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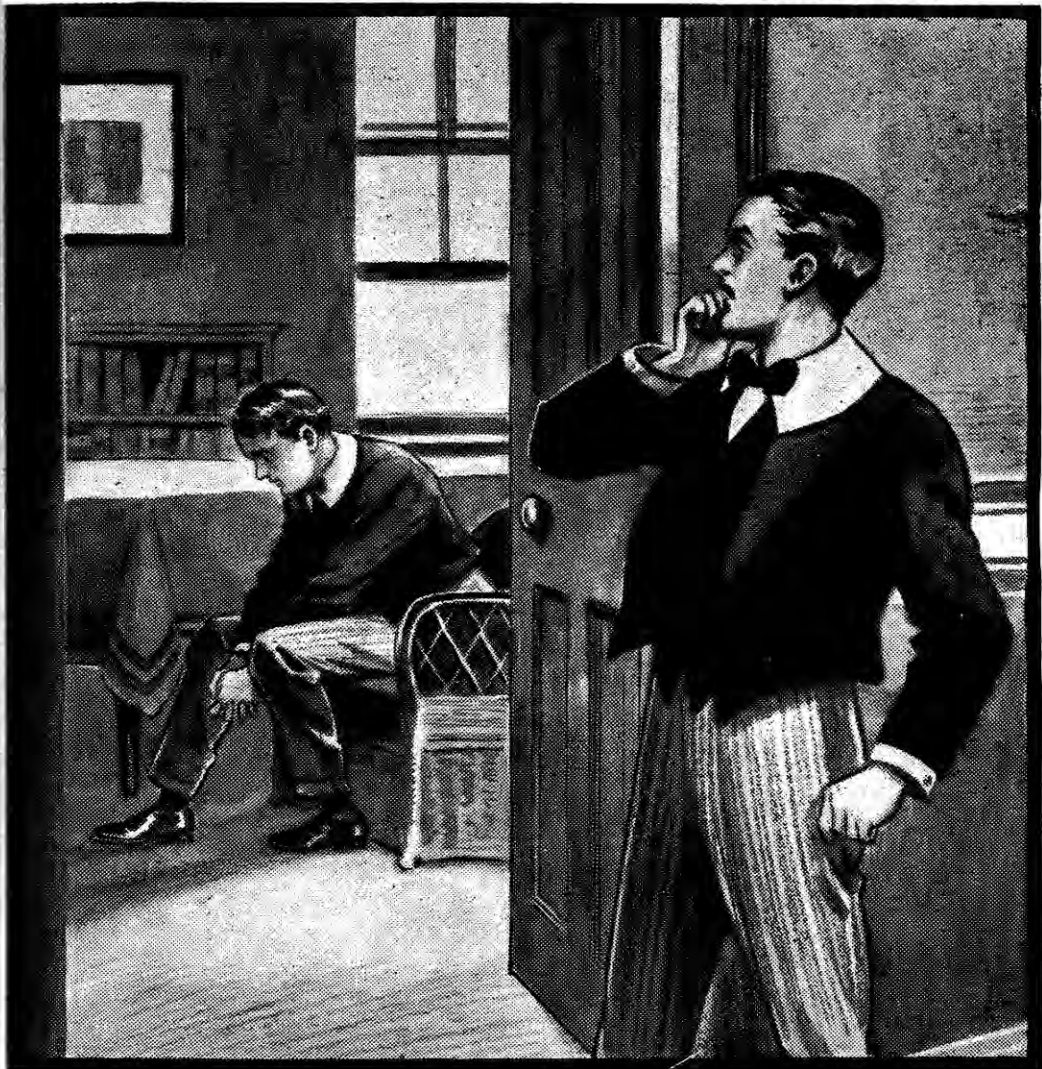
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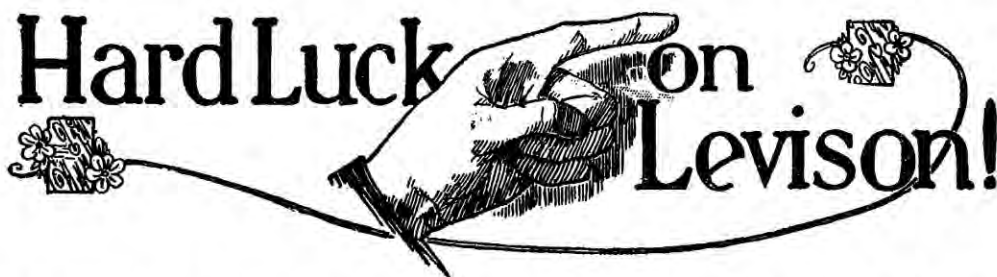
September 2nd, 1922.



IN THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR!

(Levison of the Fourth realises that, through his own action, he is barred by the school!)

Hard Luck on Levison!



A Grand Long Complete Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, in which fate deals Levison, of the Fourth, a bitter blow.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. Levison's Game!

"LEVISON!"
"Good man!"
"Well hit!"
"Three!" grinned Levison minor of the Third Form. "It's going to be four! Watch, you fellows. See if it isn't four!"

Levison minor was in great glee as he watched his major, Levison of the Fourth. And his comrades, Reggie Manners and Wally of the Third, grinned, and watched, too.

Levison of the Fourth was worth watching just then. Tom Merry himself, the junior captain of St. Jim's, was watching him with great satisfaction. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth watched him with his eyeglass fairly glued to his eye. A hundred St. Jim's fellows gathered round Little Side watched him, too, and cheered him.

Levison crossed from wicket to wicket like a streak of white—well backed up by his partner, Jack Blake.

It was four, as Frank had prophesied. Frank clapped his hands ecstatically as his major reached home safely, whole seconds before the ball came whizzing in from Harry Wharton in the field.

The St. Jim's crowd roared.

"Good old Levison!"

"Good man!"

Knocking up fours against a field like Greyfriars was good business. In the first innings of that match Levison had not done very well. In the second St. Jim's innings he was making up for it in great style. His own handsome individual score was 50; and even Tom Merry and Figgins and Talbot had come nowhere near that figure. Levison was playing the game of his life against the school of which he had once, in past days, been a member.

Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars had not known quite what to expect of Levison. They knew now!

Hurree Janset Ram Singh plied him with his very best samples of bowling, and plied him in vain. Wharton changed the bowling again and again, but Tom Brown and Vernon-Smith made no impression on Ernest Levison.

Still he was knocking up runs, while his partners at the wickets came and went, and he seemed set for the rest of the innings.

"What price that for hitting?" asked Levison minor, giving Tom Merry a dig in the ribs as he stood before the pavilion. Tom smiled down at the bag.

"Tip-top!" he said.

"Jolly good!" remarked Monty Lowther. "Never thought Levison had so much as that in him."

"Best game he's ever played!" remarked Manners.

"Quite the best!" said Tom Merry. "And against his old school, too! The Greyfriars chaps will be sorry they lost him."

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter, who had honoured the Greyfriars team by coming over to St. Jim's with them, rolled up to the group. But Tom Merry & Co.—though, as a rule, exceedingly polite to visitors—had no eyes or ears for Bunter. Their eyes were on the game.

Hurree Singh was bowling to Levison again, and he sent down a twister that all but beat the batsman. But not quite! Levison stopped it dead on the crease. And he cut away the next ball for a single.

Blake took the batting end, and received the next ball from

the dusky Greyfriars junior. The next moment there was a howl:

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Bai Jove! Poor old Blake!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as his chum brought home his bat to the pavilion. "Wathah wotten luck, Blake."

"Beastly!" said Blake. "The bowling's good."

"Not too good for my major!" remarked Frank Levison, not very tactfully.

Blake looked at Levison minor.

"There's one thing you don't learn in the Third!" he said.

"What's that?"

"That little boys should be seen but not heard."

"Yass, wathah!"

Frank Levison grinned, and forbore to make any rejoinder. Blake was not happy at having been dismissed for seven after playing second fiddle to Levison at the wickets for a long time.

"Last man in!" remarked Digby.

Fatty Wynn of the New House was last man in. Fatty was renowned as a bowler; at the wicket he was only average. Tom Merry spoke a word to him as he went in.

"Back up Levison, old chap, and see him through. You can leave the fireworks to him."

Fatty grinned.

"Trust me!" he said.

And David Llewellyn Wynn rolled out to his wicket, and proceeded to back up the brilliant batsman at the other end for all he was worth.

The Greyfriars bowlers tempted him, but he did not fall. He played a cautious game, and was quite content with keeping his sticks perpendicular. That was good enough; Levison did the rest.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter. "Levison isn't playing badly."

"Think so, really?" grinned Lowther. "Well, your opinion on the game is worth having, Bunter, old top."

"Of course, he's not quite my style," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not quite!" chuckled Frank.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I say, Levison's picked up since he left Greyfriars. He wasn't a cricketer there."

"St. Jim's is the place to pick up the game!" said Manners.

"Oh, that's rot!" said Bunter. "We shall beat you—anyhow, we should beat you if I were in the team. But Levison was always a dud at games. His game was smoking cigarettes in the study. He, he, he!"

"Shut up!" muttered Tom Merry. "His brother's just behind you!"

Frank Levison's ears crimsoned as he listened to Bunter. But he did not speak, though he would gladly have punched the fat Greyfriars fellow. What Bunter said was true enough. And Frank knew it. Levison of the Fourth had not always been the good sportsman that he was now. He had had to leave Greyfriars—why, few knew, but obviously it was for no reason that could possibly be to his credit. And for whole terms at St. Jim's he had been known as a black sheep.

Frank knew it, and it made him miserable to know it. Why couldn't that fat bounder let it rest?

The best fellows in the school liked Levison now. He was a valued member of the junior eleven—no important match

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was safe without him. That was enough to atone for a rather doubtful past.

Billy Bunter blinked round at Frank through his big spectacles, and caught an angry frown. He grinned. Bunter felt quite safe from punching on the St. Jim's ground; and nothing short of punching would ever make Bunter considerate towards others.

"He had to clear out, you know," continued the Owl of Greyfriars. "I remember the day he was up before the head—"

"Bravo, Levison!" roared Tom Merry.

"A giddy boundary!" exclaimed Frank. "It's a boundary, you fellows—"

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"Right on the nail!" said Reggie Manners. "Your major is playing rather decently to-day, Frank."

"Rather decently!" snorted Frank.

"Fairly well!" grinned Percy minor.

Frank laughed at that. He realised that his chums were pulling his leg a little. They liked him for his devoted admiration of his brother, but they found entertainment in it also.

"One hundred up!" said Monty Lowther, with a glance at the board. "We are doing all right, Tom."

"Right as rain!" said Tom Merry joyously. "I fancy we shall make Greyfriars sit up and take notice this time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Looks like our game," said Blake, taking comfort. "Let's see—seventy in the first innings, against Greyfriars sixty. Hundred in the second—so far—against X. If Greyfriars pull the game out of the fire, they can use my napper for a cricket-ball."

"Good old Fatty!" roared Figgins and Kerr of the New House.

"Good man!" assented Tom Merry.

Fatty Wynn was not shining. He was helping Levison to shine. And as that was exactly what was wanted, the St. Jim's crowd were grateful to Fatty, and signified the same. So long as Fatty Wynn kept the game alive, Ernest Levison would go on scoring, that was clear. Bowlers and field seemed alike, helpless to shift him.

"Hundred and ten!" grinned Herries. "We're going up!"

"And down!" said Monty Lowther, as Fatty Wynn's wicket at last went with a crash.

"Not out!" chuckled Frank Levison.

"Not!" ejaculated Wally. "Can't you hear the umpire? Wynn's out—right out! The innings is over, young ass!"

"I mean my brother—"

"Oh!"

"Not out at the finish, you know," said Frank; "and his total is—"

"Sixty-three!" said Tom Merry.

"Hurrah!"

And Ernest Levison, as he came back to the pavilion, flushed, bright, and cheery, received an ovation from the St. Jim's crowd.

CHAPTER 2. Levison's Win!

"I SAY, you fellows, what about tea?"

Billy Bunter wanted to know.

Bunter had come over with the Greyfriars team ostensibly to see the match. But his interest seemed centred, first in lunch, and then in tea. At lunch he had distinguished himself, and since then he had had one tea with Trimble of the Fourth. But he was prepared to distinguish himself at the cricketers' tea. He nourished a faint hope that there might even be something "handed round" after the match. Lunch, tea, and supper would be something like cricket, in Bunter's estimation.

"Tea's the next item on the programme," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Bear up for another minute or two, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Merry?"

Tom Merry clapped Levison of the Fourth on the shoulder. Ernest Levison gave him a smile.

"Satisfied?" he asked.

"More!" said Tom, laughing. "You've played the game of your life. I fancy you've given us all the runs we want to win."

"Not quite!" chimed in Bob Cherry of Greyfriars. "Just one or two short, I hope."

"One at least," said Harry Wharton, with a smile. "But you've got a good bat there, Tom Merry. I should never have thought that Levison—"

The Greyfriars skipper

checked himself. "I mean, Levison's picked up no end since he's been with you."

"I jolly well wish you were back in the Remove at Greyfriars, Levison," said Bob Cherry heartily. "By George, you would be a rod in pickle now for Highcliff, and St. Jude's—and St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now we've got him we're keeping him," said Tom Merry, with a laugh.

The cricketers crowded off cheerily. Levison looked round and smiled and nodded to Sidney Clive, who came up to him.

"Congratulations, old fellow!" said Clive cordially. "This is no end of a boost for Study No. 9."

"Where's Cardew?" asked Levison.

Clive glanced round.

"Cardew! Not here. I think I saw him walking off with Trimble."

"Trimble!" exclaimed Levison.

"Yes; now I think of it, I saw them walking off together," said Clive. "Jolly queer taste to take Trimble for a walk! It's generally trouble enough to keep clear of him."

Levison did not reply; but he contracted his brows. The information that his study-mate had gone off with Trimble seemed to have an annoying effect upon him.

