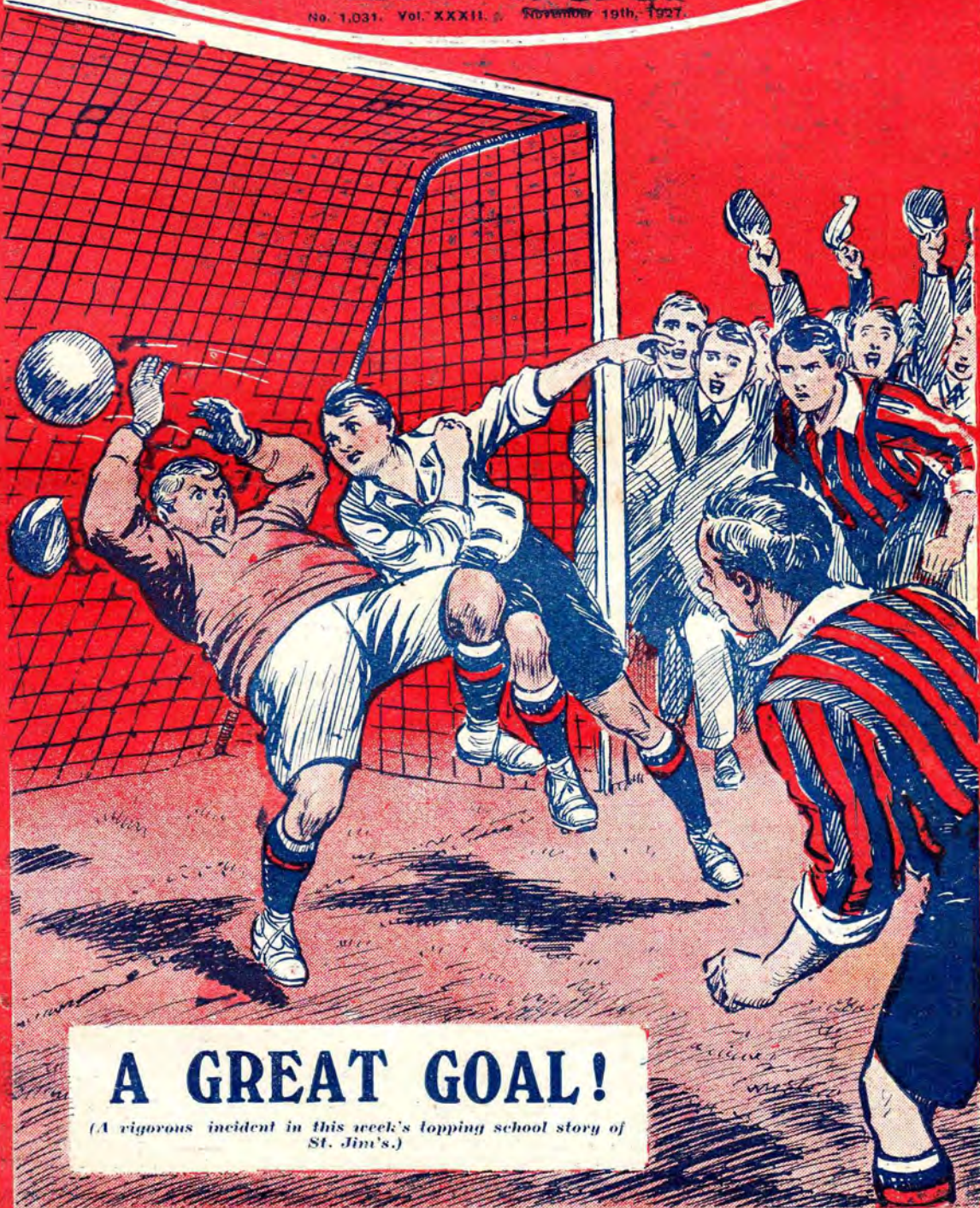


The GEM 2^d

EVERY WEDNESDAY

LIBRARY

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A GREAT GOAL!

(A rigorous incident in this week's topping school story of St. Jim's.)

A SPLENDID COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY FEATURING—

LEVISON'S



Good-bye to St. Jim's—good-bye to all his old chums, is the parting in front of Ernest Levison. but before he leaves his old school, Levison once more proves his worth on the footer field.

CHAPTER 1. Levison's Goal!

"LEVISON!"
"On the ball!"
"Bravo!"

Little Side, at St. Jim's, was in a roar. It was a House match; and at St. Jim's House matches were keenly contested. Senior House matches were important affairs; but junior House matches, according to the Lower School, at least, were the "goods." And in this particular junior House match

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Tom Merry & Co. had found themselves rather up against it.

Tom Merry never failed to put a good team into the field for the School House. But Figgins, of the Fourth, seldom or never failed to do as much for the New House.

On this occasion the School House had started with the fixed intention of mopping up the earth with Figgins & Co. of the New House. As a matter of fact, they always started a game with that intention, which often materialised, but sometimes didn't.

On the present occasion it didn't.

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—TOM MERRY & CO. AND ERNEST LEVISON OF ST. JIM'S.

LAST DAY!

by
Martin Clifford



Instead of being the moppers, the School House footballers were, so to speak, the moppers.

The New House were in amazing form. Never had Figgins, their best forward, so much resembled a flash of lightning in his movements. Never had Kerr, in the half-way line, made himself so wonderfully useful. Never had Fatty Wynn, in goal, been such a tower of strength. At half-time the New House were one up to nil, and in the interval Tom Merry told his men that they would have to pull up their socks.

Pulling up their socks, however, did not seem to produce much effect in the second half. Figgins added a goal amid cheers from the New House, who thronged round the ground in an enthusiastic mob. And when the School House forwards did get through, it was only to find Fatty Wynn absolutely impregnable in his citadel putting "paid" to all their attempts with a cheery grin on his plump face.

So when luck came Levison's way there was a roar from the mob of School House men on Little Side.

Levison of the Fourth, in the School House team, was at the top of his form, and when he was at his best he was very, very good. He had had little chance hitherto; but when his chance came he made the most of it. From every School House throat came a roar as Ernest Levison, in possession of the leather, raced it up the field, winding round New House men as if by magic and rushing down on goal. Tom Merry, speeding up to

take a pass, was bowled over—Blake was on his back, gazing at the October sky, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was nowhere, and Talbot of the Shell next to nowhere—but Levison looked like having all things in his hands. He left Kerr gasping on the ground, he beat the backs as if they were wooden images instead of active footballers, and he drove in the leather with a shot that nearly caught even David Llewellyn Wynn napping. And the School House roared wildly.

"Levison! Levison!"

"Good man, Levison!"

"Shoot! Shoot!"

Frank Levison, of the Third, was watching with all his eyes. Had Frank possessed as many eyes as Argus they would all have been fixed on his brother at that moment. He scarcely breathed. His comrades of the Third, Wally D'Arcy and Reggie Manners, were yelling; but Frank was too excited to yell. He could only gaze.

Fatty Wynn bagged the leather in the nick of time. There was a gasp of relief from the New House crowd, almost a groan from the mob of School House men. And then Fatty, for once in his goalkeeping career, made a slight error of judgment. He stepped out to clear; and with two backs fairly jumping in on Levison it seemed easy enough.

But—

There was a "but."

As if moved by a hidden spring, Levison, with the New House backs touching him, leaped at the New House goalkeeper.

Crash!

Before Fatty Wynn knew what was happening—he had a vague impression that it was an earthquake—he was crashing back into his citadel and the ball was landed—as well as Fatty Wynn.

Levison went down heavily.

But the ball was safe. And from all the School House crowd burst a terrific roar:

"Goal!"

"Goal, goal, goal!"

"School House! School House!"

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, good!" gasped Levison minor. "Oh, splendid! Oh, ripping! Oh, gorgeous! Ernest! Ernest! Hurrah!"

"Goal!" roared Wally of the Third enthusiastically. "Goal! Good man, Levison!" Then Wally of the Third turned to Frank. "Shut up, you young ass!" he added.

"Eh—what?" gasped Frank.

"Shut up with your Ernest!" said Wally witheringly.

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, young Levison!"

"Goal!" roared Levison minor. "Goal! Well done, Ernest! Goal!"

"Some goal that!" yawned Cardew of the Fourth, who was looking on with his hands in his pockets. "Our jolly old House is looking up! Franky, my excellent and enthusiastic young friend, your brother is in great form!"

"Isn't he?" exclaimed Frank, with sparkling eyes.

"Not bad," said Reggie Manners.

"Not bad?" repeated Frank. "Why, you cheeky young ass—"

"Goal!" the School House men roared. "Goal! Goal!"

Fatty Wynn, in the New House citadel, looked rather rueful. It was a goal for the rival House, there was no doubt about that; and David Llewellyn Wynn had fully intended Tom Merry & Co. to finish with a blank sheet. But Levison of the Fourth, as he picked himself up, sank back again; and the School House cheering died down a little as Tom Merry and Blake were seen to pick up the successful goal-getter.

"He's hurt," said somebody.

Levison minor's enthusiastic face became suddenly grave and troubled. Wally and Reggie grinned as they saw it.

They were good chums to Levison minor; but they never pretended to take his devotion to his brother-in anything but a comic spirit. Family affection was a good thing in its way, Wally of the Third freely admitted; for instance, he was quite sincerely attached to his own major, the great Arthur Augustus, and Reggie was more or less attached to Manners of the Shell. But in the opinion of both the fags Frank overdid it. He seemed to believe that Levison of the Fourth was the only pebble on the beach. And that, in Wally's opinion, was rot; there were lots of pebbles on the beach.

"Oh, he's hurt!" gasped Frank.

"Little pain in his little toe!" said Reggie. "Let's cry!"

"Lend me a hanky!" sobbed Wally.

Cardew grinned.

But Frank did not heed them. He could barely restrain himself from rushing on the football field and hurrying to his major. Clive of the Fourth, who was playing centre-half for the School House, ran up to lend a hand with Levison. The game had had to stop; it was clear that Levison was hurt, and that it was something more than a little pain in his little toe, as Manners minor had humorously expressed it.

"Oh!" murmured Frank, unconsciously aloud. "Oh, Ernest!"

"Shut up, you young ass!" said Wally. "Never seen a man damaged at footer before? You Levisons ought to play marbles!"

"Or hop-scootch!" suggested Reggie.

With Tom Merry on one side of him and Clive on the

other, Levison of the Fourth limped off the field. His face was white and his lips rather hard set. He was not the fellow to show his feelings if he could help it, but anyone could have seen that he was in pain.

"I'm sorry, Tom Merry," he said. "I know it's rotten! But I can't go on. My ankle—ow! I'm really sorry!"

"You've bagged the goal!" answered Tom Merry cheerily. "We shall miss you, old man—but you've given us our only goal! We looked like being wiped out, with nothing to show. I'm awfully sorry you're hurt."

"That's nothing! Only you'll be a man short."

"Why grouse?" said Tom. "Can't be helped. Here, some fellows to help Levison back to the House."

In a second Frank was at his brother's side. Cardew reached him a moment later.

The footballers went back into the field.

It had been a great goal, and the School House had needed it badly. Whether it was worth the loss of Levison from the team was another matter; but that was a thing that could not be helped. Anyhow, it was a goal, and it had broken the run of bad luck for the School House. The whistle went, and play was resumed. And Levison was left leaning rather hard on Cardew's shoulder.

"Feel bad?" murmured Cardew.

"It's my ankle. One of the New House backs landed his hoof on it. Accident, of course. I can stand it, but—help me a bit."

"You bet?"

"I'm going to help you, Ernest," whispered Frank.

"You stay here and watch the game, kid," answered Ernest Levison. "You can pick up a lot of tips from watching a good game, and this is a good one. It's all right, kid. Nothing serious the matter!"

Frank nodded, and went back to his friends. He was disappointed. But he was aware that Ernest was right. At St. Jim's, as at most schools, a fellow was not supposed to wear his heart upon his sleeve; and there were plenty of daws to peck at it if he did. Levison minor continued to watch the House match, but his thoughts were not in the football now, good game as it was.

Levison limped back to the House, and in the changing-room Cardew rubbed his damaged ankle with embrocation.

"Better?" he yawned.

"Tons," answered Levison. "Don't waste any more time on me, old fellow. Get back to the football ground."

"Dear man, I'm not so jolly keen on watching footer," said Cardew. "I only turned up because you and Clive were in the team."

"Clive's still in it."

"Oh, all right!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew lounged lazily away.

Levison of the Fourth changed, his face twitching a good deal as he felt severe twinges from his ankle. Then, still limping a little, he made his way up to Study No. 9 in the Fourth—slowly.

CHAPTER 2.

Trimble's Taunt!

BAGGY TRIMBLE jumped.

Baggy was alarmed.

Baggy had cause to be alarmed.

On the occasion of a House match or any other match, the spirit never moved Baggy Trimble to roll down to the football field. Only when games practice was compulsory did Baggy find himself there. But House matches were not unwelcome to Trimble of the Fourth, all the same. Most of the fellows in both Houses turned up to play or to cheer, and the studies were left deserted. And Baggy Trimble had a pleasant little way of rooting through studies that were deserted like a lion seeking what he might devour.

This afternoon was Baggy's lucky afternoon. In Study No. 9, in the Fourth, he had found something good.

Two fellows belonging to that study were in the House team. The other member of the study could have been in it also if he had not preferred to slack.

But Cardew, though he did not care for the exertion of a hotly-contested Soccer match, professed to be greatly bucked by the distinction Levison and Clive were bringing on the study. Not only had he taken the trouble to turn up on Little Side, but he had laid in a spread for tea, which he described as a feast for the conquering heroes. His chums would have preferred to see him lining up for his House, but Cardew could not oblige them to that extent. Standing a feed in celebration of their performances was much easier—quite easy, in fact, to a fellow who had more money than was good for him. So there was the spread—in the cupboard in Study No. 9 which Cardew, with his usual carelessness, had left unlocked. There it was—ample, enticing, when Baggy Trimble proceeded on his voyage of discovery among the deserted studies in the Fourth Form passage.

Cardew's spread had been intended for seven or eight fellows. Now it had vanished from human knowledge.

and he persuaded himself that he was enjoying himself immensely.

And then—

What Baggy did not know about football would have filled huge volumes to overflowing. But he knew that a match lasted at least ninety minutes. So he had felt safe for at least that period of time. He had not allowed for accidents.

Accidents will happen, in the best-regulated Soccer matches. The one that had occurred in the House match was unfortunate for Levison, unfortunate for Tom Merry, unfortunate for the House; but it was particularly unfortunate for Baggy Trimble of the Fourth Form.

For it brought Ernest Levison to the door of Study No. 9, while Baggy was still sprawling in Cardew's armchair, smoking Cardew's cigarettes, with the study table still covered with the wreckage of the feast.

Levison stood in the doorway of his study, staring blankly at Baggy Trimble, who had jumped up from the armchair. On the study table were the remains of a feast, and the cupboard door was open. "You fat rascal!" ejaculated Levison. "You've raided Cardew's grub!" (See Chapter 2.)



Where Trimble had put it was a mystery.

But in this line, if in no other, Trimble of the Fourth was a great man. In this line he could do what no other fellow could do. Even Fatty Wynn, of the New House, could only regard him with admiring despair. Trimble had negotiated that feed in ease and comfort, secure in the knowledge that a Soccer match lasted ninety minutes, and that he had, therefore, lots of time to dispose of Cardew's good things and take a little rest afterwards in the particularly easy armchair that belonged to the dandy of the Fourth. Having devoured his prey, as it were, Trimble unfastened several buttons of his ample waistcoat—even Trimble was feeling his exertions a little—and stretched his fat limbs in the armchair. Now he was smoking cigarettes of an expensive brand, which belonged, of course, to Cardew; no other fellow in the study was likely to possess such stuff. As a matter of absolute fact, Baggy did not enjoy the cigarettes, but he felt very daring and doggish as he sprawled in the armchair smoking them,

Baggy, as aforesaid, jumped.

Jumping was of no use to him, however. Levison of the Fourth had arrived, and he stood in the doorway staring at the fat Baggy.

Baggy stared back at him.

For some moments there was silence. Levison looked at the table, covered with the remains of an extensive feast. He glanced at the open door of the cupboard, and finally his eyes fixed on Trimble, enveloping in a cloud of cigarette-smoke.

