

"FOR HIS CHUM'S SAKE!"

This Week's Powerful Extra-Long School Story.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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**LEVISON'S DESPERATE ACT ENDS
IN DISASTER!**

FOR HIS CHUM'S SAKE!

By Martin Clifford.

One word would lift the shadow of disgrace from Levison's shoulders; one word would reinstate him in the good opinion of his headmaster and his schoolfellows. But that word Levison will never utter, for it means that his chum, whom he has tried to save, will be ruined!

CHAPTER 1.

Under Sentence!

"T HERE'S Levison!"

A dozen fellows in a corner of the St. Jim's quad looked up as Tom Merry spoke.

At a window high above—a little window that was barred and almost hidden by thick, clustering ivy, a face had appeared pressed against the glass.

It was the window of "Nobody's Study"—the punishment-room in the School House at St. Jim's. And the face that was pressed to the glass was that of Levison of the Fourth Form.

He was looking down at the group of juniors below. He could see them clearly enough in the morning sunlight, but only a glimpse of the face at the window was caught by Tom Merry & Co.

Tom Merry waved his hand and his example was followed by some of the other fellows.

Levison of the Fourth was under sentence of expulsion from the school. He was a prisoner in the punishment-room till the time came to send him away. That his sentence was just few of the fellows could doubt. The Head was not likely to make a mistake in such a matter. But fellows who had been friendly with him could not forget all at once that they had been Ernest Levison's friends. And whatever he had done he was paying the price for it; his punishment was severe enough.

So the juniors waved their hands to the Fourth-Former at the high window in friendly greeting and farewell. They did not expect to see him again; it was probable that he would be gone before the school came out after class.

"It's wotten, you chaps, to see a fellow come a muckah like this," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dismally. "I suppose the Head knows what he's doin'—"

"Probably!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"But it's vewy wuff on Levison, and still more wuff on his young bwothah," said Arthur Augustus. "Young Fwanky looked awf'ly cut up."

"Hard lines on the kid," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There's the bell for class!" said Manners, as the bell began to ring, and the juniors moved away.

Tom Merry waved his hand again to the face at the window and walked away with Manners and Lowther. The other fellows followed, only two of the crowd remaining, staring up at the barred window. The two were Sidney Clive and Ralph Reckness Cardew, Levison's study-mates and chums. They stood where they were, heedless of the clang of the bell.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked back.

"You fellows will be late for class!" he called out.

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Neither of the juniors replied, and the swell of St. Jim's went after the rest. Cardew and Clive were left alone.

Both of them were looking gloomy and disturbed. The expulsion of Ernest Levison had come as a surprise and a shock to both his chums—to Clive more than to Cardew, however. Clive could scarcely believe that some ghastly mistake had not been made. He could not credit that his friend had done anything deserving expulsion from the school. Cardew had less faith in his friend; little faith, indeed, if anything. But there was no doubt that he was hard hit.

Clive stirred at last as the bell ceased to ring. Levison's face had disappeared from the window.

"You'd better go, Cardew."

Cardew glanced round. There was no one in sight now; the Forms were all going into the Form-rooms.

"I suppose so," he said. "Come on."

Sidney Clive shook his head.

"I'm going to speak to Levison," he said.

Cardew stared.

"How can you speak to him? There's a prefect roostin' in the passage outside the door of Nobody's Study."

"I know." Clive made a gesture towards the thickly ivied wall. "I can climb that."

"Risky, old bean."

"I know."

Clive drew nearer to the wall and tested the clustering masses of ivy. The ivy was old and strong and tenacious, but it was risky to climb sixty feet to the window of the punishment-room, and Clive knew that well enough. But fear had been left out of the composition of the South African junior.

"What's the good?" muttered Cardew uneasily. "Levison's bunked—you can't alter that."

"I've got to speak to him," said Clive doggedly. "There's some mistake—some horrible mistake."

"You think so?"

"I'm sure of it."

Ralph Reckness Cardew scanned the troubled, gloomy face of his chum curiously. He was sorry enough, and distressed enough, by the disaster that had overwhelmed Ernest Levison. But he did not see where a mistake could have come in. Obviously, the Head must have weighed the matter well before he decided upon so drastic a sentence. Dr. Holmes was a just man, and in such a terribly serious matter he could not have failed to make absolutely sure before he acted. Clive's faith in his friend was proof against such considerations. Cardew envied him his unthinking loyalty, but he could not share it. His nature was very different.

"But think a minute, old chap," he murmured. "Levison was out of bounds last night—"

"I know that. But that alone wouldn't make the Head sack a man."

"Which rather proves that there is somethin' else."

"Some mistake."

"Old chap, Levison was up before the Head and the Housemaster. He had every chance to explain away any mistake."

Clive made an impatient gesture.

"I don't blame you, Cardew—but I don't agree with you," he said. "I know Levison, and I trust him. I don't care what he was like before I came to St. Jim's—a lot of stories are told about him at that time, and I dare say they're more or less true. But I know he has been square ever since we've been friends. That's enough for me."

"But think, old chap—"

"I've thought about it till my head spins. I can't make it out. I must speak to Levison and see whether there is anything that can be done. The Housemaster won't let anybody go near the punishment-room—"

"That shows he thinks it's jolly serious."

"I don't care what he thinks. I know what I believe. Give me a bunk up, Cardew."

"Any old thing," said Cardew.

And he helped Clive mount into the ivy.

Then he stood back, watching him, as the sturdy, active South African junior climbed higher and higher. The thick, strong ivy bore his weight well, and slowly

but surely the climber drew towards the window of Nobody's Study. Cardew watched him with a hard, set face. A fall now meant instant death to the climber—a terrible crash on the hard earth at his comrade's feet. Cardew's face was tense, but his eyes never left the climbing figure on the rustling ivy. He almost gasped with relief as Sidney Clive reached at last the little stone window-sill and grasped the transverse iron bar.

CHAPTER 2.

A Loyal Chum!

LEVISON of the Fourth moved restlessly about the room.

He had breakfasted alone in Nobody's Study, and Toby, the page, with a commiserating look, had taken away the tray, and a prefect outside had locked the door again when he was gone.

Levison was left alone till he should be sent for to be taken away from St. Jim's.

It was his last day at the old school.

The fellows would be going into the Form-rooms now; one place in the Fourth Form-room would be empty, never to be filled again.

Levison had faced his disaster calmly; he had had the courage to face the music when the blow fell.

But his heart was heavy.

Even now he could scarcely realise that that day he was to look his last on the old school, never to see again the many fellows he had liked, never to play again for his House, never to join in a rag in the passages, never again to hear Mr. Lathom's voice droning in the Form-room.

It was the end of all things, almost, for Levison of the Fourth.

He thought of Frank of the Third, whom he was to leave behind him, with the shadow of this disgrace to bear. He winced as he thought of his brother. Frank would never believe ill of him, he knew that; but the shame of his brother's expulsion would be there, all the same. He thought of his father and mother and his sister Doris, and what they would feel when he came home in disgrace.

Was it worth it?

Had Levison been the Levison of former times, the "hardest case" at St. Jim's, it would have been different. Often enough, in those reckless days, he had risked the "sack"—once or twice he had been very near it. But now—it was different. Now he had made himself liked and respected; now it was not for a fault, but for a scruple of honour, that he was to go. He had saved his friend, and he had lost himself.

And he could not help feeling a twinge of bitterness, with the knowledge that Cardew would never guess. Cardew, certainly, knew nothing of Levison's intervention in his affairs—did not even know that he was saved from the danger that had impended over him. Even now Levison had only to speak out, to give his friend away after saving him. That he could not do. He had intervened to save Cardew, not to make matters hopeless for him. Now that his luck had failed, he had no right to back out—he could not back out. He had to go through with it. And Cardew would never guess—Cardew would never doubt that the "old Levison" had broken out again, and had been found out and justly punished.

Tap!

Ernest Levison started violently as there came a tap at the window. More than one fellow, he knew, had made the attempt to speak to him by the keyhole of the punishment-room, and had been turned away by the Sixth Form prefect on guard there. But from the window he had never expected any communication. He caught his breath as he saw Sidney Clive's face beyond the glass.

"Clive!"

Levison sprang to the window.

He pushed up the little sash. The bars outside prevented any attempt to climb out or in. Clive smiled faintly at his chum's astonished face as he held on to a bar.

"You—you're mad!" said Levison huskily. "You're risking your life!"

"I'm safe enough. I had to speak to you," said Clive.

"That means that you're sticking to me!"

"Of course."

"You're a good chap, Clive," said Levison gratefully. "I wanted to speak to you before I went, but the Head won't allow it. I'm a bad hat—a contamination to decent fellows!" he added, his lip curling bitterly. "I suppose they will allow me to speak to my brother before I leave, but nobody else."

"You're nothing of the kind, Levison."

"The Head thinks so."

"I want you to tell me," said Clive. "Nobody knows exactly what happened yesterday. You've brought suspicion on yourself, somehow. But you've done nothing rotten."

"That's true, at least."

"Well, then, there must be some way out," said Clive eagerly. "The Head's a just man. You know that."

"I know it."

"You can't have told him everything. You must have kept something back for some reason. Levison, if you don't realise how serious the matter is—"

"I think I do," said Levison grimly.

"Then if you're keeping something back, speak out before it's too late. It must be that, unless you're justly sentenced—and I don't and can't believe that."

Clive, leaning across the little stone sill, one hand gripping the bar for safety, hardly remembered his precarious position as he watched Levison's face questioningly. Levison was silent, and his silence puzzled his chum. Levison was keeping something back—that was the only explanation, as far as Clive could see. But why—why—when his whole future was at stake? He did not deserve to be expelled, Clive was sure of that. But if he did not deserve it, he must be able to explain—he must be able to clear himself. If he did not—

"Why don't you speak, Levison?" exclaimed Clive at last.

"I—I've nothing to tell you, old fellow. I've got into a scrape—landed myself in it fairly up to the neck. But—but it's not in my hands to clear myself."

"You went out of bounds yesterday evening."

"Yes; Mr. Railton caught me getting back through the box-room window," muttered Levison.

"Why did you go?"

"I—I had a reason, Clivey. But—"

"Have you told the Head the reason?"

"I've told him I had to see somebody. But—but—there's nothing doing, old fellow. I don't blame the Head or Mr. Railton; they can only act as they have done, unless—"

"Unless what?"

Levison was silent again.

He had to go. Unless he betrayed Ralph Reckness Cardew, he had to go. And he could not betray his chum. He could not betray him to the Head, and he could not give him away to Clive. He had to go; why should he leave behind him distrust and discord between his two friends? Clive could not help him, and it was better for him to know nothing. What would he have thought of Cardew had he learned that it was the reckless folly of the scapegrace that had brought this disaster upon Levison? It might have meant the end of their friendship. Levison did not want that.

Clive waited for him to speak, and, in spite of his loyal faith, he felt a chill.

But he would not doubt.

"You're keeping something back from the Head, Levison?"

"Yes," muttered Levison.

"And from me?"

"I can't help it, old fellow. If you knew how I was fixed, you'd understand."

"But don't you see," breathed Clive—"don't you see that you can't afford to keep anything back, Levison? You must clear yourself or go."

"I—I know."

"What do they accuse you of, Levison?"

"Pub-haunting, gambling, associating with bad characters—all that I was guilty of before I knew

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you, old chap, when I managed to pull through all right," said Levison, with a touch of irony. "Now I'm clear of it all, and as decent as any other fellow in the school, I've got to go. I don't deserve it now—but I deserved it once, if that's any comfort. I shall be glad to know that you still believed in me—when I'm gone. And—" He hesitated. "What does Cardew think?"

Clive flushed.

"He doesn't know anything more than I do," he said, and Levison smiled again, without bitterness. He did not need telling that Ralph Reckness Cardew did not share Clive's simple, loyal faith.

"But, Levison, you—you must—you must speak," said Clive. "You must make the Head understand that there's a mistake."

"I can't. My own act has condemned me," said Levison. "I knew what I was doing when I took the chances, and it's no use whining now that I've come out a loser. Go back now, old chap; you're in danger every moment you hang there."

"Never mind that—"

"But I do mind! And you're late for class, too—"

"Hang class!"

There was a whistle from below. It was a warning from Cardew that it was time to clear.

Clive, holding on to the bar, glanced down, with a steady head and eye, dizzy as the height was. Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, came whisking round a corner of the buildings.

"Cardew," rapped out the Form master, "why are you not in class? What—what? And where is Clive? Where is he?"

"Get down, old chap!" whispered Levison, as the Form master's angry voice floated up to his ears. "No good making Lathom wild."

Clive hesitated.

"You are late for class, you and Clive!" boomed Mr. Lathom. "I suspected that you might be making some attempt to communicate with that young reprobate, Levison, and I came here. Where—" Mr. Lathom broke off, as he turned his glance upward towards the window of the punishment-room. "Good heavens! Clive! You reckless, foolish lad! Come down at once! At once—do you hear?" almost shrieked Mr. Lathom.

There was no help for it, and Clive reluctantly began to descend the ivy. Levison watched him with anxious glances from the barred window, Cardew equally anxiously from below. As for Mr. Lathom, he was unable to keep still in his anxiety and alarm. He forbore to call out to the junior again lest it should startle him and precipitate the fall that Mr. Lathom dreaded to see every moment. He gasped and spluttered and almost shrieked, as a tendril of the ivy snapped and Clive for a second swung out from the wall.

"Good heavens!" groaned Cardew.

But Clive was holding on with one hand strongly, and he soon recovered his grip with the other. Hand-below-hand he worked his way down, his face crimson with exertion and dewed with perspiration. Mr. Lathom spluttered with relief, as he dropped safely on the earth at last and stood panting for breath.

As soon as the junior was in safety, however, the Form master's anxiety changed at once into wrath.

"How dare you, Clive!" he gasped. "How dare you risk life and limb! And for the purpose of communicating with a young reprobate who is justly sentenced to expulsion!"

"Levison isn't a reprobate, sir," said Clive stubbornly.

"What? What? How dare you say so! I shall punish you most severely for this, Clive! Follow me to the Form-room at once! Follow me—both of you! Upon my word!"

And Mr. Lathom whisked away, and the two juniors followed him.

"We're for it now!" murmured Cardew.

Clive shrugged his shoulders.

"Who cares?" he growled.

"A last lickin' before I quit!" remarked Cardew carelessly.

"Before you quit! Oh, I forgot—you're going home to see your grandfather to-day," said Clive. "I'd forgotten that. I—I suppose you'll go just the same."

Cardew gave him a curious glance. Clive did not know and did not guess, that Cardew had arranged to



"I want to know what my brother's accused of, sir," said Frank Levison steadily. "I have a right to know that—as his brother!" "There is no reason why you should not be told, Levison minor," said the Head. "Your brother is to be expelled for breaking school bounds, for associating with bad characters, for uttering falsehoods when I questioned him, and for destroying in my presence the evidence of his guilt!" (See Chapter 3.)

be asked home on leave for a few days, in order to get out of the school quietly—never expecting to return. Clive knew that he was going to visit his grandfather, Lord Reckness, at Reckness Towers. He did not know that he was not to return. Levison's disaster had driven all thought of Cardew's arrangements from Sidney Clive's mind. But he was a little troubled now. Surely, in view of what had happened to his pal, Cardew would cancel that holiday.

"I've got no choice, really, old chap!" murmured Cardew. "It isn't up to me, you see."

Clive nodded silently, and the two juniors followed Mr. Lathom into the School House, and to the Fourth Form room.

Levison, in Nobody's Study, was left alone once more. His face was a trifle less gloomy; that talk with Clive had done him good. There was, at least, one fellow in his Form who still believed in him and trusted him, and that was something. But his thoughts turned from his chum to his brother Frank. He had been told that he might see Frank before he left. It was his minor's desire; but Levison would willingly have avoided a painful interview with the fag.

Frank, like Clive, would suppose that there was something to be done—something that Levison could do to save himself from an undeserved sentence. He could not understand that Levison's lips were sealed, that not only a scruple of honour, but common decency, kept him from betraying his friend. Frank, if he had known all, would scarcely have wished his brother to speak; but Levison could tell him nothing, and he knew that his minor would be puzzled, perplexed, impatient in his grief. Bitter as it was to leave St. Jim's, and all the school meant to him, Levison would have been glad to go without seeing a single St. Jim's fellow again, since it had to be.

CHAPTER 3.

The Proof of Guilt!

"AFTER dinner," said Reggie Manners of the Third.

"Sure?" asked Wally.

"I heard Mr. Railton tell Kildare."

"We shall have to get Frank out of the way," said Wally of the Third decidedly.

Manners minor shook his head.

