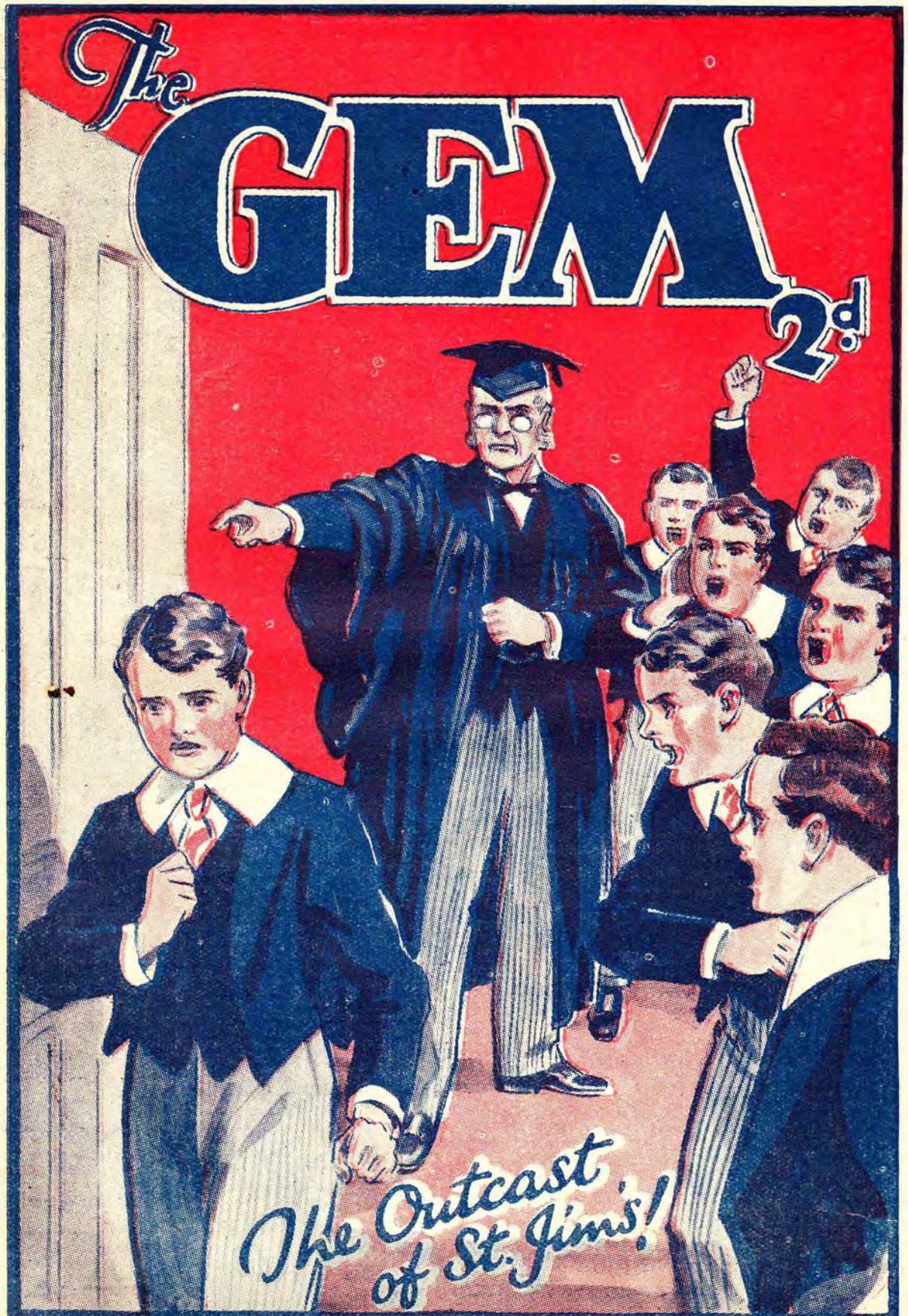


LOOKING FOR THE BEST SCHOOL STORIES? LOOK INSIDE!



The OUTCAST of ST JIM'S!



The sight of Brooke walking across the quad as if he had never been expelled, followed by Harthur, the vagrant, came as a surprise to the juniors. "Get out, you cad!" shouted Levison.

CHAPTER 1.

Good Dog!

"YOW! Help!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell were lounging in the old gateway of St. Jim's, talking football, when that loud yell came ringing across the road.