And the expression that grew on Levison's face was well calculated to cause Trimble to feel alarmed.

"I—I say—" stuttered Trimble.

"You fat rascal!"

"Oh, I say, you know—"

"You've raided Cardew's spread."

"I—I—I may have taken a snack," admitted Trimble cautiously.

"That's bad enough," said Levison quietly. "But
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,031,

you're smoking in my study. How dare you smoke in this study, you rascal?"

"Well, I like that!" spluttered Trimble. "I may have borrowed some of your cigarettes."

"I have no cigarettes here."

"Cardew's, then. Not yours, I dare say; you couldn't afford expensive cigarettes!" sneered Trimble. "Anyhow, I found them in the study."

Levison compressed his lips.

There had been a time when Levison of the Fourth had been a reckless scapegrace like Cardew, and the recollection of that time made him very patient with his unthinking study-mate. He had no doubt that Trimble's statement was correct; that he had found the smokes in the study, and that they belonged to Ralph Reckness Cardew. But that did not decrease his anger; it rather intensified it. He could bear with Cardew's reckless ways; but he was not called upon to bear with the dingy blackguardism of a fatuous young rascal like Baggy Trimble.

He advanced into the study, and the look on his face made Baggy spring out of the armchair.

"Look here, you know, you keep off!" gasped Baggy.

"I'll leave it to Cardew to deal with you for bagging his feed!" said Levison grimly. "But I'm going to deal with you for smoking in my study, you fat rotter!"

"Keep off!" yelled Trimble.

He dodged round the study table, with Levison in pursuit.

Levison stopped suddenly, with an exclamation of pain. He had forgotten his crooked ankle, but he was reminded of it very sharply.

"I—I say, you know, you keep off!" gasped Trimble, with the table between him and Levison. "Talk about smoking in this study! Cardew smokes in it. Why, those are his fags! Don't you put on airs with me, Levison. You lay a finger on me and I'll go to the Housemaster. Mr. Raiton will be interested to know about cigarettes in a fellow's study. Yah!"

Levison did not answer. He stood leaning on the table, his face pale with pain.

Baggy Trimble rattled on victoriously.

"You keep your paws off a fellow! Perhaps I did help myself to the grub. You never paid for it, anyhow. You couldn't stand a bone to a dog, you couldn't. Hard-up rotter! Yah!"

Levison stared at him across the table.

"What do you mean, you fat idiot?" he asked, more surprised than angry.

Trimble grinned.

"I know something about you!" he jeered.

"You burbling ass!"

"Like me to tell all the fellows?" sneered Trimble.

"You unspeakable idiot, there's nothing you can tell the fellows that I should mind!"

"Can it!" said Trimble derisively. "I know what I know, I can jolly well tell you! Not that I'm the fellow to tell tales or repeat what I heard by accident. Very likely the Head wouldn't believe that I heard him by sheer chance. He's suspicious. Still, you'd better be civil. You'd hear a lot about it if I told the fellows."

"About what, you chump?" roared Levison, utterly mystified.

Trimble winked.

"You don't know, of course?" he jeered.

"I haven't the least idea what you are burbling about, you fat dummy!"

"Oh, come off!" said Trimble.

"Tell that to the Marines, you know. You can't stuff me. Look here! One good turn deserves another. I'm not going to give you away if you're decent. Let's call it quits about the feed and I'll say nothing. There!"

Levison glanced round the study and picked up a cricket stump.

Trimble backed away in alarm as the Fourth-Former reached across the table with that weapon.

Levison limped round the table after him. Baggy backed round it, very weary and on his guard. He dared

not make a break for the door with the stump so close behind, and he did not find it easy to keep the table between him and Levison. But for Levison's crooked ankle he would have found it impossible. As it was, however, Baggy succeeded in keeping out of reach, though he was panting and gasping with his exertions.

"You fat rotter!" gasped Levison, stopping at last. Levison was not a bad-tempered fellow, but the impudence of the fat junior, added to the pain in his ankle, made him decidedly angry now, and Baggy would have suffered considerably had Levison got near him with the stump. Baggy stopped also, and grinned at him across the table. He realised by this time that Levison was crooked, and it made him more cheeky and confident.

"You keep off with that stump," he said. "For two pins I'd come round the table and thrash you!"

"You—you—" gasped Levison.

"I could do it," said Baggy valorously. "But you ain't worth a fellow soiling his hands on—a poverty-stricken bounder! You and your minor! Yah! You won't be at this school much longer, that's a comfort. I shan't miss you, for one!"

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Levison.

"Yah!"

"What on earth's put it into your head that I'm leaving?" demanded Levison of the Fourth.

"Oh, come off!" jeered Baggy. "Of course you're leaving if your people can't afford to keep you here. He, he, he!"

Levison compressed his lips.

He started the circumnavigation of the study table again, but his ankle twinged horribly and he had to stop. Just then there were steps in the passage, and Levison called out:

"Here, come in here, will you!"

Herries of the Fourth put a surprised face into the doorway.

"What?" he began.

"Collar that fat pig for me, Herries!" gasped Levison. "He's raided my study and I'm crooked."

"Any old thing," grinned Herries.

"Here, you keep off!" yelled Trimble.

But George Herries did not keep off. He strode into the study and grasped the fat junior in a muscular grasp.

"Bagging a free feed—what?" he asked genially. "Well, after the feast comes the reckoning!"

It came.

As Baggy wriggled spasmodically in the grasp of Herries, Levison reached him with the stump.

Whack!

"Yaroooooh!"

Whack! Whack!

"Yooooooooooop!"

"That will do!" gasped Levison. "Cardew will give you some more, you fat scoundrel! Now cut!"

Herries released the fat Fourth-Former.

"Hook it!" he grinned.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Baggy Trimble staggered to the door. He was hurt, and he was enraged. It was in his power to give away the smoker of Study No. 9 to the Housemaster—and in spite of that he had been stumped!

No doubt Levison considered that the fat Baggy would not dare to speak to the Housemaster for fear of the consequences. And, no doubt, Levison was right on that point. Baggy glared back into the study before he departed, his fat face red with rage.

"Yah! You hard-up cad!"

"Get out!" snapped Levison.

"Yah! Charity!" yelled Trimble.

"What?"

"Charity cad!"

And with that Baggy Trimble fled down the passage before the stump could reach him again.

Levison stood staring after him blankly.

Herries gave Levison a curious look.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S "HIDDEN NAMES" PUZZLE!

1. Frank Levison.
2. Edgar Lawrence.
3. George Figgins.
4. George Alfred Grundy.
5. James Monteith.
6. Reggie Manners.
7. Toby Marsh.
8. Percy Mellish.
9. Robert Arthur Digby.

"What did the fat duffer mean by that?" he asked.
"Blessed if I know, unless he's going off his rocker!" said Levison, in wonder.

"I'll go after him and kick him," said Herries generously.

And he went. And a wild yell that was audible a few minutes later in the Fourth Form passage indicated that he had kept his word.

Ernest Levison did not heed it.

He had thrown the stump aside and sunk down in the armchair lately vacated by Trimble. A strange, dark expression was on his face.

What did Trimble mean?

He could have meant nothing. And yet—yet the fatuous fellow could not have thought of that bitter word, charity, without something to "go" upon. He must have meant something. And, apparently, it was founded upon something he had heard the Head say—Baggy being a past-master in the art of gaining surreptitious information at keyholes and round corners. What could the Head have said that put such an idea into Trimble's fat and fatuous brain?

Levison of the Fourth sat in painful and perplexed thought until he was roused from gloomy meditation by the tramp of many feet and the buzz of many voices as the cheery footballers came back to the House after the match.

CHAPTER 3.

After the Match!

TOM MERRY looked into Study No. 9 with ruddy, cheerful face.

Levison glanced up and forced a smile.

"How's the old leg?" asked Tom.

"Oh, not so bad, thanks!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You'd say that if it was nearly dropping off," he said. "Look after it, old chap! We can't have you crooked when the Greyfriars men come along next week!"

"You want me for the Greyfriars match?" asked Levison, with a sparkle in his eyes.

"What do you think?" asked Tom emphatically. "After the form you showed to-day, we couldn't spare you. You'll have to turn up if you come along on crutches."

Levison laughed.

"I shall be all right," he said. "This old ankle will be as sound as a bell to-morrow, or the day after. It was only a kick, anyhow. I shall be jolly glad to play against Greyfriars."

"Your old school?" said Tom with a smile.

"Yes, all the more for that reason," said Levison. "I wasn't much in the way of games when I was at Greyfriars, and I rather like the fellows to see that I've improved a bit since I left."

"I fancy they'll find a rather surprising improvement," said Tom Merry. "Wharton will go into mourning for losing you from his team. Mind you're fit, old man. I'd as soon leave out Talbot of the Shell as you."

"Rely on me," said Levison.

Tom Merry nodded and went off to join Manners and Lowther for tea in Study No. 10 in the Shell. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy put his aristocratic visage and his glittering eyeglass into the doorway a minute after the captain of the Shell was gone.

"Feelin' bettah, old bean?" inquired Gussy.

"Yes, thanks."

"That was a wippin' goal, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "Unluckily, it was our only goal; the New House beat us. I did not expect that result. I fully intended to take at least one goal myself. Somehow, it did not come off."

"These things don't always come off," suggested Levison with a smile.

"Yaws, wathah! Football is a vewy uncertain game. I pointed that out to Figgins. I asked him if he was not astonished at the result of the match, beatin' our

House two to one. He said that the only astonishin' thing about it was beatin' us two to one instead of thwec or four to one. I werged that wemark as absolutely asinine."

"Absolutely!" assented Levison.

"The New House men are sayin' that Tom Mewwy will have to put at least six of their cwood into the St. Jim's team for the match with Gweyfwahs next week affah this. Fwightful cheek, you know."

"Frightful!" agreed Levison.

"I twust you will be fit for the match next week, Levison. But if not, don't wowwy. I shall be there."

"Then I won't worry," grinned Levison.

"That's wight, deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus sailed majestically away.

But he was not the last visitor. The fellow who had taken the only School House goal in the junior House match was a fellow whom the footballing fraternity delighted to honour. Blake came along, and Talbot of the Shell, and Kangaroo, and other fellows; and

Figgins of the New House looked in to see how the "old leg" was getting along. Like Gussy, Figgins told Levison not to worry.

"Lots of New House men ready for Greyfriars next week, if you're crooked," said Figgins comfortingly.

"That's good!" said Levison gravely. "But I shan't be crooked."

"You put in a jolly good goal to-day," said Figgins. "A bit of a fluke, perhaps—"

"Not on your life!" drawled a quiet voice, as Cardew came into the study with Clive.

Figgins stared at the dandy of the Fourth.

"What the thump do you know about Soccer?" he asked.

"Lots!" answered Cardew. "I know a fluke goal when I see one. I saw two this afternoon."

"What?" ejaculated Figgins.

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CAN YOU SOLVE THESE ANAGRAMS?

HIDDEN NAMES!



We print below a further selection of "Anagrams" for our readers to solve. The following sentences, when correctly transposed, will be found to form the names of well-known characters at St. Jim's. See how many names you can find, and watch for the correct solutions, which will appear next week.

1. "THE GEM" to our lawn!
2. Do charm old chorister.
3. Am unwilling.
4. Pilfer—I've help.
5. Drawler chap.
6. I'd a brooch, Kerr.
7. Catcher of frail.
8. Jolly mule—yell "Murder!"
9. Yank—Vac.—mule trip.

"Both to the credit of the New House," said Cardew gravely. "You New House men had all the luck. You'd be splendid men at Soccer if you could play football. What?"

Figgins gave the dandy of the Fourth an expressive look and stalked away, leaving Study No. 9 grinning. "These New House men get awfully bucked over a little win!" yawned Cardew. "I almost wish I had played myself for the House! But perhaps the result would have been the same."

"No perhaps about it," said Clive. "If you want to kick goals, you'll have to give up slacking and cigarettes."

"How fortunate that I don't want to, then!" drawled Cardew. "But leavin' the absorbin' and enthrallin' topic of cricket—I mean football—what about tea? If I don't know how to kick goals, I know how to select really excellent comestibles at the tuckshop, and in that humble line I have been makin' myself useful."

"So has Trimble," said Levison. "The grub's gone."

"Oh!"

"Not a fragment left. And I found him here smoking your cigarettes to wind up."

"What a neck!" said Cardew. "So the promised feast has gone from our gaze like a beautiful dream. And I've asked four or five fellows."

"Look here, it's time that fat villain was given a lesson about raiding study cupboards!" growled Clive. "I'm jolly hungry."

"I could toy with a tempting morsel myself!" said Cardew. "But I think I will take that stump and toy with Trimble first. Suppose you trot down to the tuckshop, Clive, and ask the worthy Mrs. Taggles to repeat the order? She will know what that means—a very intelligent old lady. While you're bringing home the plunder, I'll interview Trimble and endeavour to impress upon his mind that he must not disappoint hungry footballers coming in famished after a game."

"Good!" assented Sidney Clive.

The South African junior left the study. Cardew picked up the stump, of which Baggy Trimble had already felt the weight, and tucked it under his arm. A rather timid face looked in at the door.

"I say, Ernie—"

"Come in, kid!" said Levison of the Fourth with a smile.

"Yes, trot in," said Cardew, as Levison minor entered Study No. 9. "The interestin' invalid is progressin' favourably. Keep him company till I come back after slaughterin' Trimble, and after that, may we have the honour of your distinguished company to tea? That is, of course, unless there is some noble feast toward in the halls of the Third?"

Frank looked at his brother.

"Tea with us, kid," said Levison.

"Yes, rather," answered the fag at once.

"By the way, have you seen Trimble, Franky?" inquired Cardew. "I'm goin' to take the trouble to kill him, but I don't want the trouble of huntin' for him first."

Levison minor laughed.

"He was going into Tom Merry's study as I came up," he answered.

"Many thanks! I'll drop in on Thomas!"

Cardew left Study No 9, with the stump tucked under his arm.

"How's the leg, Ernie?" asked Frank.

"Gettin' on all right," answered Levison with a smile.

"Nothing to make a song about. By the way—"

He paused.

"Yes?"

"Have you heard from home?"

"No," said Frank. "I was going to ask you to lend me half-a-crown, Ernie; I never got my allowance last week. The pater seems to have forgotten."

"Same here," said Ernest. "I've written home, but I haven't had an answer yet. Here's the coin."

Frank slipped the half-crown into his pocket.

"Settle when the allowance comes," he said.

"That's all right."

"I had a jolly good mind to punch that fat boulder

Trimble when I passed him in the passage," said the fag.

Levison of the Fourth raised his eyebrows.

"Why?" he asked.

"Well, he looked at me."

"A cat may look at a king, Frank; and you mustn't punch the Fourth, you know. Keep that for the Third."

"I know. But he had a nasty sneering grin on, and I did want to knock it off," said Frank. "I could lick Trimble, Fourth Form man as he is."

"I dare say you could; but you mustn't. Let him grin!" said Levison; but his brow was troubled.

"It's rather odd not hearing from home," said Frank.

"Can't be anything wrong there, Ernie?"

"Doris would have written in that case."

"Yes, of course."

"But—" Levison broke off.

"But what, Ernie?"

"Nothing. Here comes Clive with the grub. Make yourself useful, kid. I'm crooked, you know!"

"What-ho!" said Frank cheerily.

And the fag proceeded to make himself useful in getting tea ready in Study No. 9, and for the time he did not notice the cloud that had settled on his brother's face.

CHAPTER 4.

A Threshing for Trimble!

"OUTSIDE!"

Monty Lowther's remark could not be called polite. But St. Jim's fellows seldom wasted much politeness on Baggy Trimble when he butted into a study at tea-time.

"Shift!" said Manners of the Shell. He had no more politeness than Monty to waste on Baggy.

"Shut the door after you!" added Tom Merry.

Baggy Trimble did not get outside, and he did not shift. He shut the door after him, but he remained on the inner side of the door.

"I haven't come to tea, you chaps," he said.

"You haven't," agreed Lowther. "You jolly well think you have, but you haven't! Travel!"

"I suppose a fellow can drop into a fellow's study?" exclaimed Baggy warmly.

