the bench, and sentence you to be bumped, rolled, ragged, whacked, punched, and made to run the gauntlet of the whole dormitory."

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I say—I won't—I—yaroooh!"

The sentence was executed promptly. On second thoughts, the bumping was omitted, as that would probably have brought prefects to the dormitory.

The blackguard of the Fourth was rolled, ragged, pommelled, and ducked in his own washstand basin. Then he was given a sound slipping, stretched across his bed face downwards, and with Blake wielding the slipper.

And after the slipping he was ducked once more, and then—in case he should catch cold, as Blake remarked—he was made to run the gauntlet; and every fellow in the dormitory "expressed himself," as the French say, to get in his whack, with a slipper, a pillow, or a boot.

By the time Levison had run the gauntlet some of the ragers were getting tired, and so it was pretty certain that Levison was tired. He collapsed on the floor of the dormitory and groaned.

Then he was allowed to crawl back to bed; and the Terrible Three returned to their dormitory with a satisfied feeling of having done their duty, and done it well.

Levison thought they had done it too well. It was long before the unhappy black sheep slept, and when he did sleep, it was to dream that he was being passed through a mangle. That was what he felt like. He had learned—not for the first time—that the way of the transgressor is hard.

The next day there were two fellows in the Fourth Form with black eyes, and both of them received lines for it from Mr. Latham.

That day Levison crawled about looking as if life were not worth living.

It was some time before he got over the effects of that dormitory ragging. During that painful period his only consolation was the reflection that Sefton of the Sixth was doubtless spending the foggy evening spying for him about the Green Man. But the black sheep of the Fourth was not likely to be caught there again. His lesson had been severe, but it had done him good, and nothing more was heard at St. Jim's of Levison's Double.

THE END.

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.

Our

Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

MODERN CONVENIENCES.

Hunter: "Seems to me that this house isn't very

Why, the floor shakes when one walks!"

"Um—yes. That's the new kind of spring flooring, you know."

House-Hunter: "And the stairs creak terribly."

Agent: "Ye-es. We furnish that as a new patent burglar alarm without extra charge."—Sent in by W. Haywood, jun., Brighton.

A CASE IN POINT.

A certain railway official was asked by an employee for a pass to visit his parents in the country.

"You are in the employ of the company?" queried the official.

"Yes."

"Well, now, supposing you were working for a farmer of a railway company, would you expect your horse to take out his horses every Saturday night and at home?"

"No," replied the employee, "I shouldn't expect that. But if the farmer has his horses out, and was going my way, I should say he was rather mean if he wouldn't give me a lift."—Sent in by J. Pollock, Boscombe, Bournemouth.

UNREASONABLE.

Think this advertising for recruits for Kitchen's New Army is getting a bit too thick? They don't seem to care where they stick their bloomin' bills.

"Why, what's up?"

"Well, I was passing the cemetery this morning, and outside the main entrance was a large coloured poster, with the words:

'WAKE UP!

Your King and Country Need You.'

Bit unreasonable, ain't it?"—Sent in by H. S. Nicholls, West Croydon.

PROMPTITUDE.

Managing Editor (to proprietor): "That new man Flyer ought to have a permanent position. He's the best reporter we have."

Proprietor: "How's that? I thought he was a regular

JOK POST

ARCEL POST

"Why, the broken rail that caused the accident on the railway, had sat on a stone near by for eight hours waiting for the accident to occur, so that he could get the report in to-morrow's paper."—Sent in by W. Bennett, Daybrook, Nottingham.

UNFORTUNATE.

A village doctor was explaining to a friend why he had lost his patients. "It was all my fault," he said. "An old patient of mine died, and I made out the death certificate. I signed my name in the space of death."—Sent in by G. Brinsford, Rotherham.

A TRAGEDY.

His eye was stern and wild, his cheek was pale and cold as clay.

Upon his tightened lips a smile of fearful meaning lay!

He nursed a while; but not in doubt—no trace of doubt was there.