"Most likely he'll be back for tea," said Clive.

But Ralph Reckness Cardew was not back for tea. Nobody seemed to miss him excepting Levison, however. Neither was Baggy Trimble back for tea, which was surprising. Baggy Trimble, certainly, had no right to wedge his fat person into the cricketers' tea-party; but he might have been expected to do so. And he was conspicuous by his absence.

Billy Bunter was conspicuous by his presence, and by his amazing gastronomic powers, which put even those of Trimble into the shade. But the tea interval was brief, for the cricketers were anxious to finish the game. St. Jim's were ahead on the first innings; but at the finish Greyfriars hoped to make up the leeway—if they had time. They had an uphill fight before them; but they had a cheery confidence that they only needed time to win it.

Harry Wharton opened the second Greyfriars innings after tea, with Bob Cherry at the other end. Tom Merry led his men into the field, and the ball was given to Fatty Wynn.

Great things were hoped from Fatty; and at the start David Llewellyn Wynn proceeded to justify them. He kept down Harry Wharton's runs to two for the first over. In the second over Talbot of the Shell gave Bob Cherry plenty to think about, and Bob ran only a single at the finish. That landed him at the batting end to face Fatty, when the plump New House junior took the ball for the third over.

Bob made two runs off the first ball, and the second lifted his leg stump from the ground. There was a cheer from the crowd—Fatty Wynn was fulfilling expectations. Bob Cherry looked rather glum as he carried out his bat. This really was not the way to make up a heavy leeway.

Johnny Bull came on in Bob's place. The ball came down from Fatty, and Johnny drove it back. There was a breathless buzz round the field; for Johnny Bull had driven the ball fairly back to the bowler, and it was a catch that hardly Trimble would have missed. But the force on the ball was great—it came like a bullet from the bat—and some fellows would have let it go by. Not so Fatty! There was a smack as his fat hand caught the ball; and he held it up.

"How's that?"

"Well caught!"

"Caught and bowled Fatty!" roared Figgins. "Bravo!"

Johnny Bull went back to the pavilion rather glumly.

Vernon-Smith came out.

Smithy was very careful for the rest of that over; but he was rather surprised to find easy bowling. When the field crossed over Tom Merry gave Fatty Wynn a tap on the shoulder.

"Good catch, old fat bean!" he said. "Keep that up!"

Fatty Wynn made a grimace.

"Not so jolly good," he said. "I rather wish I'd let it alone."

"Eh! Why?"

"Look at my paw. I sha'n't be able to bowl again."

"Oh, my only hat!"

After that, Fatty was in the field. There were good bowlers left in Tom Merry's team, but the most dangerous of them was barred off, and the Greyfriars batsmen took full advantage of the fact. The innings had started badly enough, with two wickets down for five; but now it looked up in great style, and Harry Wharton and Herbert Vernon-Smith, between them, piled up the runs.

Tea had been taken fairly early, and there was a good deal of time before the cricketers, as Harry Wharton was not catching an early train. There was no danger of the light failing. The Greyfriars hopes rose high as the innings went on, and the score jumped and jumped. Levison, as a change bowler, accounted for two wickets, but the score was by then at 80. Harry Wharton was still batting, and going strong.



Levison seemed scarcely to touch the turf as he moved. He was looking up, following the flight of the ball—backing—backing again, with his shoulders almost on the fence. The ball seemed to float down meekly into his outstretched palm. From the whole crowd there burst a tremendous roar. (See this page.)

Greyfriars totalled 100 by the time he was caught out by Talbot of the Shell.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tapped Tom Merry's arm. "They're lookin' up!" he remarked. "Pewwaps you had better put me on to bowl, deah boy."

"And perhaps not!" grinned Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Bow-wow!"

The St. Jim's crowd were watching more keenly than ever now. It was true that the injury to Fatty Wynn's "paw" handicapped the St. Jim's eleven, but there was no doubt that Greyfriars were playing a magnificent game. Peter Todd was knocking up runs almost in heaps; and Hazeldene, who came in as last man, played up manfully to back him. Peter Todd had the bowling when the figure reached 118.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Two wanted to tie, and three to win. Weally, I ought to have the bowlin'!"

It was Talbot of the Shell who had the bowling, and he sent down his very best ball to Peter Todd of Greyfriars. Peter drove it far.

"Game's up!" murmured Wally of the Third. "If that isn't a giddy boundary, I'm a giddy Dutchman!"

Frank Levison gave a yell.

"Ernie! Look! Ernie!"

All eyes were upon Ernest Levison.

He seemed scarcely to touch the turf as he moved. Now he was looking up—backing—backing again, with his shoulder almost on the fence, and the ball seemed to float down meekly into his outstretched palm. He held it for a second, and then sent it up straight as a die, and caught it as it came down again. From the whole crowd there burst a tremendous roar.

"Well caught!"

"Oh, well caught, sir!"

"St. Jim's wins!"

The game was over, and St. Jim's had won by four runs. And a crowd of fellows surged round Levison of the Fourth, wildly cheering.

CHAPTER 3.

A Little Surprise for Cardew,

"ENJOYIN' yourself?"

"Pretty fair, old chap."

Ralph Reckness Cardew, the dandy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, asked the question, and Baggy Trimble answered it.

The two juniors were far from the school.

They were, as a matter of fact, a good distance out of school bounds; a fact that did not worry either of them in the least. Cardew because he was, as usual, reckless of consequences, and Trimble because he was not giving a thought to that matter, or to any other matter, excepting the feel before him.

Cardew was the happy possessor of plenty of that useful article—cash. He had "stood" a car for a motor run that afternoon; and the two juniors were now on the terrace of the hotel at Seacliff, overlooking the sea, and Baggy, at least, was enjoying himself.

Although, according to Baggy, the garage at Trimble Hall fairly swarmed with expensive cars, those cars never found their way to St. Jim's. A motor run was a treat to Baggy, and he had thoroughly enjoyed it. It was not every fellow who could get a run from St. Jim's to the sea on a half-holiday. Cardew was one of the lucky few, and on this occasion he had shared his luck with Baggy Trimble.

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Why, was a question few St. Jim's fellows could have answered. Baggy could not really be considered good company. His manners and customs were not really pleasant.

But Cardew, whatever his reasons, had done the thing in style. A handsome car had landed them at Seaciff after a spanking run, and now they were having tea on the terrace over the bay. They called it tea; but, so far as Trimble was concerned, it was a dinner, and a couple of lunches, and five or six teas, all rolled into one.

Baggy did not mind missing the finish of the match at St. Jim's for a treat like this. He had forgotten the match, in fact, and almost forgotten St. Jim's.

Ralph Reckness Cardew was looking at his watch. He did

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not want to get back to St. Jim's till the Greyfriars fellows were gone. But he did not want to be late for call-over if he could help it. Questions asked by the Housenaster with regard to that excursion would be difficult to answer. Mr. Railton certainly would not have approved of the distant excursion, or of Cardew's lavish expenditure of money.

"Time we were movin', old top," said Cardew at last. Baggy Trimble sighed—a sigh of fat contentment. There were still eatables on the table. Baggy was a great trencherman, but he was slowing down.

"Well, settle with the giddy waiter while I finish this cake," he said. "No good wasting time."

"Right—ho!" Cardew settled his little bill—which was not very little—and Baggy tore himself away at last. Thoughtfully he slipped the remainder of the cake into his pocket, a proceeding that the waiter eyed with a grim eye.

The two juniors descended the steps to the promenade, where the car was waiting.

The chauffeur touched his cap to Cardew, and started the engine. Baggy Trimble rolled in, and the dandy of the Fourth followed him.

The car ran out of Seaciff, and scudded on by dusty roads and leafy lanes in the red summer sunset, heading for St. Jim's. Ralph Reckness Cardew leaned back in his cushioned seat, his hands driven deep into his pockets. He was not tired, but he was bored. Boredom was not an infrequent state with Cardew, but certainly nobody bored him so much as Baggy Trimble did.

"Think we shall do it before call-over?" asked Trimble.

"Just, I think."

"Good! Railton would kick up a row at our going out of bounds."

Cardew nodded.

"The Greyfriars fellows will be gone," said Baggy Trimble, with a sly, smiling glance at his companion.

"I'm afraid so," said Cardew gravely.

"Rather a pity to miss them," said Trimble.

"I'm afraid it can't be helped now."

Trimble gave a fat chuckle.

"I sha'n't be able to have a little talk with them about Levison," he remarked.

"Levison?" yawned Cardew.

"Yes. They all know why Levison left Greyfriars," said Trimble cheerily. "Levison doesn't want St. Jim's to know. He, he, he!"

Cardew regarded him thoughtfully. He had burdened himself with Baggy Trimble for the afternoon to keep that prying youth from contact with the Greyfriars crowd—to keep him from pushing his inquisitive inquiries regarding Levison's past. He had not suspected for a moment that the obtuse Trimble would "tumble" to his little scheme. But as he scanned the sly, grinning face he wondered.

"Levison was kicked out of Greyfriars, you know," pursued Trimble.

"I don't know."

"You do now I've told you!" grinned Baggy.

"But you don't know anything about it, my dear old fat bean," said Cardew smoothly.

"He, he, he! Don't I!"

Again Cardew regarded him thoughtfully. He was considering whether, after asking Baggy out for the afternoon, it would be quite the thing to pull his fat nose on the way home. He decided, regretfully, that it wouldn't be quite the thing.

"Awfully good of you to stand treat like this, old chap," went on Trimble. "I've had a good time."

"So glad!" drawled Cardew.

"And missed seeing the Greyfriars chaps before they left, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 760.

too!" chuckled Trimble. "Still, I saw them before we came out. He, he, he!"

Cardew's look became alert.

"I noticed you askin' questions of Wharton and Bob Cherry and some others," he drawled. "It seemed to me that they shut you up fast enough, old bean."

"They're keeping it dark," said Trimble. "Don't see why. I know they didn't like Levison when he was in the Remove at Greyfriars. But they seem to have a sort of conspiracy to keep it all dark about him. But I fancy I can get to know a thing when I want to know it."

And he chuckled explosively.

"Never thought of mindin' your own bizney?" inquired Cardew.

"This is my business," said Trimble loftily. "Levison's taken the whole school in—the Head, too! It's a fellow's duty to learn the facts."

"And you're gettin' home too late to learn the facts!" smiled Cardew. "Your duty won't be done, Trimble."

"That's all you know. He, he, he!"

"What do you mean, Trimble?" asked Cardew very quietly, sitting upright, and fixing his eyes upon the fat junior. "What are you driving at, you fat young scoundrel?"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Trimble. "If you want to call a fellow names, start on Levison! He's earned it! He, he, he!"

"What do you know about Levison?"

"Lots!" said Baggy cheerily. "Everything, in fact."

"You fat young rotter—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Baggy. "Rotter yourself—and Levison, too! Do you think I don't know why you stood me a motor-run this afternoon?" Trimble's fat lip curved with contempt. "Think I don't know you were trying to keep me away from the Greyfriars crowd so that they couldn't answer my questions? Think I'm a fool?"

Ralph Reckness Cardew nodded.

"Yes—and a rascal, too," he answered. "Whether you're more fool than rascal, or more rascal than fool, is too big a problem for me, and I give it up."

"I knew your game all the time," said Trimble coolly. "I let you run on! You thought you were pulling my leg and I was pulling yours all the time. He, he, he!"

Cardew breathed hard. He rather prided himself upon his keenness. It was rather disconcerting to learn that this obtuse fellow had seen through his little scheme all the time. "So you saw the little trap, old bean?" he said.

"He, he! Yes."

"And walked into it all the same?" said Cardew, eyeing him.

Trimble chortled again.

"I'm pretty deep!" he said complacently. "Look here Cardew! You've stood me a motor run and a tea. I'll give you a tip in return. Keep clear of Levison!"

"Levison's my pal!" said Cardew, with a glint in his eyes.

"He won't be anybody's pal at St. Jim's much longer!"

"Why not?"

"Because he'll be turned out!"

Cardew jumped.

"Levison turned out of St. Jim's?" he ejaculated.

"Kicked out!" said Trimble, with much satisfaction. "Booted out! Chucked out! Mind, I haven't done this because young Frank pitched into me, or because Levison kicked me—the beast! They've got a neck, turning up their noses at anybody!" Trimble sniffed. "I've done it from a sense of duty! I've got a sense of duty—not like some fellows. And I give you the tip to keep clear of Levison. He's a bad lot, and when the Head knows why he left Greyfriars, he'll kick him out of St. Jim's, just as he was kicked out of his old school."

"And you can tell the Head all that, dear boy?"

"Little me!" said Trimble, with a nod.