"That depends. He's liable to be dropped out again on his neck if he does. Are you going on your feet or on your neck?" inquired Lowther.

"How did the match go?" asked Trimble.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

The Terrible Three, of the Shell, all ejaculated together. This was the first time on record that Baggy Trimble had displayed any interest in the result of a House match.

"Beat the New House, of course?" asked Baggy.

"As a matter of fact, the New House beat us," said Tom.

"For once," added Manners.

"Just by way of a change," said Lowther. "But what do you want to know for, you fat fraud? Have you been making a bet on it?"

"Well, you fellows know I'm keen on football," said Trimble.

"Ye gods!"

"Tell me all about it," said Baggy. "You've jawed me sometimes for not taking any interest in games. Well, now I'm taking an interest. Let's hear something about that House match."

"You could have watched it if you'd liked," said Tom Merry, rather perplexed by Baggy's sudden interest in Soccer.

"I had a rather important engagement," explained Trimble. "I was detained elsewhere—something I couldn't possibly miss. But I'm really awfully keen to know how you fellows got on."

"Well, my hat!" said Tom.

"I think I can guess how the wind blows," said Manners grimly. "Who's after you, Trimble?"

"Eh?"

"Oh, that's it!" exclaimed Tom, bursting into a laugh. "The fat boulder is taking cover in this study. Might have guessed it!"

"Well, you see, that—that beast, Knox of the Sixth, wants to see me," stammered Trimble. "I—I don't want to see him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can hide in here if you like, if you don't talk," said the captain of the Shell, laughing.

"Thanks, old chap! I—I'd rather not meet Cutts of the Fifth at the present moment!"

"Eh? It was Knox of the Sixth a minute ago!"

"I—I mean Knox of the Sixth. The fact is——"

Tap!

"Come in!" called out Tom Merry.

The door of Study No. 10 in the Shell opened, and Ralph Reckness Cardew glanced in. Baggy Trimble, with wonderful celerity, had backed behind the opening door and was not immediately visible.

"Excuse my buttin' in, old beans," said Cardew gracefully. "I'm lookin' for a burglar."

"A burglar in the daylight? What the thump——"

"A fat and flabby burglar, as broad as he is long."

"Oh, Trimble!"

"I see you recognise the description. The fat villain

"Anybody know what this idiot is burling about?" he inquired.

"Ask me another!" said Tom, staring at the fat Baggy in wonder. "Seems to me to be wandering in his mind."

"Has he one to wander in?" queried Monty Lowther.

"Mind, I mean it," said Trimble. "You let it drop about the feed and I'll keep it dark about Levison. I haven't told anybody, so far. I may have said something to Racke of the Shell, but he promised to keep the secret. So did Tompkins when I told him. But I can jolly well tell you that Levison will be sorry for it if you touch me with that stump."



Baggy Trimble stopped and glared across the table at Levison. Now he realised that Levison was lame, his courage came back. "You keep off with that stump," said Baggy. "For two pins, I'd come round and thrash you!" (See Chapter 2.)

cleared out my study of grub this afternoon while I was puttin' in an exhaustin' time watchin' the House match! This isn't his first offence, and this time I'm goin' to kill him! Seen the beast?"

"Oh dear!"

It was an involuntary ejaculation of dismay from behind the door.

"Do you fellows keep pigs in this study?" asked Cardew.

"Eh? No, ass!"

"Then that must have been Trimble!"

Cardew slammed the study door, and Baggy was revealed. The fat pilferer of study cupboards eyed Cardew with great dismay and apprehension. He knew what the stump under Cardew's arm meant.

"You fellows got any objection to my killin' a pig in your study?" asked Cardew.

"None in the world," said Lowther. "Go ahead!"

"I—I say, look here, you know," stammered Trimble.

"You keep off, Cardew. I never touched your spread. It's all a mistake. Besides, one good turn deserves another. I told Levison I'd keep it all dark if nothing was said about that feed. Levison's your pal, you know."

Cardew gazed at him.

"And why?" asked Cardew.

"Well, I suppose he doesn't want the whole school to know about it, does he?" demanded Trimble.

"About what, you frabjous fathead?"

"What on earth has the fat idiot got into his noddle now?" asked Manners.

"Fatty degeneration of the brain!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"I'll leave these fellows to judge," said Baggy. "They're friends of Levison's, and they'll keep it dark. One good turn deserves another. You stop raking up that sordid story about grub, and I'll keep it dark about Levison being hard-up and his fees here not being paid, and all that. It stands to reason that Levison would rather the whole House didn't know. What do you think, Tom Merry?"

Tom stared at him.

"I think you're a more cheeky and lying worm than I supposed!" he answered. "How dare you say that Levison is here without his fees being paid?"

"How dare the Head say so, do you mean?" sneered Trimble.

"The Head certainly has never said so."

"If you'd heard him talking to Mr. Railton yesterday you'd sing a different tune."

"I hope I shall never hear a private conversation between Dr. Holmes and the Housemaster," said Tom contemptuously. "I suppose you've been eavesdropping, and you've caught something or other wrong and mixed it up somehow, you eavesdropping cad!"

"I know what I know!" jeered Trimble. "They were talking about the House accounts, and I had stopped just near the study door to—fasten a stud. The Head said quite plainly that Mr. Levison hadn't sent the cheque for the fees of either of his sons this term. And we're close on the half-term now; and a fellow's pater never leaves it so late. The Levisons are hard-up, of course, and my idea is that Levison will have to go. The Head can't keep him here on charity. I think—yaroooooh!"

Cardew had listened in blank astonishment. But he now woke up as it were all of a sudden. He made a spring at Baggy and grasped him and whirled him across a chair.

The stump rose and fell.

It rose rapidly and fell with terrific vim.

Probably Baggy Trimble's punishment would have been light, for Cardew was only half in earnest in seeking the fat pilferer, stump in hand, but for the fatuous Baggy's statements concerning Levison.

It was not for raiding the study spread, but for what he had said of Ernest Levison, that Cardew was now punishing the fat junior. On account of the raided spread a few flicks would have sufficed. Now the hapless Baggy was getting terrific swipes, and the stump fairly rang on his tight trousers.

Baggy Trimble's yells rang the length of the Shell passage and beyond.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yoop! Help! Yaroooo! Oh crumbs! Ooooooh!"

"There, you fat cad!" gasped Cardew. "Take that—and that—and that—and that—and that—"

Tom Merry caught Cardew's arm at last and stopped the stump as it was descending for about the twentieth time.

Cardew gave him a fierce look.

"Let go!" he snapped.

"Cheese it, old man!" said Tom good-humouredly.

"Enough's as good as a feast, you know."

"You heard what he said about Levison."

"Yes; but you can't kill even Baggy, you know."

"Yaroooo! Leggo! Yow-ow-ow!"

Cardew gritted his teeth.

"The fat cad has made up this rotten yarn—he's always spinning some sneaking yarn about somebody! He's got to learn to leave my study alone when he makes up his fairy tales!"

"Yaroooo! It's true! Oh dear! Leggo!"

"Shut up, Trimble, you fat idiot!" said Tom. "Let him alone, Cardew. I tell you he's had enough."

"He hasn't!" roared Cardew furiously.

"Ask Trimble!" suggested Monty Lowther. "Trimble is bound to know. Have you had enough, Trimble?"

"Yaroooo!"

"The answer is in the affirmative," said Lowther.

"Chuck it, Cardew. Don't be a brute, you know."

"Leggo!" yelled Trimble.

"He's not had enough!" said Cardew savagely. "I'm goin' to lick the fat cad till he can't crawl!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You're not," said Tom Merry coolly, and he pushed the dandy of the Fourth back, forcing him to release Trimble. "Now cut, Baggy, you rascal!"

Baggy Trimble did not need telling twice. He cut so quickly that he vanished like a flash of lightning. He went down the Shell passage as if he were on the cinder-path.

Cardew made a fierce movement; but the captain of the Shell was in the way. For a moment the dandy of the Fourth looked as if he would spring at Tom Merry, and Tom Merry stood on his guard, cool and determined. But in a moment more the excitement faded from Cardew's face, and he was his cool and careless self again.

"Good gad! Do you know, I believe I lost my temper with that fat cad!" he drawled.

"Not much doubt about that," said Tom dryly.

"Shockin' bad form, losin' one's temper!" sighed

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Cardew. "My mistake! I apologise for bein' guilty of such a display of exceedin' bad taste in your study. Ta-ta!"

And Ralph Reckness Cardew lounged away.

Tom Merry shut the door after him. The Terrible Three exchanged rather curious looks.

"Only a yarn of that fat idiot's, of course," said Tom, but he spoke rather slowly. "He deserved a licking. But Cardew was piling it on rather too thick."

"Only a yarn, of course," said Manners. "Anyhow, I hope Levison isn't in for any bad luck."

"Baggy heard something, and got it wrong," said Lowther.

"That's it," said Tom. "Anyhow, I hope so."

But he was rather thoughtful over tea. Somehow or other, there had been a ring of truth in what Trimble had stated; and, unwilling as they were to believe it, the chums of the Shell could not help thinking that it looked as if all was not well with Levison of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 5.

Gussy Means Well!

ERNEST LEVISON had a rather thoughtful expression upon his face the following day.

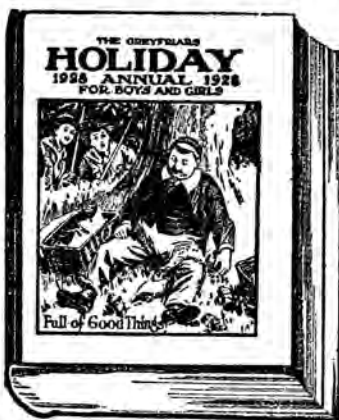
He was still limping a little; the bruise on his ankle, though he made light of it, was still painful and caused him some trouble.

But it was not that that made him thoughtful and unusually silent; though, as a matter of fact, he never was a fellow to talk very much.

Trimble's taunt was lingering in his mind.

For Trimble himself, and his opinion, Levison did not

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care a straw; he did not even take the trouble to despise the fat and fatuous Baggy. It was his consciousness that there was something behind the taunt that troubled him.

More than once, during that term at St. Jim's, Levison had had a vague feeling that all was not well with the people at home.

His father's letters were few and brief; and although they told of no trouble, it seemed to Levison that, reading between the lines, he gathered a hint that Mr. Levison was not easy in his mind.

Now the allowances due to himself and his brother

were overdue, and in such matters Mr. Levison had always been punctiliously careful. And there had undoubtedly been no extra "tips" that term.

It had crossed Levison's mind once or twice that there might be money troubles at home.

He knew little of his father's financial affairs; but so far as he knew, his family were comfortably off. But he knew that his father's expenses were heavy. Two sons at St. Jim's were not a light item; and Levison's mother was in delicate health and passed a great part of every year in the South of France. Still, unless something unexpected had happened, there was no

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reason to suppose that Mr. Levison found himself in unusual difficulties. The question was, had something unexpected happened? If it was true that the school fees were still unpaid, almost half through the term, it showed that something was wrong. And if that was the case, it was likely, or rather certain, to be referred to by the Head some time or other in speaking to Levison's Housemaster, though certainly not within the hearing of any St. Jim's fellow. But Trimble had his own ways of getting within hearing of things that did not concern him.

Levison had repudiated the idea at first; but his cool, clear brain did not allow him to believe what he wanted to believe. After reflection, it was clear enough to him that there was something in it—how much, he could not tell. His vague uneasiness that something had happened at home had been, after all, well founded.

It was possible that his father had had business losses. But that did not seem very probable. He knew that his father was a very careful and cautious man of business. If it was not that, Levison could not guess what it was; but he felt that there was something amiss. More and more it was borne in upon his mind that Trimble had overheard what he had stated that he had overheard, and that the usual cheque had not been paid for the term's fees.

Levison's cheeks burned at that thought.

A fellow could not stay at an expensive school like St. Jim's with his fees unpaid. Dr. Holmes was the man to make every possible allowance, but there was a limit. And even if Levison could have stayed on such terms, he would not have stayed; he was not the fellow to eat the bread of charity. That word, flung at him by the wretched Trimble, had sunk deep into his sensitive mind.

Frank had no suspicion so far that all was not well; and Levison said nothing to him on the subject. So long as he could keep the new trouble to himself, he intended to do so. But it weighed deeply on his mind.

Neither was it possible to keep it entirely to himself, with Trimble in possession of the story. Trimble was well aware of what the Head would say—and do—if it came to his knowledge that a junior boy had played eavesdropper while he was speaking on a private matter to the School Housemaster. For that reason, Baggy had not intended to tattle so freely as usual on this new and interesting topic. But Trimble was a fellow who simply could not keep anything to himself. Sooner or later the story would be all over the House, and all over the school. Trimble had already told some fellows "in confidence," and they were certain to mention it to other fellows in confidence, more or less.

In fact, Levison, now that his eyes were opened, could see that the tale was already going round the House.

He did not fail to note the sardonic, mocking grin on the face of Racke of the Shell, and the sneering look that Mellish gave him in class. He did not fail to note that Talbot of the Shell sought him out in morning break to chat in an unusually friendly manner for a few minutes. He noticed that Tom Merry & Co. were more than usually cordial that day. The fellows who had heard the story were taking it according to their natures—but it was clear that they had heard it.

Clive and Cardew had heard it, too, he knew; though they said nothing. The terrific thrashing that Trimble had received from Cardew was, as Levison knew, not due to the raiding of Study No. 9. Many fellows had commented on that thrashing, which really had been rather over the limit. Levison knew well enough what had roused his chum's ire to such an unusual extent.

But it was not a matter on which fellows could talk, especially as nothing definite was known.

It was reserved for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form, to butt in on the delicate subject, perhaps on the principle that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. And it was like the cheerful Gussy to bring up the subject, in the innocence of his heart, before a crowd of fellows.

The swell of St. Jim's came over to Levison in the junior Common-room that evening, with a benevolent expression on his face which was a clear indication to anyone who knew the noble Gussy that he was about to put his aristocratic foot in it.

"Levison, deah boy!"

Levison looked up.

"How's the old leg?"

"Getting on fine, thanks."

"All wight for the Gweyfwialis match next week?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good! I suppose you couldn't kick a fellow with it to-day?"

Levison stared.

"Well, I'd rather not," he answered. "But if you want a kick, the other foot is at your service."

"Weally, Levison—"

"Or Clive will oblige," said Levison.

"Certainly," said Clive, with a grin.

"Or little me," remarked Cardew. "Both feet at your service, Gussy. Turn round."

"Pway don't wot, deah boys! I was speakin' of Twimble."

Levison's face clouded, and Clive and Cardew looked uncomfortable. Some other fellows exchanged glances. In happy ignorance of the fact that he was rushing in where angels feared to tread, the swell of St. Jim's went on:

"I feel bound, as a friend, to bwing to your notice the fact that Twimble is spweadin' a wotten yarn about you, Levison. I will not go into particulars, as it is wathial unpleasant for a fellow to hear that a fellow is sayin' that his fees are not paid. But I wecommend you, deah boy, to kick Twimble with your sound leg."

Levison's face flushed, and then paled.

He knew that many eyes were upon him, and he knew, what was still more disconcerting, that many eyes were carefully turned away from him.

"If you do not feel equal to the stwain, deah boy, I will kick Twimble for you," added Arthur Augustus generously.

Levison did not answer.

"You're too good, Gussy!" said Cardew, gazing at the swell of St. Jim's admiringly. "This is really like you, and in your best style. Tactful, and all that."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy. I wathah pwide myself on bein' a fellow of tact and judgment, you know," said Arthur Augustus unsuspiciously.

"Oh, my hat!" said Cardew, almost overcome. Really, Gussy's tact and judgment were not conspicuous at the present moment.

"Gussy!" shouted Blake across the Common-room.

"Yaas, deah boy?"

"Where's that 'Holiday Annual' you were going to lend me?"

"In the studay, deah boy."

"Run and get it, like a good kid."

"Weally, Blake—"

"And buck up!" said Blake. "I want it, you know. I suppose you're not going to give a fellow the trouble of fetching a book when you lend it to him, are you?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Slacker!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Lazybones!" said Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Oh, come on!" said Blake, taking Gussy's arm. "Come and show me where it is, if you're too lazy to fetch it."