It was the steady, solemn pause of resolute despair.

Once more he looked upon the scroll, once more its words he read.

Then calmly, with unflinching hands, its folds before him spread.

I saw him bare his throat, and seize the cold, blue steel, And grimly try the tempered edge he was so soon to feel.

A sickness crept upon my heart, and dizzy swam my head, I could not stir, I could not cry—I felt numb and dead!

Black, icy horrors struck me dumb and froze my senses o'er, I closed my eyes in utter fear and strove to think no more.

Again I looked. A fearful change across his face had spread.

He seemed to rave; on cheek, on lip, a flaky foam was spread.

He raised on high the glittering blade. Then first I found a tongue:

"Hold, madman! Stay thy frantic deed!" I cried, and forth I sprang.

He heard me, but he heeded not, one glance around he gave, And ere I could arrest his hand he had begun to—shave! —Sent in by Miss W. G. Hughes, West Toronto, Canada.

WANTED SOME HIMSELF.

A man who was habitually hard up was disturbed one night by a burglar. He shouted downstairs:

"Who's there? What do you want?"

"Money," replied the burglar.

"Hold on a minute," replied the impecunious one. "I'll come down and help you look for some!"—Sent in by J. Prosser, Barrow-in-Furness.

CONFUSION.

"I want a cap, please," said the countryman, in a smart outfitter's shop.

"Yessir! Have you any idea of the size, sir—six and three-quarters, say, or six and a half?"

"Six and a half be hanged! Why, I take sixteen and a half in collars, and I'm sure my head's bigger than my neck!"—Sent in by B. Phelps, Sheffield.

NO NAMES NEEDED.

A tiny tot arrived at school for the first time, and the teacher asked her what her surname was. But the child didn't know.

"But you must know your own name!"

"I do. It's Emily."

"But what's your father's name?"

"Gussie."

"Hasn't he any other name? What does your mother call him?"

"She don't call him any name—she loves 'im!"

Sent in by P. Mellor, Stoke-on-Trent.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 372.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

THE BOYS' FRIEND, 1d.,

Published every Monday,

in order to give more of our readers a chance of winning one of our useful Money Prizes.

If you know a really funny joke, or a short, interesting paragraph, send it along (on a post-card) before you forget it, and address it to: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, E.C.

Look out for YOUR Prize Storyette in next week's GEM or BOYS' FRIEND.



THIS WEEK'S CHAT

Whom to Write to —
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON, E.C.
OUR THREE COMPANION PAPERS!
"THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY CHUCKLES."
— LIBRARY — POPULAR — 1/2"
EVERY MONDAY EVERY FRIDAY EVERY SATURDAY



For Next Wednesday—

"LOYAL AND TRUE!"

By Martin Clifford.

In our next grand, long, complete story of the chums of St. Jim's, the interest centres around Koumi Rao, the Indian junior, whose fidelity to Figgins of the Fourth has always been very strongly marked. The dusky junior is an individual of tremendous importance in his native land, and this fact impels one of Germany's spies to incite the boy's anger against the British race. The scoundrel's object is to cause an insurrection in India, which will make Koumi Rao's fellow-countrymen throw in their lot with the Kaiser's hordes. Efforts are made to persuade the Indian junior to leave St. Jim's, but the influence for good which is exercised over him by his chums causes him to do the right thing; and all ends well for the good-hearted Eastern lad who was

"LOYAL AND TRUE!"

TO MY GIRL CHUMS.

In order that the popularity of the good old "Gem" Library may become still more widespread and universal, I am making a special appeal this week to my chums of the fair sex, who, I feel sure, can be quite as instrumental in securing new readers as their loyal brothers.

In my opinion, there are two reasons why girls read the "Gem." Primarily, I consider that the class of literature published exclusively for girls—mostly of the ramby-ramby, love-making order—does not really appeal to the modern girl any more than a book of Euclid would appeal to a native of Timbuctoo. Girls, as a whole, prefer stories of a bright and entertaining description to those which deal in a lot of sentimental nonsense.