"But how—"

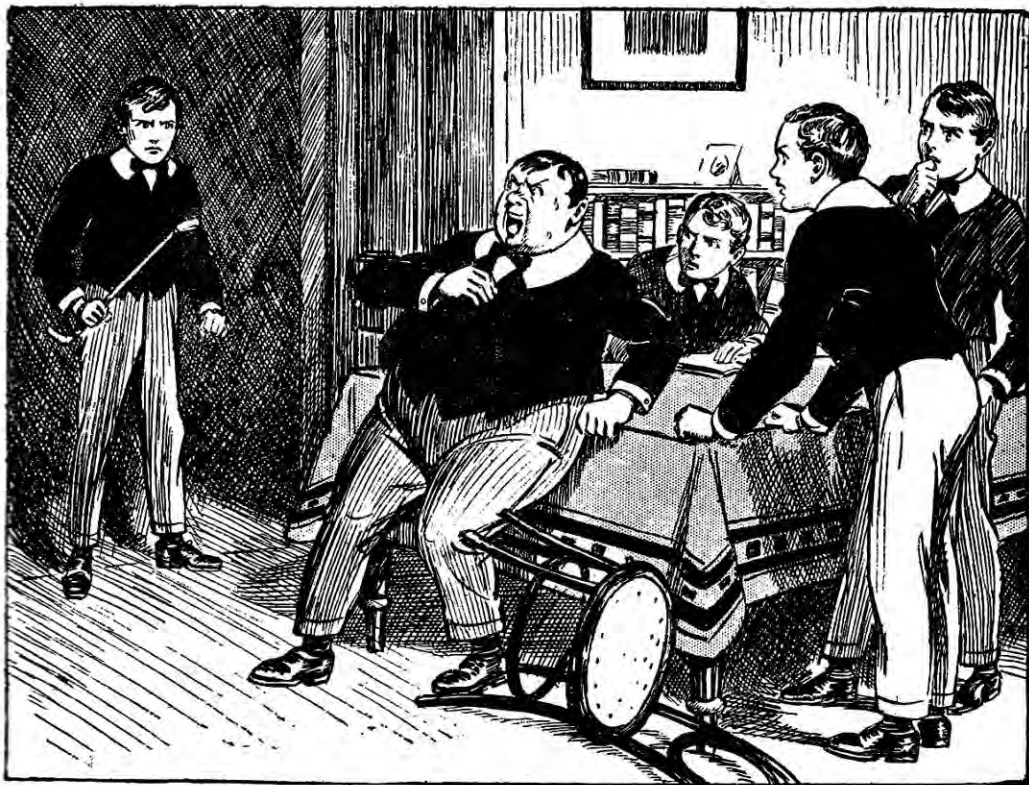
"You thought you were awfully cute in bagging me for the afternoon—what?" grinned Trimble. "But, you see, I've already got it all out of Bunter."

"What?" roared Cardew.

"I stood Bunter a feed, and screwed it all out of him!" grinned Trimble. "Lucky he came over with the cricketers—what? After that you dropped on me, and walked me off—to keep me clear of the Greyfriars fellows. Ha, ha, ha!" And Baggy Trimble fairly roared.

Cardew sat and stared at him, at a loss for words for some minutes. It was only too evident now that, instead of pulling Baggy's fat leg that day, he had been utterly and hopelessly outwitted by the fat junior. Trimble had learned all that he wanted to know, from Bunter; and then he had allowed Cardew to walk him off, coolly bagging the motor run on the feed at the seaside hotel, which had been intended to keep him from making his inquiries.

Cardew's feelings, as he realised it, were too deep to find expression in words for some minutes. To be taken in by



Baggy, letting out a terrified yell, rushed into Study No. 10, startling the Terrible Three, who were at their prep. Levison of the Fourth then appeared in the doorway, panting, and with Wildrake's whip in his hand. Baggy let out another yell. "Help! Keep him off! Help!" he cried. "What the thump!" exclaimed Tom Merry, springing up. (See page 9).

any other fellow was bad enough, but to be utterly "done" by the fat and obtuse Baggy was the very last straw.

"I'm giving you a tip out of good nature," said Baggy, blinking at him. "All the fellows will leave Levison pretty severely alone when they know the facts. Like his neck to come to St. Jim's at all after being expelled from his old school—"

Baggy Trimble was suddenly interrupted.

A grasp of iron descended upon his collar, and he was jerked off the seat, and went with a bump and a yell to the bottom of the car.

"Yoop! Wharrer you at?" roared Trimble.

"Keep there!" said Cardew.

"I'm not going to. I—I—"

"If you get up I shall knock you down!"

"Look here, Cardew—"

"You worm!" said Cardew, between his teeth. "So you've been spying and prying, after all! Well, the proper place for a worm is down under one's feet—and that's where you're goin' to stay for the rest of this trip!"

"You cheeky rotter!" howled Trimble.

He scrambled up.

Cardew smote, and he sat down again with a bump. Then the dandy of the Fourth coolly pushed him over, and rested his feet on Trimble's waistcoat.

"Lemmas gorrup!" he gurgled.

"Shut up!"

"Do you think I'm going to stay like this?" roared Trimble.

"Exactly!"

"Why, you—you—"

"And if you don't dry up," said Cardew. "I'll tap my boots on your nose! That's a tip!"

Trimble dried up. He glared at Cardew like a wild Hun, but he did not venture to speak again or to struggle. Trimble had enjoyed the motor run out. He did not enjoy the run back. It seemed to him ages before the car stopped, a dozen yards from the gates of St. Jim's.

Cardew jumped out, without a word or a look to Trimble. He paid the chauffeur, and started for the school. Behind him, dusty and rumped and breathless, limped Baggy Trimble.

Taggles had come out to lock the gates when Cardew walked in. The two breakers of bounds were just in time. Trimble hurried in after Cardew. But Ralph Reckness Cardew seemed quite unconscious of his existence as he walked towards the School House; and Baggy Trimble did not venture to remind him of it.

CHAPTER 4.

After the Match!

"JOLLY good game!" said Tom Merry, with satisfaction. "And jolly decent chaps!" remarked manners.

"Yes, rather!"

Tom Merry & Co. had seen the Greyfriars party off in their brake for the station. The two teams parted with mutual goodwill. It had been a great game; and St. Jim's were fully satisfied, and Greyfriars almost satisfied. St. Jim's had won by a narrow margin—and a defeat by such a narrow margin wasn't much of a defeat; moreover, the winning catch had been made by Levison, once of Greyfriars. It was really an old Grey Friar who had beaten Greyfriars.

Tom Merry & Co. walked back cheerily to the School House, after the visitors had gone, Bunter having waved his fat hand from the brake, and called back that he would be giving them a look in again soon—a cheery remark which nobody seemed to hear.

The Terrible Three went to their study for prep; even after a great game like the Greyfriars match there was prep to do—though certainly prep was done in rather a desultory fashion in most of the cricketers' studies that evening.

Levison and Clive waited downstairs for Cardew. He had come into Hall just in time to answer "Adsum!" to his name when Mr. Railton called the roll, so they knew that he had returned at last. But he did not seek his chums. They

looked round for him without finding him, and at last went to Study No. 9 in the Fourth. But Cardew had not gone to his study.

"What does it matter?" asked Clive, as Levison frowned uneasily. "He will come in for prep."

"I want to know—" Levison paused.

"About his going out with Trimble?" asked Sidney Clive, with a smile. "Some scheme for keeping the prying bounder away from the Greyfriars chaps, I believe. Cardew was saying something to that effect to you, wasn't he?"

"Yes," growled Levison; "and I told him to mind his own bizney!"

Clive laughed.

"Then he can't have taken the tip, for he went out with Trimble," he said. "What does it matter? Let's get on with prep."

Clive sat down to his work; but Levison remained standing by the study window, staring out into the dusky quadrangle. He was feeling a little tired after the cricket, which was not surprising, considering the vigorous game he had played. He was worried about Cardew, about Trimble, about what the Greyfriars fellows might have told Trimble—though that last circumstance he would not have admitted, even to himself.

He glanced round quickly, as there was a step in the passage, and the door opened. He expected to see Cardew; but it was his minor, Frank, who entered.

Levison's clouded face cleared, and he gave his young brother a nod and a smile.

"Time you were in your Form-room, isn't it, Frank?" he asked. "Mr. Selby doesn't like you to be late for prep."

"Nearly," said Frank. "I—I say, Ernie, you played a wonderful game to-day."

"Not so bad, was it?" said Levison, with a smile.

"It was splendid!" exclaimed Frank. "The Greyfriars fellows know what to think of you now, anyhow."

Levison regarded him curiously. There was trouble in Frank's young face, he could see that. The fog had not come to Study No. 9 to speak only about the cricket.

"Have you seen Trimble?" asked Frank.

"Trimble! No. He went out with Cardew, I think."

"I saw them," said Frank. "I was going to punch Trimble, and Cardew stopped me."

"What the thump were you going to punch Trimble for?" said Levison gruffly. "Can't you keep out of rows with the Fourth?"

"He said—"

Levison made an impatient gesture.

"Something about me?"

"Yes," said Frank.

"Well, don't you think that I can fight my own battles, without help from the Third?" grunted Levison.

Frank coloured painfully. Anything like a rebuke from his older brother hit him hard.

"There, never mind!" exclaimed Levison hastily. "But, really, Frank, you must draw in your horns, you know. If a fellow in the Fourth slangs me, I can punch his nose if it's worth punching."

"But—but he said—Ernie, I know it's all lies—but he said—" Frank choked. "He's a slandering rotter, and it's all lies! But he said you were expelled from Greyfriars."

"I'll speak to Trimble," said Levison quietly. "It's about time he learned not to talk so much. But you can leave him alone, Frank. You'll make me look a silly ass, at this rate."

"That isn't all," said Frank.

"Well, I don't want to hear any more," said Levison. "I'll talk to Trimble. He can't go around chattering like this, that's certain. But you can see that it's better for you not to chip in, Frank."

"I—I know! But—"

"Well, it's all right."

Frank Levison still lingered.

He evidently had something more to say, but could not bring himself to say it. He turned at last to the door. It was high time for him to turn up in the Third Form room. His face was pale and troubled as he went, and Levison of the Fourth frowned after him.

"That tattling cad!" he muttered. "I'll jolly well give Trimble something other than my affairs to talk about, if he must talk. Bother him! He's been spinning Frank some yarn, I suppose."

Levison left the study after a few minutes, and went along to Study No. 2 in the Fourth, which belonged to Trimble, Mellish, and Kit Wildrake. All three of the juniors were there. The door was half-open, and the sound of Baggy Trimble's fat voice was audible as Levison approached.

"He, he, he! I could tell you fellows something if I liked! I'm not going to; but I could!"

"About Levison?" asked Mellish.

"Ho, he! Yes, rather!"

"I guess you jaw too much, Trimble," said Kit Wildrake. "Can't you give tattling a rest for a bit?"

"I could jolly well tell you—"

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"Ring off while a galoot's doing his prep!" said the Canadian junior. "How's a fellow to work while you're wagging your chin?"

"If you knew all I could tell you about Levison—"

"Oh, blow Levison! Dry up!"

"Yah!"

Levison, with a grim face, kicked the door wide open and strode into the study.

CHAPTER 5.

Levison Loses His Temper!

BAGGY TRIMBLE gave a jump at the sight of Levison's face. The expression on it seemed to alarm him.

He pushed back his chair and rose, and made a movement to bring Kit Wildrake between him and the visitor to the study.

Levison fixed his eyes upon the fat junior.

"So you were jawing about me again, Trimble?" he said.

"You shouldn't listen—"

"I heard you as I came along the passage. Anybody in the Fourth could have heard you. I should think you other fellows might find something better to do than to listen to Trimble's sneaking tattle!" added Levison savagely.

Mellish shrugged his shoulders. Wildrake rose to his feet, and fixed his clear, steady eyes on Levison's angry face.

"If you heard Trimble, I guess you heard me," he said quietly. "In that case, you know that I was shutting him up."

"Well, yes; but—"

"No 'but' about it, I guess," said Wildrake tersely. "You're talking out of your hat, Levison, and you'd better not."

Levison opened his lips for an angry retort, but he restrained it. He had not come there to quarrel with Wildrake.

"Anyhow, it's pretty rotten for a fellow to know that a cad in this study is always tattling about him behind his back!" he said bitterly.

"There's the cad! Kick him!" said Wildrake. "I guess that's what he wants. Kick him as hard as you like, and save me the trouble!"

"You jolly well keep off, Levison," said Trimble, eyeing the angry Fourth-Former warily. "I'm not going to fight you."

Levison laughed angrily and scornfully.

"Fight me, you fat fool! If I hit you, you'd burst!"

"I'd jolly well give you a licking," said Trimble, "only—"

"Only you're a sneaking fat funk, and can't do anything but tattle slander!" exclaimed Levison contemptuously.

"The truth ain't slander!" said Trimble. "And I'm not going to fight you, because you're not fit for a fellow to touch!"

"What?" roared Levison.

"A fellow who's been sacked from his school—"

"Who told you I was sacked?"

"Bunter did."

Levison started.

"Bunter! Billy Bunter of the Remove, do you mean?"

"That's the only Bunter I know," grinned Trimble. "He was at Greyfriars while you were there, and he knows it all. I had to stand the fat bounder a feed to get the story out of him; he was keeping it dark, like Wharton and all the rest. But I got it all—from beginning to end."

"So Bunter told you I'd been sacked from Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

"Anything more?"

"Lots!" grinned Trimble. "Enough to get you sacked from St. Jim's, if the Head knew."

"You lying rascal!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" exclaimed Trimble disdainfully. "I've not told about you yet! I'm not sure that I shall. I'm going to think it out. A chap must consider his duty."

"But is it true, Levison?" asked Mellish curiously.

"Mind your own business."

"That's as good as saying yes!" grinned Mellish. "I say, the Head couldn't have known when he let you into St. Jim's, Levison. Would he let you stay if he knew?"

Levison glanced at the wall, where Wildrake's riding-whip hung.

"Will you lend me your whip for a few minutes, Wildrake?" he asked, without heeding Mellish.

"For Trimble?" grinned Wildrake.

"Yes."

"Take it and welcome."

"You'd better look out, Levison!" exclaimed Trimble, in alarm. "I could tell the Head if I liked—"

"Tell him anything you like, you fat rotter. You can tell him at the same time that I gave you the licking of your life," said Levison, crossing to the wall and reaching down the whip.

"If you think you can brazen it out you're making a mistake," said Trimble, "why, even Cardew knows—"
 "Cardew?" exclaimed Levison, taken aback for a moment. Trimble chuckled.

"Mean to say you didn't know Cardew was trying to keep me away from the Greyfriars chaps to-day to keep me from getting at the facts?" he jeered. "Didn't you put him up to taking me out for a motor-run? He, he, he!"

Levison's eyes glittered.
 "That's a fact," said Mellish. "We all know Cardew took Trimble out for the afternoon in a car. Couldn't be because he liked his company. Who could possibly like Trimble's company?"