"Nothing doing," he answered. "The whole school has to turn up. They're making a jolly old example of Franky's major. It's a giddy warning to the lot of us not to take to pub-haunting."

"Shurrup!" whispered D'Arcy minor hurriedly, as Frank Levison came along.

Levison minor of the Third was looking pale and harassed. Nobody was surprised to see that he had taken the blow badly, for Frank's loyal affection for his brother was well known. He could not, as Wally D'Arcy had remarked, have looked more "pipped" if he had been bunked himself.

He heard Reggie's words as he came up, but made no angry rejoinder, as Manners minor fully expected. Poor Frank was suffering too much to be angry with anybody now. Besides, how could he blame Reggie for thinking of Ernest Levison as the whole school thought? They did not know Ernest as he did.

It was morning break, and the St. Jim's fellows had poured out of the Form-rooms into the sunny quad. Most of them were discussing the Levison affair.

It was known now that a public expulsion was to take place in Big Hall that day, which was not pleasant news. Tom Merry & Co. had wondered a little that the Head did not allow the expelled junior to "drop out" quietly. He could have been sent away while the

fellows were in class, without fuss. It was rarely that an expulsion took place at the school, still more rarely a public expulsion; the whole giddy ceremony, as Monty Lowther put it, with bell, book, and candle!

The Head's decision was a plain proof that he regarded Ernest Levison as no ordinary delinquent, that he judged him guilty, with no extenuating circumstances of any kind. That much was clear. And when the fellows heard that Levison of the Fourth was to go through a public expulsion they realised that the matter was more serious than they had supposed at first. Levison's guilt must be not only clear, but deep and unpardonable.

It was not merely the fact that he had transgressed, but that he had transgressed after being once forgiven on the promise of better conduct; to reckless blackguardism, of which he was adjudged guilty, he had added deceit and hypocrisy, in the belief of the headmaster. He had, in fact—to quote Monty Lowther again—pulled the old scout's leg, and the old scout was correspondingly ratty.

Frank, knowing that his brother was to go, had felt miserable enough, but he had winced when he heard that the expulsion was to be public. He thought bitterly that they might have spared Ernest that. But all his views were coloured by his fixed belief that Ernest had done no wrong.

"Brace up, young Levison," said Wally of the Third, smacking the hapless fag on the shoulder. "Can't be helped, you know. Look here, we'll ask the Housemaster for leave to cut the expulsion, what?"

"Can't be did," said Reggie Manners. "I tell you it's a giddy function, all Forms and both Houses."

"Anyhow, they'll let Franky off if he asks," said Wally warmly. "You come with me and ask the Housemaster, Frank."

Frank shook his head.

"I'm going to see the Head," he answered.

"I say, fags can't butt in to see his Nibs," said Wally doubtfully. "Make it the Housemaster. He's human."

Frank Levison smiled faintly.

"I must see the Head! He's made some silly mistake about my major—"

"Franky!" murmured Wally.

"Nobody seems even to know what Ernest is accused of," said Frank passionately. "It's a shame—a rotten shame."

"Well, we all know pretty well," said Manners minor, "your major went out of bounds at night, and he's been sacked for it. He must have been playing the goat pretty seriously for the chopper to come down like that."

"He's done nothing of the sort."

"Well, the Head seems to think so," said Reggie, rather tartly. "You'll get licked if you go cheeking the Head, I can tell you, young Levison."

"I shouldn't think of cheeking him; but I'm going to ask him about my brother," said Frank determinedly.

He went into the House, leaving D'Arcy minor distressed, and Reggie shrugging his shoulders at what he regarded as his chum's obstinacy. What was the use of Frank keeping this attitude up, Reggie wanted to know, when all the school knew that Levison had asked for what he had got. Reggie Manners sympathised, but he was getting impatient. A fellow ought to have some sense, in Reggie's opinion.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were in the doorway of the School House when Frank came in. They nodded kindly to the fag. There were few fellows in the House who did not feel sorry for the young brother of the expelled junior.

"Hold on, Levison minor," said Tom Merry. "Look here, kid, if you ask Railton he'll give you leave to cut the show after dinner."

"Bound to," said Manners of the Shell.

"I'm going to see the Head," answered Frank. "I'm going to ask him what he's got against Ernest, and try to make him see that there's a mistake."

Tom Merry looked very grave.

"You fellows don't believe that my brother has done anything to be sacked for?"

"Well, you see—" said Tom hesitatingly.

"We're sorry, kid," said Lowther, "but you're not

asking us to believe that the Head has made a ghastly blunder with a fellow's whole future at stake?"

Frank nodded dismally. He knew how they regarded the matter, how they had to regard it. If Levison was innocent of what was laid to his charge the headmaster would be as glad as anyone to hear it. Why, then, did he not clear himself? It was no case of circumstantial evidence, the juniors knew that—Frank knew it. The Head would not expel a man unless the thing was sun-clear. Indeed, poor Frank, though he clung to his faith in his brother, was sadly perplexed and troubled. He could not think that Ernest had had intentional injustice; that was unthinkable. But if the Head was misled about him, why did not Ernest set him right? Why?

"Better leave the Head alone, kid," said Manners. "It can't do any good, and it may mean trouble."

"I don't care if it does!"

Frank Levison went on to the headmaster's study. He tapped at the door and entered, his heart throbbing painfully. In his brother's cause he feared nothing; but the Head of St. Jim's was an awe-inspiring personage to a fag of the Third Form.

Dr. Holmes had returned to his study from the Sixth Form room. He was speaking to Mr. Railton when the fag came in.

Both the masters glanced round frowningly. But their faces cleared as they saw the tormented little face.

"Ah! Levison minor!" said the Head, not unkindly. "Excuse me for one moment, Mr. Railton. What is it, Levison minor? Why have you come here?"

"About my brother," faltered Frank.

"You must not suppose that any disgrace attaches to you, my poor lad," said the Head. "No one will think of blaming you. You are known to be very different from your brother, I am glad to say."

Frank coloured painfully.

"I don't believe my brother has done anything, sir."

"What?"

"I—I mean," gasped Frank, his courage almost oozing away under the astonished stare of his headmaster, "I mean there must be some mistake. Ernest's one of the best—he's the best fellow at St. Jim's—nobody knows him like I do, sir."

In spite of his determination to keep his self-control the fag's voice faltered, and the tears came into his eyes.

"Say no more, Levison minor," said the Head gently. "I quite understand how you feel, but you should not have come here."

"I want to know what my brother's accused of, sir," said Frank, more steadily. "I have a right to know that—as his brother."

The Head paused.

"There is no reason why you should not be told, Levison minor," he said. "No doubt it will be painful for you to hear, however."

"That's nothing, sir."

"Very well! Your brother is to be expelled for bad conduct—for breaking school bounds, for associating with bad characters, for deceiving me and his Housemaster and Form master, for uttering falsehoods when I questioned him, and for destroying, in my presence, the evidence of his guilt," said the Head sternly.

Frank gazed at the stern face before him. The recapitulation of his brother's list of offences left him unmoved; he did not believe any of them. The Head believed what he said, but he had been misled somehow. But Dr. Holmes' last statement struck the fag hard. That was apparently a matter not of hearsay, but of fact, seen by the headmaster's own eyes. If that was true—and it could not but be true—what was he to think of his brother?

"I—I don't understand, sir," he panted. "I know my brother went out of bounds after lock-up last night, but—"

"He has admitted that he went out to meet a rascally character of the name of Tickey Tapp."

"He—he—he has admitted it, sir?" gasped Frank.

"In my presence and the presence of his Housemaster."

Frank almost tottered.

"But—but then he had some reason—something that he could explain, if you asked him, sir—"

"Do you think that I did not inquire thoroughly?" said the Head. "So cunningly did Levison tell his tale that he almost succeeded in deceiving me again, as he has deceived me before. But his pockets were to be searched—"

"He would not object to that, sir."

The Head gave the fag a pitying look.

"When he was commanded to turn out his pockets your brother drew a paper from his pocket and threw it into the fire," he said.

"Oh!" gasped Frank.

"He acted so quickly that the paper was burnt before it could be saved from the fire. What it contained I do not know—doubtless some communication from one of Levison major's disreputable associates. By that act, Levison minor, your brother condemned himself. That paper he dared not let me see. Such proof of his guilt as existed he had the brazen audacity to destroy in my presence, before my eyes."

The Head's voice had risen a little. It was easy to see that the old gentleman was still sore and angry at the recollection of Levison's effrontery, as he regarded it.

Frank scarcely breathed.

"Now you know upon what proof your brother is condemned," said the headmaster. "You may tell anyone you choose; it is fit for the whole school to know that Levison has thoroughly deserved what has befallen him. His case is the most serious that has occurred during my headmastership, and for that reason he will be expelled in public. You, however, are excused from being present when the school is assembled for the purpose this afternoon. You may go, Levison minor."

Frank opened his lips to speak; but closed them again. He turned to the door.

He had supposed, or conjectured, that some false suspicion had rested on his brother, that hearsay and mistaken reports had deceived the headmaster. He learned now that it was upon his brother's own act that he was condemned—his act in defiance of his headmaster, in his headmaster's presence. It was a crushing blow to the unhappy fag. He almost tottered to the Head's study, and went unsteadily down the corridor. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther saw him coming back, and made a movement to speak to him; but Frank went by them blindly, his eyes unseeing, heavy with unshed tears. The chums of the Shell exchanged uncomfortable glances.

"Poor kid!" muttered Tom Merry.

And the Terrible Three went out gloomily into the quad, haunted by the dumb misery in the stricken face of Levison minor.

CHAPTER 4.

Levison's Last Word!

THE key grated in the door of the punishment-room, and Levison of the Fourth turned from the window.

He had been looking out into the sunshine from the dusky little room. From the window he had a glimpse of the quad, and of a part of the playing-fields in the distance. His heart was heavy as he looked at them. He would never stroll in the quad again, never hear again on the green cricket pitch the click of bat meeting ball. Even yet it seemed somehow unreal to him; he could not wholly visualise the disaster that had overwhelmed his young life.

Fellows had gathered in morning break to look up at the little barred window; but Kildare of the Sixth had walked round to clear them off. Since Mr. Lathom had discovered Clive climbing the ivy no one was allowed to hang about under the window of Nobody's Study. Only in the distance Levison had caught glimpses of St. Jim's fellows:

He turned from the window as the door opened. Mr. Railton stepped into the room, his face, usually kind, very cold and hard. His expression was more than enough to tell Levison that he was utterly condemned by his Housemaster. Mr. Railton, like the headmaster, believed now that Levison's apparent reform had been nothing but a cunning system of hypocrisy, and he was naturally deeply incensed by the belief that he had been deceived and mocked. There was no compassion for the expelled junior in the Housemaster's heart; he was only anxious to see him go.

"Levison," he said coldly and quietly, "I have come to tell you what the Head has decided upon. Your dinner will be brought to you here, and then you will be allowed to leave the punishment-room, to pack your box in the presence of a prefect. At half-past two you will be taken into Hall to be publicly expelled by your headmaster. If there is anything you have to say or to ask, you may speak to me now."

Levison's lip quivered.

"A public expulsion?" he repeated.

"Yes. Do you desire to see your brother before you leave? If so, a few minutes will be allowed."

"I think he would like to see me," said Levison quietly.

"Very good."

"May I speak to Cardew?"

"Certainly not. I hear from Mr. Lathom that you have already been in communication with Clive of the Fourth Form, who had the temerity to climb up to this window. You are very well aware that the Head forbade you to communicate in any way with any boy in this school."

"Cardew is my friend, sir," said Levison steadily. "I should like to speak a few words to him before I go."

"Nothing of the kind will be permitted," answered the Housemaster coldly. "You are not a fit person to speak to any boy here. Had your true character been known earlier—" He broke off. Deeply as he was incensed, he restrained what he would have said. Levison, after all, was paying in full for his transgressions, and that was enough. "Is there anything else? A Sixth-Form prefect will take you home, carrying a letter from Dr. Holmes to explain the matter fully to your father."

"A few words to Cardew, sir—"

"That will do!"

Mr. Railton turned to the door again.

Levison set his lips. He had taken the risk of seeing the blackmailer, Tickey Tapp, to save Cardew, to obtain from the sharper the paper signed by the scapegrace—the "bit of writin'" as Tickey Tapp called it. That

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was the paper that Levison had destroyed in the presence of the Head, and but for his having done so, it was Cardew who would now have been in the punishment-room under sentence of expulsion. But he had had no opportunity of speaking to his chum. Cardew, still in the belief that it was in Tickey Tapp's power to ruin him, intended to leave the school that day on a visit home, and not to return. Cardew's danger was over, and he did not know it, and Levison could not tell him.

"Mr. Railton, one moment!"

"Well? Be brief."

"If you will not allow me to see Cardew, will you give him a message from me? There can be no harm in a message given to him by yourself," said Levison bitterly.

The Housemaster paused.

"Give me the message, and I shall judge," he answered.

"Cardew has leave, I think, to go home to-day?" said Levison.

"That is the case," said Mr. Railton. "I understand that Lord Reckness wrote to the Head, requesting leave for his grandson for a few days."

Levison smiled faintly. He knew that Cardew had written to his grandfather, asking the old lord to make that request. Certainly, the Head was not aware of that.

"Will you tell Cardew, sir, that I advise him not to take this holiday, but to remain at the school?"

Mr. Railton looked puzzled.

"And why?" he asked.

"I think the holiday will do him no good, sir, and that it will be better for him not to take it," said Levison.

"That is very probable," said the Housemaster dryly. "Certainly, Cardew is not industrious or attentive in class. But I cannot understand why you should concern yourself in the matter."

"Even a bad character may give good advice to a friend, sir," said Levison, with a touch of sarcasm. "At least, the message can do no harm, sir, and the advice is good."

Mr. Railton reflected for a few moments.

"I see no harm in the message, and I will deliver it," he said. "Is that all, Levison?"

"That is all, sir."

"Very good."

The School House master left the punishment-room and locked the door again on the outside.

Levison heard his footsteps die away down the corridor.

A bell rang. Morning break was over. The school were assembling once more in the Form-rooms.

Levison, pacing the room restlessly, wondered whether Cardew would understand. Certainly, he was not likely to guess that Levison had intervened and succeeded in getting the "bit of writing" away from Tickey Tapp. But he would know from the message that Levison believed that he could remain at the school without danger of exposure. He would suppose that Levison had learned something, and knew that it was safe for him to do so. Indeed, believing as he did, probably, that Levison was "thick" with the rowdy gang at the Green Man, Cardew might believe that his chum had somehow squared the matter with the blackmailer. It mattered little what he believed so long as he acted on Levison's message.

Levison, at all events, had done all he could.

And his thoughts, as he paced the punishment-room, turned from the scapegrace of St. Jim's to himself and what was to happen to him. A public expulsion, the whole school assembled to witness his shame and humiliation. That was the hardest blow of all. If they had let him slip away quietly he could have borne it better; but to stand up in Big Hall, under hundreds of eyes, to be covered with shame as with a garment! How was he to bear that?

Black and bitter were the thoughts of the condemned junior as he paced the narrow limits of the punishment-room.

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CHAPTER 5.

All Clear for Cardew!

"CARDEW!"

"Yes, Kildare?"

"Mr. Railton wants you."

The Fourth were going to their Form-room for third lesson when the captain of St. Jim's came along and called Cardew.

Ralph Reckness Cardew stopped dead.

Ever since his last meeting with Tickey Tapp, and his refusal to be blackmailed, emphasised by the crash of his fist in the rascal's face, Cardew had been living, as it were, on the edge of a volcano.

By every post that "bit of writing" might have arrived for the Head. It was even possible that the impudent rascal might come to the school himself to expose the scapegrace who had defied him.

Cardew had longed to be off the scene when the blow fell, to be at home at Reckness Towers. Then all the Head could do would be to forbid him to return to the school. He had lost no time. He had written to his grandfather, and then he had telephoned to the old lord to make sure that there would be no delay. The indulgent old lord had acceded at once to his request. He had obtained leave for him. That afternoon Cardew was to go home. Was it too late?

Cool and self-possessed as he was, Cardew felt his face going white. For a moment he was dizzy.

He had been thinking more about his chum's trouble than his own that morning. Now it came into his mind that instead of one expulsion there might be two; that he might be standing by Levison's side to receive the same sentence in Big Hall when the school assembled.

Kildare had turned away. He did not observe Cardew's look. But a good many of the Fourth observed it.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tapped the dandy of the Fourth on the arm.

"What's the wow, deah boy?" he asked. "You look quite ill."

"Railton got something in store for you, Cardew?" asked Blake.

There was a fat chuckle from Baggy Trimble.

"He, he, he! Is Cardew going to be sacked, too?"