The statement is borne out by the letter of a girl chum at Cheltenham, which has arrived since I started to write my Chat. My fair correspondent, in the course of her interesting epistle, declares that "Marie Rivers and Cousin Ethel are two of the most charming, amiable, and sensible girls in fiction."

My correspondent goes on to remark that the characters mentioned are far more fascinating than the heroine of the take-me-to-the-pictures-Charlie variety, so commonly found in so-called papers for girls.

Another good reason why girls read the "Gem" is that, through the medium of Martin Clifford's stories, they are enabled to study the characters of various boys. "Boys is funny things," wrote a small girl in a recent examination; and this statement, though lacking in grammatical accuracy, contains perhaps a good deal of truth. In many cases a misunderstanding exists between the two sexes; this is because girls do not always understand boy nature, and vice versa. The stories in the "Gem" help considerably in bringing about a better understanding between boys and girls.

But to return to my Cheltenham chum's letter. I think I may take it for granted that most girl Gemites are of the opinion with regard to Marie Rivers and Ethel Cleveland. I am, therefore, making a special appeal to all the Ethels and Maries who read the "Gem" to buy an extra copy to-day, and hand it on to a non-reader.

This is not a very big request, but when complied with its results will be far-reaching. Imagine a thousand girls named Ethel or Marie handing a copy of the "Gem" to a non-reading chum! It means that practically

A THOUSAND NEW READERS

will be added to the long line of loyal Gemites!

So I want all my fair chums whose Christian names are those of our two popular girl-characters to send me a postcard saying that they have acted upon my suggestion. I shall then be enabled to know exactly how much good work has been done in this direction, and will be in a position to personally thank all my loyal Ethels and Maries on this page in due course.

Meanwhile, I will endeavour to evolve a scheme whereby my thousands of other girl chums may do their Editor a good turn in securing new readers for this bright little journal.

YOUR EDITOR'S BEST THANKS.

I have recently been literally overwhelmed with letters and suggestions from Gemites all over the world—a striking testimony to the immense popularity enjoyed by the premier boys' paper.

A tremendous staff of assistants would be required were I to attempt to reply personally to this great host of loyal chums. I must, therefore, ask them, one and all, to accept, through the medium of this Chat, my brief, but none the less sincere, thanks for their splendid support.

The following readers are especially commended for their interesting letters:

"Scotch-Irish" (Dublin), D. B. (Levenshoe), "A Constant Reader" (Glasgow), "Two Inquisitive Readers," Ida and Clement Coles (Shepton Mallet), R. Penny (Worcester), "A Gemite" (Catford), Gervase Bamber (Preston), W. Allen (Shepherd's Bush), W. J. O. Burton, N. S. Roberts-Sutton, F. Goodyer (Bristol), R. Evans (Parkstone), William P. Lee (Liverpool), L. R. R. Gilson, W. May (Walthamstow), E. Ellwood (Plumstead), Hubert B. Smith (London, S.E.), E. J.-W. (Chiswick), H. P. (Putney), Alfred Hall (York), and J. E. D. (Pecadilly).

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Muriel M.—Your cheery letter was most encouraging. Many thanks indeed to you and your brother for the good work you are doing on behalf of the companion papers. Monteith is seventeen years of age. Best wishes.

"A Loyalist" (Carmarthen)—Good for you, "Loyalist"! If every fellow shared your staunch views the "Gem" would indeed be a paragon among papers. Hope you will write to me again.

L. Davis (Plymouth).—You and your chum deserve my best thanks for backing up the companion papers at a time when you can ill afford to do so. I hope your outlook is brighter by now.—Sutcliffe has retired from professional football.