"Yah!" from Baggy.
 Levison bit his lip hard. Cardew's intervention had been well meant. But it was obvious that it gave an air of probability to whatever yarn Trimble claimed to have heard from the Greyfriars juniors. If there was nothing to discover, why should Cardew have taken the trouble? Wildrake was looking very curiously at Levison, though he did not speak. It was no business of his; but he could not help thinking. Levison caught the expression on his sunburnt face, and turned an angry stare upon him. Wildrake smiled.

"Keep it for Trimble, old man," he said.
 "So you think that Trimble's found out something from the Greyfriars crowd—something I'm afraid to have known?" exclaimed Levison, his eyes blazing.

"You ought to know best," said Wildrake. "It's no bizney of mine!"

"But you think so?"
 "No need for me to tell you my thoughts. They're my own!"

Levison breathed hard.
 "If you're afraid to speak out——" he said savagely.

Wildrake set his lips.

"It looks to me as if you've come here to hunt for a row all round, Levison," he said quietly. "I'm not looking for trouble with you, but if you want my thoughts on the subject you shan't say I'm afraid to put them to you. It looks too me as if you've got something kept dark—and if Cardew took the trouble to load himself with that fat cad for the afternoon, to keep him from inquiring of the Greyfriars chaps, it looks as if Cardew thinks so, too. That's what I think; and you can put it in your pipe and smoke it!"

Levison eyed him savagely. He was angry and resentful, and not in a very reasonable frame of mind, perhaps. But a fat grin on Trimble's face recalled him to common sense, and checked the angry words on his lips.

He fixed his eyes on Baggy and gripped the riding-whip in his hand almost convulsively.

"Well!" he said. "I'll show you, Trimble, and everybody else how much I fear your tattling tongue."

He strode at the fat junior with uplifted arm.

Trimble made a wild rush for the door, yelling. The riding-whip came down with a lash across his fat back.

"Yuroooooh!"
 The whip came down a second time before the fat Baggy escaped from the study and fled wildly down the passage. Levison dashed after him. Baggy, letting out a terrified yell at every step, darted into the Shell passage and rushed into Study No. 10, startling Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther at their prep.

"Hallo! it's Fatty Podgy again!" ejaculated Lowther. "Is some tiny twopenny-halfpenny fag on your track again, Trimble?"

Trimble gasped.
 "It's Levison——"

"Minor?" grinned Manners.
 "Ow! No! Keep him off!"

Levison of the Fourth appeared in the doorway panting, the riding-whip in his hand. Baggy let out a yell of terror.
 "Help! Keep him off! Help!"

"What the——" exclaimed Tom Merry, springing up.

Levison calmed himself with an effort. He realised the ridiculous side of this chase of the funk of the School House—a foe who was certainly not worthy of anybody's steel.

He turned away quickly, with a flushed face. He walked back to Study No. 2 in the Fourth and hung the riding-whip on its hook.

"Thanks!" he said briefly.
 And with that he returned to his own study. In Tom Merry's study Baggy Trimble breathed freely when his pursuer was gone.

"There's the door, Trimble!" said Tom Merry, pointing.
 "If you think I was afraid of that rotter——" began Baggy.

"Well, it looked just a trifling little bit like it, didn't it?" asked Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"The fact is——"
 "Never mind the facts," said Manners, "get out!"

"It's up to me to tell you fellows why I refuse to fight Levison," said Baggy loftily.

"We know!" grinned Lowther.

"You don't know! You see, it would be beneath a chap's dignity to fight a fellow who's not honest!"

"What!"
 "A fellow who was sacked from his school for stealing!"

said Trimble.
 "Levison—sacked—stealing!" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Now you know!" grinned Trimble.
 "Now we know you're even a rottener slandering cad than we supposed," exclaimed Tom wrathfully. "How dare you say such a thing about Levison? Why, you awful rotter——"

"Look here——"
 "Outside!" roared Tom.

He grasped Baggy Trimble by the collar and spun him to the door. Then his foot landed on Trimble.

Baggy fairly flew into the passage.
 Tom Merry slammed the door on him as he rolled and roared, and returned to the table with a black brow.

"The awful rotter!" he said.
 "Can't be anything in it!" said Lowther.

"Of course there can't!"
 "Why did Cardew take him out for the afternoon?" asked Manners suddenly.

"Blessed if I know!"
 "It looks——" said Manners slowly.

"It looks as if Cardew is a silly ass."
 "Cardew is Levison's pal. Trimble must have got this yarn from——"

"Not from the Greyfriars fellows!" exclaimed Tom.
 "Whom else?" said Manners.

"He's invented it, of course."
 "Husn't brains enough," said Manners decidedly.

"Besides, you know how keen he was to get at the Greyfriars fellows to ask them about Levison."

"I think I remember something of the sort," said Tom, with a worried look, "but——"

"Cardew was trying to keep him off the grass," said Manners. "That was Cardew's game, because it can't have been anything else."

"But—but—rot!" exclaimed Tom. "Cardew's an ass, anyhow, and Trimble's—well, we know what Trimble is. I'll never believe he got such a yarn from the Greyfriars quarter. It can't be true! That's not possible! Dash it all, I wish I'd kicked him harder now!"

The subject was dropped in Study No. 10.

But it left the Terrible Three with very uncomfortable thoughts in their minds. They could not help remembering that nobody knew precisely why Levison had left Greyfriars—excepting that it was generally known that he had left his old school under a cloud of some sort. Yet it was generally believed that upon one occasion the Head of Greyfriars had testified his willingness to take Levison back.

(Continued on page 12.)

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Baggy's Little Wangle.

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"**B**AI JOVE! There's somethin' the maffah, deah boys!" Gussy was right. Something certainly was the matter. He and Digby, Herries, the Terrible Three, and I were sauntering along a quiet lane at Rylcombe one afternoon, leisurely making our way back towards St. Jim's.

A little old-fashioned cottage stood back from the roadway—a pretty little cottage, covered with ivy and honeysuckle. It had a pretty little garden in front, too. But it was a scene in that little garden which caused us to stop and look.

A poor little old lady was sitting in the garden, surrounded by a pile of furniture. She looked a frail pathetic figure, sitting there, with head bowed, amongst her humble worldly possessions.

"**Bai Jove!**" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy again, screwing his monocle tighter into his eye, and looking in great concern at the old lady in the garden. "This is weally most distwessin' deah boys. Poor old soul!"

The old lady did not look up, but sat with her eyes cast to the ground, now and then stirring slightly to draw her threadbare shawl about her.

"I say, you chaps, what do you think of this?" said Baggy Trimble, rolling up, a look of deep indignation on his face. That poor old lady has been turned out of her cottage—kicked out, lock, stock, and barrel, just because she owes a bit of rent. Beastly shame, I call it!"

"**Yaas, wathah!**" said D'Arcy. "It is almost incomprehensible, deah boys, that any man could be such a callous wotah as to turn a poor lady frowm her home! Wheah is the landlord? As a fellow of tact and judgment, I will wemostwate with him!"

"The landlord's gone," said Baggy. "It's no use talking to him; he's unreasonable. All he wants is his rent. I say, you chaps, would you like to contribute to the subscription I'm raising on the poor lady's behalf?"

Baggy held out a little cigar-box with a slit in it. Money jingled inside it as he rattled the box.

"You—you're raising a subscription!" gasped Tom Merry faintly.

"**Yes. Why not?**" demanded Baggy warmly. "It's for a jolly good cause, too! There's the poor old soul, turned out of her own home, too proud to ask for charity, yet she deserves it if anybody ever did! I'm doing this for a good cause."

"**Humph!** That's not much in your line, Baggy, is it?" said George Herries bluntly. Baggy Trimble glowered.

"**Oh, really, you know—**" "I suppose Baggy's trying to reap some cheap glory!" said Manners. "By collecting for the old lady, he reckons people will think him a giddy hero!"

"**Oh, well, that's no bizney of ours!**" said Tom Merry, with a good-natured laugh. "We'll contribute willingly, as it's to do the old lady a good turn. Won't we, chaps?"

"**Yaas, wathah!**" There was nothing half hearted in the way Tom Merry & Co. "cashed up." Gussy contributed fifteen shillings, and we all gave willingly according to our means. Quite a goodly sum must have accrued in Baggy's collection box.

"**Thanks awfully, you chaps!**" said Baggy, in great satisfaction. "Nothing like helping **THE GEM LIBRARY.**—No. 760.

others, is there? Ah, here come Figgins & Co."

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the New House, strolled up. We strolled off, still feeling very concerned about the poor lady who had been turned out of her cottage.

Baggy Trimble successfully "touched" Figgins & Co. for contributions, and several other fellows, too, who happened to pass that way, willingly parted up with all they could afford to swell the proceeds of Baggy's subscription.

"I say, deah boys, I am weally verry grieved ovah that poor old lady!" said Gussy, as we made our way towards St. Jim's. "She must feel her posish fwightfully, bai Jove! I think it's up to us to provide her with any little comfort we can. I've a wippin' ideah. Let's make up a parcel of provisions fwom the tuckshop, and take it along to the poor old soul!"

"**Good wheeze, suat, Gussy!**" said Tom Merry heartily.

When St. Jim's was reached we all went over to the tuckshop, and Mrs. Taggles made us up a fine parcel of provisions which would gladden the heart of the unfortunate old lady.

Several other fellows who were in the tuckshop gladly contributed.

The Shock.

We made our way back along the lane to the cottage.

Baggy Trimble was gone, but the old lady was still sitting in the midst of her furniture in the garden.

She looked up wearily at us as we entered and approached her along the little garden path.

"**Good aftahnoon, madam!**" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, raising his topper, and making a graceful bow. "We are verry grieved to see you so unfortunately placed. It must be fwightfully infwua dig. for you, bai Jove!"

"**Goodness!**" said the little old lady, raising her wrinkled hands in great astonishment.

We could not help grinning. Gussy had all the noblesse oblige which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere, and it was apt to come as rather surprising to those who were not used to him.

"**We twust, madam,**" went on Gussy,

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extending the parcel of provisions we had brought with us, twust that you will do us the favah of acceptin' this little gift of provisions. We thought that they might come in wathah usefule to you, undah—ahem!—undah the circs!"

"**Deary me!**" said the old lady, opening the parcel wonderingly.

Her eyes glistened with surprise and pleasure when she saw the goodly contents of the parcel.

"**Lordy!** It's verry kind of you young gentlemen to bring me these, I'm sure," she said. "Thank you verry much, and—"

"**Pway do not bothah to thank us, madam!**" said Arthur Augustus graciously.

"**We considah it our duty to help a lady in distwess. This must be a verry twain' ordeal for you.**"

"**It is—it is, young gent.,**" said the old lady, shaking her head sadly.

"**We considah that the man who turned you out into the garden in t's atwocious mannah is a wotten bully and a bwute!**" went on Gussy, his eyeglasses glimmering with indignation.

"**If I could lay my hands on him, I should considah it my painful duty to administrah a fearful twashashin!**"

"**Deary me!**" said the old lady, looking at Gussy over her eyeglasses with an expression of mild reproof.

"**I wepeat, madam, that I should weghad it as my duty to give him a fearful twashashin!**" said Gussy warmly. "What weason can a man have for bein' such a bwute? Why are you turned out heah in this dewardful mannah—turned out of yowah own home by a man?"

"**Well, you see, young gent, my old man's whitewashin—**"

"**Eh?**" Gussy fell back with a start, and so did we all. We blinked at the old lady.

"**My old man's whitewashin,**" she said simply, looking benevolently at us over the rim of her eyeglasses. "And when my old man's whitewashin, he likes to do the job properly, and me and the furniture has to move out into the garden till he's finished."

"**I don't see what he's done to deserve a thrashin, and—**"

"**Bai Jove!**" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his monocle fluttering from his eye.

"**Mum-my only sainted aunt!**" gasped Tom Merry, in a faint voice.

We all stood there like a lot of sheep.

"**Then—then you weren't turned out because you owed rent?**" I managed to gasp.

"**Certainly not, young gent!**" replied the lady. "My name is Mrs. Miggle. This cottage belongs to my old man, and no landlord can turn us out."

"**Oh! We—we have been labouvin' undah a gwave misapprehension, madam!**" said Gussy, groping for his monocle, and jamming it into his eye. "Pway accept our deepest apologies. Mastah Twimble's subscription on yowah behalf must have occasioned you some ambawwement."

"**Subscription?**" echoed Mrs. Miggle.

"**Which subscription?**"

"**Didn't one of our fellows collect some money for you, and hand it over?**" asked Tom Merry, a light beginning to dawn upon him.

"**Mrs. Miggle shook her head.**" "No, young gent," she said.

We looked at each other with feelings that were too deep for words.

"**Well, I'm jiggered!**" gasped Tom Merry. "Baggy, the fat spoofer!"

"**The swindling worm!**"

"**He's frauded us!**"

Feeling a perfect set of asses, we bade Mrs. Miggle good afternoon, and made a hurried exit from the garden, leaving her to

wait there amidst the furniture until Mr. Miggle had finished his whitewashing inside the cottage.

We went, thirsting for Baggy Trimble's blood.

We told the other subscribers of how we had been spoofed by Baggy's fraudulent collection. Howls of wrath arose.

"Then Baggy knew all the time that Mrs. Miggle hadn't been turned out for rent!" gasped Figgins. "He knew her—her old man was whitewashing!"

"We'll annihilate him when he comes in!" Baggy Trimble did not put in an appearance until nearly locking-up time. He rolled in at the gates of St. Jim's looking very shiny in the face, and particularly jammy round the mouth. He seemed to walk rather more slowly than usual, as though he had just partaken of a huge feed.

Angry subscribers to his fund bore down upon him out of the shadows.

"I—I say, you chaps—," began Baggy; but next minute he was whirled over.

"Turn his pockets out, chaps!" sang out Tom Merry. "We'll have every blessed farthing we can find on him, and put it into the hospital box!"

"Yarooooogh! Yah! Leggo!" howled Baggy, struggling. "Hauda off, you rotters! Woocgh! Ow-wow-wow!"