"I'm speakin' to Levison now—"

"Levison's got enough to bear at present, with a crooked ankle, without having to suffer from the jaw-bone of an ass," answered Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on, fathead."

"But—"

Arthur Augustus was led away. He went protesting; but, once outside the Common-room, Blake did not take him so far as Study No. 6 in the Fourth. He jammed him against the wall of the passage, and Arthur Augustus gasped.

"You uttah ass! What—"

"You burbling chump!" said Blake, in concentrated tones. "Can't you leave Levison alone?"

"Eh?"

"What do you mean by rubbing it in?" demanded Blake.

"Wubbin' what in, deah boy?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, quite bewildered.

"Oh, you ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, you fathead!"

"I wegard you as a wude ass, Blake. I considahed it quite wight to let Levison know what that fat wottah is sayin', so that he can knock it on the head at once."

"How can he knock it on the head, ass, if it's true, fathead?"

"Oh!"

"Got that?" demanded Blake.

"But it isn't twue, is it?" asked the astonished Gussy.

"Judging by Levison's face, I should say it was. Anyhow, if the chap's hard up, no reason for you to rub it in, you burbling bandersnatch!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus jerked himself away from Blake, and set his tie straight. "If that yarn is twue, it is wathah wuff on Levison. Of course, no decent fellow would think any the worse of a fellow for bein' hard up. I have been hard up myself, and hardly known where to turn for a pound note. Do you weally think that poor old Levison is up against it, Blake?"

"I don't think about it at all, as it's not my business, ass; and as it's not your business, either, let it drop."

"But I was speakin' to Levison as a fwient—"

"Speak to him as an enemy next time, then; he will find it more agreeable," grinned Blake.

"I wegard that remark as merely asinine, Blake. The fact is, you are wathah an ass, and uttably wantin' in tact. Go and eat coke!"

And Arthur Augustus walked back to the Common-room.

Blake supposed that even the great Gussy would let the topic drop now; but even Blake did not quite know the great Gussy. The swell of the Fourth bore down on Levison, who had started a game of chess with Manners of the Shell. He tapped Levison on the shoulder.

"Sowwy to intewwupt, deah boy—"

"Don't, then!" said Levison curtly.

"I am speakin' as a fwient, Levison," said Arthur Augustus gently. "It had not occurred to me that there might be any twuth in that wotten yarn of Twimble's. But if there is anythin' in it, and you are weally up against it, old chap, pway allow me to express my deep sympathy."

"Your move, Manners," said Levison.

"Bai Jove! Did you hear my remark, Levison?"

Levison glanced round.

"Blake!"

"Hallo!" said Blake.

"Your prize idiot is loose. Don't you think you ought to lock him up somewhere, or at least lead him about on a chain?"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's walked away, with great indignation in his noble countenance. It was only too clear that deep sympathy, as well as tact and judgment, was at a discount just then. And it was equally clear, to most of the fellows in the room, that Trimble of the Fourth had, for once, told the truth, and that Ernest Levison was in deep waters.

CHAPTER 6.

Baggy Begs For It!

BUMP!

"Yaroooh!"

Thump!

"Help!"

Mr. Railton, Housemaster of the School House, opened his study door, with wrath in his countenance.

It was two or three days since that little scene in the junior Common-room, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with the best intentions in the world, had made it clear to all the fellows that Levison of the Fourth was under a cloud.

Since then, even the tactful Gussy had let the matter drop; and all the fellows who were on friendly terms with Levison had elaborately ignored it.

But Baggy Trimble had not let the matter drop. Such an item of news was not to be discarded lightly by the tattler of the School House. Other fellows—not nice fellows, certainly—had taken the story up. Racke of the Shell had adopted charity as a topic of conversation—in public—and apparently found it inexhaustible as a topic. He made no allusion to Levison; he said nothing that would have justified Levison, or any of his friends, in punching him. He talked in the Common-room, and the passages, and the quad, of charity as a virtue, of charitable institutions, of charitable bequests—of anything and everything in which the word charity could be used. Mellish of the Fourth entered into the game with zest, and Clampe of the Shell, and Chowle of the New House, and two or three other fellows of the same kidney. It was scarcely possible for Levison to leave his study without hearing that disconcerting word, "charity," on the lips of some of his old enemies.

But Levison was not to be drawn.

He affected deafness and ignorance, and not on one occasion could the malicious fellows feel sure that their shots had got home. And they could not venture to come out into the open, as it were. An open taunt would have brought prompt punishment. Trimble, still mindful of the stumping, was as malicious as the others, though Baggy's malice was more due to stupidity than anything else.

It was Baggy Trimble who had collapsed suddenly outside the Housemaster's study and drawn out Mr. Railton with a wrathful brow. The cause of his collapse was a rather small but extremely hefty fist which had been planted on Baggy's fat little nose. The fist belonged to Frank Levison of the Third Form.

Not satisfied with the collapse of the fat Baggy, Levison minor was thumping him as he sprawled,

apparently regardless of the fact that he was just outside Mr. Railton's study door.

He was speedily apprised of that fact, however.

Mr. Railton emerged from his study, and after an astonished stare at the scene he seized Frank Levison by the collar and jerked him away from the sprawling and gasping Trimble.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" Trimble was roaring.

"Levison minor!" thundered the Housemaster. "How dare you! How dare you, I say!"

"Yow-ow! Keep him off!"

"Get up, Trimble!"

Baggy staggered to his feet, eyeing Frank Levison warily. The fag's eyes blazed at him.

"How dare you fight here!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"I—I wasn't fighting, sir!" gasped Trimble. "I—I was trying to keep away from that little beast, sir. He followed me here."

"Is that the case, Levison minor?"

"Yes, sir! The rotten funk ran away!" growled Frank.

"That is not the way to speak to your Housemaster, Levison minor. You seem to have attacked a boy belonging to another Form. I shall punish you most severely."

"The rotter—"

"What?"

"I—I beg your pardon, sir!" stammered Frank. "But—but—"

He broke off, with another glare at Trimble.

"Both of you step into my study."

Mr. Railton followed the two juniors in, and picked up his cane.

"Now, Levison minor," he said quietly. "I cannot understand why you should have attacked an older boy belonging to a higher Form. Kindly explain at once."

Frank crimsoned.

"I—I—it—it—" he stammered.

"I never touched him, sir!" gasped Trimble.

"Silence! I await your explanation, Levison minor."

It was quite clear to Mr. Railton that there was something unusual behind this extraordinary outbreak on the part of one of the best-tempered and best-behaved fags in the House. And he intended to know what it was before the cane came into operation.

"It—it was what he said, sir," stuttered Frank at last.

"Indeed! What did you say to Levison minor, Trimble?"

"Nothing, sir," answered Baggy promptly.

"Trimble!"

"Well, sir, I only said I was sorry for him, or words to that effect," said Baggy. "So I am, sir."

Levison minor's eyes blazed.

"You cad! You dare to be sorry for me! I'll—"

He broke off again, as he remembered in whose presence he stood.

"Tell me at once, Levison minor, what Trimble said to you!" said the Housemaster sharply. "I am determined to know what this means."

"He said I was taking charity, sir!" gasped Frank at last, with his face and his ears burning.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, quite surprised.

"He said my fees weren't paid at the school, and that the Head was only keeping on my brother and me out of charity!" exclaimed Frank. "I hit him—and so I will again if he repeats his statement! I—I—I mean—I—I beg your pardon, sir!"

Mr. Railton fixed his eyes on Trimble. The look on his face made that podgy youth fairly quake.

"You are to blame in this dispute, Trimble. Levison minor, you may leave my study. I excuse you on account of the provocation you have received; but you must not let such a scene occur again."

"Very well, sir," faltered Frank.

With another glare at Trimble he left the study and closed the door after him. Baggy Trimble felt very uneasy as he faced the clear, searching eyes of the Housemaster.

"What reason had you for making such a statement to Levison minor, Trimble?" asked Mr. Railton quietly.

"I—I—I'd heard—" stammered Baggy.

"You had heard what?"

"Some fellows were saying that—that the Levisons weren't paid for at the school now, sir—and—and—"

"So you taunted that lad in the Third Form with taking charity?"

"I—I meant to say that I was sorry for him, sir, only he—he—he misunderstood. Just got into a temper, sir, at the word charity!" said Trimble indignantly.

"I am not surprised at that, Trimble, and I have not the slightest doubt that you used the word as a taunt. But I require to know upon what this is founded. Who told you anything about the private affairs of the Levisons?"

"All the fellows know, sir."

"Then some other boy told you?"

"That's it, sir."

"His name?"

"Eh?"

"I require the name of the boy who started this unpleasant rumour concerning two boys of the best character in the House."

"I—I forget, sir."

"I am sorry for that," said Mr. Railton grimly. "because unless you can give me the name of your informant, Trimble, I shall take it for granted that the story began with yourself, and punish you accordingly."

"But—but it's true, isn't it, sir?" gasped Trimble.

"That does not concern you in the very least, Trimble. Can you answer my question?"

"I—I can't call to mind the fellow's name, sir!" groaned Baggy. "I—I think it was a New House fellow. Some chap I don't know!"

"I am afraid that that will not do, Trimble."

"Lots of fellows know, sir!" groaned Trimble. "You can ask Racke, and Mellish, and Chowle, and lots of fellows. Tom Merry knows!"

(Continued on the next page.)



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"Indeed! Tom Merry, certainly, will give me the name of his informant," said Mr. Railton.

Trimble quaked.

"I—I think I mentioned it to Tom Merry myself, sir."

"I have no doubt you did."

"I—I—I'd just heard it from a—a chap——"

"His name?"

"Oh dear!" mumbled Baggy.

It would have cost Baggy very little to accuse anybody. But what was the use of accusing a fellow who, if questioned, would simply point out that he had had the story from Baggy himself, with the additional information that Baggy had learned it by eaves-dropping? Baggy was not very bright, but he was bright enough to refrain from making matters worse for himself.

Mr. Railton waited a few moments. Then he pointed to a chair with his cane.

"Bend over that chair, Trimble!"

"Ow!" gasped Baggy.

"At once!" snapped the Housemaster.

"Oh dear!"

Baggy Trimble, in the lowest of spirits, bent over the chair. The Housemaster's cane fairly rang on him, and there was a yell from Baggy that echoed through the House.

"Now," said Mr. Railton, laying down the cane, "you may go, Trimble. If it should come to my knowledge that you have taunted either of the Levisons, or that you have repeated this wretched story to anyone, I shall cane you again, and much more severely!"

"Ow, ow!"

"Go!"

And Baggy went; a sadder if not a wiser Baggy.

CHAPTER 7.

The Brothers!

"CHARITY covers a multitude of sins."

Mellish of the Fourth, loafing in the doorway of Study No. 2, made that remark to Kit Wildrake, the Canadian junior who had the pleasure—or otherwise—of sharing Study No. 2 with Mellish.

Wildrake stared at him.

He was sorting out some books in the study, taking no heed of Mellish, and not expecting any remark from him. And that remark, apropos of nothing that he could see, naturally surprised him.

"Eh? What did you say?" he asked.

"I said that Charity covers a multitude of sins," answered Mellish.

"I guess it does, and I guess I've heard so before," answered Wildrake. "But what are you chucking that ancient wisdom at me now for?"

There was no need for Mellish to answer; for just then a Third Form fag who was coming up the passage passed the open doorway. And Kit Wildrake, as he saw Levison minor passing, knew why Mellish had made the remark. He caught the flush in the fag's face; but Frank passed on without looking at the grinning Mellish.

Wildrake set his lips.

"You had to trot out that word for young Levison to hear as he passed," he remarked quietly.

"I suppose I can say what I like," grinned Mellish.

"I guess not when you say it to me. I guess you're a low-down sort of rotter, Mellish. I guess a kick would do you good."

"Look here, you meddling cheeky ass—yarooook!" roared Mellish, as the Canadian junior grabbed him by the collar and slewed him round.

Kit Wildrake had a hefty foot. Mellish realised that when it landed. The next moment Mellish himself landed on all fours in the passage with a resounding roar.

Frank Levison glanced round and smiled faintly and

went on to his brother's study. But the smile was only momentary, and a cloud of trouble took its place. Mellish, no doubt, was sorry that he had spoken; but the mean taunt made the fag wince. Not that Frank believed that there was anything in it; but, all the same, he was troubled and sore.

"Hallo, deah kid!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sailing majestically along the Fourth Form passage, paused to bestow upon Levison minor a politeness that even the polished Gussy was not accustomed to waste on fags of the Third. "Comin' to my studay—what?"

"No; I'm going to see my brother."

"Always glad to see you in Study No. 6," said Arthur Augustus graciously. "How are you gettin' on in the Third?"

"Same as usual."

"I'm fed up with Levison and his namby-pamby brother," said Mellish. The Arthur Augustus D'Arcy reached out, dragged on his collar, and proceeded to knead Mr. Latham spun round in amazement. "What—what— Bless my soul!"



"Oh, yaas! Havin' a good time—what?"

Frank looked at him.

"Then you've heard?" he exclaimed.

"Eh?"

Arthur Augustus was quite unconscious of the fact that his fatherly kindness to the fag was absolutely transparent.

"You've heard what that cad Trimble has been saying and some other cads!" exclaimed Frank.

"Weally, deah boy, I was not alludin' to that."

"Oh rats!"

"Weally, young Levison——"

"It's a rotten yarn they've got up among them. There's nothing in it, of course!" said Frank angrily.

"I—I twust not, deah boy."

"You silly ass!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Of course there's nothing in it!" snapped Levison minor. "Even you ought to have sense enough to know that!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm going to ask Ernest to put a stop to it," added Frank; and he passed Arthur Augustus and went on to Study No. 9.

Arthur Augustus gazed after him through his eyeglass for a moment or two and shook his noble head. Then he sailed into Study No. 6.

"I have always wathah liked those Levisons, Blake," he remarked. "But I fear that their mannaahs are detewiowatin'!"

"You've been sympathising again?" inquired Blake.

sh. The next moment he uttered a wild yell, as needed to knock his head on the desk. "Yarooop!" y soul! D'Arcy, how dare you!" (See Chapter 8).



"Weally, you know——"

"You'll get your silly nose punched one of these times!" warned Blake. "You talk too much, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to weply to such a vewy diswespectful wemark as that, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I wegard you as a wuffian. It appeahs to me that mannaahs are detewiowatin' all through the Fourth!"

Meanwhile, Frank had presented himself in Study No. 9. The three fellows there were chatting after tea on the subject of the football match with Greyfriars School, now drawing nigh. They looked rather curiously at the troubled face of the fag.

"Comin' along to see Tom Merry, Clivey?" asked Cardew suddenly. "About the football, you know?"

Sidney Clive stared for a moment, and then nodded.

"Just coming," he answered.

The two juniors left the study. Frank glanced after them, the cloud deepening on his face. He wanted to speak to his brother alone. But how had those fellows guessed it so quickly? For the first time, it occurred to him that his brother was not ignorant of Trimble's yarn as he had supposed, and that his brother's study-mates had heard it also.

"Well, kid?" said Levison rather curtly. One glance at the fag had told him that Frank knew now.

"Have you heard, Ernie?" asked Frank, his voice trembling a little, in spite of himself.

"Heard what?"

"I see that you have. Ernie, what does it mean?" exclaimed Frank. "It can't be true that the pater's got suddenly hard-up and hasn't paid our school fees. It can't be true!"

Levison of the Fourth did not answer.

"I thought the fees were always paid at the beginning of the term," said Frank.

"They are, as a rule."

Levison breathed rather hard.

"There's no hard and fast rule about such things," he said rather lamely. "People are short of money at times, and it's not uncommon, I believe, for fees to be paid late sometimes."

"Not so late in the term as this."

"Well, not often," admitted Levison. "But I believe headmasters sometimes have to dun parents."

"You think it's true that the pater hasn't paid, and that the Head is letting us stay here for nothing?" faltered Frank.

"Well, you see, I suppose some sort of a reminder would be sent," mumbled Levison. "The Head isn't a tradesman; but, after all, keeping a school is a good deal like keeping a shop—it's a business matter, and has to be run on business lines. If a man forgot to pay, he would get a reminder of some sort."

"Father isn't forgetful of such things."

"Not as a rule."