Cardew pulled himself together at once. He smiled, though his cheeks were drained of colour.

"You kids run along to your lessons," he drawled.

"I dare say Railton wants to ask my advice about the management of the House. I don't mind givin' a Housemaster a few tips."

"Bai Jove!"

Cardew strolled away, leaving the juniors laughing.

But the smile died off his face when he was out of sight of the Fourth. He paused near the open doorway of the House.

The thought was in his mind to "cut," regardless of the summons to the Housemaster's study.

He had obtained leave to go home that day to avoid the blow that was coming. If it had come, there was still time to dodge it—if he cleared off from the school at this very moment.

But he shook his head.

After all, it might be something else. It was unusual for the Housemaster to send for a junior when he was going into the Form-room for class. Still, it might not mean that the dreaded blow had fallen. Cardew resolved to see the Housemaster and learn what was wanted, and if it was as he feared, to bolt the moment he was out of the study. With that resolve in his mind he went to Mr. Railton.

He smiled as he found himself in the presence of the Housemaster, realising at once that his fears had been unfounded. Mr. Railton's manner was quite as usual; obviously, he had learned nothing of Cardew's association with Tickey Tapp.

"You sent for me, sir," said Cardew demurely.

"Yes, Cardew; I have just seen Levison, and he has asked me to give you a message."

"May I see him, sir?"

"You may not, Cardew," said Mr. Railton sharply. "No boy belonging to this school will be allowed to speak to Levison again. But I see no harm in delivering his message, as it seems to be not only harmless but to contain good advice."



There came a startling interruption to Third lesson: from the quadrangle there came a loud, sharp cry—a cry of horror and pain. Mr. Lathom, in his surprise, dropped his book, and the juniors all sprang to their feet, listening in alarm and amazement. (See Chapter 5.)

"Indeed, sir," said Cardew, quite perplexed.

"Levison desires to advise you not to take advantage of Lord Reckness' request to your headmaster, Cardew. He advises you not to take this holiday, but to remain at the school."

Cardew stared at him blankly.

The Housemaster was giving the message at face value, so to speak; but Cardew was quick on the uptake, and he knew that Levison must have had some motive in sending that message, apart from the desire to give him good advice.

It did not, in fact, take Cardew a second to grasp the hidden meaning in the message.

Levison had agreed with him that, if Tickey Tapp persisted in his determination to betray him to his Headmaster, it was wisest for Cardew to be off the scene when the blow fell.

Now he advised him to stay.

That could only mean that Levison knew, somehow, that it was safe for him to stay—that Tickey Tapp would hold his hand.

How he knew it was a mystery, but the fact was clear enough to Cardew. Levison would not have advised him to stay if the blackmailer still intended to betray him.

Cardew's brain was in a whirl.

But he kept his face calm. The Housemaster's eyes were upon him.

"Levison's advice is good, Cardew," the Housemaster was going on. "As he said himself, a bad character may be capable of giving good advice. You will be wise to act on his advice in this instance. But the matter rests with you, as the Head has acceded to Lord Reckness' request."

"I—I see, sir," stammered Cardew. "I understand! I shall certainly do as Levison advises, sir."

"Very good," said Mr. Railton approvingly.

"Perhaps you will let me use your telephone, sir, and I will tell my grandfather not to expect me to-day," said Cardew meekly.

"Certainly," said Mr. Railton. "You may telephone now, Cardew."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Railton left the study. He was due in the Sixth Form-room.

Cardew stood in puzzled thought. He was quite sure of the meaning of Levison's message. He had not the slightest doubt on that subject. But how did Levison know that the blackmailer would hold his hand? He had been out of school bounds the previous night. Had he seen Tickey Tapp—squared the scoundrel somehow? If he was thick with the Green Man crew it was possible that Tapp was willing to oblige him.

A cynical smile came over Cardew's face.

Clive was still clinging to his sturdy, loyal belief in Levison's innocence. Cardew had doubted, as he doubted in all things. But if it was the case that Levison had influenced the blackmailer to hold his hand, it was proof positive that he was still "thick" with the Green Man crew. It was proof that he had dealings with Tickey Tapp, and had an influence over that rascally character—that he was a fellow with whom Tapp could not afford to quarrel.

"I wonder what Clivey would say!" murmured Cardew.

He was confident that he had hit on the right explanation; it was the only explanation he could think of.

Well, he was safe for the present, at least! Levison's association with the Green Man gang had ruined him, but it had been the means of saving Cardew. The scapegrace felt a pang at his heart. What a pal the fellow was, blackguard or not; even at the bottom of the abyss he had thought of Cardew and sent that cunningly-worded message to relieve his mind, and save him from taking a false step. Blackguard or not, humbug or not, Levison was a better fellow than himself, and Levison was to go, while he was to stay. If he could only have helped him somehow—

He turned to the telephone at last and waited for a trunk call to Reckness Towers. His message home despatched at last, Cardew made his way to the Fourth Form-room.

Third lesson was almost over when he entered the Form-room. Mr. Lathom gave him a severe glance.

"Cardew! What—"

"Mr. Railton sent for me, sir," said Cardew. "He let me telephone home, sir, to say that I am not going home to-day."

"Indeed," said Mr. Lathom, blinking at the dandy of the Fourth over his glasses.

"Mr. Railton gave me a message from Levison, sir," went on Cardew gravely. "Levison sent me his advice not to take this holiday, sir, but to remain at school and stick to lessons."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Lathom, in astonishment.

"I thought I had better take such good advice, sir. I hope you approve," said Cardew demurely.

"Certainly I approve," said Mr. Lathom. "Your progress with your lessons, Cardew, scarcely justifies extra leave from school."

"I thought you would think so, sir," said Cardew, with great gravity, "and so I'm giving up that little holiday, sir. I am so glad you approve."

Some of the Fourth grinned. But little Mr. Lathom seldom perceived the fact when his leg was being pulled.

"Quite so, Cardew," he said. "You may go to your place."

Cardew went to his place.

Third lesson proceeded in the Form-room. But a few minutes later there came a sudden, startling interruption. The Form-room windows were wide open to let in the fresh summer air. From the quadrangle there came a loud, sharp cry—a cry of horror and pain. Mr. Lathom, in his surprise, dropped his book, and the juniors all sprang to their feet, listening in alarm and amazement.

But the cry was not repeated. It was followed by dead silence, broken a moment or two later by the sound of hurrying feet and exclaiming voices. Others in the Form-rooms had evidently heard that strange, terrible cry. And the juniors, looking at one another with startled faces, wondered what had happened.

CHAPTER 6.

The Last Blow!

"NEVER!"

Levison of the Fourth muttered the word between his teeth as he paced to and fro in the punishment-room.

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His face was set, his mind made up.

He had resolved to endure with quiet determination the disaster that had fallen upon him. He could not betray his friend to save himself. He was to go.

But Mr. Railton's words had roused fierce rebellion in his breast. He was adjudged guilty, and he did not blame the Head for so adjudging him. Yet he was innocent of all wrongdoing, guilty only of having taken terrible risk to save his chum. Why should he stand in Big Hall, under the eyes of all the school, to go through the deepest of humiliations, to be looked on by hundreds of eyes with contempt and scorn?

"Never!" he muttered again.

That, at least, he was not called upon to endure. If there was a way of escape he would not go through that final shame and humiliation. And there was a way—if he had the courage to take it. And Levison of the Fourth had never lacked courage. Presently they would come for him to take him away to his ordeal, and they would find him gone. He was to go, and he would go of his own accord, before they came for him.

Clive had climbed the ivied wall that morning, a proof that it could be done. The bars at the window were the only obstacle. But the bars were old and rusty, set in wood that had crumbled for years under wind and weather. Levison did not believe that the barred window would stop him long. It was the descent of sixty feet, clinging to the ivy, that was the real obstacle. But what Clive had done he could do, and would do.

His mind once made up, Levison of the Fourth lost no time.

He opened the window-sash as wide as it would go, and grasped the bars in his hands and tested them.

The upright bar was almost loose in its worn sockets. The transverse bar was stronger, but not likely to resist him long. Levison wrenched a leg from the chair, to use as a lever. He placed it between the bars, outside the transverse, inside the upper half of the upright, across the corner where they joined, and wrenched and wrenched again. The task was even easier than he had supposed. After a few strong wrenches the upright bar was so loosened that he was able to jerk it free, and then he very quickly twisted the level bar out of place. The bars, indeed, were rather for show than for use. Certainly, it had never been anticipated that a prisoner of the punishment-room would think of escaping by a sheer wall sixty feet down.

The bars out of the way, Levison squeezed himself through the window.

He caught his breath a little then.

The height was dizzy, and there was only the ancient ivy between him and a fall that meant instant destruction.

But he did not falter.

His legs hung out of the window and he lowered himself, holding to the sill.

Then he set his teeth hard and trusted himself to the thick, clinging tendrils of the ivy.

Those stout old tendrils had supported Sidney Clive's weight, and he was a heavier fellow than Levison. He remembered, however, that once or twice a tendril had torn away and he had feared that Clive would fall. But he had resolved to take the risk.

Groping carefully for a secure hold, he lowered himself, hand below hand. The strain on his arms was terrible. Levison was a sinewy fellow, but he did not possess the hefty strength of the stalwart junior from South Africa. He realised that the task, which had been a hard one for Clive, was still harder for himself. But he was committed to it now, and he did not think of going back. Indeed, it was now easier to descend than to ascend. His heart throbbed, but his brain was clear and cool as he groped and clung and lowered himself farther and farther.

A tendril of the ivy snapped suddenly, and he swung loose by one hand.

For some moments he swung, helpless, his brain whirling. He was still twenty feet from the ground. Had he fallen then—

But he did not fall.

Once more both hands gripped securely, and the desperate junior, aching with fatigue, resumed his descent. His head was dizzy, and the dust from the

old ivy almost choked him. He knew that if it lasted much longer he would fall helplessly.

Lower and lower!

How far had he to go now? The strain on his aching arms seemed too terrible for further endurance.

He dared not look down. Desperately, with failing strength, he clung to the strong old roots and worked his way downward.

Another snap, and a shudder ran through him. He was clutching with one hand again, and still he was not at the foot of the wall. Wildly he clutched for a fresh hold, and again the ivy broke in his grasp, and then the worn, numbed fingers of the hand that was holding slipped.

The ivy tore through his grasp.

He was falling—falling—falling!

One terrible cry broke from Ernest Levison as he struck the ground, and then he knew no more.

He could not hear the footsteps that approached the spot, the exclamations of alarmed voices. He lay like one dead as Mr. Railton bent over him, and others who hurried to the spot after the Housemaster gazed at him in horror.

"Levison!"

"He has fallen——"

"Is he—is he——"

Mr. Railton knelt beside the unconscious junior.

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Lathom came hurrying up. "Levison—he has climbed down from the window! The reckless, foolish young rascal! Mr. Railton, is he badly hurt?"

"He seems to have fallen only a short distance," said the Housemaster quietly. "He must have accomplished the greater part of the descent in safety. He is stunned, and his leg seems to be hurt. Kildare, Darrell, help me with him."

Levison did not stir or speak as he was lifted by the two stalwart Sixth-Formers. His eyes were closed, his face white as chalk, save where a thin trickle of red ran from under the dark hair. He knew nothing till at last his eyes opened, and his first wild and wavering glance showed him the washed walls of the school hospital. He was in bed. There were bandages on him. A face was looking at him from the bedside, and he dimly recognised Dr. Short, the school doctor.

"Lie still!"

The doctor's voice seemed to come from far away.

Levison tried to speak, but his voice would not come.

"Lie still!" The doctor's voice seemed still to come from a great distance. "You are in no danger, but you are hurt. Keep still and do not try to speak."

Levison could not speak if he tried. His head sank back weakly on the white pillow.

He had failed.

That was the one clear thought in his dazed mind. He had made his bid to escape and he had failed. He was in the school hospital, hurt, only to face, when he recovered, that which he had sought to elude. He gave a faint moan of misery and despair and relapsed once more into merciful unconsciousness.

## CHAPTER 7.

### No Hope!

**T**OM MERRY & CO., in the Shell Form-room, watched the clock anxiously. The minutes ticked away slowly. It seemed as though third lesson that morning would never end. Something had happened. They knew that. They had heard that terrible cry from the quadrangle, hurrying feet and startled voices. But Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, carried on without regard to the disturbance, and the Shell had to carry on likewise. But even Mr. Linton could scarcely keep his pupils' attention fixed on the lesson.

But the hour of dismissal came at last, and the Shell swarmed out. The Fourth were already out, buzzing with excitement. Tom Merry caught the name of Levison on many lips.

"What's happened?"

"It's Levison!" gasped Baggy Trimble breathlessly. "Climbed out of the window of Nobody's Study, and fell——"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Tom, aghast.

"And I believe he's killed," added Baggy. Baggy Trimble always liked to make his news as sensational as possible.

"You fat fraud! Nothing of the kind," put in Blake hastily. "He's hurt, but Mr. Lathom says the doctor said he wasn't in danger."

"You know these medical johnnies," said Trimble, with a sage shake of the head. "They don't know what they're talking about half the time. My idea is that Levison's done for."

"Shut up, you fat duffer!"

"Where's Levison now?" asked Manners.

"In sanny," answered Blake. "He came down by the ivy, and it broke, and he had a nasty fall. Blessed if I know why he tried it on."

"Didn't like the idea of the show in Hall after dinner," grinned Baggy Trimble. "He was going to bolt, of course."

"Poor old Levison!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy commiseratingly. "A man can hardly blame a chap for not wantin' to go through an expulsion. I suppose he was thinkin' of cleavin' off."

"May be one of his tricks," said Racke of the Shell, with a derisive grin.

"A trick—falling and getting hurt?" said Blake.

"A trick to stick in the school, I mean. If he's in sanny now, with the doctor, he can't be pushed out of St. Jim's to-day. Looks to me like a dodge," said Aubrey Racke.

"He will be sacked just the same when he gets well," said Tom Merry quietly. "That's all rot, Racke."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Levison always was as full of tricks as a monkey," remarked Crooke of the Shell. "I shouldn't wonder if this was a new dodge. I dare say he's not hurt very much."

"I twust he is not hurt vewy much, Cwooke; but he must be hurt, if he is in sanny with the doctah lookin' aftah him," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I only hope it will not turn out to be vewy sewious."

Many of the juniors gathered under the window of Nobody's Study, to look at the scene of Levison's accident.

They could see that the bars had been removed from the window of the punishment-room, and it was easily to be discerned where the ivy had torn away in the climber's hands.

"Wanted some nerve, to climb down that wall!" remarked Kangaroo of the Shell, with a whistle.

"Levison always had plenty of nerve," said Tom Merry. "He seems to have got down most of the way before he fell. Lucky for him he didn't fall from the top." The captain of the Shell shivered a little.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Cardew and Clive came along, and stared at the torn ivy. Sidney Clive's face was very pale, and Cardew looked unusually serious. They had heard Levison's cry in the Fourth Form-room, though they had not known then that it was uttered by their chum.

"Know how Levison is, you chaps?" asked Tom Merry.

Clive nodded.

"I've asked Mr. Railton. He's not in danger, it seems, but he's had a nasty knock on the head, and his leg's hurt. He will be laid up for some time; he's got to be kept quiet."

"We're not allowed to see him in sanny," said Cardew. "I think the beaks would have let us speak to him, in the cirts; but it's doctor's orders that he's to speak to nobody—not even young Frank."

"I suppose Levison minor's taking it rather badly," said Tom.

"Looks like a little ghost," said Clive. "I believe he's glad that the bunking is off for to-day, though."

"The jolly old ceremony is unavoidably postponed," said Cardew. "The school will not assemble in Big Hall, according to schedule. That's somethin', at least. For this relief, much thanks."

Most of the fellows were glad to know that the expulsion would not, and could not, take place that day, after all. Most of them hoped, too, that when Levison was able to go, the Head would allow him to depart quietly, without the public condemnation that had been intended. It was probable enough, for the

junior's narrow escape from serious injury, if not from death, could hardly fail to move the Head a little.

After dinner the order for the school to assemble in Big Hall was officially cancelled.

Baggy Trimble, who had a glimpse of the Head when the old gentleman went to his study after lunch, announced to the other fellows that the beak was looking as grim as a gargoyle.

"He's awfully ratty, you know," grinned Baggy. "He's down on Levison like a ton of bricks, and he doesn't like him getting all this sympathy. Not that I sympathise with him much myself."

"You wouldn't!" grunted Blake.

"Well, he's a bad character, you know," said Trimble virtuously.

"And you're such a nice one?" snorted Herries.