"Yow-ow! Help!"

"That's Levison of the Fourth," growled Monty Lowther. "Let him yell. I dare say he's only trying to pull our giddy leg."

Tom Merry looked out into the road. The long white road ran past the walls of the school to Rylcombe, and on the other side were the deep woods, separated from the road by a paling and a wide ditch. Some distance from the gates of St. Jim's a plank crossed the ditch, giving access to a footpath through the wood. It was from that direction that the yell for help had come.

"Oh! Help! Rescue, St. Jim's!"

"Better go, I think," said Tom Merry. "If he's pulling our leg we'll jolly well bump him! But it sounds as if he's in trouble."

Monty Lowther, who was leaning against the old stone arch, with his hands in his pockets, did not trouble to move.

"If he's in trouble, he's got himself into it," he said. "Let that cad alone!"

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Tom Merry hesitated.

Lowther was quite right; Levison, the cad of the Fourth, was frequently enough in trouble, and he had his own crooked ways to thank for it. But as Tom Merry hesitated there came a fresh yell from the wood.

"Help!"

"I'll go," said Tom Merry. "After all, he's a St. Jim's chap, and it may be the Grammarians bumping him."

"Serve him right if they are!" said Monty Lowther lazily.

Tom Merry ran out into the road. Manners and Lowther detached themselves from the stone arch, and their hands from their pockets, and grunted, and followed him. They did not like Levison, and he might have shouted himself hoarse without inducing them to take the trouble to see what was the matter; but as their clum went, they grumbled and went, too.

Tom Merry ran down the dusty road to where the plank crossed the wide ditch, and ran across it into the wood.

The deep growl of a dog struck his ears as he came into the trees. It was followed by a frenzied yell from Levison of the Fourth.

"Help, help, help!"

"My hat!" muttered Tom Merry. "There must be something wrong."

He dashed up the footpath. The deep growl was repeated, and it guided Tom Merry to the spot.

He turned from the footpath and came into a glade through the thickets. A strange scene burst upon his view.

Levison lay upon his back in the grass, his face white with terror. A huge dog was standing over him, and at every movement Levison made the great animal opened his jaws and showed his teeth and growled. He was evidently guarding Levison, and there was no escape for the cad of the Fourth.

A lad of about Tom Merry's age, in ragged garments, with a ragged cap on the back of his head, sat under a tree, looking at the scene with a grin. The boy was evidently a tramp. A bundle tied in a coloured handkerchief and attached to a stick lay at his feet, and he was eating bread and cheese, cutting same with a pocket-knife.

"Guard 'im, Buster!" said this youth cheerfully. "Don't let 'im get away! That's right. If 'e gets up, nip 'im!"

Buster growled as if to show that he understood.

Tom Merry burst into the glade, and the youth with the bread and cheese started and looked at him warily.

"My eye! 'Ere's another of 'em!" he ejaculated.

Tom Merry halted. There was something about the open and frank face of the tramp that he liked, and he knew enough of Levison to know that the St. Jim's fellow was very likely the one in fault.

—ANOTHER GREAT YARN OF THE POPULAR CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"What's the row here?" asked Tom. "There ain't any row, 'cept wot your friend's making," said the youth cheerfully. "I'm all right."

"He's not my friend," said Tom Merry, "but he belongs to our school."

"Well, I shouldn't think much of you if he was your friend," said the youth. "I wouldn't own a pal like that—no fear!"

"Help!" yelled Levison, rising a little. "Don't stand talking to that tramping cad, Tom Merry! Get this beast away!"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

Buster growled fiercely as Levison moved, and the cad of the Fourth subsided into the grass again, shivering with terror.

"Quite a merry scene!" said Monty Lowther, as he came through the thickets with Manners. "Two to one that you began the trouble, Levison—and you certainly seem to have bitten off more than you can chew!"

"Ow! Help!"

"Who are you, my cheerful young friend?" went on Monty Lowther, looking curiously at the stranger, who was eating his bread and cheese unconcernedly.

"I'm Harthur," he said.

"Oh, you're Arthur, are you?" grinned Monty Lowther. "Anything else?"