There was no escape for Baggy. Nearly thirty bob was forthcoming from his pockets. The rest of the proceeds of his subscription he had spent in gorging. Tom Merry appropriated the money, and we appropriated Baggy.

We rolled him over and over in the quad, bumped him, frogmarched him, and then hurled him head foremost into the fountain in the Close.

"Yerrrugh!" gurgled Baggy, as he sank.

We left him there to crawl out. Baggy felt that life was not worth living when he did get out. He moaned and gasped all the evening. The rest of his ill-gotten wealth was put into the hospital box, and during the rest of the evening, every time that Baggy met with one of the angry subscribers, he received a kick that sent him scuttling off, howling most dismally.

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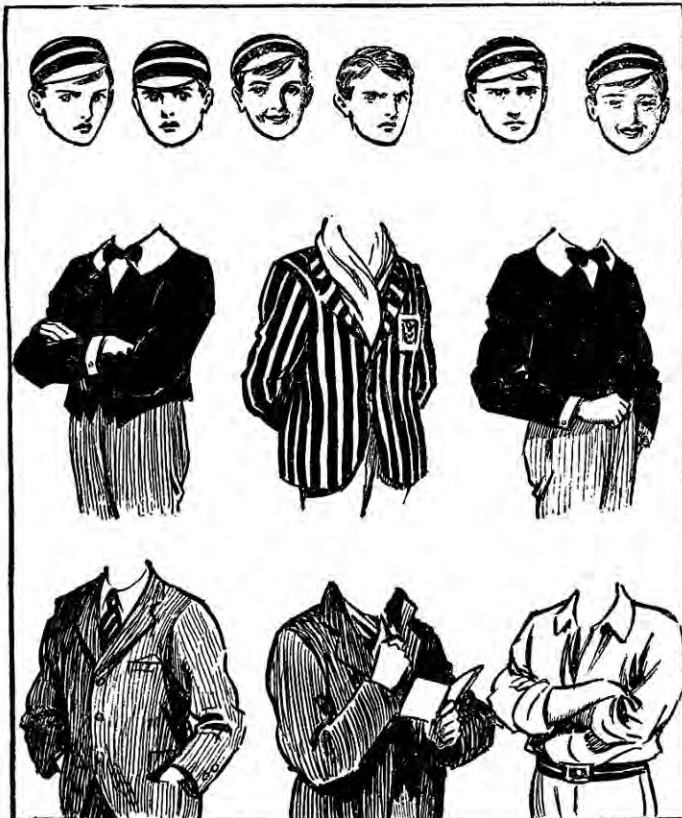
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Ask Your Old Uncle!

HELP CLUB.

Conducted by Monty Lowther.

A. A. D'ARCY.—"I should be very much obliged, dear boy, if you could tell me how to cut down my tailah's bills. Things are weally expensive, bai Jove!—Certainly, Gussy! An ordinary pair of scissors will do, or old safety-razor blades will be found very useful for the purpose."

B. TRIMBLE.—"No, Baggy, that theory won't work. When you contract a debt, you don't make it smaller. You contracted a debt with me last week of half-a-crown, and it's still half-a-crown, and not two bob—savvy? If you try any of that old buck on me, you'll also contract a thick ear!"

H. SKIMPOL.—"Your oil-painting received, Skimpy, with the request that I should suggest a title. Why not call the picture 'Home'? There's no place like it!"

G. A. GRUNDY.—"Do you think I am cut out for a military career?" I yes, rather! You'd go great guns at shelling peas!

R. A. DIGBY.—"You know what a dab I am at writing poetry. Do you think I shall succeed in writing for money?" Dunno, Dig! It's all according whom you write to. You might try writing to my Uncle Ned—he hasn't sent me a tip for three months, although I dun him no end. If you succeed, I'll treat you to a still lemon at the tuckshop."

L. SCOPE.—"I have come to the conclusion that I am not exactly of the stuff of which heroes are made. How can I become full of grit?"—Have a sand bath, or, if you can't get sand, try coal-dust."

WALLY D'ARCY.—"Do you think I can train my dog Pongo to kill rats?"—I couldn't say, but you can bet quids to tidlywinks he'd give a mouse the dickens of a fight!"

G. HERRIES.—"Have just purchased a wireless set, but am disgusted to find that it's fitted with a whole lot of bally wires. Can you instruct me in the art of listening in?"—Ask Baggy Trimble; he's more expert at "listening in" than anybody at St. Jim's—especially at keyholes!

HARD LUCK ON LEVISON.

(Continued from page 9.)

There was nothing in Trimble's astounding story—they were certain of that. But they felt very uncomfortable.

CHAPTER 6.

Trouble In Study No. 9.

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW was in Study No. 9 in the Fourth when Levison returned thither. He seemed to be busy with his prep when Ernest Levison came in—so busy that he did not even look up. It was extremely unusual for Cardew to be keen on prep. Levison halted by the table, and looked down at Cardew's bent head.

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(On Sale Friday.)

"Glued to it?" he asked sarcastically.

Cardew looked up at that.

"Yes," he assented. "I'm rather late beginnin'. And I'm rather keen on pleasin' dear old Lathom in the mornin', for once."

"You can chance it with Lathom again, as you generally do," said Levison dryly. "I've got to speak to you."

"Won't after prep do?"

"No."

Cardew sighed.

"This isn't encouragin'—when I'm stickin' to work," he said. "You're neglectin' your own prep, dear boy."

"Never mind prep now," said Levison savagely. "I want to know what silly fool game you've been playing this afternoon!"

"Game?" repeated Cardew vaguely.

"Yes—you and Trimble. It seems that you took that fat rotter out for the afternoon, after all."

"Dear old Baggy!" said Cardew. "No end of an entertainin' chap. The afternoon passed like a jolly old dream."

"You hate the sight of the fat bounder."

"Dear man, I haven't energy enough to hate anythin'." I don't even hate prep. Only dislike it with a mild dislike."

"You talked some silly rot to me before the cricket about keeping Trimble away from the Greyfriars chaps."

"Did I?"

"You know you did!" shouted Levison.

"Be it so, as they say in the novels!" yawned Cardew. "I did, then. No need to tell all the Fourth. But I'm always talkin' rot! I call Clive to witness. Speak up for your old pal, Clive. Am I not always talkin' rot?"

"Generally," said Clive, with a laugh. "What on earth's the row, Levison? What have you got your rag out for?"

"The row's this," said Levison passionately. "That silly fool—"

"Little me?" asked Cardew.

"Yes, you! That fool, Clive, carted that other fool off for the afternoon, and all St. Jim's knows that he did it to keep him clear of the Greyfriars crowd, so that he couldn't find anything out about me when I was at that school. That's the row! What sort of an impression is that going to make when it's jawed up and down the passages?"

Clive looked grave.

"It was rather fatheaded, Cardew," he said. "Levison told you not to do anything of the kind."

"I know," sighed Cardew. "I did it for the best, dear boys. Sorry! I'm always puttin' my foot in it. I admit I was a fool! Fellow must be a fool to take any trouble on another fellow's account. It's not really my way, either. I must be careful, to stick to my own ways after this. The fat's in the fire."

"I warned you to let Trimble alone," said Levison, white with anger. "You couldn't even keep it dark what you were doing it for. You might as well have shouted out in the quad that you believed there was some shady secret the Greyfriars fellows could tell about me."

"Trimble dished me," confessed Cardew. "Generally, anybody can pull that fat fool's leg. But he did me this time. I loaded myself with the greedy brute for the afternoon—and he had already pumped Bunter of all he knew. It was a clean sell!"

"All Bunter knew!" repeated Clive. "But I suppose Bunter didn't know anything that mattered."

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Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't you see?" exclaimed Levison bitterly. "Cardew can't believe that I've nothing to be afraid of from Greyfriars. He thinks that any Greyfriars chap has only to ope his silly mouth to cover me with disgrace, if he choose: Goodness knows what he thinks I did at Greyfriars!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" urged Cardew.

"And now— I've thrashed Trimble; but that won't stop his mouth—and won't stop other fellows from believin' him, with Cardew's evidence to support what he says."

"My evidence?" exclaimed Cardew.

"Yes—it's as good as evidence; the fellows knowing who you did. Why the thump couldn't you let Trimble rip?"

Cardew's lips set a little.

"Can't see there's much harm done," he said tartly. "I Bunter has told Trimble lies, there's nothin' in it. If you weren't sacked from Greyfriars, you can prove it easily enough. What's the good of askin' fellows to believe that you had nothin' to keep dark, when it was plain all the time that you were keepin' somethin' or other very dark?"

"What do you think I was keeping dark, then?" asked Levison, between his teeth.

"I don't know—somethin'. Whatever it was, the Greyfriars fellows could have told Trimble, an' I heard him tryin' to pump Wharton an' Cherry an' Vernon-Smith an' some others. They wouldn't tell him anythin'. But if there's been nothin' to tell, they'd have said so."

"I must say that seems about right," remarked Clive, with a look at Levison.

"If you'd accepted my offer in the first place, Levison, an' let me get Trimble off the scene, he couldn't have found anythin' out," said Cardew. "You refused—"

"Of course I refused."

"And when I acted on my own, it seems to have come too late. Not my fault."

Levison clenched his hands.

"Trimble will be spinning yarns up and down the House, and what you've done will make the fellows believe there's something in them," he said.

"Let it go at that," said Cardew. "Don't put on my shoulders the blame for whatever it was you did at Greyfriars a long time ago!"

Levison's eyes flashed.

"What do you mean by that?"

"My meanin' is clear enough," Cardew was angry himself now. "If Trimble slanders you, have him up before the Housemaster. Any other fellow would. Frinstance! Tom Merry was at Clavering School for a term or so before he came here. I've heard. If a fellow declared that Tom Merry had been sacked from Clavering, would Merry let it rest at that? You know he wouldn't. He'd make the fellow prove it or eat his words in public."

"Of course he would," said Clive, "and it's up to you to do the same. Levison. Cardew's played the goat, very likely; but it's up to you to clear the matter up."

"How?" almost hissed Levison.

"Take Trimble before the Housemaster to repeat his statements," said Cardew coolly. "Mr. Railton will be bound to apply to the Head of Greyfriars for definite information, and will make it known to the whole school."

Levison gnawed his lips.

"And if I don't choose to do that?" he said.

"Oh, let it drop!" said Cardew impatiently. "If you don't choose to make the truth known in the only possible way, it's because you've got somethin' to hide—and you ought to thank me instead of slandin' me for tryin' to help you to keep it dark."

Levison stood looking at him without speaking. He turned his glance on Clive, and he read in the South African junior's face full agreement with Cardew's view.

The two juniors waited for him to speak. But he did not speak. Without another word he sat down at the table and drew his books towards him.

Cardew and Clive exchanged a glance, and then dropped their eyes to their work. Not another word was spoken in Study No. 9 while prep lasted; and then the three juniors left the study—still in silence. But while Cardew and Clive went one way, Ernest Levison went another.

CHAPTER 7.

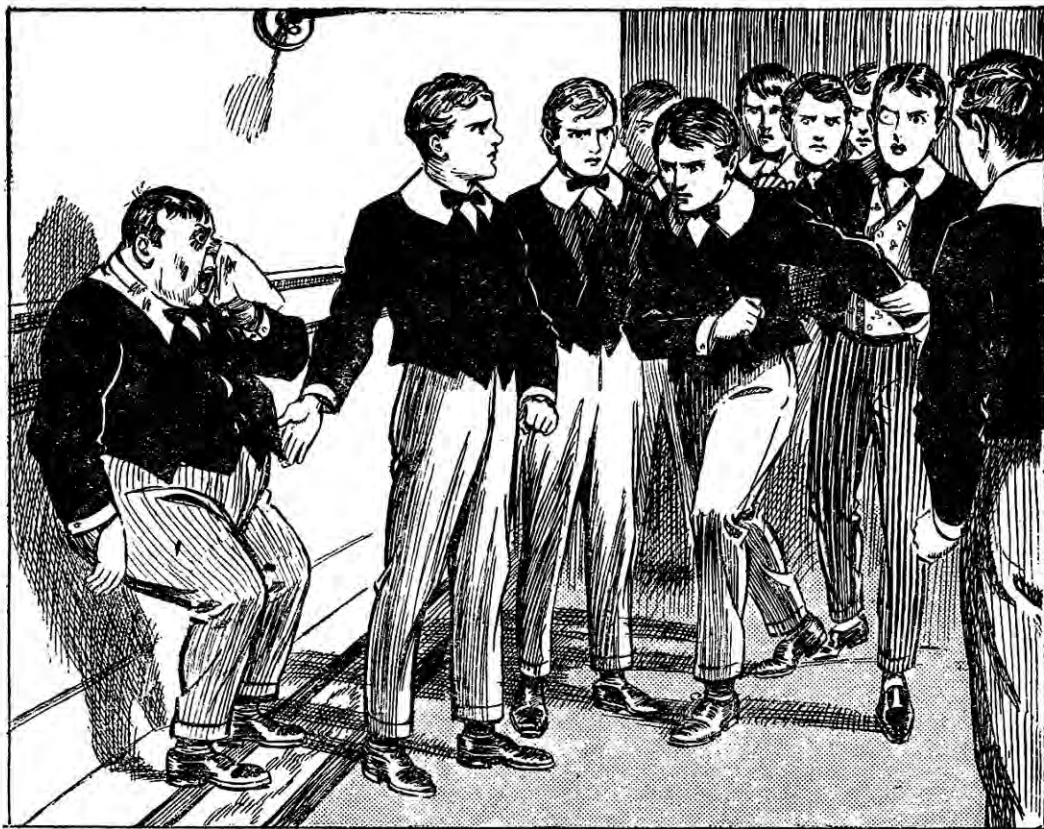
Letting Levison Off!

THE next day the most discussed fellow at St. Jim's—in the Lower School, at least—was Ernest Levison of the Fourth Form.

Levison's great game in the Greyfriars match was a general theme—and Levison's "past" was a theme still more general.