"Look here, Ernie, what does it mean? If our fees are not paid, we ought not to be here. We can't take charity."

"It's not that. I'm quite sure that the Head would wait till the end of the term—or till next term, for that matter. So long as the fees are paid some time, it's all right."

"You mean you believe what Trimble says—that they're not paid yet?" muttered Frank.

"I don't know."

"But if not, why not?"

"I don't know," repeated Levison.

"But we can't let this go on," said Frank, with a scared look. "We ought to know. I—I thought it was all one of Trimble's rotten yarns."

"I'm afraid there's more to it than that," said Levison reluctantly. "But don't worry; the pater will pay up sooner or later. The only thing is, if there's a shortage of cash at home, we may have to leave St. Jim's."

"I don't want to leave, but I'd rather leave than be kept here on charity, even if the Head was willing."

"Of course. This story has been going about for nearly a week—ever since the House match day," said Levison. "I've written to the pater and—and asked him."

"And what did he say?" exclaimed Frank breathlessly.

"Only——" Levison paused.

"Only what?"

"Only that he's coming to see me on Wednesday. I suppose that means that there's something up, and he's going to explain by word of mouth."

"Wednesday's the day of the Greyfriars match."

"Yes; the pater will see me before the game. I can't make out what it means, Frank. I hoped you'd hear nothing of it before I saw the pater and got at the facts," said Levison. "No good brooding over it, kid; keep a stiff upper lip. Don't let a cad like Trimble see that you're hurt."

Levison minor coloured.

"I can stand it," he said. "But—but a fellow wants to know. I—I wish we hadn't come back for this term, if it's like that. Surely father knew whether he could pay the term's fees or not."

The Fourth-Former shook his head.

"Something's happened since the holidays," he said. "Things were all right when we left home. It's happened since, whatever it is. But it must have been early in the term, or the pater would have paid the cheque as usual. Now he's put it off—for some reason. It can't mean that he hasn't the money; if it means that, there must have been an awful crash. It can't be so bad as that."

"Then why—"

"Goodness knows!"

There was silence in Study No. 9, and the brothers looked at one another—the elder grave and troubled, the younger pale and distressed. The blow that had fallen had come like a bolt from the blue. Levison was able to bear it, as he had borne many things, with cool hardihood; but it left Frank quivering.

"If—if it's as bad as that, it means that the pater's ruined—that we're ruined!" whispered Frank at last.

Levison did not speak.

"We can stand it," muttered the fag; "but—but Doris—and the mater—" His voice broke.

"Keep a stiff upper lip," said his brother quietly. "We don't know the facts yet, Frank. If it comes to the worst, we shall have to leave school; but we can be thankful that we've got health and strength and pluck. If the pater's done for, we've got a mother and a sister to care for. We've got to put up a fight for them. Keep your courage up, kid."

Frank Levison nodded, and a few minutes later left the study. He had a stunned feeling. Levison had been able to tell him little, but he knew what his brother was thinking—what Ernest had read between the lines of his father's letter—a letter he had not shown Frank. There was disaster at home—ruin, or something like ruin. He knew that Ernest thought so, and he never doubted Ernest's judgment. He felt stunned; but the example of his brother's quiet courage had done him good. In the passage he passed Mellish and Racke, and they grinned at him

maliciously; but the fag passed them with a scornful glance and his head held high. They, at least, should not see him wince under the blow that was crushing him.

CHAPTER 8.

Arthur Augustus is Wrathful!

"FEELING fit?"

"Fit as a fiddle."

Tom Merry asked the question, and Levison answered it, on Wednesday morning.

Levison of the Fourth answered it with a smile on his face, a smile that Tom was glad to see.

All through the House it was known—or, at least, surmised—that Levison of the Fourth was deeply down on his luck.

All the fellows knew that Trimble had been caused by the Housemaster for spreading the story about Levison of the Fourth. But quite a number of fellows had observed that Mr. Railton, while he had very naturally punished the tattler, had not said anything to the effect that the story was false.

That it was true was the general opinion.

Levison had more friends than enemies in his House—many more. But he had his enemies—especially the shady set, who had never forgiven him for throwing them over. Aubrey Racke, of the Shell, was the bitterest; but there were others who were bitter. This was their chance, and they made the most of it.

In these days they kept an eye on Levison, and they knew or surmised many things in support of Trimble's tale. Neither Levison major nor Levison minor was getting his usual allowance, and both of them had owed trifling sums to friends in their Forms, as a consequence—little friendly debts incurred, as is common among schoolboys, in a time of temporary shortage. But these little debts had been cleared off to the last halfpenny, and Racke had discovered that Ernest Levison had paid a visit to Wayland post office immediately before that had taken place. Levison, always a careful fellow, had an account in the Post Office Savings Bank, and Racke & Co. hardly needed telling that he had drawn out money to clear himself and his brother of those little schoolboy debts. If they left St. Jim's they did not mean to leave owing anything. Even Racke had no fault to find with that view; but it was a proof to him that the Levisons were getting nothing from home, and that their allowances had stopped for good. That could only be taken as a proof that there had been a financial crash, and that the brothers' days at St. Jim's were numbered.

"He's goin'," Aubrey Racke told his friends. "He's goin', and a good riddance to him!"

To which Aubrey's friends agreed, and they looked forward to the day of Levison's going with considerable anticipation.

But they were, after all, few in number, and little regarded in the school. Tom Merry & Co., at least, were certain to miss Levison—all the best fellows wished him well. Sidney Clive was not in boisterous spirits these days, and even the volatile Cardew was grave and thoughtful.

And yet both friends and foes were in doubt. If Levison was really in such deep waters as the fellows surmised, he was taking it remarkably well. He was openly and obviously as keen as ever on football, and his name was down for the Greyfriars match, and he evidently looked forward to the game. He was, perhaps, more silent than usual, but when he spoke he spoke cheerfully. Tom Merry, on that Wednesday morning,

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as he saw the cheery smile on the Fourth-Former's face, wondered whether the whole thing was not, after all, mere moonshine. Certainly he hoped that it was.

"I fancy there's nothing in it, you fellows," he said to Manners and Lowther, after leaving Levison. "The chap seems merry and bright enough, and he's as fit as a fiddle, anyhow."

"He always was a hard nut to crack!" remarked Manners.

"Well, yes. But—"

"Let's hope for the best," said Monty Lowther. "And let's go and kick Trimble."

"Good egg!"

And soon afterwards a yell was heard floating in the quad.

Levison of the Fourth went into class with his Form that morning, cool and composed as ever. Even Cardew,

"Yes, sir."

"You will wait in the visitors' room if your father has not yet arrived."

"Very well, sir."

Ernest Levison quietly left the Form-room.

The Fourth looked at one another. So Levison's father was coming down to St. Jim's that morning! The fellow had said nothing of it—he was as close as an oyster. Certainly, fellows' fathers did come down to St. Jim's to see them at times; there might be nothing in it. But it was, as Mellish whispered to Chowle, another nail in Levison's coffin. As likely as not his father had come to take him away.

"Jolly good thing, too!" said Chowle.

"Yes, rather! I'm fed up with the cad for once, and with his namby-pamby young brother, too!" said Mellish.

THE full-back of West Bromwich Albion, William Ashurst, has had the sort of experience to which no player looks forward. He was with Notts County in the season before last when they were relegated. Then he went to West Bromwich Albion and had a similar experience. That's bad luck if you like.

It takes some pluck to pay £2,500 for a full-back who is not even in the first team. Yet this is what Derby County paid to Port Vale for Tom Cooper, the full-back. But the money was well spent, for Cooper has deservedly earned a big reputation.

Alderman J. Broley, who is the new Mayor of Barnsley, originally went to the town as a goalkeeper for the Barnsley Football Club from Liverpool. That was twenty-eight years ago.

In the usual first team of Liverpool there is only one player who is a bachelor—Hodgson, the South African. So there is double rejoicing when the Liverpool players earn the bonus.

Many footballers lose opportunities by stopping to think. Goalkeepers, however, must reverse this process. They must think in order to stop.

Bury have this season made a change in the usual training procedure. Usually Monday is a day off. Now the Bury players do light training on Mondays, but have a full day's rest on Fridays. The men are said to like this arrangement.

James Townley, who has played at inside-left for the Spurs this season, is the son of a former outside-left for Blackburn Rovers, who twice helped the club to win the Cup, and who also played for England. Football in the blood!

who was a very keen youth, doubted whether there was anything really wrong, after all. Certainly, if there was trouble, Levison had told his study-mates nothing of it; and they were not the fellows to ask questions.

Mr. Lathom found Levison quietly attentive in class, as usual; and his construe that morning was—also as usual—one of the best in the Fourth. Mellish and Chowle and Trimble, looking at him, wondered whether their happy anticipations were to be realised after all. Baggy almost doubted whether his fat ears had heard aright on that occasion when he had overheard the head-master speaking to Mr. Railton on the subject of the Levisons. And yet he knew that he had heard aright; that the fellow was bitterly up against it; just carrying the thing off with a high hand, as Baggy indignantly told Chowle.

Morning break was at eleven; but at a quarter to eleven Mr. Lathom called to Levison:

"You may leave the Form-room, Levison."



Dick Pym, the goalkeeper of Bolton Wanderers, says that his most thrilling football experience happened at Buenos Ayres, when a spectator drew a revolver and fired at the referee. Fortunately, the aim of the spectator was not good.

Voce, the eighteen-year-old Notts cricketer, who did so well and showed such promise during the summer, plays football for a junior club in Nottingham. He may yet be an England player at both cricket and football.

Coggins, the Bristol City goalkeeper, is a newsagent, and even yet does his round early every morning.

Charlton Athletic have been distinguished this season as the last club in the big Leagues to be defeated. Yet the whole Charlton Athletic team which earned this honour did not cost one hundred pounds in transfer fees.

Walsall, however, have an even more wonderful record than Charlton, for it is stated by their manager that not a single member of their team cost a penny in transfer fees.

The railway strike a couple of years ago was really responsible for Brown, the Wednesday and English International goalkeeper, coming into prominence. The manager of Sheffield Wednesday had intended to make a long journey to watch a certain player. That was impossible, owing to the strike, so he went to a local match at Leeds and discovered Brown. It's an ill wind that blows nobody good.

It is not generally known that if George Duncan, the famous golfer, had not taken to the royal and ancient game he might have been a really good footballer. He was making fine progress with the big ball at Aberdeen when he took up a professional engagement as a golfer. Incidentally, it may be suggested that golf pays better than football.

The next moment there was an unusual sound in the Fourth Form-room. It was the sound of a head tapping—hard—on a desk, accompanied by ferocious yells.

Mr. Lathom spun round in amazement.

"What—what—what—" he ejaculated.

"Yarooogh!"

"Bless my soul! D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Lathom.

The master of the Fourth stared blankly at the scene. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in the form behind Mellish, had reached over and taken that disagreeable youth by the back of the collar. With wrath in his noble countenance, Arthur Augustus was knocking the hapless Mellish's head on his desk.

Rap, rap, rap!

"Yarooogh! Leggo! Oh, my hat! Ow!" roared Mellish.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fourth.

"Bless my soul! What—what—what does this mean?" Release Mellish at once, D'Arcy!" thundered Mr. Lathom.

"Yaas, sir!" said Arthur Augustus breathlessly.

He released the wretched Mellish, who rubbed his head, with a series of horrid groans. There was no doubt that he was hurt.

"How dare you, D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Lathom. "This brutal—this unprovoked assault upon your Form-fellow—in class, too!"

The Fourth Form master grabbed up his cane.

"It was not unprovoked, sir," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I am sorry to bothah you, sir, in class; but I weally could not allow that wottah's remarks to pass."

"What? What?"

"I never spoke to him!" yelled Mellish.

"I cannot allow a wotten cad like that to wejoice in a fellow's misfortunes, sir," said the swell of St. Jim's.

"Bless my soul! What do you mean, D'Arcy, if you have intelligence enough to mean anything?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom.

"Weally, sir——"

"Mellish says that he never spoke to you——"

"I never did, sir!" howled Mellish.

"He was makin' his wotten remarks to anoathah fellow, sir," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I am sorry to disturb you, sir, but I am not sorry that I wapped his wascally head. Ewery decent fellow heah is sorry that old Levison is up against it."

"What? What? What did Mellish say?"

"I am bound not to wepeat his remarks to you, sir, as that would amount to sneakin', as I am suah you would be vewy waxy if you knew that the wottah was wejoicin' at Levison bein' down on his luck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows——"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "You may sit down, D'Arcy."

"Thank you, sir."

Arthur Augustus sat down. Mr. Lathom gave Mellish a very expressive look, and let the incident pass. No doubt it was clear enough to him why Mellish's head had been rapped, and certainly he had no sympathy to waste on the sufferer.

When the Fourth came out for morning break, the swell of St. Jim's bore down on Mellish.

"I wapped your head in class, you wottah!" he began.

"You took me from behind, you beast!" snarled Mellish.

"Yaas, wathah! It has occurred to me that you may desiah to call me to account for doin' so," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately way. "I am quite at your service."

"Oh, clear off!"

"I am pwepared to put on the gloves with you, Mellish, eithah now or at any time you may select."

"Go and eat coke!"

And Mellish stalked away with Chowle, evidently not desirous of claiming satisfaction at the hands of the swell of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 9.

Ruin!

ERNEST LEVISON entered the visitors' room and glanced round him. The room was so silent and still that he thought at first that his father had not arrived. But in a moment or two he saw him, seated in the old bow-window that looked on a shady corner of the quadrangle.

Levison's tread was quiet, and his father did not seem to have heard him enter. Mr. Levison was sitting quite still, as if very tired, and looking out into the quad, and Levison had a view of his profile. It gave him a pang to see that his father's face was pale and worn, the outlines sharpened since last he had seen him. Only too plainly, trouble had descended on Mr. Levison, and it had fallen heavily.

The junior came quietly but swiftly across the room to his father. Mr. Levison looked up then.

"Mr. Lathom told me to come here, father," said Ernest. "I came at once. I hope you haven't waited."

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"Only a few minutes—nothing."

Mr. Levison signed to his son to sit down. He moved a little himself so that his back was to the light from the window.

"I have bad news for you, Ernest," he said abruptly.

"I knew that much, father," said the junior with a faint smile. "Tell me what has happened—I can stand it."

"You will need all your courage to stand it, Ernest."

"I'm to leave St. Jim's?"

Mr. Levison nodded.

"And—Frank?"

Another nod.

Ernest Levison drew a deep, hard breath. He had been prepared for this, but it hit him unexpectedly hard now that he knew it for certain. Leave St. Jim's—break off a promising career—leave Cardew and Clive, and the many cheery faces he knew—his triumphs on the playing fields—But he checked the selfish thought the next moment. It was no time for his father's son to think of himself.

"We're up against it, then, dad?" asked Levison.

"You can hear the truth, my poor boy?" asked Mr. Levison, with a wistful glance at his son's quiet, steady face.

"I don't think I'm the fellow to whine, dad."

"We are ruined," said his father.

Levison winced.

"Ruined?"

"Actually, materially. Not merely as a figure of speech, but utterly and absolutely ruined!" said the old gentleman, in a trembling voice. "It was no fault of mine, Ernest, no mistake of mine. It is an unexpected, utterly unlooked-for calamity that no one could have guarded against. You will understand now why I hesitated to tell you—why I would not breathe a word until the matter was absolutely certain."

"And it's certain now?"

"Yes."

"But what can have happened?" asked Levison, in wonder. "I knew we were not rich, father, but we've never seemed hard-up. You've invested in some company that's failed?"

"I am not so imprudent as that, Ernest. If it had depended on me, this would never have happened. I have lost nothing personally."

Levison's wonder increased.

"It's not business, then?"

"No."

"Then what?"

"I have to meet a claim," said Mr. Levison, "for twenty thousand pounds. I can meet it—barely. But it will leave us nothing."

"Twenty thousand pounds," repeated the junior.

"Yes."

"Who makes the claim?"

"A Mr. Bright—a solicitor."

"A just claim?" asked Levison, staring.

His father gave a sigh.

"No. Mr. Bright is acting in good faith, I have no doubt, and his claim is strictly legal. But——"

"If the claim is unjust it can be contested."