"Bai Jove! You weally ought to sympathise with a fellow if you wegard him as a bad chawactah, Twimble," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Shakespeare says that a fellow-feelin' makes us wondwous kind. It does not seem to make you wondwous kind, howevah."

"Yah!" was Baggy's elegant rejoinder to that.

Frank Levison joined the Terrible Three in the quadrangle after dinner. He was, as Clive had said, looking like a little ghost, but, at the same time, he was undoubtedly relieved that the expulsion was off for that day. The postponement had given the fag a gleam of hope. Tom and Manners and Lowther gave him a kind smile and a nod; whatever they thought of Levison of the Fourth, they had nothing but kindness and sympathy for his young brother.

"I—I want to speak to you chaps," said Frank falteringly.

"Go ahead, kid," said Tom.

"About my brother—"

"He'll pull round all right," said Tom Merry soothingly. "Don't worry about that, kid."

"I mean—I suppose you know why he climbed out of Nobody's Study," said Frank. "He must have intended to get away without that awful scene in Hall before he went. He could have had no other reason."

"That's so," said Tom.

"If he had been guilty, he wouldn't have cared so much," said the fag. "It's because he's done nothing wrong that he couldn't bear the shame of it."

"I—I—I hope so," said Tom hesitatingly.

"You don't believe so?"

"Well, you—you see—"

"I can't make it out," said Frank. "I saw the Head in break, as you know. What he told me almost made me doubt Ernest."

The Terrible Three gave him pitying looks. They would not have deprived him of his faith in his brother for any consideration whatever. But naturally they could not share it. There was, as they knew, and all St. Jim's knew, no possibility of a "mistake" in the matter. Either Levison was guilty, or he had kept back from the Head the proof of his innocence—which was unthinkable.

"What did the Head tell you?" asked Manners.

Frank Levison explained.

The faces of the Shell fellows grew graver as they listened. The incident of Levison destroying the paper in his possession before the headmaster could see it was the final proof in their eyes, as it had been in the headmaster's.

Frank watched their faces, and read their thoughts easily enough. His pale, troubled face coloured painfully.

"You think that settles it?" he asked. "You think there was something on that paper which my brother dared not let the Head see?"

"Isn't that rather plain, kid?" asked Lowther.

"Surely," said Tom.

"I know the Head thinks so," said Frank. "But—suppose it was some letter from a bad lot, or something of the kind—Ernest's no fool, is he? He would know that destroying it under Dr. Holmes' eyes would be quite as bad for him as letting the Head see it, whatever it was."

"Well, I suppose that's so," agreed Tom, after some thought. "It couldn't have been worse for him if the Head had seen the paper, anyhow."

"Then—don't you see?" asked Frank eagerly.

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"Doesn't it look as if that paper wasn't what the Head supposed at all?"

"Then why should your brother destroy it, knowing what the Head would think of his action?"

"I—I don't know. It might have been something he wanted to keep secret, and yet nothing with any harm in it," urged Frank.

The Terrible Three stood silent. That suggestion was rather too steep for them; in fact, it was clear that it could only have occurred to Frank himself because he was determined to believe in his brother against all evidence.

"You—you don't agree?" faltered Frank.

"My dear kid, it's not reasonable," said Tom gently. "If it was a harmless letter, or something of the sort, Levison could let the Head see it. No fellow here is supposed to have any letter that he wouldn't care to let the masters see. It must have been something that settled Levison's prospects to a certainty, and so he took the chance of destroying it, as that couldn't make matters worse."

Manners and Lowther nodded. That seemed to them, as well as to Tom Merry, beyond doubt.

Frank breathed hard.

"I suppose you'd think so," he said wearily. "But I don't—I can't! Clive believes in my brother."

"I'm afraid he's the only fellow here, excepting yourself, who does," said Tom. "It seems to me that Levison has condemned himself. If he can explain the thing away, why doesn't he?"

"I—I don't know."

"Well, he would if he could, of course," said Manners.

"Then—then you don't feel inclined to help my brother?" faltered the fag.

"Help him!" repeated Tom. "I'd help him if I could—I'd do anything. What can we do?"

"Don't you see? He's laid up in sunny now." The fag's face quivered for a moment. "He can't be sent away till next week at the earliest. That gives us time. Friends of his might be able to find out how the matter really stands, and—and clear him."

"Poor kid!" said Tom.

The fag's faith in his brother touched him deeply. But the suggestion was absurd in itself, as all the school had no doubt whatever that they knew already how the matter really stood.

"Look here, kid," said Tom at last. "It all hinges on that paper which your brother dropped into the fire in the Head's presence. I can't see any explanation of that, except what the Head believes. But if there is any other explanation, Levison can give it. He knows. When he's better you'll be allowed to see him in sunny. Urge him to tell the Head the truth—if the truth isn't what all the school believes. Let him explain what that paper really was, if it wasn't some incriminating evidence against himself."

"He won't."

"Why shouldn't he?" demanded Tom, rather tartly.

"I don't know; but he won't, or he can't, or he would have done so already," answered Frank.

"I know! But don't you see that that settles the matter?" asked the captain of the Shell. "You're asking us to believe that a fellow would rather be sacked than make a quite innocent explanation that his headmaster is entitled to demand."

Frank Levison nodded and turned away in silence. He knew that, so far as logic was concerned, there was nothing to be said for the condemned junior now lying in the school hospital. But it was from instinct, not from reason, that Frank's loyalty came; and he had realised miserably that had not Ernest seen his brother he would have believed as the rest of St. Jim's believed. He moved away, with drooping head, and Tom's heart ached for him as he watched him go.

"Poor kid!" muttered Tom. "I can't imagine how the case could be clearer. Levison seems to have put the lid on it himself. What else could the Head think but what he does think?"

"Nothing!" said Manners.

"It's a clear case," said Monty Lowther. "Poor old Frank! Let him stick to his belief as long as he can."

"Levison's a frightful rotter to have let the kid down like this," said Tom. "He might have kept straight for that lad's sake." We all believed that he was straight as a string."

Poor Frank wandered away by himself. He did not feel in a mood for the rough-and-ready company of his friends in his own Form. Wally and Reggie were sympathetic, but they made no secret of the fact that they regarded his brother as a rotter, who had only got exactly what he had asked for. Frank could hardly blame them for believing so, but he did not want to hear them say so. The unexpected happening that had kept his brother at the school, unavoidably postponing his expulsion, had given Frank a gleam of hope. But it was only a transient gleam. There was no help for him; and though he passionately and stubbornly persisted in his belief that, if all the facts were known, his brother would be justified, he

## CHAPTER 8.

### Trouble in Study No. 9!

LEVISON of the Fourth lay on his bed of pain, and day followed day, and the doctor still came regularly, and no one had seen Levison. Many of the fellows almost forgot that the expelled junior was still lying in the school hospital, as the excitement and interest in the affair died down. Tom Merry & Co. did not forget him, and they thought of him with compassion, only hoping that when he was well he would be allowed to leave quietly, unseen, and unnoticed.

Levison minor, however, found relief in the knowledge that his brother was still at St. Jim's. From the circumstance that he was still there, the unhappy fag drew a vague hope. Mr. Levison had been to the school to see his son, but he came while the

# CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE.

## SPORTS DAY!



THIS is a real red-letter day,  
It ever was, and still it is;  
When rivals meet, in friendly fray,  
To prove their high abilities.  
Every St. Jim's athletic "crack"  
Will exercise his muscles;  
Keen sportsmen on the running-track  
Will wage tremendous tussles!

The Senior Sports are fought out first,  
The Hundred Yards is glorious;  
For Kildare, with a mighty burst,  
Is valiantly victorious!  
He also wins the Hurdle Race,  
Each barrier gamely clearing;  
Of sportsmen, Kildare is the "Ace,"  
His exploits all are cheering.

But we will leave the Senior Sports,  
And turn, with eyes admiring,  
To where the juniors, in their shorts,  
Are panting and perspiring.  
A mighty tussle for the "Mile"  
Is seen to be progressing;  
Tom Merry speeds in thrilling style,  
With Blake and Clive hard pressing!

The final lap—the final dash,  
The final stern resistance;  
And Merry covers, in a flash,  
The last remaining distance.  
Salvoes of cheering rend the air,  
His plucky win acclaiming;  
And caps are whirling everywhere—  
The victor's cheeks are flaming!

The Sack-race causes lots of fun,  
Ten juniors are partaking;  
Watching them tumble, one by one,  
Our sides are fairly aching!  
The portly Trimble raises grins  
As barrel-like he bounces;  
He comes to grief! "Dick Redfern  
wins!"  
The smiling judge announces.

Oh, glorious day of thrills and spills  
Of triumph and disaster!  
Grim conflicts of contending wills,  
Delight each boy and master.  
If we'd a Shakespeare at St. Jim's,  
What epics would be written  
Of sportsmen true, with sturdy limbs,  
Of Briton matched with Briton!



could not even begin to think of a plan for elucidating those supposed facts.

Tom Merry & Co. sympathised, but their minds were made up on the subject. In all the school, only Clive of the Fourth believed as he believed, and he could give no reason for his belief excepting that Levison was his chum, which was not a reason at all. Clive could not help him. Cardew, with his quick brain and ready ingenuity, might have helped, if there was anything to be done; but Frank knew, with resentful bitterness, that Cardew did not believe as Clive did. He was still Levison's friend; nevertheless, he believed as the rest believed.

The voice of Wally of the Third, shouting from the distance, drew Frank from his miserable meditations at last.

"Can't you hear the bell, fathead? Do you want Selby to rag you?"

And Frank Levison went in with the Third.

St. Jim's fellows were in class, and no one saw him but his sons. What the Head said to Levison's father no one knew, but no doubt he had explained the matter fully, whether he had convinced Mr. Levison or not. Tom Merry wondered how Levison's sister, Doris, had taken the news; but he learned from Frank that Doris had been told nothing so far. She was at school, and it was not necessary to tell her; bad news could not be told too late.

In Study No. 9 in the Fourth, Clive and Cardew were growing used to the absence of their study-mate. But Sidney Clive's face was very grave in these days, and Cardew had lost a great deal of his irresponsible vivacity. There was a shadow on the study; it was not a situation that could be got used to very easily.

Cardew had had no reason to regret having acted on the advice Levison had conveyed to him by the message through Mr. Railton. He was still puzzled; but he had

found that Levison was right—Tickey Tapp had not troubled him again. He had heard and seen nothing of the blackmailing rascal, though he knew the man was still in Rylcombe. He had heard his name mentioned by Racke of the Shell, who was "thick" with the Green Man crew.

The rascal's teeth had been drawn somehow, and Cardew wondered endlessly how Levison had done it—for it was plain that it had been done somehow by Levison. It was strange enough that Levison had saved him at the very time that he was lost himself. But the fact that he had done it was a proof to Cardew's mind that Levison was an associate of the Green Man gang. Possibly he even knew something about Tickey Tapp which made the sharper afraid to offend him; that would explain his influence over the man. He might even have got the "bit of writing" away from Tickey Tapp, if that blackguard had reason to fear him.

It was all a puzzle to Cardew, but one thing seemed clear in the midst of his perplexity and that was that Ernest Levison was not innocent of what was laid to his charge. Innocent, he could have had no power to force Tickey Tapp to hold his hand. He was anxious to see Levison, to learn from him what he had done. But that was impossible. No one was allowed to see Levison in the sanatorium, save his minor or rare occasions.

To some extent there was a coldness in Study No. 9 between the two juniors there. Cardew, certainly, never dreamed of uttering his opinion that Levison was a guilty party; but Clive understood well enough what he thought.

Clive was still clinging to his belief in his chum, and to the sturdy, plain-dealing junior from South Africa Cardew's attitude was incomprehensible.

Had Clive believed that Levison was guilty his feelings would have been very different. He bore with Cardew's thoughtless follies; but the case of Levison was very different from that of the scapegrace of the Fourth. Ernest Levison was not a thoughtless, flippant fellow like Cardew, likely to plunge into trouble from sheer slackness and carelessness. Had he entered into the same reckless pursuits Clive would have condemned him much more severely, for he would have realised much more clearly than Cardew what he was doing.

Moreover, there was no humbug about Cardew; he concealed his follies from masters and prefects, but he did not pretend among his Form-fellows to be any better than he was. But if Levison was guilty, his guilt was much deeper, for to it had to be added a system of lying and hypocrisy, the deception of all who knew him, even of his nearest chums. If, therefore, Clive had believed Levison guilty now, he would have turned him down; he had no use for a friend whose whole life was a lie. But Cardew's view was quite different. Obviously he believed that Levison was justly accused and condemned; yet it made no difference whatever to his friendship for him. He could feel friendship for a fellow whom he believed to be a worse blackguard than himself, and a professional hypocrite and deceiver.

Clive never had understood Cardew's peculiar nature, and he understood it now less than ever.

He resented Cardew's disbelief in his friend, and he resented almost as much the fact that Cardew could condone what he believed Levison to have been guilty of.

So there was little cordiality in Study No. 9 in these days, and Cardew and Clive were not seen together as much as of old. Clive saw a great deal of Levison minor. It was unusual for a Fourth-Former to have much to do with the Third, but he sought out the fag a good deal to comfort him as much as he could. Frank had nothing to say to Cardew, and when he came upon that elegant youth his eyes would gleam. In Frank's opinion, Cardew was a fellow who had let down his friend at the time when that friend needed sorely the loyalty of his chums.

It was nearly a week after Levison's accident, when Clive came into Study No. 9 one afternoon and found Cardew lounging there, thinking of tea, but too lazy to make any movement towards getting it. Cardew did not speak as he came in; he knew what Clive was

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feeling and thinking, and he was getting used to silence in the study. But, rather to his surprise, Clive stood before him as he loafed in the armchair and broke the silence.

"I've just seen Levison minor," he said abruptly.

"Yes?" said Cardew. "I hope poor old Frank's gettin' used to the situation now."

"As you are!" said Clive, rather bitterly.

Cardew looked at him.

"No good a fellow wearin' his heart on his sleeve,"



"I don't want to lick you," said Cardew quietly. "You'd better  
"Do you think I care a straw? I don't understand how it is, other you're at the bottom."

he answered quietly. "A fellow has to take the knocks as they come. What's the good of howlin'?"

"Never mind that, anyhow. Frank still believes in his major."

"Poor kid!"

"As I do!" snapped Clive.

"More power to your elbow!" said Cardew. "I wish I could! But I suppose I never believe in anythin' or anybody very much."

"I think you might stand by a pal when he's down on his luck."

Cardew coloured.

"I'm standin' by him all I can. I'd do anythin' I could. I'd be sacked along with him if it would do him any good; I deserve it as much as he does."

"Not if he's guilty," said Clive. "If Levison is guilty he must be a frightful hypocrite, the way he has taken us in. A fellow like that isn't fit to be touched."

"I'm not so particular."

"Well, I am," said Clive, frowning. "If I believed that Levison had been deceiving us for whole terms I'd



"What do I care if you lick me?" gasped Frank Levison. "That you're the cause of my brother's trouble. Somehow or (See Chapter 9.)"

turn him down fast enough. But I don't and can't believe it. I can't understand the matter; it's beyond me, for it seems clear that if Levison is innocent he can prove it. He seems to have let the Head believe him guilty, for some reason that nobody can get on to."

"Which, as jolly old Euclid would say, is absurd," said Cardew lightly.

"It may be absurd, but I believe it, or else I should have to believe Levison a scoundrel."

"That's a hard word."

"Not too hard, if the Head's right about him. But I still believe that Levison could clear himself."

"Why doesn't he, then?"

"That beats me, as it beats young Frank. But I know I'm not a clever chap," said Clive, with a sigh. "Levison, in my place, would nose out the facts fast enough to save a friend from being done for. I feel sure of that. I can stick to him and believe in him; but I can't see anything that can be done. If you believe in him as I do, you might do something. You're lazy and slack——"

"Thanks!"

"But you've got a keen brain if you choose to use it. You might be able to hit on something that's beyond me. It's rotten of you not to be trying your hardest, anyhow."

"My dear chap," murmured Cardew, "the facts are known. There's nothin' more for even Sherlock Holmes or Ferrers Locke to nose out."

"The facts are not known," said Clive quietly.

"But——" said Cardew helplessly.

"Taking it that Levison is innocent——"

"Hem!"

"Well, take that view for a minute, even if you can't believe it," said Clive impatiently. "Taking that view, there must be something behind all this—some reason why Levison refuses to say what the facts really are. What's behind it?"

"Nothin'."

"If we could see Levison—ask him questions—but I suppose he would tell us no more than he told the Head," said Clive, in miserable perplexity. "But unless I'm to believe him guilty I must believe that he's hiding something. Goodness knows why. That paper that he burnt in the Head's study——"

"What paper?"