True, Baggy Trimble had not yet revealed all that he could have revealed. But he had said enough to excite general interest and great curiosity.

Not that Baggy's statements, as a rule, attracted much attention or belief. Any accusation that had rested upon



Tom Merry glanced at Baggy's damaged fat nose, and then at the cold, hard, defiant countenance of Ernest Levison. "This won't do, Levison!" he said curtly. "You've no right to punch Trimble—a helpless duffer who can't put his hands up." "I'd punch any fellow who said what he said," answered Levison. (See page 14.)

Baggy's bare word would have leaned upon a very rotten reed.

But there was more in it than that.

Already it had been known, though almost forgotten, that Levison had left his old school under a cloud. It was known—only too well—that for whole terms at St. Jim's he had been a black sheep, and more than once in danger of expulsion from the school.

And Cardew's intervention was, as Levison himself had said in Study No. 9, as good as evidence against him.

If Levison's own chum believed that he had something to fear from investigation, and had taken measures to prevent investigation, the inference was clear enough.

And so, that day, there was much comment on the subject of Levison of the Fourth, and he received unusual attention—which did not fail to elicit the fact that he was not on his usually cordial terms with his own study-mates.

There had been no quarrel in Study No. 9; but undoubtedly there was a "rift in the lute," a restraint that was visible to all eyes.

Frank Levison, in the Third, was worried; and all the fags knew why he was worried. But he did not venture to approach Ernest on the thorny subject again, or to interfere with Trimble. Frank, angry as he was at aspersions upon his major, realised that it was for Ernest to defend himself; and that for his young brother to take up the cudgels was as good as an admission that Ernest had no defence to make.

Levison was in a moody temper that day.

He was angry with his chums for not trusting him more completely, especially with Clive. Cardew, whose cynicism was ingrained, trusted nobody—not even himself. But Clive was steady and loyal, not at all given to doubting. If Clive had been driven to doubt at last, it was Levison's own doing—he had refused to take the natural step for clearing himself from Trimble's hints and innuendoes.

But Levison, in his present mood, at least, was not inclined

to admit that it was his own doing. Clive, in his straightforward way, would have had Trimble "up" before the Housemaster, there to repeat or to withdraw his accusations. If Levison did not choose to do so, why did he not choose? Clive wanted an answer to that question, and Levison had, apparently, no answer to make.

The Terrible Three of the Shell had said nothing of the amazing statement Trimble had made in their study. If Trimble repeated it outside Study No. 10, it was up to Levison to take action. Apparently Trimble had not repeated it yet. But Tom Merry was keen enough to see that this was not Trimble's usual reckless lying. He had something to go upon, or he thought that he had.

After lessons that day, when the Fourth came out of their Form-room, Cardew and Clive waited in the passage for Levison, prepared to make advances.

Levison was last out, and the passage was nearly empty when he appeared.

Certainly he saw his chums, and must have guessed why they were waiting. But he did not choose to see them. He walked on as if they were not there.

Sidney Clive frowned. Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

Levison of the Fourth went to his study. He had the room to himself—his chums did not feel inclined to seek his company there, after one rebuff. Levison threw himself into a chair, with a gloomy brow. He was feeling dissatisfied and discontented, angry and resentful, and with a kind of gloomy pleasure in anger and resentment. It was not usual with him to give way to such an unhealthy frame of mind, but undoubtedly Levison was sullen now, in fact, sulky.

He looked up bitterly as the door opened. His eyes glittered at the sight of Baggy Trimble's fat face.

Trimble eyed him from the door without coming in. He appeared rather unwilling to trust his podgy person within Levison's reach.

"Have you come for another licking, you fat rascal?" asked Levison. "If not, you'd better clear!"

"I've got something to say to you, old top," said Trimble. "Is it pax?"

"No!" growled Levison. "I'll kick you out if you put a hoof inside this study!"

"Then I'll say it here," said Trimble. "It's your look-out if the fellows hear."

"Do you think I mind them hearing, you fat dummy?" Trimble grinned.

"You would—if you knew what Bunter told me," he answered.

Levison eyed him morosely. He remembered Bunter well enough—a tattling fellow, much after Trimble's kind. Whatever Bunter knew, doubtless he had passed on to Trimble. It did not occur to Levison, yet, that Bunter might also have passed on what he did not know.

"Are you going to make it pax if I come in?" grinned Trimble.

Levison did not trouble to answer.

"Then I'll go ahead," said Trimble. "First of all, I was going to ask you to lend me a pound."

Levison stared.

"Lend you a pound!" he repeated blankly.

"Just that!"

"You fat idiot!" exclaimed Levison, half-laughing.

"Lend you a pound for meddling in my affairs?"

"Not exactly," grinned Trimble. "But one good turn deserves another, you know. I haven't told the fellows yet. Perhaps I dropped a hint to young Frank yesterday; I may have said a word or two to Tom Merry. But that's nothing—I'm keeping it dark."

"Keeping what dark?" yelled Levison.

"What you were sacked from Greyfriars for."

"I was not sacked from Greyfriars."

Trimble winked a fat wink.

"Gammon!" he said.

Levison half-rose from his chair, but sat down again.

"You're not worth licking," he muttered. "I suppose that other fat fool, Bunter, span you that yarn."

"And a good bit more," grinned Trimble. "I got from Bunter why you were sacked."

"So far as I can remember, Bunter never knew why I left," said Levison sourly.

"Well, I like that!" ejaculated Trimble. As if the whole school didn't know! Robbing your headmaster—

Levison bounded from the chair as if he had been electrified.

"What!" he roared.

"Here, keep off!" gasped Trimble. "I'm not going to tell the fellows; I'm going to let you down lightly, Levison."

Levison, checking his rage, stared at Trimble. He was more astounded, in fact, than enraged by the unexpected accusation.

"You—you think—you dare to think—" he stuttered. Trimble winked again.

"I don't think—I know, old bean," he said, grinning.

"But I'm going to let you down lightly. I'm letting you off—see? I hope you've repented."

"Repented!" said Levison dazedly.

"Yes. Even thieves can repent."

"Thieves!"

"If you've turned over a new leaf, I'm willing to give you a chance," said the generous Baggy. "Treat me decently, and I'll treat you decently. I admit you haven't stolen anything here."

"Stolen anything here?" murmured Levison, like a fellow in a dream. It really seemed that he could not quite believe his ears.

"I've never missed anything, anyhow," said Trimble. "I'm willing to believe that you've given up stealing."

"Given up stealing?"

"Yes. I'll keep it dark and give you a chance. Of course, one good turn deserves another," said Trimble. "You see that?"

Levison was still staring at him, motionless, as if dazed. Trimble, encouraged, rattled on cheerily. He thought that Levison was being reasonable at last.

"Lend me a pound," he continued. "It's not much—I call it moderate. One good turn deserves another. What do you think?"

Levison drew a deep, deep breath. He came towards Trimble at last. He was quite calm, but the look in his eyes scared Baggy.

Trimble backed into the passage.

"Look here, you know—" he began.

Levison was upon him the next moment. Baggy had only time to let out one terrific yell, and then his head was in chancery and Levison was pounding at his fat features as if he mistook Baggy's fat face for a punchball.

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CHAPTER 8.

Trimble's Triumph!

"BAI Jove! What's the wow?"

"What the thump—?"

"Levison!"

A dozen fellows crowded into the passage, as Baggy's yells of anguish rang and echoed there.

"Scrapping" in the Fourth Form passage was not a thing of rare occurrence. But the fearful yells uttered by Baggy Trimble were rather unusual. Fellows came dashing out of their studies in alarm.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy ran up, with Blake and Herries and Dig behind him. Wildrake and Roynance, Kerruish and Hammond, came speeding along. A dozen other fellows gathered from one quarter or another.

"Help! Ow! Ooooo! Help!" Trimble was roaring as he struggled frantically in Levison's grip.

"Levison, you uttiah ass—"

"Let go, Levison!" shouted Blake.

Thump, thump, thump!

Baggy's head was still in chancery, and Levison was still using his face for a punch-ball, heedless of the exclamations round him.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy caught him by the arm.

"Weally, Levison—" he began.

"Let go, you fool!"

"What?"

"Let go, confound you!"

Instead of letting go the swell of St. Jim's tightened his grasp on Levison's arm.

"I wogard your unseemly expressions, Levison, with uttiah contempt!" said Arthur Augustus, in his most dignified tone. "I considah it uttiahly bad form for a fellah to lose his tempah in this mannah."

"You idiot!"

"Ow! Help!" roared Baggy.

"I am helpin' you, Twimble. You are a fat wascal; but I will not allow you to be knocked about like this."

"You—you—" gasped Levison, struggling to release his arm. But Arthur Augustus held on.

"I am not awah of what Twimble may have done, Levison—"

"Then mind your own business, you dummy!"

"But whatever he has done," continued Gussy calmly. "he has had enough. You are bein' bwutal."

"Shut up, and—"

"I wufuse to shut up, Levison, or to allow you to punch Twimble any more."

Levison breathed hard. Trimble wriggled and struggled, but Levison's left still held him fast. Jack Blake took hold of Levison's left and coolly unwound it from Trimble.

"That's enough, whatever he's done!" said Blake coolly.

"You cheeky rotter—"

"Get aside, Trimble." Baggy was only too glad to get aside. "Now, Levison, if you want any more punching, you can start punching a fellow who can put up his hands—little me, for example."

"Yaas, wathah!"

For a moment Levison looked as if he would spring at Blake, who was quite ready for him. But he restrained himself with an effort.

"You can let go my arm, D'Arcy," he said quietly, though his voice was trembling with anger and excitement.

"You are not goin' to punch Twimble any more?"

"No." Levison gave a short, hard laugh. "He looks as if he's had enough."

"Too much, I should say," remarked Wildrake dryly. "I guess I'd have stopped you if I'd come up before these fellows."

Baggy Trimble certainly looked as if he had had too much. He reeled against the wall, spluttering for breath, and there was a crimson stream oozing from his fat nose. He gasped and blinked, and blinked and gasped, in a dazed way. Baggy had often been kicked, and had often been licked, and generally had deserved it. But certainly never had he been punched like this.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow! Wow!" groaned Baggy. "Keep him off, you fellows! Ow, ow! Wow! Groooh! Woop!"

"Feelin' awf'ly bad, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus sympathetically.

"Ow! Wow! Yes. Ow!"

The Terrible Three had arrived on the scene now from the Shell passage. Tom Merry glanced at Baggy's damaged fat face, and then at the cold, hard, defiant countenance of Ernest Levison.

"This won't do, Levison!" he said curtly. "You've no right to punch Trimble like that—a helpless duffer, who can't put his hands up."

"If he can't put his hands up he should keep his tongue between his teeth!" said Levison. "I'd punch any fellow who said what he said, if it was Kildare of the Sixth himself."

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "I think I can guess what you're driving at," said Tom quietly. "It's bad enough. But there's a limit. And if a fellow accuses you, it's better to squash the accusation than to punch him, if he's not a fellow who can fight."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Trimble been accusing Levison?" yawned Blake. "He's always spinning some yarn. That's no reason for smashing his features, though. They were bad enough, anyhow."

"I'd lick him!" gasped Trimble. "Levison knows why I won't fight him."

"We all know," grinned Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He's not fit to touch!" roared Trimble, backing behind Tom Merry. "Yah! You know you're not fit to touch, Levison! A thief's not fit for anybody to touch!"

Levison made a bound towards him with a cry of rage. Tom Merry stood grimly in the way.

"Hands off!" he said.

"You heard what he called me!" panted Levison, white to the lips.

Tom Merry nodded.

"I heard," he answered. "But Trimble's had enough, for one thing. And nobody here believes him, for another. You've no right to punch him as you did."

"I'll smash him!" panted Levison. "He's called me a thief!"

"He was sacked from Greyfriars for stealing!" yelled Trimble.

"Gweat Scott!"

"My only Aunt Selina!"

"Chuck it, Trimble!"

"It's true!" yelled Trimble. "He knows it's true! That's why he pitched into me. I got it all out of a Greyfriars chap yesterday, and Levison knows it."

"Phew!"

"Will you let me get at that slandering rotter, Tom Merry?" said Levison, in tones of concentrated rage.

"No," said Tom quietly. "You're not going to touch him, Levison!"

"Then put up your hands!"

Tom Merry kept his hands at his sides.

"I shall do nothing of the kind," he said. "Listen to reason, Levison, and keep your temper. This is going to be thrashed out. Trimble, you say that Levison was sacked from Greyfriars long ago for stealing?"

"Yes," howled Trimble.

"You're ready to come before the Housemaster, and say it in the presence of Mr. Railton?" demanded the captain of the Shell.

"Yes."

"Very well. I suppose you're ready, too, Levison?"

"Ready for what?" snapped Levison.

"To have this affair thrashed out in the only possible way!" said Tom tersely. "No fellow here can possibly know why you left Greyfriars. There's a sort of impression that you were in some trouble there, but even that isn't known for certain. Nobody here can prove or disprove what Trimble says. Mr. Railton can."

"And how?"

"By referring to Greyfriars," said Tom Merry at once. "After this, if the matter's taken to him, he's bound to do it. The Greyfriars headmaster is bound to give him the facts, if he inquires there—as he certainly will. Trimble will get a flogging then, and you will be cleared. It's the only way you can be cleared."

"Then there are fellows here willing to believe that I'm a thief on Trimble's word!" exclaimed Levison passionately.

Tom looked at him steadily.

"I wouldn't take Trimble's word against a Hun," he answered. "But it's not a question of Trimble's word. He knows that he risks a flogging by accusing you before the Housemaster, and he's ready to do it—"

"Quite ready!" hooted Trimble. "Keen!"

"You've got nothing to lose by it," said Tom. "Everything to gain, in fact. The Greyfriars Head will tell Mr. Railton the exact facts. Mr. Railton will make them known here. We all believe that you are innocent; and in that case you have nothing to fear."

"I do not fear anything!" said Levison, with savage disdain.