"Unhappily, no. There is no legal proof on my side. It concerns the twenty thousand pounds I inherited from my Uncle Thorpe before you were born, my boy. I inherited as next-of-kin, and there was no dispute at the time. It never crossed my mind, or anyone else's, that there could be a rival claimant. But a will was in existence, as it has proved, by which this gentleman Bright, who was a close friend of my uncle's, was his sole heir. At the time it was made, both of them were young men. Neither was well-off, having little beyond their salaries. Uncle Thorpe was a Form master in a school and Mr. Bright in very poor practice as a solicitor. But they were great friends, and both had expectations from elderly relatives, and they made wills in one another's favour."

Levison listened attentively.

"I knew nothing of this," went on his father. "At the time I seldom or never saw my uncle. It was when I was in America. Bright went abroad, and was abroad for many years; he has only lately returned to England to learn that his old friend was long dead,

"Excuse my buttin' in," said Cardew, coming into the study, the cricket-stump under his arm. "I'm lookin' for a fat burglar who's cleaned out my grub. I'm goin' to kill him! Seen the beast?" A gasp of dismay came from behind the open door. "Oh, dear!" (See Chapter 4.)



and that his fortune had passed to me. Mr. Thorpe's will, locked away somewhere for a quarter of a century, has been found and proved. Mr. Bright claims the restitution of the twenty thousand pounds which Mr. Thorpe inherited from his father and I, in turn, inherited from him. I cannot contest the claim. I have, of course, taken legal advice; but the will holds good. In fact, I could not think of disputing it, for it is obviously genuine."

"It has been proved?"

"Yes."

"That settles that point, then," said Levison slowly. "But it's a queer story. Mr. Bright should have put in his claim before!"

"He has lived abroad without news of England, as I understand. Certainly he would have returned to this country sooner if he had known that John Thorpe was dead, and had died rich. At the time the will was made Mr. Thorpe was poor, and had only vague expectations. Probably Bright never supposed that the will would be of great value to him."

Levison nodded.

"It looks a clear case, so far," he said. "But you said that the claim was not just, though Bright was acting in good faith. What did you mean by that?"

"I have no proof," said his father, with a sigh. "But I have certain knowledge that there was a later will."

Levison's eyes gleamed.

"A will in your favour?"

"Yes."

"Then that cancels the earlier will in Bright's favour?"

"Undoubtedly—if it can be found."

"Oh!" said Levison.

"It was after my return from the West that I saw my uncle at Greyfriars," went on Mr. Levison. "You may remember having heard that he was a Farm master at that school, which was one reason why I selected Greyfriars for you, Ernest. Mr. Thorpe was an elderly man then; he could not have seen Bright for many years, or had news of him. Possibly, he supposed that his friend had died abroad. At all events, he recognised a claim on the part of his own nephew, and

he told me that he was making a will leaving me all he possessed. He was at that time in failing health, and shortly afterwards retired from his post in the school and spent his last days at Worthing. He went into the matter with some thoroughness, however, in talking to me, and mentioned various small bequests he intended to make—one to the school in which he was a master, one to the local hospital, and so on—but the bulk of his fortune, he told me, was to be mine."

"And he made the will?"

"I have no doubt whatever that he did, for he was a dutiful and methodical man, not in the least likely to fail in such a matter. But the will was never found among his papers; it was as his next-of-kin that I inherited. As a conscientious man, Ernest, knowing what his intentions had been, I carried out his wishes with regard to the bequests as well as I could remember them."

"That was right," said Levison.

"Quite so. But as it turns out, the money was not mine, and such payments as I made must come out of my own pocket."

"Oh!"

"That he made this later will, and that under this new will the fortune came to me, I have not a shadow of a doubt. But the will was not found. It has never been found. Where he placed it, or in whose charge, I cannot even imagine. It is in existence, I feel sure; but my statement to that effect has, of course, no value in law."

"I understand that, of course."

"If Mr. Thorpe's last will could be found we should be saved," said Mr. Levison. "But it is hopeless."

Levison compressed his lips.

"If it exists it must be found!" he muttered.

"I am certain that it exists. But it cannot be found."

"He was still a master at Greyfriars School when he made it?"

"Yes, it was in his last term there."

"He may have left it behind when he left Greyfriars."

Mr. Levison smiled faintly.

"Naturally, I have thought of that, and I have been in communication with Dr. Locke, your old headmaster, Ernest. He is very kind, and desires to be helpful; but he was not at the school in my uncle's time and never knew him. All he can tell me is that, after the most careful inquiry, he can hear nothing of any papers having been left at the school by Mr. Thorpe."

Levison bit his lip hard.

"Then it comes to this—that we are to be ruined because a will that would save us cannot be found."

"That is the position. But I fear that no one would be likely to believe my statement concerning Mr. Thorpe's last will," said his father, with a sigh. "And in law, of course, the actual document is required."

"You have told this man Bright?"

"I fear that he regards my story as an invention, Ernest. In any case, he stands on his rights under the only will known to be in existence."

"I suppose he would," assented Levison. "Can't blame him for that. But we've got to find the will, dad."

Mr. Levison shook his head hopelessly.

"During the past few weeks, Ernest, I have left no stone unturned, as you may imagine. The will cannot be found, and no one but myself believes that it ever existed."

"If it is found, it saves us?"

"Yes. But it will never be found."

"And if it is not found?"

"We are ruined!" said Mr. Levison, in a low voice. "I am worth, at the present day, little more than the sum I have to restore to Esau Bright. The villa at Cannes will remain, where your mother is at present. And I hope to be able to keep this terrible news from her—for the present, at least. But we shall be hard pressed, Ernest. Dr. Holmes has kindly consented to let you and Frank leave at the half-term, and to waive any claim for the fees for the remainder of the term. He has, indeed, offered to waive all claim for the whole term, but that I cannot accept. We are ruined, but we are not beggars."

Levison flushed.

"I am glad of that, father. Let us pay our way, if we starve. Then Frank and I get out at the half-term?"

"If you care to stay till then," said his father. "But there is another matter I must mention. When you left Greyfriars, Ernest, you were under a cloud—you were, in fact, sent away for bad conduct. But your old headmaster knows what you have done since, and you are aware that more than once he has offered to take you back if you should leave St. Jim's."

"I know," said Levison. "But I can't go to Greyfriars on charity, any more than I can stay at St. Jim's on such terms."

"At Greyfriars the matter is somewhat different," explained his father. "Dr. Locke has made me a very kind offer. As relatives of a former Greyfriars master, he considers that you and your brother have a claim. In order to give me time to make fresh arrangements, he has offered—indeed, begged—that I should send you and Frank to Greyfriars for the rest of this term."

"Oh!" said Levison.

"You will remember, Ernest, that I paid a certain sum, which Mr. Thorpe had intended to leave to his old school, when I came into his property. This, as it transpires now, must come out of my own pocket—Mr. Bright declines to recognise any such imaginary bequest, as he terms it. This gives us a very real claim on the Greyfriars foundation, to some extent, and I am assured that Dr. Locke's kind offer may be accepted by us without any taint of charity."

"That's true," said Levison slowly.

"Until I have had time to think the matter out, and make fresh arrangements, it would be a great boon to me for you and Frank to be provided for at Greyfriars. I have therefore accepted Dr. Locke's offer for you and your brother."

Levison was silent.

"At the half-term—or before, if you choose—you will go to Greyfriars with Frank," added Mr. Levison. "You cannot stay here and eat the bread of charity. At Greyfriars the matter is different."

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Levison, his thoughts busy, did not answer. His father gave him an anxious look.

"What do you say, Ernest?"

"I'll go, of course," said Levison. "But—father, old Mr. Thorpe's will must be somewhere. More likely at Greyfriars than anywhere else. I remember well enough that the old place was full of odd nooks and corners. If I could find it—"

His father smiled faintly.

"I have no hope of that Ernest. Greyfriars is a refuge for you and your brother till I have time to consider what can be done."

"Let it go at that, then," said Levison.

But the idea that had come into his mind remained there. It might be a slight chance—the faintest of chance—but there was surely a chance that, by going to Greyfriars, he might be able to save his father from the ruin that had fallen upon him.

Mr. Levison looked at his watch.

"I must see the Head again before I go," he said. "You will tell Frank what I have told you, Ernest—break it as gently to the poor boy as you can. I am too distressed to see him—it will come better from you. One word more. I am told that some Greyfriars boys, friends of yours, are coming to this school to-day for a football match—"

"Yes."

"Dr. Locke has intimated that, if you desire to join Greyfriars at once, you may return with them when they go. That is a matter you may decide for yourself. Ernest."

After a few more words Mr. Levison left his son.

Levison of the Fourth remained in the quiet solitude of the visitors' room, his brow dark with thought.

He had expected bad news—news of black trouble. But he had hardly expected it to be so overwhelming as this.

His father was ruined!

His own prospects, and his brother's and his sister's, were completely changed.

He had to leave St. Jim's—though there was a consolation in the knowledge that he was going back—at least, for a time—to his old school. He had left that school under the shadow of disgrace, and his face flushed when he recalled it; but this was an opportunity, at least, of proving to his old headmaster, to his old Form master, to his former schoolfellows that he had pulled up, that his old school had no reason to be ashamed of him now. There was some little comfort in that.

For a long time Levison remained where he was, thinking hard. The bell for third lesson startled him at last from his meditations.

He left the visitors' room.

The fellows were going into class again after morning break, and Mr. Levison was stepping into the station cab. Frank was there, saying good-bye to his father. Levison ran up. A few minutes more, and Mr. Levison was gone, and the St. Jim's fellows were in the Form-rooms and Ernest Levison was left alone with his brother. Under the old trees in the quad, walking on the thick fallen leaves, he told Frank what the fag had to know, watching his face anxiously as he told him. But he was soon relieved.

"We've got to stand it, Ernie," said Frank bravely. "It's rough, but we've got to stand it. No good grousing."

"We'll stand it together, kid," said Levison softly.

CHAPTER 10.

Bygones are Bygones!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Levison of the Fourth started.

Well he knew that cheery voice, though it was a long time since he had heard it.

But no one who had once been used to the stentorian tones of Bob Cherry, of Greyfriars, was likely to forget them.

All thoughts in the Lower School at St. Jim's that afternoon—or nearly all—were given to the Greyfriars football match. Racke & Co. and Trimble certainly

gave it no thought, but they were fellows who did not matter. Tom Merry & Co. of the School House, Figgins and his merry men of the New House, were all thinking of beating Greyfriars, and sending Harry Wharton's crowd bootless home. Figgins, who claimed seven places in the team for New House men, and would have been satisfied with six, had had to satisfy himself as much as possible with five. Six School House men were playing, and among them was Levison of the Fourth. And even the New House enthusiasts admitted that Levison, at least, couldn't be spared, after the wonderful show he had put up in the House match a week ago.

It was close on time for the game now, but Levison, in point of fact, was not thinking about it. He had changed for footer, and was walking in coat and muffler with Clive and Cardew. Now that he knew from his father how matters stood, it was time for his friends to know—they had to know that he was leaving. It was painful enough. Levison did not want to leave his best chums—he had many friends at Greyfriars, but he never would have such close pals there as Clive and Cardew had been to him. Such friendships were not easily formed. To leave them, when he left St. Jim's, was the hardest part; and Levison, little as he was used to display emotion of any kind, could not help his brow clouding as he told them, and there was just the slightest uncertainty in his voice.

It was dismaying news to his friends.

"You jolly well shan't go!" said Cardew, almost savagely. "You silly ass, you shan't!"

"We shall miss you frightfully, old chap," said Clive.

"You shan't go!" repeated Cardew. "If your pater's on the rocks, somethin' will have to be done. Bag a scholarship or somethin'. I've heard that Talbot of the Shell had a schol. before his uncle took him up. You've got more brains than all the Shell put together."

Levison smiled.

"Hardly," he said. "But there's no time to think of that, anyhow, old fellow. I'm being quite frank with you—it's a twist for the pater to squeeze out my fee-

up to the half-term, and he hasn't paid up even that yet. I can't hang on."

"Let me ask my grandfather; he would give me twice as much if I asked him—"

Levison made a gesture.

"Oh, blow your pride!" said Cardew bitterly. "Look here, you can't and you shan't go, confound you!"

"I must, old fellow."

"Hang it! I tell you—"

"Levison must go, Cardew," said Sidney Clive quietly. "It's rotten all round, but he must. He has a claim on Greyfriars, but no claim on St. Jim's."

"Rot!" growled Cardew.

"The Head is a good old sport to offer Levison's father what he did; but Mr. Levison was right to decline," said Clive.

"Looks as if you want Levison to go," said Cardew bitterly.

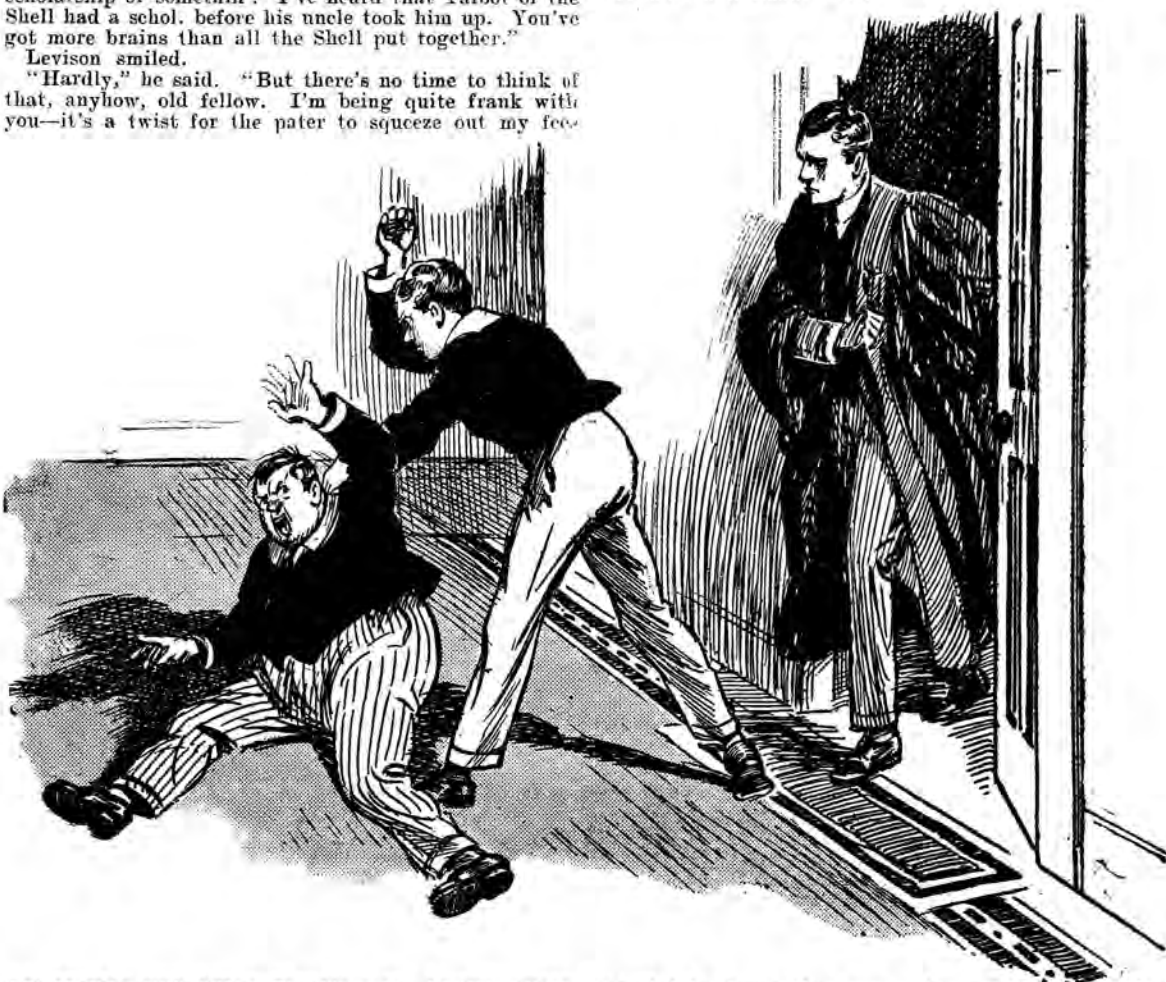
Clive flushed.