"No; jest Harthur. I'm lookin' for work," explained the youth, with one cheek bulging out with bread and cheese as he talked. "I'm on tramp, looking for a job. They told me over at Wayland that there was work round 'ere, and I'm lookin' for it. I was sittin' down 'ere—me and Buster—to 'ave my dinner, when this feller comes an' horders me horf. So I puts 'im on the floor and sends Buster to guard 'im."

And Harthur impaled a fresh lump of cheese upon the end of his pocket-knife and transferred it to his mouth.

The Terrible Three burst into a roar.

"You've got what you asked for, Levison," said Monty Lowther. "What did you order him off for? This wood is free to everybody."

"I told him we don't want any dirty tramps round here," said Levison furiously. "If you had any decency you'd kick him out of the place with his dog!"

"I don't see that we're called upon to interfere," said Tom Merry. "You were a rotten cad to order this chap away when he has as much right here as you have. You can stick it out now."

"You—you coward!"

"Oh, shut up! Tell the chap you're sorry you acted like a cad and a rotter, and perhaps he'll let you off."

"Ready and willing," said Harthur.

"I won't!" yelled Levison. "And I'll have him locked up! He's a dangerous character, and this dog is a dangerous beast! I'll—I'll—"

The sound of a bell came faintly from the direction of the school.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "There goes the tinkler for afternoon lessons. Come on—we shall get lined."

"Don't leave me here!" shrieked Levison. "Get this dog away."

Tom Merry hesitated.

"Buster!"

Harthur whistled, and called the dog, and the animal trotted over to him. Levison rose to his feet. He shook his fist savagely at the boy tramp.

"I'll make you pay for this!" he

snarled. "I'll have you arrested, you vagrant! I'll have you—"

"You'll 'ave Buster arter you if you don't clear!" said Harthur cheerfully.

And Levison took the hint and cleared. The Terrible Three followed him, laughing, leaving Harthur to finish his lunch in the wood. At the gates of St. Jim's Levison paused to cast a bitter look at the chums of the Shell.

"You—you rotters!" he muttered. "You couldn't stand by me to give that cad a licking. You were afraid of the dog, I suppose—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry. "We wouldn't stand by you, or anybody else, to bully a chap, whatever he happened to be. It would have served you right if he'd licked you with that stick; he could have done it easily enough. You'd better grow a little more pluck before you start in business as a bully. Go and eat coke!"

And the Terrible Three rushed off to the Shell Form Room, and got in just in time. Levison, with a scowling face,

Expelled in disgrace—the despised outcast of all his school-fellows! It's a shattering blow Fate suddenly deals to honest Dick Brooke! Yet there is one junior at St. Jim's who knows he is innocent of the crime of which he is accused—but that one junior is his enemy, who has schemed for his downfall.

went to the Fourth Form Room, dusty as he was, but he was not so quick as the Terrible Three, and he was late for class.

CHAPTER 2.

Trouble in the Fourth!

THE Fourth-Formers looked round as Levison came into the Form-room. Little Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, glanced up from his desk.

"You are late, Levison!"

"I'm sorry, sir. I was delayed in the wood, sir; a tramp set a dog on me," said Levison.

"Dear me! Very well, go to your place."

Levison went to his place and sat down between Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Dick Brooke. He was looking dusty and heated, and extremely ill-tempered. Arthur Augustus gave him a sympathetic look. D'Arcy was not on good terms with the cad of the Fourth, but he felt that Levison was to be sympathised with in this case. D'Arcy had had his own little troubles with Herries' bulldog, Towser.

"Hard cheese, deah boy!" he whispered. "Did the beast teah your tuousals?"

"No, he didn't," said Levison.

"I suppose you wan away?" said D'Arcy.

"I couldn't," said Levison; "the beast had me down! But I'll make him smart for it. I'll get the brute shot somehow."

"Weally, Levison, that would be wathah wuff. I could not approve of havin' a dog shot, you know."

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Levison—"

"Shut up!"

Arthur Augustus' eyes gleamed. He felt that he had wasted his sympathy upon Levison.

"You uttah wottah!" he said. "Now I reflect upon it, I dare say you were entirely to blame. I wemembah you tormentin' Hewwies' dog, by pokin' a bwoom at him in his kennel. A wottah who does that deserves all he gets! You agwee with me, Bwooke, deah boy?"

"Yes, rather!" said Brooke. "I should certainly want to know who started the row before I wasted any sympathy on Levison."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Jack Blake, from the desk in front.

Levison scowled savagely.