N. Dagbrosio (Hamilton).—Tom Merry and his chums are fifteen years of age; and Kerr's Christian name is George.

"A Loyal Pal" (Aberdeen).—You must remember that no replies can appear on this page within the space of three weeks. So far as the inter-school matches are concerned, Greyfriars has the better record. I hardly care to predict the possible result of an encounter between Wingate and Kildare.

F. H. (Hilborough).—You will find shorthand invaluable to you in your efforts to obtain a clerkship. I should say that you were about the right age to make a start in life. All good wishes.

N. Goodfellow, E. Glen, and H. C. W.—The suggestion of a threepenny book-story of Talbot is already under consideration.

Frank Ballard (Birmingham).—Thank you for your sketches, which, although hardly up to publication standard, certainly show promise.

THE EDITOR.

BARRED OUT!

The Greatest Barring-out School Story Ever Written.

By OWEN CONQUEST.



The angry and indignant old warrior nodded off at last, and silence and slumber reigned in the fortress of the rebels of Rookwood.

In the Dead of Night!

BOOM! The stroke of one sounded heavily through the silence of the night.

Rookwood School lay buried in silence and slumber.

At that hour, certainly, no one was supposed to be awake in the ancient edifice. The last light had long been extinguished, the last door had closed, the most determined "swot" had long ceased to burn the midnight oil.

On the "Modern" side, all was as it should be—masters and boys were sound asleep. But on the "Classical" side, there was one who was wide awake—very wide awake indeed.

That one wakeful individual was Jimmy Silver of the Fourth Form.

Jimmy Silver was sitting up in bed, while his Form-fellows lay sleeping round him. To tell the truth, Jimmy Silver had had hard work to keep awake so late. He had almost to prop his eyelids open. But he had not succumbed. There was a most important enterprise fixed for that night.

It was an enterprise into which nearly all the Classic members of the Fourth Form entered with heart and soul.

And one o'clock was the hour for action. Jimmy Silver, with heroic self-sacrifice, had promised to remain awake and call the others when that hour struck. And he was still awake, which was very fortunate for the important enterprise, because the rest of the Fourth were sleeping like tops.

True, his chums, Lovell and Raby and Newcome had all declared that they would keep awake, too, to bear him company. They had kept awake till about eleven, and then their deep breathing announced that they had glided away into the arms of Morpheus. But Jimmy Silver did not mind. He pinched himself hard every now and then when he felt drowsiness overcoming him. And he was very glad to hear the stroke of one boom through the night. He felt that he could not have "stuck it out" for half an hour longer.

The stroke had barely died away when Jimmy Silver was out of bed. He shivered a little—the March night was cold. But before he began to dress he proceeded to awaken the partners in the great enterprise. Lovell came out of the land of dreams with a jerk, as Jimmy Silver shook him gently but firmly by the hair.

"Groooooooh!" said Lovell lucidly.

"Wake up, slacker."

"Grooooh! Mooooh!" murmured Lovell sleepily. "Gerroff! Get away! 'Tain't rising-bell!"

"Fathead! It's one o'clock."

"Lemme 'lone! Grooooh!"

Jimmy Silver tightened his grasp upon Lovell's curly hair, and gave a tug. Then Lovell was broad awake. If he had been one of the celebrated Seven Sleepers, he could hardly have remained dozing after that.

"Yow!" roared Lovell. "Leggo, you thumping ass! Yow! My hat!"

"Shush!" said Silver warningly. "Do you want to wake up the whole house, you dummy. Do you want old Manders to drop on us?"

Lovell rubbed his head and glared at his chum in the gloom. "You silly ass! No need to lug my hair out by the roots! Yow! Look here, are you quite sure it's one o'clock."

"Just struck."

"Well, s-s-suppose we leave it till two o'clock?" said Lovell, blinking. "On second thoughts, two o'clock is ever so much better than one—Yow-ow-ow! Wharrer you at, you thumping ass?"

Bump! Lovell descended on the floor, tangled up in his bedclothes, and he struggled wildly with blankets and sheets, breathing vengeance. Jimmy Silver chuckled, and proceeded to the next bed. The next bed was Raby's, and Raby had been awakened by Lovell's remarks. He blinked nervously at Silver.