"Don't be an ass, old chap! Right is right, even if it hurts. Levison can't stay, and we shall only make it harder for him by grousing."

"Rot!" repeated Cardew. "All because of tattle from a fat snail like Trimble, and a low upstart like Racke of the Shell. What does it matter what such cads think or say?"

"If what they say happens to be true, it matters," said Levison quietly.

"How do you know you won't get the same at Greyfriars?" demanded Cardew. "They're not all angels there, I suppose? If the fellows get hold of the fact that you're there without your fees bein' paid, you'll get from some of them what you've been gettin' from Trimble and Racke here."



Not satisfied with biffing Trimble over, Levison minor proceeded to thump him, apparently regardless of the fact that he was just outside Mr. Ralton's study. The study door opened suddenly, and the Housemaster came upon the amazing scene. (See Chapter 6.)

Levison started a little.

"It's different," he said, after a pause. "The Head thinks I have a claim as a relative of a former Greyfriars master. And my father paid five hundred pounds into the Greyfriars School funds years ago, because old Mr. Thorpe had intended to leave that sum as a bequest to the school. Now he's got to find the money again to satisfy the real heir. That gives us a claim."

"Of course it does," said Clive.

Cardew was silent.

"I suppose you're right, Levison," he said, after a long pause. "It's rather sickenin', but I suppose you will have to go. Anyhow, we meet again in the hols."

"Yes, rather," said Levison. "You can bet on that."

"And somethin' may turn up!" said Cardew hopefully.

"There's just the remotest chance," said Levison. "If my great-uncle's last will could be found, everything would be all right. And unless he left it at Greyfriars, goodness knows what he did with it. If it's shoved away into some cranny there, and I have any luck—"

"A chance in a million!" said Cardew moodily.

"Yes, about that. But better than nothing."

"Oh, it's rotten!"

The three chums strolled on under the trees with moody faces. It was a hard blow to all three of them. Strangely assorted as they were, quite unlike each other in almost every respect, their friendship was deep and sincere; all the more so, perhaps, because they were so unlike.

"When are you goin'?" asked Cardew at last.

"No god hanging it out," said Levison. "The Greyfriars headmaster has offered to let me go at once—to return with the footballers who are coming over here to-day. When a cut has to be made, better make it quick—it hurts less, I think."

"Grasp your nettle, what?" said Cardew, smiling faintly.

"That's it."

"Then you're going to-day?"

"Yes."

"And young Frank?" asked Clive.

"He goes with me, of course."

"Oh, rotten!" growled Cardew.

And again the three chums walked in silence for long, busy—all of them busy—with moody thoughts. It was then that the stentorian tones of Robert Cherry, of the Greyfriars Remove, broke in upon them, and they turned to see the cheery, exuberant Bob.

"Here we are again!" said Bob cheerily. "Have you forgotten there's a footer match on, Levison?"

"My hat! Is it time?" exclaimed Levison.

"Jolly near. I spotted you, and came along to tell you," grinned Bob. "Didn't you know we'd got here yet?"

"I—I'm afraid I was thinking of something else," stammered Levison. "But I'm ready."

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Come on, then!" he said. "I'm glad to find you're in Tom Merry's team, old bean. Levison used to be at my school!" he added, by way of explanation to Cardew and Clive. "We'd be jolly glad to have him back, too."

"I'm sure you mean that, or you wouldn't say it," said Levison, as he walked to the football ground with the Greyfriars junior, Clive and Cardew remaining in the quad.

"Yes, rather," said Bob.

"You may have your wish, then," said Levison.

The Greyfriars junior looked at him.

"You're thinking of coming back?"

"Yes."

"Bravo! Next time we play St. Jim's, then, you'll be on our side, and help us to give them beans!" chuckled Bob. "That's jolly good news, Levison, and all the fellows will be glad to hear it."

Levison's face was brighter as he arrived on Little Side. There was no doubting Bob Cherry's hearty cordiality, and it was something to know that he would be warmly welcomed at his old school.

"Hallo, here you are, Levison!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We're just going on, old man. Feeling fit?"

"Quite!"

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"The jolly old leg all wight, what?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Right as rain."

"We want some more goals like the one you bagged in the House match last week, Levison," said Figgins with a grin.

"That fluke?" smiled Levison.

Figgins coughed.

"Well, it wasn't exactly a fluke," he admitted. "But if it was, put in another like it. We can do with some of those flukes to-day."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

Darrell of the Sixth, who was refereeing the match, arrived on the ground. Harry Wharton, the Greyfriars skipper, tapped Levison on the arm, and the St. Jim's junior looked round at him with a smile.

"I've got a sort of message from the Head, Levison," said the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Yes?"

"It seems that something has happened—I don't know what, and of course don't want to know—but it's made your father change his plans, and you and your young brother are coming to Greyfriars this term."

"That's so," assented Levison, eyeing the captain of the Remove rather curiously.

He had met Wharton many times since leaving Greyfriars, and always on friendly terms; but he could not forget the terms upon which he had been with him in his old Greyfriars days. He wondered what Wharton would think of his coming back to his old school.

If he had any doubts, they were soon relieved. Wharton's manner was cordiality itself.

"Dr. Locke told me that you might be coming back with us to-day," said Harry. "I thought I'd mention that I'll be jolly glad if you do, and I think all the fellows will say the same."

"Thanks very much," said Levison in a low voice. "You're not the fellow to remember old troubles, I know."

"No fear! Bygones are bygones," said Harry. "We're friends, and I hope we shall be good friends at Greyfriars."

"That's certain, if it depends on me."

"Good!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "You fellows gone to sleep, or what? Waiting for you, old beans."

"Coming!"

And the footballers went into the field.

CHAPTER 11.

Back to Greyfriars!

"ON the ball!"

"Play up, St. Jim's!"

There was a big crowd round Little Side.

School House and New House had rolled up in a mob to see the team chosen from both Houses play the visitors. It was a good team—both Houses agreed on that. Not enough New House men in it, one party thought; while the other party considered that there were rather too many New House men in it. But both parties agreed that it was a topping team, and that Greyfriars would have to play a great game if they were going to keep their end up.

Among the swarm of School House men, there were three fags of the Third. Levison minor was not likely to miss his brother's last game for St. Jim's. Wally of the Third and Reggie Manners came along with him. They had intended to spend that afternoon "mucking about," as Wally elegantly expressed it, in old Pepper's boat on old Pepper's pond. But they had learned that Frank was leaving that day with his brother, and at such a time Frank's wish was law. So they came along with him to see Levison of the Fourth cover himself, as Wally put it, with mud and glory.

D'Arcy minor was a little more serious than usual. He did not like the idea of losing Frank. Reggie Manners was quite disturbed at the news for a time. He had presented Frank with his pocket-knife as a parting gift, insisting upon Levison minor accepting it.

It was true that the knife had both blades broken, and that the bone handle was cracked. But Frank accepted the gift in the spirit in which it was offered. And Wally remarked that although the gift of a knife was supposed to cut friendship, Reggie's knife was not likely to have that effect, on friendship or anything else.

It was seldom that the three minors, great pals as they were, were together for any length of time without argument supervening. But on this occasion Wally and Reggie were particularly careful. They were going to cheer Levison's game all the time for Frank's sake, even if he muffed goals and fell over the other fellows; indeed, Wally had warned Manners minor to cheer even if Levison of the Fourth kicked the ball through his own goal. Manners minor promised manfully that he would.

"Play up, St. Jim's!"

"Go it, Levison!" roared Wally.

"Bravo, Levison!" yelled Reggie Manners.

As Levison of the Fourth, at the moment, was nowhere near the ball, this applause was a little mistimed. But it was a proof of friendship, at least.

"Splendid, isn't he?" said Manners minor. Reggie's view of the game was a little obscured by the broad back and shoulders of Grundy of the Shell. But that did not matter. He was there to give Levison of the Fourth his meed of praise for friendship's sake, and he gave it.

"Ripping!" said Wally enthusiastically.

"Never saw such a ripping winger!" said Reggie.

"A regular flyer!" said Wally.

"Bound to bag goals!" said Reggie.

"Oh, bound to!" said Wally.

IMPORTANT!

There's a special story in this week's "MAGNET" which deals with the adventures of Ernest Levison at Greyfriars. Mind you read it, chums.

NOW ON SALE!

"Are you speaking of Tom Merry?" asked Levison minor, puzzled. "He's got the ball, but he's not doing anything special."

"Eh? I was speaking of your brother."

"Good old Levison, you know."

"Wonderful player!"

"Marvellous!"

Grundy of the Shell looked round and down.

"You young asses!" he grunted. "Levison's doing nothing—only lolling about like a stuffed dummy, so far!"

"Oh!"

The fags circumnavigated Grundy of the Shell to get a better view.

But if Wally and Reggie had been a little previous, so to speak, in their praise, they soon had cause for genuine enthusiasm. Levison of the Fourth soon found chances, and he made the most of them. It was Levison who got the ball away from Harry Wharton; and left Bob Cherry lying on his back, and gave Tom Merry a pass just in the nick of time, giving Tom the chance to slam the leather into the visitors' net—a chance that Tom did not miss. There was a roar.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Well done, Levison!"

"Good old Levison!" shrieked Wally, glad of something to yell for at last. "Bravo, Levison! Good man. Oh, good man!"

"Bravo, Levison!" bawled Manners minor.

"That was Tom Merry's goal," said Frank, staring at his enthusiastic chums.

"Oh, was it?" said Reggie. Reggie had been surreptitiously devouring toffee, and had missed the exciting moment of the actual shot.

"Yes, you young ass!"

"But Levison centred jolly well," said Wally, in haste. "Give him another yell!"

"Hurrah!" roared Reggie, forgetting the toffee for the moment, and then remembering it very suddenly as it nearly slipped down his throat. "Grooogh! Ooooooh! Grooooooh! Mooooooocoooooh!"

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Frank.

"Oooooocoooooh! Gug-gug-gug!" gurgled the hapless Reggie.

"There goes Levison!" roared Herries of the Fourth. "Levison's on the ball!" shouted Wally. "Hurrah! Bravo! Cheer him, Reggie, you young ass! Give him a yell! Levison!"

There was a roar round Little Side. Some of the Greyfriars men had wondered what their former school-fellow's game would be like. They knew now as Levison whizzed in the ball, beating Squiff in goal by a foot or more.

"Goal!" roared St. Jim's.

"Bravo!"

"Well kicked, sir—oh, well kicked!"

"Two up for us," said Wally of the Third when the whistle went for the interval. "Looks like a day out for us. They don't know how to play footer at your brother's old school, young Levison!"

"Levison will teach them when he goes back," said Reggie Manners.

Frank grinned.

"They can play all right," he said. "They've had no luck, so far. The game isn't won yet."

Levison minor was right. In the second half Harry Wharton opened the ball with a goal for Greyfriars in the first five minutes, and ten minutes later it was followed up by another taken by the dusky Greyfriars junior, whose striking name was Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The score was level then, and the game went on ding-dong, both sides fighting hard for the deciding goal, and both effectually putting "paid" to one another's efforts.

Greyfriars came gamely through at last; but Fatty Wynn, in goal, drove out the ball once, twice, thrice,

and then Kerr cleared to midfield. Once more the game swayed into the visitors' half.

Wally of the Third looked up at the clock-tower.

"Five minutes to go!" he said. "Anybody's game!"

"What about Levison?" asked Reggie.

"He seems done," grunted Wally.

"Ain't we going to cheer him?" asked Reggie. "Didn't we arrange to cheer him anyhow?"

"Shut up, you young ass!" hissed Wally, with a glance at Frank. But Levison minor only laughed.

"If you have cheers, prepare to shed them now," said Cardew's cool voice behind the fags. "Old Ernest is goin' it!"

Levison of the Fourth had the ball once more, and was speeding down on goal. For a moment or two it looked as if he was going to beat the defence on his own.

"Shoot!" yelled Wally.

"Shoot, you beggar, shoot!" roared Manners minor.

"Cheese it!" muttered Frank, his eyes glued on his brother. "He hasn't an earthly, unless— Oh, splendid! Bravo!"

Levison passed to Talbot of the Shell as Johnny Bull of Greyfriars swept him over. Talbot let Tom Merry have the ball, and Tom ran it in and shot. The Greyfriars custodian was a second too late.

"Goal!"

"St. Jim's wins! Hurrah!"

The whistle rang.

Tom Merry ran up to Levison, who had picked himself up, breathless, and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Good man!" he gasped. "That was really your goal, Levison—you've won the game for us!"

"Goal! Goal!"

"Bravo!"

"St. Jim's wins!" said Wally of the Third. "I told you so, young Manners. Levison ought to have kicked for goal—"

"And lost it!" said Frank. "He ought to have passed, and he did pass, and it was a goal, and Ernest was right."

"Why, you young ass—"

(Continued on page 27.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,031.

CLEARING A MYSTERY! Light is thrown on the mystery surrounding the cowardly attack on Carthew, by Mornington, who is determined to clear Jimmy Silver & Co. of the charge!

The Rookwood Dictator!

By Owen Conquest.



An Amazing School Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Heroes of Rookwood.

Carthew Speaks Out!

"IT'S serious," said Mornington grimly. "Deadly serious! You know that Silver an' his friends are bein' expelled this mornin' for pitchin' into you?"

Carthew nodded grimly in return.

"I want you to think," said Mornington earnestly. "I know you're not on the best of terms with Silver an' the rest of us—but have you ever known us to overstep the mark before?"

"You're a lot of unruly young villains!" granted Carthew.

"Granted. But we're not hooligans. There's a difference," said Morny coolly.

"Well, it's been proved that Silver and Lovell and the others went for me this time!" snapped Carthew irritably.

"I want you to think," repeated Mornington. "I don't believe they did it, for one. Hardly a fellow in the junior school does. How many robed an' cowed figures did you actually see, Carthew?"

The prefect stared. But he answered, after reflection. "Two. I suppose the others were behind somewhere. But they didn't help; Lovell did that too well by himself!"

"You only spotted two," said Mornington musingly. "Did you recognise Lovell as the chap who struck you?"

"How could I, when he wore a mask?"

"My point, you see," went on the Fourth-Former calmly. "You didn't recognise him. Now, think hard. Was there any peculiarity about the man that you can remember? Or about the other fellow you saw?"

"No. Wait a minute. The chap who hit me seemed—well, bigger than myself. But I must have been mistaken—the hooligan didn't give me much time to see anything."

"Bigger than you?" reiterated Mornington, his brows puckered. "Was the other man smaller? The size of a junior, for instance?"

"Yes, so far as I can recollect."

"Now, listen," said Mornington smoothly. "I can't make head nor tail of this yet. But it's growin' plainer an' plainer that we haven't caught the real culprits. Silver & Co. say that they went picnicin' that afternoon—"

"Lies!"

"They met one man who could prove their alibi—and they ragged the life out of him!" said Mornington.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,031.

Carthew's brows lifted.

"What man?"

"Fellow callin' himself Captain Punter," answered Mornington.

"By gad!"

Carthew stared. He had forgotten Punter, and the man's threat of vengeance on Jimmy Silver & Co.—on Lovell in particular. Now, those threats stood out in Carthew's mind, and he recalled that the afternoon of the attack had been that on which his fortnight's grace expired. Could Punter possibly—Carthew licked his lips at the thought.

"You know Punter?"

Carthew nodded, hardly realising it.

"On good terms with you?"

Carthew shook his head.

"By gad! You've thought of somethin', Carthew. Out with it, man! Don't you realise that four fellows are bein' branded for the rest of their lives over this—an' that they're innocent?"

"I'm beginning to believe they are," said Carthew, shivering. "I'll tell you—if you'll promise to keep it mum. Promise, both of you?"

"Rely on us!" said Erroll.

Carthew licked his lips and began.

He was beginning to observe dimly, some of the cunning workings of the rascally captain to gain his revenge on the Fistical Four.

And as he unfolded Punter's threats to Mornington and Erroll, their faces showed that they were beginning to see light, too.