"Oh, you'd naturally stand up for a charity cad!" he said to Brooke. "Birds of a feather, of course."

Brooke flushed red.

"If we weren't in the Form-room, Levison—"

Little Mr. Lathom's voice broke in.

"No talking in the class, please!"

And the mutter of voices died away.

Levison's eyes were glinting. He had an unsatisfied longing for vengeance upon the youthful tramp, and he was filled with spite towards Tom Merry & Co., and his own Form-fellows. Brooke of the Fourth was the special object of his aversion. Brooke was a day-boy at St. Jim's, and it was known that he worked in the evenings at home to help pay his fees at the school; a fact which Levison and fellows of his kind regarded as casting a reflection upon themselves. Certainly Levison never did any work if he could help it; and his exercises were the most slovenly in the Form, with the possible exception of Percy Mellish's.

Yet Levison was certainly clever enough when he chose to exert himself. He was clever enough to lead less keen-witted boys into trouble, and to contrive that if there were unpleasant results, they seldom fell upon himself. Which is one reason why Levison was not popular in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

He sat and listened with a sneer upon his face while Dick Brooke construed, and received a word of praise from the Form-master when he finished. When Levison was called upon to construe, he was far from making so good a show, and he was given fifty lines as a reminder that school was a place for work as well as play.

He sat down again, scowling, and he cast a venomous glance at Brooke.

"Fifty lines for me, and a pat on the back for you," he growled, under his breath. "It's all rotten favouritism!"

Brooke glanced at him.

"It's nothing of the sort, and you know it," he said. "I've worked, and you haven't—that's the difference!"

"Don't talk to me, you beggar!" muttered Levison, between his teeth.

Brooke's eyes gleamed.

"That's the second fancy name you've given me," he said, in a low voice. "I'll ask you to say it over again when the Form's dismissed."

"You are talking again!" said Mr. Lathom, stopping Digby in his construing, and turning with a frown towards the place in the Form where the speaker sat. "Who was that talking?"

"It was I, sir," said Brooke.

"Indeed! I'm surprised at you, Brooke. You know that you should not interrupt the work of the class in this way," said Mr. Lathom reprovingly. "To whom were you speaking?"

"Levison, sir," said Brooke reluctantly.

"It is very curious that you cannot keep what you have to say to Levison until the class is dismissed," said Mr. Lathom, who was really irritated. "The Form-room is not the place to hold conversations."

"I am sorry, sir!"

"What were you saying to Levison?"

Brooke was silent.

Mr. Lathom frowned.

"Levison, what was he saying to you?"

Levison's eyes glinted maliciously.

"I'd rather not tell you, if you don't mind, sir," he said.

Mr. Lathom's brow grew stern.

"I have already told you to tell me, Levison!" he exclaimed sharply. "Tell me at once, or I shall cane you!"

"Well, sir, Brooke was threatening me."

"What!"

"He—he was saying what he was going to do to me when class was dismissed, sir," said Levison. "I didn't want to tell you, sir."

Mr. Lathom fixed his eyes upon Brooke.

"Is that correct, Brooke?" he asked coldly.

Brooke's face was crimson.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Indeed! And do you think that is the proper conduct in the Form-room, Brooke?"

"N-no, sir."

"You will take fifty lines, Brooke! And you will write them before you go home to-day," said the Form-master.

"Very well, sir."

"You may go on, Digby."

Digby went on. Levison turned a triumphant grin upon Brooke, who was sitting with a downcast and troubled face.

"You've got it in the neck this time, you cad!" he murmured. "So much for your swooning and crawling up to the Form-master."

"Hold your tongue, confound you!" muttered Brooke angrily.

Mr. Lathom swung round sharply.

"Did you speak again, Brooke?"

Brooke started. He had not expected the Form-master to hear that faint murmur; and he was caught. He could not explain how Levison had drawn him.

"Yes, sir," he faltered.

"This is deliberate impertinence, Brooke! If lines will not keep you quiet in class, I shall have to cane you. Come out here!"

Brooke rose reluctantly from his place. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy nudged Levison as Brooke went out before the Form.

"Get up, Levison!"

"What do you mean?" muttered Levison. "Dry up!"

"Tell Mr. Lathom that you spoke to Brooke first. Brooke won't tell him."

"Oh, ring off!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a scornful look at Levison, rose in his place.