"Very well. Come to the Housemaster—with Trimble. You can see for yourself, I suppose, what fellows will think if you don't let the matter be sifted to the very bottom now it's gone so far."

All eyes were fixed on Levison of the Fourth. The passage was crowded with fellows now. Cardew and Clive were in the throng, and they looked anxiously at their study-mate. Levison stood silent, white to the lips—silent as a stone.

The juniors exchanged glances.

Levison had left Greyfriars under some kind of a cloud. Nobody had suspected anything so bad as this. But if he

refused to take the only possible step to render his innocence clear—

The silence was painful.

"Well?" said Tom Merry at last.

Still Levison did not speak.

"Are you going to the Housemaster, Levison?"

"No!"

Tom compressed his lips.

"Suit yourself!" he said shortly. "You know your own business best, I dare say. But you'll keep your hands off Trimble!"

"Yaas, wathah! If you want to deal with Twimble, Levison, you can do so by disprovov' his accusation."

"Easy enough—if it can be disproved," said Lowther.

"Levison—" began Clive appealingly.

Levison of the Fourth looked round. His lip curled bitterly. There was a hunted look in his eyes.

Without another word he turned and walked away.

The juniors made way for him to pass. All eyes followed him to the door of Study No. 9. Levison went into his study without looking back, and the door closed on him.

CHAPTER 9.

Abandoned.

THERE was a deep-drawn breath in the crowded passage. The juniors looked at one another with startled faces.

"Well!" said Blake at last.

"Bai Jove! It's too howlid to be true!"

"I told you fellows—" began Trimble triumphantly. Tom Merry interrupted him angrily.

"You've said enough!" he snapped. "Whatever may be the truth about Levison, you're a mean rotter to go nosing out things about a fellow that happened long ago!"

"Some fellows have a sense of duty—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Tom Merry went back to his study. The crowd in the passage broke up, with a buzz of excited comment.

Trimble went to bathe his nose. It needed it. But Baggy was quite consoled for the damage to his nasal organ. Levison had hit him hard, but he had hit Levison harder—both the Levisons. Baggy was consoled by that knowledge as he bathed his nose.

In all the junior studies there was discussion on the subject, and only one conclusion was drawn. There was, in fact, only one conclusion that the fellows could draw. Why should Levison, if innocent, shrink from the inquiry that would have cleared him?

There was only one answer to that question—at all events, so far as the St. Jim's juniors could see. They were willing to hear anything that Levison had to say in his defence. But Levison said nothing.

Cardew and Clive, looking—as they felt—utterly miserable, went to their study after a time. Ernest Levison met them with a black look.

"Levison—" both the juniors began together.

Levison interrupted them.

"You want me to go to the Housemaster?"

"Yes," said Cardew. "It's the only thing!"

"Why shouldn't you?" asked Clive.

"I don't choose."

"You know what the fellows will think—"

"What you will think, too?" asked Levison, his look growing blacker and more bitter.

Clive made an angry gesture.

"What do you expect us to think?" he exclaimed hotly. "You're accused of being a thief—the kind of rotter no decent fellow would touch if he could help it. You could clear yourself if you liked. If you refuse, what the thump do you expect a fellow to think?"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I refuse!" he said curtly.

"That's enough for me!" said Clive, and he walked out of the study.

Ralph Reckness Cardew lingered.

It was plain enough, from his look, that he believed Levison guilty. In the circumstances, he could scarcely believe anything else. Yet he lingered. Perhaps that belief did not shock him so much as it shocked Clive.

"Well, why don't you turn your back on me, too?" said Levison, with a sneer.

"I'm not turnin' you down, old bean," said Cardew lightly—a lightness he was far from feeling. "Let 'em all rip!"

"Do you believe what I'm accused of?"

"What's the good of talkin'. Let it rest."

"Do you believe it?" demanded Levison fiercely.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

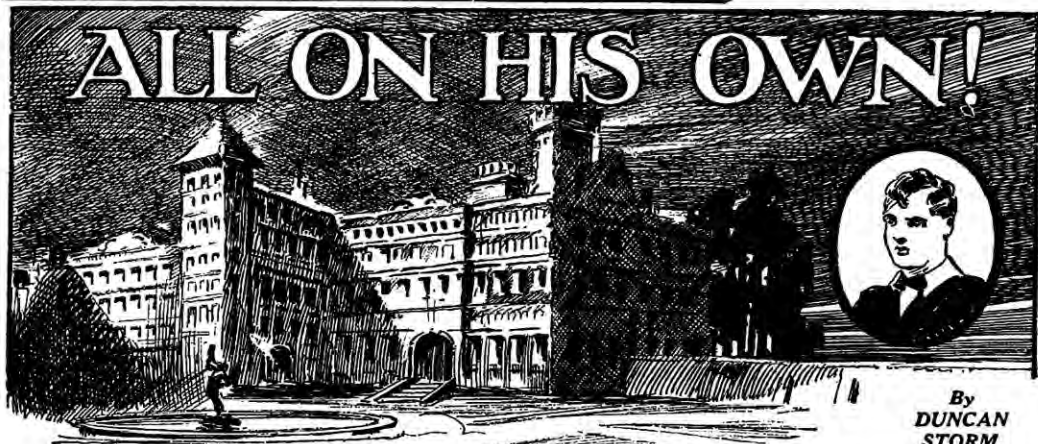
"Then you can follow Clive as soon as you like," said Levison. "I'm done with him—and with you!"

"You mean that?" asked Cardew very quietly.

"Every word!"

(Continued on page 19.)

OUR GRAND SERIAL OF SCHOOL LIFE AND ADVENTURE!



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

JIM REABY, a sturdy lad of fourteen, having seen his last friend laid to rest, is left all alone in the great world. He is leaving the cemetery gates, when he butts up against

A KINDLY STRANGER (John Lincoln), the principal governor of the great school of St. Beowulf's, who had been watching him at the funeral.

The two walk along the road together, and Jim tells his new-found friend that he intends starting work at the brickfields in Dennington. The stranger smiles, and tells Jim it is education he needs first. He then withdraws a piece of parchment from his pocket, and, after signing it, hands it to Jim. It is a free pass into the great school. Jim is to take his chance as a Lincoln scholar at St. Beowulf's.

Jim gets a warm reception from the bullies of the school, but the decent fellows welcome him.

He finds a friend in Wobbygong, a plucky lad from Australia, and the master of a pet kangaroo, Nobby.

Nobby bolts one night, but the boys give chase and capture him. On their return to St. Beowulf's they find that burglars have broken into the school. The ruffians are captured. Wobby commanders their car, and hides it in the Haunted Barn.

Learning of the scoundrels' intentions of smuggling their ill-gotten gains out of the country, Wobby plans to capture them and plunder. At the dead of night he and his pals steal out of the school. Boarding the commandeered car, they are soon hot on the trail. Reaching Goodman's Hanger, they hear strange noises coming from the house of Colonel Pepper. Wobby makes investigations, and is only just in time to save the old colonel from the mercies of further members of the burglarious gang.

The colonel is thinking the boys for their timely arrival, when Mr. Travers, from Scotland Yard, appears upon the scene.

(Now read on.)

A Warning!

THE police!" gasped Wobby. "Only one of them, Master Wobby," replied Mr. Travers, with an easy smile. "Master Jack Wobby, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," stammered Wobby. "I think I have a cap of yours," replied Mr. Travers, still gazing in the great gold framed space from which the picture had fallen.

"My cap?" stammered Wobby, taken aback.

"Yes, the cap you left behind as you skated down the slope of the Smugglers' Punch Bowl, half an hour or so ago," replied Mr. Travers. "If I am not mistaken, it has the following verse sewn in the lining:

"This little cap belongs to me,
And fits no head but mine;
So don't you sneak my little cap,
Or there will be a shine!"

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"Oh, chuck it, sir!" pleaded Wobby. "The detective went on reading from the lining of the cap:

"I'm very fond of punching heads.
If your fat head I see
Stuck in this little cap of mine,
'Twill get a punch from me."
"Signed, JACK WOBBOY."

There is nothing more trying to any poet than to have his own verses read aloud to him. Wobby turned the colour of a bright red beetroot as Mr. Travers read his little effusion aloud.

"I presume that this is your cap, Mr. Wobby!" said Mr. Travers politely.

"I say, Mr. Detective, if you would attend more closely to your duties instead of picking up schoolboys' caps," growled Sir Peter Pepper. "I should not have been in danger of having my feet grilled like an infernal chop and steak, sir—just now, sir! I may say, sir, that it was only the timely appearance of these young gentlemen that saved me, sir!"

"I should have been here before, Sir Peter," replied Mr. Travers, "but unfortunately these young gentlemen, in their light-hearted excursion across country, put me off the trail of the real men—these two who came along in a motor-cycle and side-car. We have been chasing our young friends here over the Downs in a Ford car that belongs to this Mr. Baker, here."

Mr. Travers nodded politely to Mr. Baker who, at this moment, looked as near as possible like a devil incarnate rolled up in a ball of string.

"Good job for me the boys got here first," replied Sir Peter Pepper, "or I should have been dancing like a cat on hot bricks. These scoundrels were after my jewels."

Mr. Travers climbed down from the hole in the wall. He stepped across the room and nodded to Punch Baker, just as if he were nodding to an old friend.

"Good-evening, Punch," he said. "It's all right, you need not look at me like that. You are caught properly this time, by a little clique of schoolboys, too!"

Punch looked absolutely poisonous. It was this fact that was rankling worse than the ten years that was certain. That he, Punch Baker, wanted, chased, tracked, and trailed by the police and sleuths of three continents, should have been pinched by a bunch of British schoolboys and a disreputable kangaroo—it was too hard!

Even Wobby could see the anger and despair in Punch's beady eyes.

"Cheer up, Punch," he said in consoling tones. "Even a police-inspector may slip

up on a banana skin. It's fortune o' war, ol' clobber!"

"You got my motor-car?" demanded Punch Baker fiercely. "You've stolen it, you young rips!"

"We haven't stolen your old car," replied Wobby. "We've borrowed it, haven't we, Jim? You shall have it back when you come out of gaol. It's a good old car or it wouldn't have stood what it's been through to-night."

Mr. Travers smiled. "I am not quite certain whether I ought not to place all you young gentlemen under arrest, as well as our friends, Baker and Dossy, here!" he said. "You appear to be in possession of a car which really belongs to the gang of burglars these men are working with."

"We are in possession of a car, sir," admitted Jim; "but we didn't sneak it, did we, Stickjaw?"

"Not a bit!" replied Stickjaw promptly. "We found it adrift. It didn't belong to anyone. We haven't sneaked it, we are just taking care of it for whoever it belongs to!"

"I see!" replied Mr. Travers, smiling. "You are merely acting as bailies. Very well, young gentlemen, on behalf of the police, I will accept you as such. You shall retain the car until such time as the police may require it from you. At the same time, I ought to point out to you that this car is now, in a sense, the property of the Crown, and as Crown property you must not drive it full tilt down places like the Smugglers' Punch Bowl!"

Sir Peter Pepper, who had been listening intently, pricked up his ears at this.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to tell me that these young rascals have dared to drive a Ford car down into the Smugglers' Punch Bowl?"

"Yes, sir!" replied Mr. Travers.

"Where are the pieces?" asked Sir Peter.

"There are no pieces, sir. It is still a good car. It's somewhere in your back garden now, sir," replied Wobby.

"Now I want to know a little more," resumed Mr. Travers. "I am working alone here, so you may confide in me. I left the car which pursued you at Hangman's Cope, and came round here on a motor-bicycle, picked up your tracks, and followed you into the house by the side-door. Now, what I want to know is—"

Wobby put his finger to his lips and pointed to Punch Baker and Flash Dossy, who were limply sitting up and taking a little interest in things.

"Not before these lads!" he said. "Little pitchers have long ears. Nuff said. Perhaps, Sir Peter here has got a dungeon?"

"Rather!" replied Sir Peter with alacrity. "There are some jolly good dungeons in this place. It was an old monastery, and they used to shut the monks up in 'em when they misbehaved 'emselves. They are tighter than any of your police-cells!"

The two ruffians were then jerked to their feet whilst the colonel, lighting a lamp, limped stuffily in front of the little procession. Punch Baker and Flash Dossy were so

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2!

tightly bound that they could hardly walk. They tottered along between the boys, and were lifted down the steep stairway into a vast cellarage, dug deep in the chalk.

Sir Peter lifted down a huge key from a nail. It was an enormous key, the sort of key that one only sees in a pantomime, and it opened the heavy iron-studded door of a dungeon, which was apparently used for the storage of empty bottles.

"There you are, gentlemen!" said Sir Peter politely to his prisoners. "I'm afraid that you won't be very comfortable here, but you will certainly be more comfortable than I

"I am sure we sha'n't, sir," replied Wobby politely.

"If those two ruffians in the cellar had not bitten off a bit more than they could chew," pursued Mr. Travers, "you would just about have blundered into them on the same journey of hunting for that stuff. There may be other chaps of the same sort flying about the country. This is a big gang working in these parts—I should say an international gang!"

"It is an international gang," replied Wobby boldly. "And we have blundered into Baker and Dossky. They got the dirty left—not us!"

There was no controverting the truth of this statement.

Mr. Travers nodded.

"I'm not going to interfere with your fun, young gentlemen," he said, "and neither I nor Sir Peter, here, will give you away at the school. Go on in your own sweet way and see what happens. In the meantime, are you armed?"

"I've got my boomerang!" said Wobby.

"What's a boomerang?" asked Mr. Travers rather contemptuously. "What's a boomerang against a gun?"

"I had the boomerang and Punch had the gun," responded Wobby. "Flash Dossky had his gun and Jim Ready only had a silver cup. Nobody's hurt on our side, but Punch got a tap on his head that will last him for a week, whilst Flash Dossky looks as if he wants a new nose!"

There was no arguing against this.