"Levison minor told me about it—he would have told you if you'd cared to listen," said Clive bitterly.

"Well, you tell me," said Cardew amicably. "I haven't heard anythin' about Levison burnin' a paper."

"It was when he was up before the Head. They were going to search his pockets."

"Well?"

"Levison took a paper from his pocket and threw it into the fire before he could be stopped."

Cardew whistled.

"What a nerve!"

"The Head supposed that it was some written proof of his dealings with those shady blackguards——"

"What else could he think?"

"Nothing else, I suppose; but I don't and won't believe so!" snapped Clive. "If I'm right——"

"If!" murmured Cardew.

"If I'm right that paper must have been something else. What else could it have been?"

"Nothing else."

Clive set his lips.

"For goodness' sake, have a little sense, Clive," said Cardew sharply. "Are you goin' to believe that Levison chucked an innocent letter or somethin' into the fire, just to make the Head believe him guilty? If the paper was a harmless one, why couldn't the Head see it? Levison must have known what the Head would think of his action."

"I know! That's the puzzle. I—I suppose——"

Clive looked rather strangely at Cardew.

"You suppose what?"

"It wasn't something of yours?"

"Mine!" exclaimed Cardew, with a start.

"There's no need to beat about the bush!" said Clive.

"You've had letters from Banks, the bookie, and other shady rotters, in your time. If it was some paper of yours that you'd got Levison to mind for you for some reason that would explain it."

Cardew stared at him, and then burst into a laugh.

"You ass! I've had such merry epistles, but I've always burnt them at once. Anyhow, I shouldn't dream of showing them to Levison, still less of askin' him to take charge of them."

"Then it's not that?"

"Of course it isn't," said Cardew irritably.

"I feel sure it's something of the sort," said Clive. "Young Frank thinks so, too. That paper incriminated somebody else, and that's why Levison wouldn't let it be seen. That's the only possible explanation, unless he's guilty, as the Head supposes."

"Whose could it have been?" jeered Cardew. "I'm the only bad character that Levison's on friendly terms with. He doesn't consort with Racke or Crooke or Clampe or Mellish, or any of that set."

"I know. But it must be something of that sort," said Clive stubbornly.

"There's another thing," said Cardew, with a glitter in his eyes. "If I'd planted anythin' of that sort in Levison's hands, I should know it would be found on him when he was up before the Beaks. Do you think I should have kept mum and left him to take the gruel instead of me? Don't you think I should have owned up to it?"

"I don't know," said Clive. "I know you've deserted him now that he needs his friends to stand by him."

"So that's what you think of me?" exclaimed Cardew savagely. "You think I'm the kind of fellow to keep his mouth shut and let another man take his gruel? If that's what you think, Sidney Clive, the less we have to say to one-another in the future the better."

Cardew swung to the door.

Sidney Clive looked at him, but his face was hard, and he did not speak. He could not forgive Cardew for his want of faith in the friend whom he himself still trusted, in spite of all.

Cardew swung out of the study and slammed the door after him. His footsteps died away down the passage.

The next time the chums of Study No. 9 met they did not speak or exchange a glance.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Light at Last.

"LOOK here, Frank—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Look here—"

"Rats!"

Wally of the Third and Reggie Manners were looking exasperated. Frank Levison was angry—angrier than his chums.

Frank was rubbing his knuckles, which looked as if they had very recently been jammed against something hard. At a distance Piggott of the Third was caressing his nose.

"It's time you chucked it!" said D'Arcy minor hotly. "I can tell you, Frank, that your pals are getting fed-up!"

"Right up to the chin!" concurred Manners minor.

"It's the limit!" went on Wally warmly. "You make me tired! Punching a man's nose for saying what you know to be true."

"It's not true!" flashed out Frank fiercely.

"Oh, come off!" said Reggie.

"Piggott's a little beast," said Wally. "I know that. He might as well keep his cheeky mouth shut. But I can tell you, Levison mi, that if you're going to punch every man who believes your brother to be an out-and-out rotter, you'll have to punch every man at St. Jim's, from Piggott of the Third right up to the Head."

"Are you going to punch the Head next?" inquired Reggie Manners sarcastically.

"Or Mr. Railton?" snorted Wally.

"Or Kildare of the Sixth?" went on Reggie.

"Or Tom Merry, or my major?" demanded Wally.

Levison minor made no answer. He did not wonder, perhaps, that his friends in the Third were getting "fed-up." Frank was not cheery company in these dark days. His thoughts were all with his brother, lying ill in the sanatorium, with the sentence of expulsion to be put in force as soon as he was well enough to go.

Frank knew well enough that a fellow ought to keep a stiff upper-lip. And in a public school especially a "man" was supposed not to wear his heart on his sleeve. If he had a trouble he was expected to carry on with a cheery face, as if that trouble did not exist. That ancient Spartan youth who allowed a fox to gnaw his flesh in silence rather than utter a cry of pain was the admired example.

Frank was well enough aware of it, and he always bore with a cheery fortitude any trouble of his own that

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happened along. But the disgrace and ruin of his brother was a trouble that he could not shoulder with a smiling face. It knocked him out. Even so, he was not the fellow to talk about his feelings. But he could not help being subdued and sad, and any word uttered against his brother roused his fiercest anger. Most of the fellows were considerate enough not to mention in his hearing what they thought of Levison of the Fourth. When some inconsiderate or incautious fellow did so, Frank's wrath would boil over—as had just happened in the case of Reuben Piggott. One jeer had cost Piggott a swollen nose and a thick ear.

"You want to punch the whole school, do you?" resumed Wally, as Levison minor remained silent. "You'd like to lick the Head and the Housemaster. They think just the same as Piggott."

"Oh, give us a rest!" muttered Frank.

"Well, you give us a rest," said Wally warmly. "I can tell you, we jolly well got rather fed up with your major before he was found out. Now he's found out and sacked, e're more fed than ever. It's jolly well time that you stopped mooching about looking like a moulting fowl. See?"

"Buck up, you know," said Reggie. "Suppose my major in the Shell came a cropper. Do you think I should be going about with a long face for the rest of the term?"

"No, I don't," said Frank rather bitterly.

"Suppose Wally's major came a mucker—"

"Don't you suppose anything of the kind," said D'Arcy minor, at once. "My major isn't that sort. Neither is your major, Reggie. A bit of a lumbering old slow-coach, but decent enough. But Frank's major always was a bit of a bad hat."

"More than a bit, if you ask me," said Reggie.

"It's getting too thick," said Wally indignantly. "I can jolly well tell you, Frank, that you're lucky to have your friends stick to you after what your brother's done."

"My brother's done nothing."

"Oh, can it!" said Reggie Manners derisively. "The Head doesn't sack a man for doing nothing. I'd like to see his face if he heard you say so."

"Now, look here," said Wally. "You're to chuck it, Frank. See? Just shove your silly major out of your silly head and carry on."

"Oh, leave me alone."

"Why, you cheeky little beast!" roared Wally.

"Go and eat coke!"

Wally of the Third and Reggie Manners glared at their chum. They had been, as they regarded it, extremely patient with him, very patient and very tolerant. This was his gratitude! As if moved by the same spring, Wally D'Arcy and Reggie Manners collared Frank Levison and proceeded to bump him in the quad.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Oh!" roared Reggie, as Frank's infuriated fist crashed on his nose. "Yaroooh!"

"There!" gasped Wally. "That will do you good, young Levison!"

"Give him another!" yelled Reggie.

"Well, one more for luck."

Bump!

Walter Adolphus D'Arcy and Reginald Manners walked away, the latter with his handkerchief to his nose. Frank Levison was left sprawling breathlessly on the ground under the elms.

He sat up dazedly, gasping for breath.

"Lend a hand, young 'un?" said a cool, drawling voice. And Ralph Reckness Cardew jerked the breathless fag to his feet.

He looked at Frank with a whimsical smile as the fag stood panting.

"A rift in the giddy lute—what?" he said.

Frank's eyes gleamed at the dandy of the Fourth.

"You needn't speak to me!" he snapped.

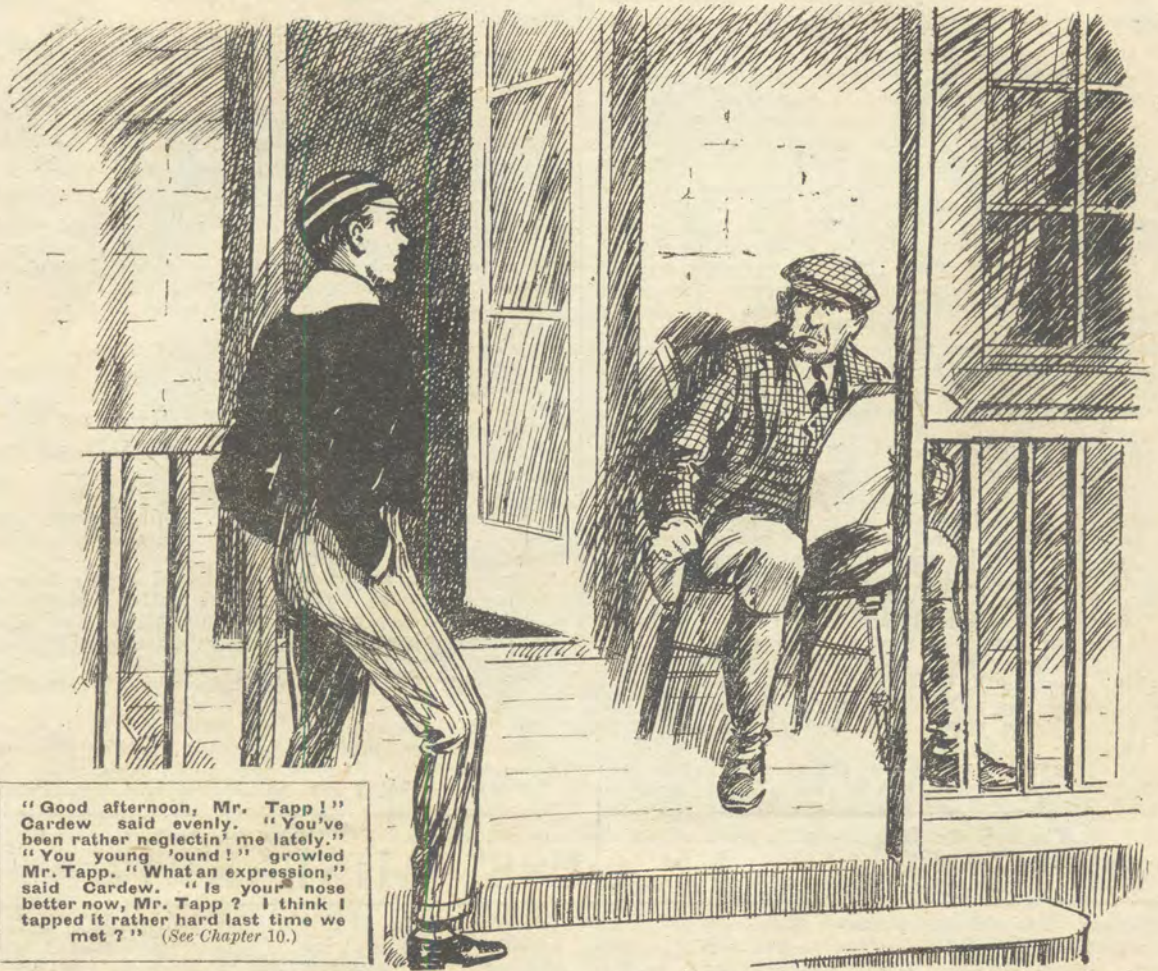
"Dear me! Are you turnin' me down, like Clive?" smiled Cardew. "What have I done to offend your Third Form high mightiness?"

"You're a rotter!"

Cardew nodded cheerily.

"Right on the wicket, young 'un! Is that all?"

"And a cad!" panted Frank.



"Good afternoon, Mr. Tapp!" Cardew said evenly. "You've been rather neglectin' me lately." "You young 'ound!" growled Mr. Tapp. "What an expression," said Cardew. "Is your nose better now, Mr. Tapp? I think I tapped it rather hard last time we met?" (See Chapter 10.)

"Draw it mild, old bean!" urged Cardew. "I don't like that word. You see, there's a distinction. My jolly old conscience tells me that I am a bit of a rotter. But I'm really unconscious of havin' ever been a cad. But perhaps these fine distinctions don't appeal to the Third Form intellect."

"A fellow's a cad to turn down a friend when he's in bad luck," said Frank savagely. "I've punched Piggott's head for calling my brother names. I'd punch yours if I could."

"Well, you couldn't reach, could you?" smiled Cardew. "Lucky for poor little me! But I assure you, my indignant young friend, that I'm as much attached to old Ernest as ever I was."

"Then you oughtn't to be, thinking of him as you do," snapped Frank.

"Oh, my hat! I seem to be in the wrong all along the line," sighed Cardew.

"You might be able to help him if you tried," said Frank scornfully. "You prefer to think rottenly of him—a fellow whose boots you're not good enough to black. He's going at the end of the week—the doctor says he will be able to travel then. A lot you care!"

"But I do care, kid—really!"

"And I believe you could help him; I believe you know something about it!" exclaimed Frank passionately. "My brother never saw those shady blackguards at the Green Man on his own account. I know he never had anything to do with them. I know it—I know it! I believe it was through you that he got into touch with them. You've landed this on him somehow."

"What!" Cardew's face changed.

"Do you think fellows don't know you?" said Frank shrilly. "I know a lot about you, Cardew. What they say about Ernest would be true if they said it about you. You're mixed up with that rotten gang—and if Ernest's got mixed up with them, it was through you

somehow. If there was any harm in that paper he burnt in the Head's study it was yours, not his. If he really went out to see that man Tapp that night, it wasn't on his own account—it was through you somehow."

The words came from the fag in a passionate torrent. Cardew eyed him.

"I don't want to lick you, Levison minor," he said very quietly. "You'd better shut up at that."

"What do I care if you lick me?" gasped Frank. "Do you think I care a straw? I don't understand how it is, but I know that you're the cause my brother's in trouble. Somehow or other you're at the bottom of it. It's you that ought to be sacked, not Ernest!"

And Frank Levison walked away, turning his back on the staring Cardew.

The dandy of the Fourth whistled softly.

"So that's what the kid thinks!" he murmured. "No wonder he has given me the marble eye ever since poor old Ernest came a mucker. Evil communications corrupt good manners, says the jolly old proverb; and the dear boy thinks I've landed his major in this!" Cardew half-laughed. "It's a naughty, unjust old world!"

He strolled on, with a smile on his face, but he was thinking. As he had listened to Frank's passionate words he had regarded them simply as an outburst of unjust resentment, the outcome of the fag's distress of mind and frayed nerves. But he could not dismiss that outburst; it had started a new train of thought in his mind. The smile died off his careless face, and his brow grew more and more thoughtful.

Suppose—only suppose—that Levison was innocent; that that mysterious paper he had burned in the Head's study related to some other fellow, as Clive conjectured. Frank had mentioned the name of Tapp—Tickey Tapp. Suppose—suppose—

Cardew uttered a sudden, sharp exclamation.

Like a flash of blinding light the revelation had come to him. He almost staggered, and his face grew white.

"It's impossible!" he panted.

He stood quite still, breathing hard. It was not impossible; it was possible—it was true! He had supposed that Levison had some influence over Tickey Tapp to be able to induce the sharper to hold his hand, and he had taken that as a proof that Levison was "thick" with the Green Man gang—a proof of his guilt of what was said against him. But, suppose that Levison, intervening in the matter to attempt to save him, had not, as he had believed, influenced the sharper to leave Cardew in peace, but had somehow wrested from him that "bit of writing." Suppose that paper was in Levison's pocket when he came back to the school, to be caught by Mr. Railton as he entered. Suppose that that was the paper that was in his pocket when he was about to be searched in the Head's study—that paper, which was enough to get Cardew expelled from the school if the headmaster saw it. Suppose—suppose—

Cardew's brain was in a whirl.

It was not supposition—it was the fact; he felt instinctively that it was so. And but for his light, flippant want of faith in his friend he would have guessed it before. Had he believed Levison innocent instead of guilty, he would have cast round tirelessly for an explanation, and this explanation would have occurred to him.

"Good gad!" whispered Cardew. "If it was that—"

There was only one way of ascertaining. Tickey Tapp, the blackmailer, knew. If Cardew's "bit of writing" was still in Tickey Tapp's possession this new surmise was wide of the mark. But if Tapp had parted with the paper—if he had parted with it to Levison—

Cardew looked up at the clock-tower. There was plenty of time before lock-up for a walk down to

Tom stared at him. Cardew spoke with the utmost gravity.