"I say, Jimmy—"

"Oh, are you awake? Out you come!"

"Just a minute, Silver! N-n-no hurry! I—I've been thinking that we'd better leave it till to-morrow night. It's jolly c-c-cold, and— If you don't leggo my ear, you beast, I'll lick you like thunder—ow!"

Raby bumped on the floor, and Jimmy Silver crossed to Newcome's bed. Newcome was snoring. As Newcome was not in the habit of snoring, Jimmy Silver suspected that snore.

"Jump up, Newcome."

Snore!

"It's time, Newcome."

Snore!

Jimmy Silver took a sponge from the nearest washstand, and dipped it into a jug of water. Perhaps Newcome heard him, for he ceased snoring all of a sudden, and sat up in bed.

"That you, Silver?"

"Yes; it's me. I'm just going to squeeze some cold water over you."

Newcome was out of bed with a bound.

"That's better," said Jimmy Silver approvingly. "Now wake up those other slackers. Lovell's made row enough to wake up a giddy cemetery, but they all seem to be asleep. Yank the bedclothes off 'em."

"Turn out, you slackers!" growled Lovell. Now that Lovell was out of bed, he was justly indignant at so many slackers remaining between the sheets.

"I—I say," said Jones minor, sitting up in bed. "I think Silver, old man— If you bring that sponge near me I'll smash you. I think, you know, a barring-out is really a rotten idea after all, and it's c-c-cold, and—oooooooooh!"

Jones minor "oooooooooh" frantically as the sponge was squeezed over him, drenching his head and face with icy water. He rolled out on the other side of the bed with great promptness.

Jimmy Silver's drastic methods of awakening his Form-fellows were successful. Fourth-Formers were turning out now without waiting for the wet sponge. Only two remained in bed—Townsend and Topham, the two champion slackers of the Fourth.

"Look here," mumbled Townsend. "I tell you I'm not in this, Silver. I don't believe in a barring-out. We shall get into a frightful row. Old Manders will get his hair off, and he'll report us to the Head when he comes back. I'm not going to have a hand in it. Now, you understand me, I'm not going to have a—grrrroooooogh!"

Townsend tumbled out, drenched with icy water. He glared ferociously at Jimmy Silver in the gloom. Topham jumped out without waiting for the sponge, and the two slackers began to dress sulkily. The rest of the juniors were dressing rapidly, and shivering and yawning.

The barring-out, which had been discussed over night, had seemed an awfully good idea to most of them at the time; but at one o'clock in the morning it appeared somehow to have lost most of its charms. But there was no help for it. Jimmy Silver was inexorable, and now that they were fairly awake, Lovell and Raby and Newcome were equally determined. And the Fistical Four were monarchs of all they surveyed on the Classical side of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

"Buck up, and get into your clobber!" said Jimmy Silver. "We've got a jolly lot to do before dawn. And don't make a row. If we're spotted, we're done. The prefects will come down on us like a wolf on the fold."

"I think it's all rot," mumbled Topham. "It's lak-kik-kik. There'll be a flogging all round for it, so we may as well take it first as last."

"Rats! We're going to make terms with Manders before we surrender," said Lovell. "We'll bring the Modern boast to reason!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And when the Head comes back, he'll pat us on the back for upholding the rights of the Classical side against the Moderns," said Jimmy Silver.

"Ahem!" said Lovell. That prospect seemed to him, to say the least, doubtful. He could hardly imagine the Head of Rookwood approving of a barring-out under any circumstances.

"We're in the right, ain't we?" demanded Silver.

"Oh, yes, rather."

"Well, then, that's enough. Buck up!"

And with a mingling of mumbling, grumbling, yawning, and shivering, the rebels of Rookwood hurried on their clothes in the dark dormitory.

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this Grand, Complete School Tale in

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