Carthew owed Punter money; and Punter was willing to let him off the debt if he could get Jimmy Silver & Co. into his hands. The attempt resulted in a further drubbing for the elegant captain, and deeper animosity towards the Fistical Four. Then Carthew's fortnight of grace had expired, and the captain had not come up to the school. Instead, Carthew had been attacked in the lane, by a fellow bigger than himself, with an assistant. The blame had fallen on Jimmy Silver & Co.—on evidence which, Carthew could see now, could have been "planted" easily enough by the captain's assistant.

Reviewing the whole matter carefully, it did not take the prefect and juniors long to see the plot of the rascally sharper.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood, angered by the persecution of Mark Carthew, a bullying prefect of the Sixth, form a secret organisation called the Fascist Band of Rookwood. In due course, Carthew and his cronies are given the ragging of their lives, the Fascists being careful to cover up their tracks by electing only a few of their numbers to act on each occasion.

Later, Lattrey bumps into Captain Punter, a rascally book-maker, who expounds a scheme to get Jimmy Silver & Co. expelled from Rookwood. Lattrey is forced to fall in with the rascal's wishes, with the result that Carthew is found shortly afterwards, lying stunned in a nearby lane. The discovery of a blood-stained walking-stick points to Lovell as being the guilty party, and he and Jimmy Silver, Baby, and Newcome, all of whom are accused of aiding him, are sentenced to expulsion. An eleventh-hour scheme to save the Fistical Four occurs to Mornington, and in consequence he lures the Head of Rookwood down into the Abbey vaults and then visits the sanatorium to interview Carthew.

(Now read on.)

Mornington drew a deep breath at the end of Carthew's recital.

"There's just one point," he said coolly. "We've got to find the assistant. By gad—Lattrey!"

"We suspected Lattrey before!" ejaculated Erroll. "I don't think there can be much doubt now."

"Wait a minute," interposed Carthew, regaining his nerve. "I'm not in this, remember! What I've told you is in strict confidence. I leave you to find a way out for your friends, Mornington. You can land all the blame on Punter—so long as I get clear."

"That's agreed," said Mornington coolly.

"But how are we going to get proof?" asked Erroll, in perplexity. "What we suspect, or even know, isn't evidence."

"Punter will have to stand the whole racket," remarked Mornington coolly.

"How are you going to make him?" asked Carthew.

"I'm goin' to see him now," answered Mornington, with a cool smile. "He's comin' back with me to tell the Head that he did it—which is all that matters. We can keep you out of it, Carthew—and Lattrey, too, though neither of you deserve it! So long!"

And Mornington and Erroll left the sanatorium.

It was in an agony of doubt that Carthew stared helplessly after them.

Persuading Punter!

"**T**HAT'S the bell for classes," said Erroll, as Mornington and he re-entered the quad.

"I think not!" grinned Morny.

"You mean—"

"No classes for us this mornin'!" grinned Mornington. "We're goin' visitin'—visitin' the estimable Punter in his den!"

"And choke out the truth, what?" chuckled Erroll. "By Jove! We may be able to clear Jimmy Silver and the rest now before the Head's found. Come on, Morny!"

"Bags of time, old bean," remarked Mornington coolly. "Look out—there's Knowles!"

The two juniors dodged behind a convenient elm as the Modern captain walked past.

It would have been disastrous to have been spotted leaving the school just then.

They had learnt much from Carthew—and putting two and two together, there was little doubt in their minds that Captain Punter was the party guilty of the assault on Carthew. All that remained was to find and tax the captain, and to force him to confess. And in the punishment-room the Fistical Four, meanwhile, were merely awaiting the return of Dr. Chisholm to receive sentence of expulsion from Rookwood.

It was not a time to worry over the consequences of "cutting" classes.

"All clear now, Kit," said Mornington coolly. "We've got the mornin' to ourselves now. I happen to know that Dr. Chisholm won't turn up inconveniently."

"What have you done with him, then?" demanded Erroll suspiciously. "I'm beginning to think that you've shut him up in a box-room, or something like it; though even you would hardly have the nerve for that!"

Mornington's eyes glimmered, but he did not reply.

He glanced up and down the lane before leaving the gates.

"Put your best foot forward," he urged. "If we're lucky we'll find Punter at the Bird-in-Hand."

Side by side, Mornington and Erroll swung along the lane. Erroll was thinking hard, trying to fathom the reason for his chum's elation. And Mornington wore a smile of cool satisfaction. He was confident that he was well on the way to clearing Jimmy Silver & Co.

They halted at last, some distance from the disreputable public house known as the Bird-in-Hand. A narrow lane led along the margin of the inn gardens, and down this Mornington drew Erroll.

Peeping through the hedge, Mornington endeavoured to make out if anybody was in the garden. In the old days he had been well known at the Bird-in-Hand, and he knew the precincts like a book.

"By gad, look!"

"What's the matter?"

"The man sittin' at that little table."

Erroll bent his head and peered through the thick hedge.

On a lawn at a little distance was set out a rustic table and chairs, with glasses and a decanter on the table. In one of the chairs reclined a figure—an elegant figure, which Mornington had recognised at once.

Their luck was good. It was Captain Punter, lazily scanning a sporting paper in the sunny summer forenoon.

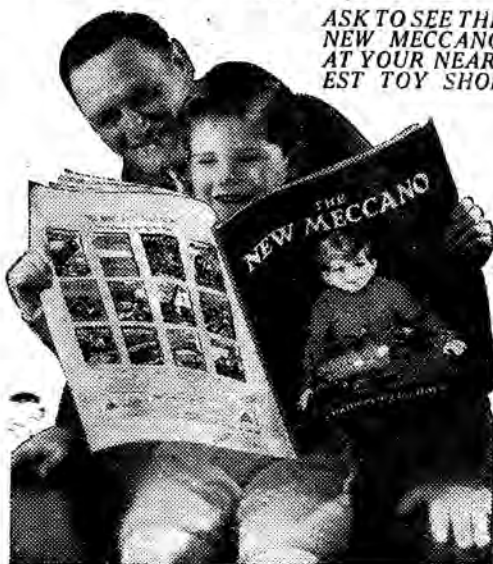
"Punter?" whispered Erroll, his mouth setting.

"The very man. We'll take him by surprise."

(Continued overleaf.)

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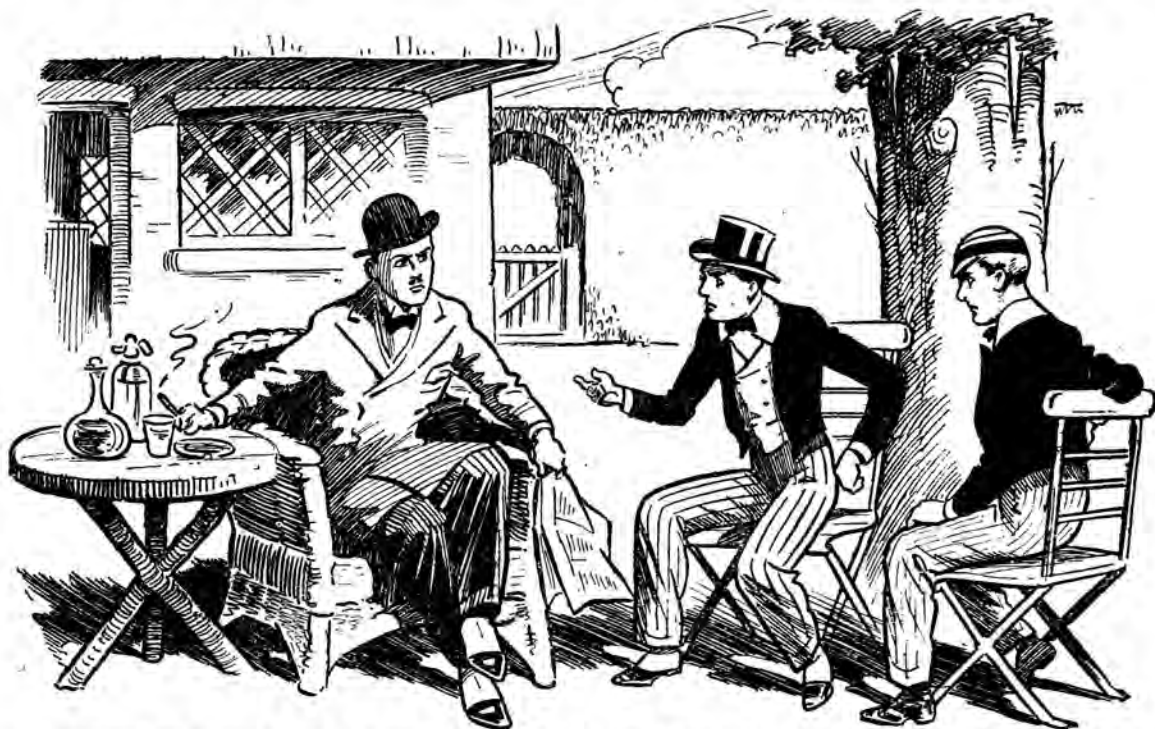
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"I have been having a chat with Carthew," said Mornington coolly. "We discussed the fellow who hit Carthew over the head—discussed him minutely. He was a fellow about your build, Captain Punter!" (See this page.)

Erroll nodded, and Mornington began carefully to part the hedge.

Probably nothing was further from the captain's mind as he sat out on the lawn than a visit from Mornington, of Rookwood. Captain Punter was, for once, in quite a pleasant mood. He had heard from Lattrey that his rascally plan had succeeded—and that the four juniors against whom his enmity was directed were condemned to expulsion. The news that Lovell was first to be flogged had afforded the captain additional satisfaction.

The captain laid down the sporting paper as there were footsteps on the lawn. He glanced up, expecting to see the beery features of Joey Hook, the "bookie."

He stared as he beheld two juniors—both of whom he recognised. Mornington and Erroll had been in the Rookwood Junior Eleven when Punter had trapped them in a barn. On that occasion Mr. Dalton and Bulkeley had arrived in the nick of time, and saved the juniors from a rough handling. Punter recalled that occasion with a scowl.

"What do you want?"

Mornington grinned as the captain half started to his feet.

"Keep cool, old bean! Sit down; we're goin' to."

And the Fourth-Former dropped coolly into a vacant chair; Erroll following suit.

Captain Punter stared angrily, and then dropped back into his own seat. His instinct was to lay hands on the juniors there and then, but he restrained himself. The inn garden was too open.

"Well, what have you come for?" he snapped.

"Matter of fact, I'm on rather a delicate mission," admitted Mornington frankly. "It's about Carthew!"

For a moment Captain Punter changed colour. But his face remained set and apparently calm. Mornington smiled. He had not failed to note that slight sign.

"I've been havin' a chat with Carthew," he went on coolly. "Really, quite an interestin' chat. We discussed the fellow who hit Carthew over the head—discussed him minutely. He was a fellow about your build, Captain Punter."

Punter returned the junior's keen gaze calmly enough. He was prepared for what might come now.

"You're talking in riddles to me, young man," he answered. "What's this concerning Carthew? You say he has been knocked on the head? What makes you think I have anything to do with it?"

"It's no good pretendin' innocence," said Mornington grimly. "Carthew is recoverin'—and he told me a lot that

the beaks don't know yet. He told me about your offer to let him off his debt if he would land Jimmy Silver & Co. in your net. If you're willing to forgo twenty pounds for revenge, you'd do almost anything that occurred to you. An' it occurred to you that by gettin' a fellow to bag Lovell's stick—Lattrey, for instance—

"Lattrey! Has he—"

The captain broke off.

But it was too late.

His sudden alarm at the thought of Lattrey revealing his scheme had not been suppressed in time.

His eyes glinted as Mornington went on calmly.

"You arranged with Lattrey to bag Lovell's stick an' use it to put Carthew on the injured list. You got Lattrey to put robes an' crows into Silver and his chums' boxes, to make it appear conclusive. You intended to get Lovell an' Silver an' the others chucked out of Rookwood on their necks, Captain Punter!"

The captain bit his lip.

"What proof have you to offer?" he sneered.

"None—only a jolly lot of suspicious circumstances. An' it happens that I know Jimmy Silver an' his pals—an' they're above suspicion in a case of this kind. It's clear enough in my mind that you're the man, Punter."

"What's clear in your mind isn't evidence!" snapped Punter coolly. "Tell the masters, and go to blazes! They won't believe you—and I shall deny every word!"

Erroll glanced at Mornington rather uncertainly.

As far as that went, the captain was right.

If he chose to deny all knowledge of the affair, there was not an atom of proof—only the knowledge that came from faith in the Fistical Fear. And there was no doubt regarding Punter's course.

But Mornington did not appear dismayed. On the contrary, he was smiling.

"Dear old bean. You think that settles it, Punter?"

"It does!" snapped the captain coolly.

"Not quite, if you'll hear me out. We suspect you—and we can rake up a lot of suspicious circo against you. An' I suppose you haven't got any too delicate a character—what? Silver an' his pals have a good record to fall back on. The Head won't listen to any more argument—"

"Then, what's the use of this?" grinned Punter.

"But the police may," went on Mornington, with the utmost coolness. "I'm goin' straight to the police now—to tell them everythin' I know!"

(Look out for the concluding chapters of this grand serial next week.)

LEVISON'S LAST DAY!

(Continued from page 23.)

"I tell you—"

"Look here— I—I—I mean, quite right!" stammered Wally. "Of course, Ernest was right—bless Ernest! Right as rain! He ought to have passed, and he did pass, and everything in the garden was lovely. You're a young duffer to think that Levison ought to have shot for goal, Reggie."

"Why, it was you who said—" gasped Reggie.

"Oh, don't argue!" said Wally. "What a chap you are for arguing, young Manners—never saw anybody like you for it."

"But you said—"

"Give us a rest, kid—arguing away like an old hen, and on Frank's last day here, too," said Wally severely. "I'm surprised at you. Let's go and get some ginger-pop—I'm quite husky with cheering Levison major's marvellous play."

"All the same, it was you said—"

"Shut up!" roared Wally.

And Manners minor shut up at last, and the three fags adjourned to the tuckshop for ginger-beer, after which Wally and Reggie went with Frank to help him pack his box. Meeting Trimble of the Fourth on the way, they kicked Trimble, and felt all the better for it, and Wally of the Third solemnly promised Frank that he would kick Trimble every day for the rest of the term. No doubt it was fortunate for Baggy that memories in the Third were short.

Tom Merry & Co. gathered in a crowd to see the Greyfriars fellows off when they went, and, still more, to give Levison of the Fourth a send-off. In the brake

that was to take Harry Wharton & Co. to the station Levison and his minor had places, and the crowd that rolled up to bid them adieu was a demonstration of the estimation in which they were held at St. Jim's. Racke of the Shell was in the crowd, with Mellish of the Fourth, and they sneered—or were supposed to sneer. Anyhow, they were collared and bumped and rolled away, and escaped in a dishevelled and breathless state, their pleasure on the occasion quite spoiled. "You've got to find that blinkin' old will and come back somehow!" were Cardew's last words to Levison of the Fourth.

Levison nodded and smiled.

"Good-bye, old chap, till the hols," said Clive, with a grasp of the hand. "Keep your pecker up, and don't forget St. Jim's."

"Not likely," said Levison.

"Good-bye, old bean!" said Tom Merry. "We'll see you when we come over for the return match—what?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Best of luck!" said Talbot of the Shell.

It was quite an ovation for Levison of the Fourth; but he was glad when the parting was over and the brake rolled away from St. Jim's. He glanced at his brother. Ernest Levison was going back to his old school, but Greyfriars was a strange school to Frank. He pressed the fag's arm.

"Keep smiling, kid."

"Yes, rather!" said Frank resolutely.

As the brake rolled over the hill in Rylcombe Lane Levison looked back, his last look at St. Jim's, the grey old walls glimmering in the sunset. Would he ever see the school again—tread the old quad and the passages, join in the cheery chat in the changing-room—or was this his last farewell to St. Jim's?

He wondered!

THE END.

THE FACS OF THE THIRD IN THE LIMELIGHT!

Young Wally D'Arcy of the Third Form at St. Jim's thinks the world of his mongrel terrier, Pongo, and, doubtless, Pongo reciprocates his youthful master's affection. All the same for that, Pongo is a rare one for getting into mischief—and dragging Wally into it after him! Certainly Pongo's latest escapade brings a whole heap of trouble to Wally D'Arcy. Just what that trouble is, and all the exciting events that lead up to it, make excellent reading in next week's extra long school story which is entitled:

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