"You silly owl!" burst out Tom angrily. "Do you think I'm going into this rotten place?"

"Aren't you?" asked Cardew.

"No, you cheeky cad!"

"Then may I suggest that you should keep a little farther away from the place? You're liable to be misunderstood if you're seen about here, you know," said Cardew blandly.

"I came to speak to you—"

"Another time, old bean. I'm rather pressed now."

"Are you mad, Cardew?" exclaimed Tom. "Levison's got it in the neck for this kind of thing—he's under sentence now. And you are butting into this rotten show, asking for the same. You ought to have more sense."

"I never had much sense," sighed Cardew, "and in comin' along here this afternoon I'm showin' less than I ever showed before."

"Oh! You can see that!" snapped Tom.

"Only too clearly, old bean."

"Then why don't you keep clear?" demanded the captain of the Shell.

"It's a case of conscience," explained Cardew.

"Conscience!" repeated Tom. And Manners and Lowther, who had now arrived on the spot, stared at the scapegrace of St. Jim's.

"Just that!" said Cardew. "You'd hardly believe it, Thomas, though I think you are rather a credulous youth as a rule; but you'd hardly believe that I'm goin' into this disreputable resort from conscientious motives."

"Certainly I should hardly believe that," said Tom Merry.

"Yet it's the case."

"What do you mean, if you mean anything?" asked Manners.

"Precisely what I say. I'm goin' into this deplor-

The splendid long complete story of St. Jim's in this weeks "POPULAR" is entitled:

## "GEORGE FIGGINS' MISTAKE!"

Rylcombe. And this was a matter that could not wait, even if there had not been time to get back for call-over. Ralph Reckness Cardew walked down to the gates.

### CHAPTER 10.

#### Cardew Makes Sure!

TOM MERRY stared.

The captain of the Shell was coming up the lane from the village with Manners and Lowther when he sighted Cardew.

Cardew, coming from the direction of the school, had reached the spot where the Green Man Inn lay back from the road, with a patch of waste ground, a sign-post, and a horse-trough, in front of it.

Cardew, turning from the lane, crossed the patch of weedy, grassy waste towards the disreputable inn.

"My hat!" said Tom.

Manners frowned, and Monty Lowther grinned.

"The Head will make a clearance of Study No. 9, at this rate," Monty remarked. "Levison's got it, and Cardew will get it next!"

"The silly chump!" growled Tom. "Why, anybody might have come along and seen him. Just after his pal's got the chopper for the same game, too. I'll speak to him."

"You won't get any thanks," grunted Manners.

"I'll speak all the same."

Tom Merry ran across the waste ground to intercept Cardew. He came on the dandy of the Fourth as Cardew was turning into the little lane that ran along beside the inn.

"Hold on, Cardew!"

The Fourth-Former glanced round in surprise; then he smiled.

"You!" he said. "Dear man, you surprise me! Fancy the good and highly-moral Thomas haunting these wicked precincts! Thomas, I'm shocked at you."

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able place, which is very rightly placed out of school bounds, to get evidence to cause my esteemed and admired self to be sacked from St. Jim's, as I deserve," said Cardew calmly. "A fatheaded proceedin', if you like, but a very conscientious one. What do you think?"

"I think you're trying to pull my leg."

"Sober as a judge," said Cardew; "and the proof is, that it's about ten to one that I shall be bunked to-morrow. I'm collectin' the evidence against myself, and if it's quite satisfactory, I'm goin' to place it before the Head, who will naturally proceed to bunk me from the school, of which I am an unworthy member."

Tom stared at him blankly.

There was a kind of seriousness behind Cardew's flippant manner; indeed, Tom could see that, with all his airy flippancy, there were lines of care in the scapegrace's face, a look in his eyes which told that his heart was far from being so light as he would have had it believed.

"I'm sorry, for your sake," added Cardew.

"For my sake?" said Tom.

"Quite. When I'm bunked from St. Jim's, your extreme and exemplary goodness will no longer have a foil to set it off to advantage. You will not shine with half so much light."

"You silly ass!"

"Thanks! Ta-ta!"

"Look here, Cardew!"

"Haven't you finished?"

"No. I tell you—"

"Sorry," said Cardew gravely. "Believe me, I appreciate your improv'in' discourse to the full. But such is my frivolous nature, that you're beginnin' to bore me. Ta-ta!"

And Cardew went down the path beside the inn, leaving Tom Merry with a very red face and Manners and Lowther grinning.

The Terrible Three walked on to the school, Tom

Merry feeling rather regretful that he had not punched Cardew's head before leaving him.

Cardew dismissed them from his mind as he turned from them. He went down the weedy path, entered the inn garden, and glanced about him there. On the wooden verandah a man in shabby riding-clothes, with a coarse, puffy, and pimply face, sat smoking a cigar and reading a pink racing paper. But he glanced up from the paper at Cardew, and a black scowl came over his face. The sight of the dandy of St. Jim's did not seem to please Tickey Tapp.

Cardew, unheeding his black looks, came up the creaking steps of the veranda.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Tapp!" he said evenly.

Tickey Tapp glared at him.

"You've been rather neglectin' me lately," said Cardew, with gentle reproach. "From what you said the last time I saw you, I really thought you wouldn't leave me alone so long."

"You young 'ound!"

"What an expression!" said Cardew. "Is your nose better now, Mr. Tapp? I think I tapped it rather hard last time we met."

"You've come 'ere to ask for a 'iding," said Tickey Tapp, rubbing his nose reminiscently. It was still a little swollen.

"Dear man! I've come for a little pleasant talk with a cheery old acquaintance," said Cardew, seating himself lightly on the veranda rail, and watching the sharper with an amused smile. "You're much more entertainin' now your teeth are drawn, Mr. Tapp."

"I'll make that young 'ound Levison sorry for it some day, and you, too!" said Tickey Tapp.

Cardew's eyes snapped. He had drawn his bow at a venture, so to speak, but now he could see that his arrow had reached the mark. He had not known, for a fact, that Tickey Tapp's teeth were drawn; in other words, that he had parted with the "bit of writin'." But he knew it now, and Tapp's mention of Levison made it all clear. But Cardew wished to know more.

"I never knew that Levison was going to see you, Tapp," he remarked.

"So he told me," growled Tickey Tapp. "I dessay it was true, 'cause I know you wouldn't 'ave thought of playing such a game to get the paper back. You wouldn't 'ave dared to go to the police."

"The police!"

"Not that I reely believe that Levison would 'ave gone," added Tickey Tapp. "But he knew I couldn't risk it."

"And you handed him the bit of writing because he threatened to go to the police!"

"Ain't he told you?" asked Tickey Tapp, peering at Cardew through the smoke of his pungent cigar. "My word! Mean to say that young Levison is keepin' back the paper he got off me? Why, I might have known that was his game. He was always deep, young Levison was. So he's holding it back, is he—keepin' it in his 'ands! I dessay he will make you pay through the nose for keepin' it dark. My word, and him a schoolboy!"

Cardew laughed.

Tickey Tapp knew nothing of the recent happenings at St. Jim's, and evidently he was judging Levison by his worthy self.

Tickey Tapp's manner became more cordial.

"Look 'ere, Master Cardew," he said, "I ain't feeling unfriendly over that little dispute, if you ain't. Call it a misunderstanding. I dessay I was a bit unreasonable; but, you see, I was 'ard up. If you've come along 'ere for a little amusement, I ain't the man to keep up a grudge."

"I'm sure you're not," said Cardew amiably. "You'll let bygones be bygones, and join me in a little game of poker—what?"

"Certainly I will," said Tickey Tapp.

"And if I run out of cash, you'll take an I O U?"

Cardew laughed again, with contemptuous amusement.

"And you'd keep the I O U to hold over my head, and blackmail me, as you tried to do before?"

"You—you see—"

"I think," said Cardew gravely, "that I'll resist the temptation to enjoy your improvin' society, Mr. Tapp."

You see, Levison might not be able to get the bit of writing off you next time."

Cardew rose from the veranda rail.

"Shall I tell you somethin', my unworthy friend?" he asked. "You did not know that when Levison got that paper off you, he was nabbed as he got back into the school, with the paper in his pocket?"

"My eye! I reckoned your 'eadmaster would expel you if he saw that paper," said Tickey Tapp, with a stare.

"So he would have, dear man, without a doubt; but Levison chucked the paper into his fire in time," said Cardew. "You'll be pleased to hear that it's safely burnt. And Levison is to be sacked for havin' disreputable friends outside the school, Mr. Tapp, all owin' to comin' along to see you that night on my account."

"Good!" said Tickey Tapp. "I'm glad to 'ear that the young 'ound has got something for what he did at me."

"Only one thing can save him," said Cardew, smiling; "that is, my ownin' up and takin' his unpleasant position under the chopper!"

Tickey Tapp grinned.

"You won't be in a 'urry to do that, I fancy," he remarked.

"Not in a hurry," agreed Cardew, with a nod. "I'm never in a hurry—it's rather bad form. But I'm goin' to do it, all the same."

"Gammon!"

"I fear that your upbringin' has been rather questionable, Mr. Tapp, if you doubt a gentleman's word," said Cardew. "It is not, as you so elegantly term it, gammon. Dr. Holmes will know of the facts before he dines this evenin', and I'm sure I hope that they will give him a good appetite for his dinner. Whether you can be prosecuted for gettin' a schoolboy into your clutches and tryin' to blackmail him, I'm not sure; but the Head will know, and if it's possible he will do it. You can bank on that. Otherwise, the least you can expect is a personal visit from my Housemaster—a rather hefty gent—who will undoubtedly thrash you within an inch of your life. My advice to you, as a friend, is to keep as sober as you can, and go into trainin'; you'll need it when Mr. Railton calls to see you!"

And Cardew ran lightly down the veranda steps and departed, leaving Tickey Tapp staring after him blankly.

"My eye!" murmured Tickey Tapp. "My blinkin' eye!"

That evening the Green Man lost its estimable guest.

(Continued overleaf.)

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Neither a prosecution from Dr. Holmes, nor a thrashing from Mr. Railton, appeared a pleasant prospect in Mr. Tapp's eyes, and he sagely decided to go while the going was good.

## CHAPTER 11.

## The Bad Hat!

**T**OM MERRY'S study, Study No. 10 in the Shell, was crowded after tea.

The Terrible Three were there, and Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy had come in. After them came Wally of the Third, with Reggie Manners and Levison minor; and Sidney Clive followed them in. Figgins & Co., of the New House, came along a few minutes later. And three or four other fellows dropped in till the study, roomy as it was, was fairly swarming.

Ralph Reckness Cardew arrived in the doorway and surveyed the meeting with a smile.

"All here?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus.

"And we want to know what it means," said Blake gruffly. "If you're pulling our leg, Cardew——"

"Do I ever go in for leg-pullin'?" asked Cardew reproachfully.

"Weally, Cardew——"

"Look here, what does it mean, Cardew?" exclaimed Sidney Clive. "I hear that you asked Tom Merry, as junior captain, to call the fellows together to hear something you have to say about Levison."

"Dear man! So kind of you to speak to me again," said Cardew. "I've almost forgotten the dulcet tones of your voice the last few days."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"I weally think that Cardew cannot help bein' a sillay ass!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Somethin' in that," agreed Cardew. "After all, I'm a distant relation of yours, Gussy, and it may be in the blood."

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I considah——"

"Hush!" said Cardew gently. "The gentlemen present have assembled to hear me talk, Gussy, not you, old bean, though I freely admit that you're a more entertainin' conversationalist, and you can keep it up longer, owin' to extensive practice with an active jaw. But I must beg you to dry up and let me say my piece."

"Look here," said Tom Merry abruptly. "Come to the point, Cardew. You asked me to call the fellows together, saying that you had found out a proof that Levison of the Fourth was innocent of the charge against him."

"Exactly."

"If that's true, nobody will be more pleased to hear it than I," said the captain of the Shell. "But——"

"Cardew!" breathed Frank Levison. "If you're fooling——"

"I fear that I am a somewhat frivolous youth," said Cardew. "But, really, I wouldn't fool on this subject. Your jolly old major is quite innocent, Franky, just as you always believed. I happen to be able to prove it, and to place the thing on the right shoulders."

"Oh!" gasped Frank.

"Well, let's hear it," said Kangaroo of the Shell.

"I'll believe all that when I hear the proof."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then I'll say my piece," said Cardew negligently.

"The matter stands like this, my beloved 'earers—Levison has played the giddy ox, but not in the way the Head supposes. Some of you may have heard of a bad character named Tickety Tapp—a shocikin' character, who gets thoughtless youths in his wicked hands and plays cards with them. This chap got hold of a St. Jim's fellow—never mind who for the moment, inveigled him into a poker game, cleared him out of all his cash, and accepted his I O U for twenty pounds in addition."

"The rotter!" growled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! But the fellow who gambled with him was a wottah, too," said Arthur Augustus.

"I agree," said Cardew. "You can't think worse of

the fellow than I do; I look upon him as a thoroughly bad hat."

"I am vewy glad to see you take such a pwopah view of the mattah, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus approvingly.

"You flatter me," said Cardew. "But to resume, the wily and unpleasant Mr. Tapp refused to part with that bit of writing, as he called it, in exchange for the sum due; he preferred to keep it and bleed the Bad Hat—in a word, blackmail. The fellow, whom I will call the Bad Hat, so as not to mention names—was in an awful bate. Mr. Tapp held a paper in his hands which was enough to get the Bad Hat sacked from the school. But the Bad Hat had sense enough not to pay blackmail; he knew that that was only puttin' off the evil day. So he made his little arrangements to get quietly out of the school, to be off the scene when the chopper came down."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry, with a very curious look at the dandy of the Fourth.

"Have I got you interested?" drawled Cardew.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Go on!" snapped Blake.

"That's how the matter stood, when Levison chipped in, quite unknown to the Bad Hat. Details are not known to me, but it appears certain that Levison met the man Tapp out of bounds one evening and got the bit of writing away from him. His method was simple—he put it to the rotter that he could hand over the paper or else be handed over to the police himself as a blackmailer. Levison, bein' an innocent party, was not afraid of calling on the police."

"Good man!" said Blake.

"Havin' got the guilty document off the blackmailer, Levison came back to the school. Probably he intended to hand it to the Bad Hat, whom he had got out of his scrape. But as he came in he was nailed by Mr. Railton at the box-room."

"Oh!"

"Now the tale becomes quite dramatic," went on Cardew. "Up before the Beaks, Levison was going to be searched, for evidence of his naughty ways—suspected. What did he do?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom. "That was the paper——"

"That was it. He chucked the paper in the fire, and the Bad Hat was saved. Levison, unfortunately, was lost. The Beaks naturally supposed that he was destroyin' some pretty strong evidence against himself, knowin' nothing about the Bad Hat."

"And the fellow let Levison be condemned!" exclaimed Blake.

"Do not be hasty, my young friend. The Bad Hat was utterly ignorant of the whole affair, never even suspectin', at that time, that Levison had butted in on his account. He believed Levison guilty, same as the rest of the school did."

"Cardew!" breathed Clive.

"But somethin' he heard from young Frank gave his mind a jolt, and he began thinkin' things out," went on Cardew airily. "The result was that he tumbled. He went to see Tickety Tapp and got out of him that Levison had got the bit of writing away from him. Then he knew for a cert how the matter stood."

"And what did he do?" asked Blake.

All the fellows had their eyes fixed on Cardew now. Frank Levison seemed hardly to breathe.

"What could he do?" asked Cardew. "The fellow's a bad hat, a very bad hat—hardly fit for you nice boys to speak to at all!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Manners.

"But he has his limits," explained Cardew. "He decided first of all to call a meetin' of representative fellows of both Houses and tell them how the matter stood, so as to correct their impressions of poor old Levison. No doubt you fellows will tell the rest, and Levison emerges from the affair with flyin' colours. That done, it only remains for the Bad Hat to put the Head wise—and that is what he is goin' to do."

"Cardew!" exclaimed Clive.

"Bai Jove!"

"You mean——" gasped Blake.

"You!" shouted Figgins.

"You!" stuttered Wally of the Third



Levison was thinking, with a dark and clouded face, of the expulsion that was to follow his recovery, when there was a footstep, and to his surprise, Dr. Holmes stood by his bedside. There was some trace of emotion in his kind old face that puzzled Levison, and he waited for the Head to speak. (See Chapter 12.)

Cardew smiled.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, your perspicacity does you credit," he said. "In me you behold the Bad Hat!"