"Perhaps it's better that you keep to your own weapons," said Mr. Travers. "I was thinking of offering to arm you, as you may come up against armed men who won't scruple to use weapons even against boys. These lads don't play their games by rules as you boys do at school. They are merciless. But perhaps you are safer as you are."

"Sure," replied Wobby calmly. "Give young Stickjaw a gun and he'd be safe to shoot himself. We'll be going along, now, sir, if we may. I suppose you'll take over our prisoners?"

Mr. Travers nodded.

"I respect cheek wherever I find it!" he said. "You leave me to take care of your prisoners whilst you go off after the treasure!"

"That's about it, sir," said Wobby cheerfully.

"Well, good luck to you, boys!" said Mr. Travers. "Keep a weather eye open. Remember that these chaps are not the only pables on the beach. There are some bad men about just now!"

He shook hands with the boys, and Sir Peter shook hands with them also.

"Come and see me again, you young rascals," said Sir Peter. "Whenever you like, you will always find a knife and fork laid for you at Goodman's Hanger."

The detective came out with the boys.

"I have got to find the motor-cycle and side-car that these chaps came in," he said.

"I know where our bus is all right," said Wobby, taking a course from the lighted window.

They found the Ford car as they had left her.

"Can we help you to look for the side-car, sir?" asked Wobby, in his polite way.

The words were hardly out of his mouth than there

was a rattle and a banging behind the shrubberies, and the sound of a motor-cycle rapidly running away in the darkness.

Mr. Travers listened.

"That's not my machine!" he said. "It's as I thought, boys. There are more in this than those two fellows you have caught. Keep your eyes open! Those fellows must have taken a peep through the windows and found that the tables are turned on their accomplices. Therefore they have seen you. Look out for yourselves."

Wobby nodded.

"We'll give them a good start," he said. "There won't be any need to wait for them. They are beating it as hard as they can!"

He slipped into the driver's seat.

"Shove old Nobby in the car, boys!" he said.

Nobby was duly boosted into the car, the rest took their places and, with a cheery good-night to Mr. Travers, they glided off into the night and on to the Downs again.

Camouflage.

WOBBOY soon stumbled on the track he was looking for, which led them on to a country road, and away they went at a great speed.

Wobby, having switched on his lights, felt that he was entitled to run thirty-five miles an hour on a road that was safe for ten on such a night as this.

They were still in the Down country; but here and there thick copes of trees and plantations of young firs bordered the road.

There were very few houses, only a cottage here and there.

The boys wondered where they were off to, but Wobby kept his counsel.

He seemed to have the country mapped in his head, for soon he began to take turn after turn, dodging, as the boys felt by the wind, towards the sea.

Soon they were running fast down hill, and Jim Ready, who knew something of the run of the country, could see that Wobby was steering for the Hundred Marsh, a wide expanse of flat land through which flowed the wide estuary known as the Pegmill River.

The boys and the kangaroo crouched low in the car as Wobby raced her down the slopes of the chalky roads. Motoring with

The "HOLIDAY ANNUAL." (Out on Friday.)

should have been by now. If you had had your rascally way with me, it is better to suffer from a little cold than from a great deal of heat."

The massive door was locked on the ruffians, and the party returned to the dining-room.

"Now, young gentlemen," said Sir Peter. "Though it is getting on for the small hours, I am sure that you can eat a little supper. You appear to have been getting plenty of fresh air, and there is nothing like fresh air and a little excitement for giving one an appetite."

Of course the boys could eat supper. They were quite ready to go on with the game-pie and the York-ham which the ruffians had been consuming, and, as they ate, they told Mr. Travers all their adventures—or nearly all.

Mr. Travers seemed to have an uncanny sense that there was more behind than their story told.

"Look here, boys," he said. "You are not telling me all!"

"They are telling you all they know, sir," said Wobby frankly; "but I'm the leader of the 'search.' I'm, as it were, the King Pin of the outfit!"

"So you know more than your companions?" suggested Mr. Travers.

Wobby nodded.

"Yep," he answered shortly; "but we've got a saying in Australia. 'Never tell your troubles to a policeman unless you are looking for more trouble!'"

Mr. Travers looked a little disconcerted, and Sir Peter laughed.

"You are not going to get much out of this blade, Travers," said Sir Peter.

"He knows what I don't know," replied Mr. Travers shortly. "He knows where the proceeds of the burglaries at Tantiy Hall and Lord Bradbury's place are hidden."

Wobby nodded.

"And I know where the Countess of Castlewood's jewels are stowed away, more or less," he said.

"I don't want to ask more questions than you want to answer, my boy," said Mr. Travers. "But what are you after to-night?"

"We are after the Tantiy and the Bradbury stuff," replied Wobby frankly. "As a matter of fact we were off to get it with the car when we blundered on to this place in the fog!"

"Great minds think alike," replied Mr. Travers nodding. "Our friends, Flash Dossky and Punch Baker were on the same track. They are like a lot of other chaps, too greedy, wanted too many irons in the fire. They thought they would take in Sir Peter's place here and get a pull on his collection of jewels."

Sir Peter nodded and twisted up his white moustaches.

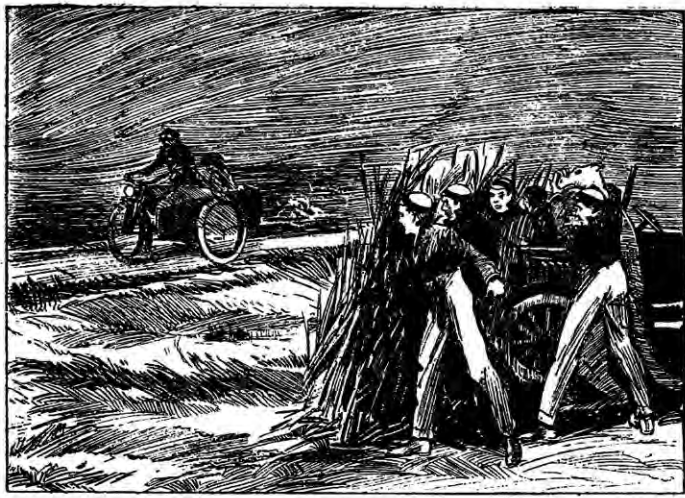
"Irons in the fire!" he exclaimed. "I should think the rascals did have too many irons in the fire! They had one too many for me! When I saw that dashed red-hot poker fizzling round my toes, I began to think that I'd have to tell them where my jewels were stowed away!"

The detective was thinking hard.

"Look here, boys," he said at length. "It is plain that we are working along the same lines, and you have done better than the professionals up to now, as amateurs often do. But there may come a time when your luck is out. Then you won't be sorry to see the police, I can tell you!"



Punch Baker and Flash Dossky were so tightly bound that they could hardly walk. They tottered behind Sir Peter Pepper as he led them down the steep stairway into the vast cellarage dug deep in the chalk.



The last bundles of reeds were rushed to the car as the rattle of the approaching motor-cycle was heard upon the road. The boys then slipped behind their reed shelter.

Wobby was worse than tackling any burglars. They felt quite relieved when the car shot down the last hill of the slopes and rocked and lurched on a proper marsh road, with deep ditches on either side.

Presently Wobby slammed on his brakes, nearly throwing the occupants of the car through the wind-screen. The car came to a halt in front of a white-painted gate across the road.

"That gate was not on the map!" said Wobby calmly.

"There are lots of gates on these roads," said Jim. "They are put there to prevent the cattle straying."

"Do you know this country?" asked Wobby.

"A little bit," said Jim; "not much."

"Well, I'm going for Whitechurch Castle," said Wobby.

Jim whistled.

Whitechurch Castle was an old ruin far away on the shingle flats by the sea. Hundreds of years ago it had stood on the sea itself, but the coastline had since changed and now the old ruin stood a couple of miles inland, surrounded by four miles of stone and shingle.

There were no roads to the old ruin. It was a queer place to get to with a motor-car.

"That is where the boodle is stowed away!" said Wobby.

Stickjaw had jumped down from the car and had opened the gates, but Wobby did not move ahead.

"Keep quiet, boys!" he said. "I think I hear a noise!"

Whoop! whoop! whoop! sounded a distant horn.

"Motor-horn!" said Wobby.

Jim shook his head.

"That's not a motor-horn," he said.

"That's a bittern booming in the marshes."

"What's a bittern?" asked Wobby.

"Sort of marsh bird," replied Jim. "Makes a noise as near like a motor-horn as makes no difference."

"We should call that a chuffer-bird in Australia!" said Wobby; "but that's not the noise I'm speaking of. Listen!"

He held up his finger.

Far away the boys could hear the throbbing of a distant engine.

"We are chased, lads," said Wobby.

"That is the same motor-bike and side-car that went away from old Pepper's place. I know the sound."

He let the car run through the gate, then he slipped his hand in his pocket and produced a padlock and chain.

"Chain up the gate, Stickjaw!" he said.

"It's only a small padlock and a light chain,

but it will worry those pebs when they come to it."

Stickjaw quickly secured the gate, and jumped on the car as it moved on.

Another half-mile and they came to a second gate, which they passed and padlocked in a like manner.

Wobby seemed to be prepared for all emergencies.

"I only want a quarter of an hour's start of those tugs," he said. "We must get the stuff to-night!"

Away he went again for another half-mile along the execrable marsh road. Sometimes it seemed to the boys that their wheel was hanging over the deep dyke at the roadside, and that the car would turn over and bury them in mud and water.

But somehow, Wobby always turned his steering-wheel in the nick of time.

Presently he came to a stop.

There were two long planks laid across the wide dyke at this point, to allow the herdsmen and shepherds to get in to the marshes.

These were mere footbridges, which could be put together when it was necessary to drive a few sheep off the pastures.

Wobby jumped from his seat and laid these across the dyke so that they fitted the wheelbase of the car. Then he shut off his lights.

"Now, boys," he said. "We've got to lift the car round."

I'm going to take to the open country."

With a great effort the car was lifted round and run across the ditch on to the marsh where the peewits were calling fretfully in the night.

A gasp Wobby listened intently. He heard the throbbing of the distant engine, and noted that it came to a sudden standstill.

"They are at the first gate!" he announced. "Now we lift our bridge!"

The planks were lifted, and Wobby lashed them one each side of the car.

"We may have more ditches to cross," he said providently.

The boys stood about the car wondering what he was going to do next.

"Shall we get in?" asked Jim.

"No, Jim," replied Wobby, in a low voice.

"There is a draught of wind coming in from the sea, and it will clear the mist from this marsh before we get across. We must camouflage. Push the car five yards inland from the ditch."

The car was pushed forward about five yards.

Then Wobby pointed to a number of bundles of reed which the reed-cutters had left along the banks of the dyke where they had been cutting.

"Quick, boys!" he said. "Up with that stuff! Pile it round the car. We'll turn the old bus into a reed stack!"

The boys had seen plenty of these disorderly, ragged little stacks through the mist as they had spun along the marsh road.

They set to work rapidly, and soon a good pile of reeds rose about the car, hiding its shape from the keenest eyes.

"Hurry, boys!" whispered Wobby. "They've reached the second gate, now!"

Soon they heard the rattle of the approaching engine again.

The last few bundles of reeds were rushed to the car as the fut-fut-fut of the motor-cycle engine was heard upon the road.

The boys then slipped behind their reed shelter, Wobby holding his hand over the kangaroo's muzzle to keep Nobby quiet.

The engine of the pursuing machine was going badly and soon they heard voices raised in argument.

The motor-bicycle gave a sick cough and came to a standstill almost at the point where the car had crossed the ditch.

"That blift into the gates done it, Ted!"

crumbled the driver. "Look at this 'ere padlock and chain!"

The young beggars ran that round the car. That's not the sort o' thing that they fasten farm gates with. Not a speck of rust on it! A brass padlock, too! Don't you tell me. Those young beggars are just in front of us. They are making either for the old lighthouse or the castle ruins, and I'll lay that it's near one of those that Frisky's stowed his stuff away."

The driver was off his machine now. He had started a light and was examining his mount.

Presently he lifted his head and listened.

"Can't hear their engine anywhere,"

he said. "That's queer! You might swear to it that they'd vanished into thin air. But listen to that horn going!"

The bittern was booming again on the marshes. "Whoop-whoop!" it went.

"That's them!" said the man exultantly.

"They are bearing away for the old lighthouse!" exclaimed the ruffian. "If we get them, we get the stuff!"

Little did he dream as he tinkered his engine that the quarry he was so eagerly in chase of was watching him from behind that innocent reed-stack just ten yards away!

(There will be another splendid long instalment of this fine serial next week. Make sure you read it.)

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HARD LUCK ON LEVISON.

(Continued from page 15.)

"Enough said!"

Cardew left the study.

Levison stood, the black and bitter look on his face still, his eyes glinting. Only yesterday he had been the hero of the Lower School—to-day, the finger of scorn was pointed at him on all sides. Like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, he had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof. And in his present hard and bitter mood he felt a kind of gloomy satisfaction in knowing that he stood alone—unfriendly; but sufficient unto himself—like Ishmael of old, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him!

"Let them go!" he muttered. "Let them go!" He threw the door shut, sat at the table, and reached for his books, to work—to force himself to work.

A book lay on the table under his eyes—a dog-eared Cæsar. It was Frank's. The bag had left it in the study. The sight of it recalled Frank to his mind, and his face altered.

Frank! His brother would believe him guilty! In his excitement and anger he had forgotten Frank! What would Frank believe? It was not only himself that had to face the finger of scorn. Frank was his brother, and Frank would suffer, too—the shame that clothed him, as with a garment, would clothe Frank also.

His features worked, and his face dropped into his hands. Cardew, lingering by the study door—half minded to return—heard a sound within, and started. It was a sob. Pushing the door softly open, he listened for a moment; then, with a pale troubled face, walked silently away.

THE END.

(Make sure you read the next of this splendid series of school stories entitled: "In Deep Disgrace!" by Martin Clifford. You will vote it as being one of the finest stories you have ever read. Be sure and order next week's GEM early.)

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