"You!" said Tom Merry. "So that's why——"

"Precisely. I am now goin' to see the Head, to let the old sport into the secret and to take my gruel. Even a bad hat can't let Levison be sacked and carry on regardless. I shall be sorry to leave St. Jim's. I shall leave behind a lot of improvin' society, which might, in the long run, have turned me into a shinin' light like Thomas here, though I doubt it. My only consolation is that I shall be expelled with proper pomp and ceremony—Big Hall, masters all present, prefects walkin' up and down and hootin' to the fellows not to shuffle their feet—Head in a mood of mingled sorrow and anger, puttin' on his famous seventhly manner—all you fellows weepin' with grief at losin' me. Quite dramatic, you know—the real goods. Gentlemen, to-morrow in Big Hall you will behold the last scene that ends this strange eventful history. Ta-ta!"

And Cardew of the Fourth walked out of Study No. 10 laughing, leaving the crowd of juniors there staring with amazement.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Cardew!" muttered Clive. "He's going to the Head—he's going to be sacked!"

He ran out of the study and overtook Cardew on the stairs. He left the study in a buzz of amazed discussion behind him. Frank Levison followed him hurriedly.

"Cardew!" Clive caught the scapegrace by the arm. "You're a brick, old man—a real brick. I'm sorry that—that——"

"All serene, old man, my fault," said Cardew. "You'll lose me instead of Levison; you'll be the gainer by the exchange. Hallo, what do you want, young Levison?"

Frank choked.

"Cardew, it's decent of you. I'm sorry for what I said to you this afternoon!"

"You needn't be. It was that that set my brain workin'," said Cardew. "If I'd believed in old Ernest as you did I should have spotted it all before. But it's not too late."

"You're decent, Cardew, to own up. I—I wish——"

Frank broke off.

Cardew gave him a nod and a smile and went down the stairs. Sidney Clive walked with his chum as far as the Head's door. Then he had to leave him, and

Cardew went into the study alone—cool, self-possessed, but grave and quiet now, to make a clean breast of it to his headmaster.

## CHAPTER 12.

## At Last!

LEVISON of the Fourth was sitting up in bed propped on pillows. There was still a bandage on his head, and his face was a little pale; but Levison was on the mend; he was to be up the next day, and a day or two later he would be fit for travel, and then—The knowledge of what was to follow had undoubtedly retarded Levison's recovery. He was thinking now, with a dark and clouded face, when there was a footstep, and, to his surprise, Dr. Holmes stood by his bedside.

Levison had not expected to see the Head again till the day he left. He looked steadily at the scholarly old face. He knew what the Head thought of him—what he had forced the Head to think of him. But his conscience was clear, nevertheless, and he was not ashamed to look his headmaster in the face.

He did not quite understand the doctor's expression. It was not stern or severe; there was some trace of emotion in the kind old face. He waited for Dr. Holmes to speak.

"Levison!" The Head's voice was kind. "When last I questioned you you refused to answer my questions. I ask you again, Levison, what was that paper which you destroyed in my presence?"

Levison did not answer.

"I believe—I could only believe—that it was an undoubted proof of your guilt, Levison. I have now learned differently."

Ernest Levison started violently.

"Cardew has spoken!" said the Head.

"Cardew!" stammered Levison.

"He has told me all."

Levison stared blankly.

"But—but Cardew never knew," he gasped. "I never told him. I mean he knew nothing!"

"He has discovered, somehow, how the matter stood, that it was for his fault that you were condemned," said the Head. "He came to me and told me the whole story. Now tell me the truth, Levison. When I questioned you, you told me that you saw the man Tapp, not on your own account. That you menaced him with the police, to drive him away from the vicinity of the school, to save other St. Jim's boys from his evil influence. Did you, at that time, take from him the paper he held in threat over Cardew's head?"

Levison was silent.

"Was your threat to him to hand him over to the police as a blackmailer if he did not return Cardew's paper?"

"Yes, sir," said Levison, at last. "As Cardew has told you, I suppose I may speak out. The brute got my pal into his clutches, and was trying to blackmail him, threatening to send his paper to you. I would have gone to the police, as I told him, if he had not given up the paper. But he gave it up, and it was in my pocket when I came back to the school. But—but I could not let you see it, sir. I acted as I did to save Cardew and give him another chance—not to betray him."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I understand now, Levison. Cardew's confession has, of course, cleared you. I know now that, instead of being a hardened wrongdoer as I believed, you were acting a generous part. The whole school knows that you are cleared—Cardew made the facts known before coming to me. You will, of course, rejoin your Form when you leave the sanatorium. The sentence is, of course, rescinded; you are exonerated with all honour."

"Oh, sir!" murmured Levison.

"That is mere justice," said the Head. "I do not blame myself for having condemned you; I had no choice as matters stood. But I am deeply glad that the truth has been made known in time."

Levison's face had brightened, but it clouded again. He was saved. But his friend?

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"And—and Cardew, sir?" he faltered.

Dr. Holmes' face hardened.

"I am in doubt how to deal with Cardew," he said, after a pause. "He would naturally be expelled from the school. Yet I cannot overlook the fact that he has confessed of his own free will; he could, had he chosen, have remained silent and let you suffer in his place."

"Cardew would never do that, sir," said Levison. "I did not think he would ever know how the matter stood; but I knew that if he knew he would speak out at once. I—I know he's done wrong, sir; but—but if you would give him another chance I'm sure he would do better! After what has happened it will make a difference. It isn't the risk to himself that would make much difference to him; but what I have gone through will make a lot of difference—he has nearly got his own pal sacked by his folly, and that will be a lesson to him, sir. I know Cardew; that will have more effect on him than anything else could," said Levison earnestly.

"I shall consider the matter," said the Head. "That can wait. But you, my boy, I hastened to tell you that you were exonerated, and your friends and your Form master will be glad to see you back in your place. I shall inform your father at once; your brother knows already."

Levison's face was brighter when the Head left him. The clouds had rolled by, and the proof of Cardew's loyalty touched him deeply. And he had hope for Cardew. Surely the fact that the reckless scapegrace had spoken out at once, as soon as he knew how the matter stood, must have some influence on the Head; it was a clear proof that, with all his faults and weaknesses, with all his dingy follies, the scapegrace of St. Jim's was sound at heart.

"Ernie!"

It was Frank's voice.

And Levison of the Fourth turned a smiling face on the happy face of his minor.

Frank's eyes were dancing.

"Ernie! It's all right now—all serene, old chap! I say, Cardew's a brick, isn't he?"

"One of the best!" said Levison.

"It's all his fault, of course; but he owned up like a real white man!" said Frank. "I—I'm sorry he will have to go. But, Ernie, buck up and get well; all the fellows are anxious to see you again! There'll be no end of a celebration when you come back to the House!"

"Do you think so?"

"Rather!" exclaimed Frank. "You wait and see!"

Ernest Levison smiled for a moment at his brother's enthusiasm and then his face clouded. He was thinking of Cardew and his probable fate. Young Frank took it for granted that the dandy of the Fourth would have to leave St. Jim's. If that came to pass, all that Ernest Levison had risked would count as nothing.

Frank watched his major with a wrinkled brow.

"Cheer up, Ernie!" he said softly.

Levison of the Fourth smiled at his brother affectionately.

"I was thinking of poor old Cardew," he said. "You think the Head will expel him?"

"I don't see what else he can do," said Frank awkwardly. "After all—"

"I hope he'll give him another chance," muttered Ernest Levison. "There's a lot of good in Cardew, young 'un."

Frank nodded.

"You're right there, Ernie. I—I hope, too, Dr. Holmes will let him stay on."

And that was the hope of Tom Merry & Co. Cardew had acted wrongly—he seemed born to kick over the traces now and again, but there was sterling worth in him, and in a way he was popular with the Fourth and Shell. But if Cardew himself had any thought of the expulsion that might be his fate, he did not show it in his face. He had done the right thing; he had to face the music for doing it, but he was not the sort of fellow to whimper.

Tom Merry & Co. met Levison of the Fourth when he came back to the House a few days later.

They marched him into the School House with cheers.

# Look Out For This Cover Next Wednesday!

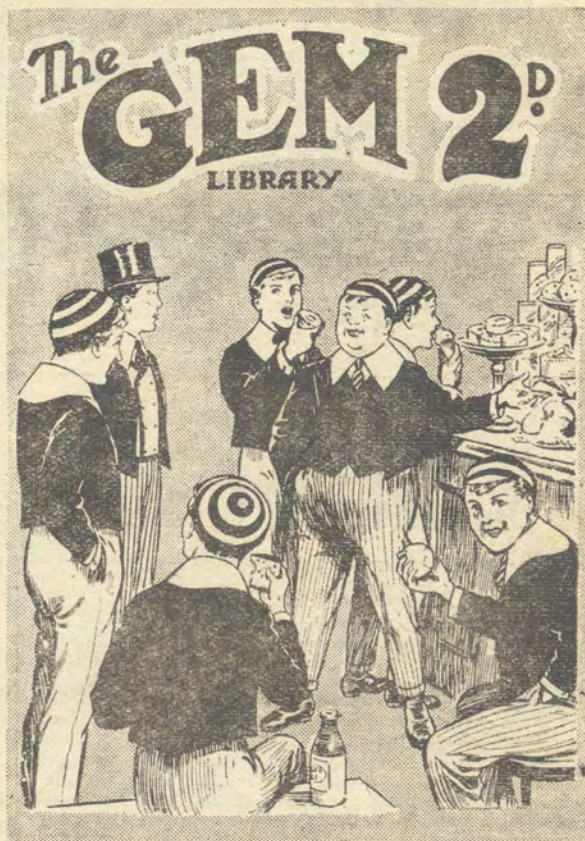
## WHO SAID THE AGE OF MIRACLES WAS PAST?

Baggy Trimble in funds!

Baggy Trimble, the motor-cyclist!!

Baggy Trimble standing a feed—and actually paying for it!!!

These are but a few of the astonishing tit-bits in next week's grand long complete story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's. The chap who misses this yarn will be missing the treat of his life. Get busy then, chums, and give that order for your favourite paper in good time.



Evidently, Levison was restored to his old footing with the St. Jim's fellows. In the cheering throng of juniors, Clive's face was the brightest. Cardew was there, too, and he was smiling a whimsical smile. The "chopper" had not yet come down on the scapegrace of St. Jim's; but that state of suspense did not seem to affect him—outwardly, at all events. The Head, apparently, was considering his case.

"We're all sorry and glad, Levison," said Tom Merry. "Sorry we thought badly of you, and glad it's all come out."

"Sort of mixed feelings, you know," said Monty Lowther. "I think the gladness predominates. You don't mind my mentioning that I think you've been a silly ass, do you?"

"Not at all!" said Levison, with a smile.

"Yaas, I considah that you have wathah played the goat, Levison," said Arthur Augustus. "Cardew wasn't weally worth it!"

"And you, Cardew?" said Levison, when he was in Study No. 9 with his chums, at last. "What about you?"

Cardew smiled.

"Nothin' about me," he said. "From the fact that I haven't been booted out of the school yet I draw a certain amount of hope. From the fact that I have fairly asked to be sacked, I can see that there isn't much ground for hope. So I am in a state of suspense—a shockin' state to be in! It takes my mind off my work, you know, and prevents me plungin' into hard study and pleasin' my kind Form master, as, of course, I'm eager to do—more or less. Like the nigger who was hung on a rope, I feel that the suspense is killin' me. What a life!"

It was some days before Cardew was put out of his

suspense, which, however, did not seem to affect his spirits very much. One morning after class he was told by Mr. Lathom to go to the Head's study.

"The long jump, or a floggin'—which?" he said to his chums. "In my opinion the bettin' is about even."

"Hurry up!" said Clive.

The two juniors waited for Cardew in a state of great uneasiness. He was smiling when he rejoined them ten minutes later.

"Well?" exclaimed Clive and Levison together.

"That's the word!" agreed Cardew. "Well, all's well. Seven minutes' steady jawin', and a floggin' to follow. Another chance to make good, and the Head hopes I shall make the most of it. The old scout appears to have a hopeful nature!"

"Good!"

"Not very good. I've got over the jawin', but the floggin's still to come," said Cardew. "I hardly like the prospect. And it's not even to be a floggin' in Hall, with the proper pomp and ceremony; merely a hole-and-corner affair in the Form-room. I feel that I've been had!"

"Fathead!"

The flogging was administered in due course, and the affair was at an end. Cardew had escaped cheaply, and he knew it; but whether the Head's hope that the lesson would not be lost on him was well founded remained to be seen.

THE END.

(Be sure you read "BAGGY TRIMBLE'S CHARITY!"—next week's topping long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. As the title suggests, the fat and fatuous porpoise of the Fourth is well in the limelight. And the sensations he causes! Well, you'll see for yourself when you read this first-rate yarn!)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,007.

**KING OF THE HOKAHULAS!** At long last, after a journey that they will remember till the end of their days, a small party of white men reach the gateway to the land of the Hokahulas where the man who has been lost to civilisation for four years is king of the tribe who took him captive!

# BEYOND *the* SILVER GLACIER!



A Grand Story of Peril and Adventure in  
Central Africa.

By **ARTHUR S. HARDY.**

## The Power of the Charm!

**H**AVING passed the vast region of snow and ice which Professor Byrne had named the Silver Glacier, the party of adventurers rested for several days in their sheltered place, with always two on guard, the machine-gun set so as to command a winding pass which led up to them, content to bide their time—for the end of their long journey seemed near.

It was necessary for the sick and exhausted messenger whose life they had so opportunely saved. Yet even with the most careful nursing, it seemed at first as if he would die—for there were hours during which he raved deliriously in the grip of a high fever.

Sandy McTavish was mainly responsible for saving him, the Scotsman selecting the medicines and dictating the treatment which pulled the big warrior back from the brink of eternity.

Jimmy Brown also shared the credit, the little Cockney watching through the period of the crisis with a patience and devotion that astonished Julian del Rivo, whose callous mind revolted at the thought of all this trouble being wasted upon a savage.

"You'll never pull him round," he grumbled during the second day of their stay in the shelter of a great rock which hid from view the scowling Mountain of the Hidden Crest. "These beggars can't stand the cold. His feet are frost-bitten. He must die. Why not put a bullet through him, and let us get on to wherever it is you think of going?"

It was the same old cry. Del Rivo seemed to have but one idea in his mind—to kill.

Once again the thought crossed Adam's mind as to how much better it might have been to have left Del Rivo to the fate prepared for him by the Hekebus.

But even Adam believed that this last messenger who raved in an unknown tongue as he turned and tossed in the grip of a raging fever would die.

Then the crisis passed; the native fell into an exhausted sleep; and on recovering from it looked at his saviours out of sane and wondering eyes. They gave him slops; they gave him brandy; they dosed him with an opiate that sent him off to sleep again. And at long last the warrior was able to sit up and talk intelligently.

The next day he could stand and walk, and ate ferociously of the fatted food they gave him.

Then, with Muta acting as interpreter, he told an amazing tale.

"In the City of Barcoomba, the capital of the Kingdom of the Hokahulas, the white man from the unknown lands had been crowned king. He had brought to the people great prosperity and freedom from sickness, enabling them to till their fields and sow crops which brought them plenty.

"In the beginning, when the white man and his beautiful white daughter—she who would be one day Queen of the Hokahulas—had been brought as prisoners from the wild

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,007.

lands beyond the field of the cold death, they had been closely guarded, and it was once thought to kill them.

"But there were those who believed that because of their white skins these were descendants from the great white god who had given the Hokahulas the strange white patches on their skin which made them a race of people apart from every other people in the world.

"That belief had saved them. Then, when he was given more liberty, the white god, having quickly learnt their language, had begun to advise, to judge, to direct, to rule. Gradually his influence had grown until he was mightier than the king, or great chief, of the Hokahulas, he who was known as Beeda. Great was the wisdom and great the power of the white god, who brought them plenty and drove famine from the land. Beautiful was his daughter, who would be queen, the white goddess, who soon would be married to Beeda. But the white god was not happy in the City of Barcoomba among the Hokahulas, because they were not his people and this was not his land. Therefore, in the hope that an army of the white gods of whom he was one might find a way to rescue him, the great white king of the Hokahulas contrived to send forth messengers, who, in their devotion to him, had promised to cross the land of the cold death by way of the line of posts, and pass through the unknown country beyond until they at last delivered the written message they bore into the hands of one of the white gods, who were to be found straying there, or left their bones to be picked by the beasts and the birds.

"Several of these messengers had gone forth at different times, but no sign or word had come, and nothing more had been heard of them; which was not strange, perhaps, as there was a law in Barcoomba that any man who left the land of the Hokahulas and crossed the field of the cold death should be hunted down and killed, or slain did he ever return.

"He—Kyhte—was the last messenger to make the essay. He had set the written message in a hair-ornament he wore which had been hollowed out to contain it by the great white god; but the priests, who were jealous of the ascendancy of the white god who was now king, and who dreaded the invasion of their land and the ruin of their people, had watched, had seen him go, and had followed him. They had overtaken him on the edge of the field of the cold death as he was resting at night, waiting for the sun of morning to begin his daring passage across the snow, and had stripped him, tied him to the post, and left him to perish there."

Such was the story the Hokahula told, with many ramifications, through the medium of Muta, the interpreter.

It seemed to Adam and Harry that the giant native with the pink-and-brown skin regarded Mutt with an awe and reverence that one human being does not usually show towards another.

Muta explained, flashing his double row of big white teeth and rolling his eyes in infinite satisfaction.

"In the time when the world was young," he stated, "there were two who came to the land of the Hokahulas—

a man whose skin was white, and a woman whose skin was black. It was ordained that the race begotten of these two should not be like any other race on earth. This Hokahula warrior, Kyhte, is no longer afraid to lead us back to the unknown country of his people, because I have told him that I am Muta, son of the witch O-Kama, queen of the Hokahulas, and that I will protect him."

"Small chance, Mutt," laughed Adam, "if we have to face the spears and arrows of their warriors, unless I use the gun that spits fire and mow them down."

Muta raised his head and stretched himself to his full height, until, with his great ears, his bowed legs, his long arms, he presented an amazing figure.

"I have learned," said he, "that it has been foretold by the priests of the Hokahulas that in the time when the white god and the black god, who speaks the tongue of their people, return to Barcoomba, so shall peace and plenty and great prosperity be theirs until the end of time. Besides, have you not upon your breast the charm of the Hokahulas—that which would always save us?"

Adam's eyes widened in surprise. Since the day when he had set the bejewelled charm, so wondrously wrought, about his neck he had never removed it, save for a minute or two when bathing in a stream or pool.

Could there be anything in what Muta said, he wondered. If not, whence came the black's almost uncanny intuition? For one could hardly believe that he invented out of the large store of his imagination.

Adam asked him about it.

"My mother, the witch O-Kama, used to tell me when I was young that she stole the jewels when she fled from Barcoomba," the black answered. "The charm, Oyorara, had been worn by the kings of the Hokahulas, and worshipped for generations. Sometimes I believed that it was all a tale; but now, O white flyer, I know that it is true."

"Ask this man Kyhte whether he will guide us to the land of the Hokahulas," said Adam.

Swiftly came the interpreted reply.

"Yes, even though death awaits at the other end; for my life belongs to the young white god. I know the trail. None could enter the land of the Hokahulas and gain the City of Barcoomba who did not know it. The way is blocked by the great fall of water that none may pass who do not know the way." So the Hokahula said.

And then—

"Tell him I have the magic charm Oyorara that will protect us from those who would slay us," said Adam.

As Muta interpreted the eyes of the Hokahula grew wide. His lips moved; but he did not speak, he only stared at Adam as if he were some strange and wonderful being.

And Adam then unbuttoned the heavy clothes he wore, bared his chest, and displayed in the bright light of the morning the glittering charm.

As he revealed it a slant of the sun struck it, hitting fire from its glittering jewels.

Then, with a hoarse cry, the Hokahula threw himself down upon the ground, rubbing his forehead in the dust, flattening his hands upon the earth, and uttering low and almost inarticulate cries.

So he remained as one in worship. And Julian del Rivo, who had happened upon the scene a moment before, seeing the wonderful bejewelled thing that Adam revealed, gasped greedily, stretching out his hands as if he would tear the charm from Adam's breast, and moving a hand significantly to where, as a rule, his revolver nestled in its holster.

"Where did you get that thing?" Del Rivo gasped. "It is wonderful! It is priceless—the work of a superb craftsman, a native Collini!" He almost trod upon the worshipping native as he stepped nearer and craned his neck to see better. "It is of gold and white metal—platinum, maybe—and the jewels are diamonds, rubies, emeralds—a string of sapphires, too! Amazing! The stones are worth a king's ransom!" His fingers itched to clutch the charm, and there was a wicked glint in his eyes. "Where did you get it? Let me see!"

### The Secret Entrance!

DEL RIVO'S fingers closed upon it, and he would have torn the charm from Adam's neck had not Adam struck his hand fiercely away.

"Hands off, Del Rivo!" said the boy; and the native who had bowed his head looked up, his face distorted with emotion, his eyes wide with fear.

Pointing at Del Rivo, he said something in a torrent of words, then folded his arms across his breast.

Del Rivo, looking at him, shivered.

"What does the rascal say in his confounded gibberish?" he snarled.

Muta once again interpreted.

"Kyhte says that he who lays hands upon the charm Oyorara without permission shall die a violent death, and be devoured to the very bones by wild beasts."

Del Rivo was hard as flint. Callous, he did not believe in God or devil; but as he listened to Muta and stared at the crouching Hokahula, he stiffened, and his face went livid.

"Rubbish!" he snarled.

"The murderer—the slayer of men," Muta went on, "shall die the violent death!"

"Dog!" snapped Del Rivo, driving his boot into the side of the man whose skin was pink and white.

The native did not stir. His lips moved; he spoke again.

"So it was written in the book of days in the time when the world began. You have touched the charm," said Muta, gloating, as he voiced in English what the Hokahula said. "You will die the violent death, oh, man-killer, and your bones will be picked bare by the wild beasts."

With an oath Del Rivo swung away and vanished from view.

The next day the journey to Barcoomba was begun. It was the last stage. Large quantities of the supplies and also the sleds were abandoned. The tent was left behind. The party carried with them just such supplies as they needed—the machine-gun and ammunition, the wireless apparatus, etc. Each man was heavily burdened, so that the party had to stop frequently to rest their tired arms and aching muscles. As they advanced, and the cold changed to an agreeable warmth, so did they discard unnecessary clothing and move with greater ease.

Now and again they slew a beast to obtain fresh food. Whilst Muta and the Hokahula, who was now well and strong again, and carried an enormous burden upon his head, as if it were a bundle of straw, found fresh roots and vegetables that they would not have dared to select, cook and eat of themselves.

There were no dense forests hereabouts, as upon the other side of the Silver Glacier. On their right, moving as they moved, always in the same position, seemingly, was the towering Mountain of the Hidden Crest.

They would never see the unclouded summit of it, Adam believed.

It now loomed gigantically, and yet the Hokahula informed them that it was many days' marching away.

The vegetation was luxuriant. They picked and ate fresh fruit; they saw beasts of every description, so tame that they came in mixed herds and stared as the single file of adventurers passed them by.

And then at last, one afternoon, they came upon a waterfall, the noise of whose falling waters had haunted their ears a whole day or longer. Its thunder grew louder. At last, skirting the high and solid wall of rocky cliff which towered above them and, moving along a pathway not more than seven feet wide in parts, with a sheer fall down to death hundreds of feet below them, they came upon the fall itself—a magnificent sight!

The torrent of water was perhaps eighty or a hundred feet wide and rolled smoothly over a brink high above them. It came down like a rounded sheet of glass, the sun striking a hundred hues out of the water as it flashed by, to beat upon the rocky basin far below them.

Adam, who was at the heels of the Hokahula, stopped dead in his tracks momentarily, petrified by the astounding beauty of the scene.

### WHO'S WHO IN THIS STORY!

ADAM BYRNE, accompanied by his three companions, HARRY FRANKLIN, SANDY McTAVISH, and JIMMY BROWN, set out in search of Adam's father and sister, news having been received that the great white explorer, GEORGE WILLIS BYRNE, and his daughter, ROSA, who left England four years ago to explore the African jungle, are alive and well, but prisoners in the hands of a strange people at Barcoomba, which lies north of the Silver Glacier and beneath the Mountain of the Hidden Crest.

Soon after leaving Baruda for the interior Adam and his companions, aided by MUTA, a native friend of Adam's, rescue from a horde of

hostile natives JULIAN DEL RIVO, a Portuguese, who claims to be an old friend of Adam's father. In consequence of this he is allowed to join up with the party, which then resumes its journey. Later they fall in with a tribe of friendly pygmies who direct them to the line of posts leading across the great icefields to the Silver Glacier beyond. Tired to the last of these posts, and dying with exposure, the adventurers discover a skulking native or Hokahula who, on recovering consciousness, drags a pin from his hair in which is a message stating that Adam's father and sister are languishing in the City of Barcoomba, from which there is no escape.

(Now read on.)

Behind Adam came Sandy McTavish, then Julian del Rivo, and at Del Rivo's heels, ready to hurl him to his death should he attempt any treachery, of which the adventurers believed him to be fully capable, came Muta, then Harry, and finally the Cockney engineer, Jimmy Brown.

Setting their heavy burdens down upon the rocky ledge, they stared in awe, calling to one another, their voices drowned by the deafening thunder of the fall.

Adam now saw, as he followed the line of the path that turned inwards, that it ended at the fall. They had come to a dead end.

Adam frowned. Had Kyhte the Hokahula led them into a trap, he wondered? It certainly seemed like it. Yet the face of the mottled warrior held a grim smile. With a gesture, he pointed at the water which came sheer down, and hurried to the very end of the narrow path.

Adam followed, and saw him standing erect, like a statue on the very brink of it—saw him throw up his arms and jump!

A cry of horror escaped Adam's lips. It seemed to him that the Hokahula had hurled himself into the falling torrent. He would be carried down by it to where it swirled in a whirlpool in the hollowed-out basin far below and beaten into pulp there.

Adam himself walked to the brink where the Hokahula had remained poised for a moment, and then saw that a man's height below him the face of the rocky wall had been eaten away, so that a wide, flat ledge, wet from the spray of the fall, offered a slippery landing-place, which extended to the very edge of the waterfall.

But Kyhte had disappeared. Their guide, who had promised them so much, had leapt to the flat ledge below, and then dived or hurled himself down into the whirlpool.

Why was that? Had he abandoned them, knowing that they would never be able to find their way back to the Silver Glacier? Had he committed suicide because he knew that to return to the land of the Hokahulas meant certain death?

Adam pondered the situation in some alarm.

All the way from the glacier they had met with beasts in plenty, but had found no sign or trace of man.

## A STORY IN A THOUSAND! THE CURSE OF LHASA!



"Every day the four of us were brought in front of the three great Buddhas. We saw ghastly and horrible things performed by these hooded priests. . . . I felt as though my personality was being drained from me. . . . Hypnotism? Perhaps—but on a scale unknown to our Western world. I escaped from that house of torture, but the hand of Kang Pu has reached out for me even in England; even in my own house, behind locked doors, I am not safe!"

Doctor Lamonte's story of the cruelties he and his companions endured at the hands of the all-powerful Kang Pu, the self-styled Chosen of Buddha, whose ambitious aim is to wipe out the peoples of the Western world, is but the starting-point of Ferrers Locke's latest and most perilous quest. The world-famous sleuth, accompanied only by his plucky boy assistant, sets out to beard this remarkable ruler of the Tibetan Lamaseries in his den, knowing full well that death lurks at his heels from the moment he puts foot in the forbidden country over which Kang Pu holds sway.

This sensational story will hold your interest from first to last. Mind you read the opening chapters in this week's bumper issue of

## THE MAGNET!

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Yet Kyhte might have led them into ambush. The other end of the narrow path, which wound its tortuous way along the face of the cliff, might now be held by hostile natives, so that with the impassable waterfall blocking one end of it, and an enemy at the other, there would be no escape.

In such a predicament Adam knew that not even a machine-gun would save them.

The Hokahula whose life they had saved had tricked them after all. Adam, blaming himself for a blind fool, turned to meet the others. What a mug he had been! And yet the Hokahula had seemed so loyal and so true.

But before he could utter the warning shout that formed upon his lips Sandy McTavish stepped up to him.

"That human guinea-pig," he yelled in Adam's ear, "has led us intae a de'il o' a mess, Mr. Byrne. If he wanted to kill himself why didna he do it long ago? There's nae sense in it!"

"There isn't!" groaned Adam. "Without a guide, and in this precious pickle, what are we going to do?"

"Gang awa' back!" said McTavish grimly.

It seemed the only way out.

As his eyes followed the line of the swollen river which wound in silver majesty, twisting and turning in a valley of unbroken green, where trees flourished luxuriantly, Adam could see no sign of a path or track in any part of the stupendous landscape mapped below him.

They could not go down the cliff. There was no way down in all the length of it they had trod. There was no way up it. It rose sheer from the footpath, sometimes overhanging the perilous track; nor had they been able to see any foothold anywhere as they came.

Sandy McTavish had voiced the only reasonable solution. They must go back.

And then, as Adam eyed again the solid stream of water which came down like moving glass from the level of the wide river above, a miracle happened; for the Hokahula reappeared, advancing out of the very water itself, and waving his arms as he beckoned to them to follow.

Adam gave an exultant shout.

"By thunder," he yelled, "there's a path behind the fall! Kyhte is true blue, after all, Sandy! Come on!"

"Hoots, mon," yelled the grinning Scotsman, "this is nae so bad! I have nae felt so dee-lighted sin' I saw the Celtic lick the Rangers in the Cuppie at Ibrox Park twenty years ago!"

The Hokahula stood there grinning as he motioned to Adam to jump.

The boy did not hesitate a moment, but sprang lightly down, and found that his feet did not even slip on the wet rock.

Sandy followed. The bundles and other impedimenta were handed down. Soon all the party stood in a group on the wide ledge, smiling and relieved.

"But we can't go through there!" said Jimmy Brown, staring at the waterfall, askance. "It's impossible!"

So, indeed, it seemed. The water was passing down with the speed of lightning. For fun Jimmy Brown hurled a walking-stick he had cut and fashioned on the journey hard at it, saw it strike and rebound from the wall of water as if the fall were made of solid moving steel, and go hurtling below.

A fine chance for the man who ventured near it!

Now, whilst they watched in stunned silence, the Hokahula advanced to the fall and vanished. Even at close range the effect was more marvellous than the disappearance or reappearance of a demon in a pantomime through or out of a star trap.

Kyhte was gone a moment, then reappeared again.

He was laughing. He spoke in a shouting voice to make himself heard.

"He wants us to follow, O flyer of the air," said Muta, interpreting, in a roar. "He says it is safe—easy! It is the gateway to the land of the Hokahulas that none may pass, save those who know the secret. Whow! We are to go on!"

They shouldered their baggage and moved forward. Even when he was standing little more than an arm's stretch away from the torrent that swept down Adam could not believe that there was a way.

A rush of air, displaced by the torrent as it came, brushed him like a wind. He hesitated, would not have gone on had not the Hokahula appeared and taken his hand. With a jerk, the warrior pulled him onward, and in half a dozen strides Adam was walking along a natural tunnel, of which the falling water formed the outer wall.

The others, seeing Adam show himself and shout that it was all right, made the venture in turn, the last piece of baggage being hauled with them, and they proceeded onward at their ease, to pass into a rocky cavern beyond the fall. They went down, down, walking along an incline, or descending steps which had been hewn by the hand of man to make the travelling easier where the slopes were dangerous.

And at long last they emerged out of a creeper-covered opening, to find the glories of open grassland and timbered wood forming the magnificent landscape that stretched as far as the eyes could see on every hand.

From behind them came the muffled roar of the great fall. And on the right, towering high and formidable, as menacing and as stupendous as ever, was the Mountain of the Hidden Crest.

For the first time since they had found the fall, Adam turned to look at Del Rivo.

The man's face was livid, his eyes dull with apprehension.

For a moment Adam thought the Portuguese was ill.

"What is the matter, Del Rivo?" he asked.

"Nothing!" growled the wanderer. "But that waterfall—I can't believe even now that we passed it alive! It was devil's magic!"

And shudderingly he plodded on by Adam's side, clutching tightly at the burden he bore.

The party marched onward through scenes of unsurpassable beauty, until, by common consent, they halted and made camp at a sheltered place, setting a watch and planting the machine-gun on its stand ready for instant action should danger threaten.

The camp was awake with the dawn; and, after snatching an early meal, the things were packed again, and the march resumed, the imposing Hokahula leading the way.

The party moved along a well-defined track, or footway, that wound in and out the glorious country, the climate of which was like hottest midsummer in England.

They camped on rising ground that night, planting their gun as before.

Del Rivo's spirits had revived to a tremendous extent next morning.

His face was all alive now, and his eyes blazed as he talked about the enormous wealth of the country, the untold value of the trophies that might be secured by the big-game hunter who came to these unexplored regions.

During the second day's march after passing the great fall, as they moved in single file through wooded country, where Nature's screen was thick and high enough to have concealed an army, Adam began to feel uneasy.

"Harry," he cried, "I believe we are being spied upon. I have had the feeling ever since we penetrated the forest that our footsteps are being dogged."

(Look out for next week's instalment, chums—it's great!)

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