"Pwaw excuse me, Mr. Lathom, sir."

"Sit down, D'Arcy!"

"Certainly, sir!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat down, but he did not leave off speaking. "If you will allow me to explain, sir—"

"D'Arcy!"

"Yass, sir. Bwooke was not to blame, sir. He only answered anothah fellow who spoke to him first, sir."

"Shut up, you cad!" muttered Levison fiercely.

"I feel it my duty to acquaint you with that fact, sir, before you cane Bwooke," said the swell of St. Jim's.

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Mr. Lathom lowered his cane as he was about to use it.

"Did you answer some boy who had spoken to you first, Brooke?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir," said Brooke.

"You should have told me so. Who was the boy?"

Brooke was silent.

"Was it you, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir."

"Then who was it?"

"I would wathah not say, sir, as it would amount to sneakin'. But as Bwooke was not to blame in the mattah, sir—"

"You may go back to your place, Brooke," said Mr. Lathom, laying down his cane upon the desk. "If there is any more talking, I shall detain the whole class an hour."

And there was no more talking in class that afternoon.

CHAPTER 3.

Levison Seeks Revenge!

DICK BROOKE glanced at Levison as the Form filed out after lessons were over. He had a strong desire upon him to punch Levison's head, but it was impossible just then.

He had fifty lines to write out, and he had to stay in the Form-room until they were written. Levison gave him a sneering grin as he passed.

Mr. Lathom paused a moment to speak to the detained junior after the Form had gone.

"You will write out your lines, and leave them on my desk, Brooke," he said. "As soon as they are done you may go."

"Yes, sir," said Brooke quietly.

Mr. Lathom left the Form-room and closed the door. Dick Brooke remained alone in the big, silent room. Outside in the sunny quadrangle he could hear the voices of the juniors. Brooke's heart was heavy as he sat at his desk, with his pen driving away at his lines.

He was wanted at home, and as he was seldom detained, he had not supposed that he would be late at the school that evening. More responsibilities than usually fall to the lot of boys of his age had fallen upon the young shoulders of Dick Brooke. At home, in the old rambling house on Wayland Moor, which was all that remained of the property that had once belonged to the family, his mother and sister were waiting for him. Where his father was he was not likely to know.

If Mr. Brooke had any money, he was probably at the Red Cow in Rylcombe, or in a billiards-room in Wayland. And if he had no money he was probably hanging moodily about the house, discontented, and a trouble to himself and everybody else. Or, perhaps, if he was in a cheerful humour, he was laying great plans for restoring the fortunes of the family.

Dick sighed as he thought of his father, whom he loved and respected, in spite of his many failings.

Outside, through the open Form-room window, came the sound of a voice. It was the voice of the cad of the Fourth.

"You and Crooke and Foxe can come with me," Levison was saying. "I believe we can find the fellow, and give him a good hiding."

Brooke wondered whom the Fourth Form cad was speaking of. The voice of Mellish of the Fourth replied:

"Can't be done! I've got fifty lines to do for old Schneider!"

"Oh, rats! I'll do your lines!"

"I've got a hundred to do for Railton," said the voice of Foxe of the Fourth. "The beast caught me smoking last night, and handed 'em out to me. If they're not done to-day they'll be doubled."

"I'll do yours as well as Mellish's."

"Yes; that's all very well for old Schneider, but it's different with Railton," said Foxe. "Railton knows the difference between one list and another."

"Oh, I can work that all right!"

"Well, if you do the lines, then—"

The voices drifted away. Brooke was writing steadily. Line after line, in a clear and firm hand, ran from his steady pen. The fifty were done at last, and he rose with a sigh of relief. He left his Form, and placed the sheets upon Mr. Lathom's desk, as he had been told, and placed a book over them to keep them in their place, ready for the Form-master's eye in the morning.

Then he quitted the Form-room.

Brooke hurried out of the gates of St. Jim's, and crossed the road into the footpath through the wood. It was a short cut home to the house near Wayland where he lived.

The path through the wood was very lonely, and was generally avoided after dark, but Dick Brooke was used to it. He went along at a run, to make up for lost time, and his footsteps made no sound upon the grassy path.

He had crossed the wood, and was in sight of the open spaces of Wayland Moor, when a sudden sound burst upon his ears. A shrill, sharp voice came ringing through the thickets.

"Let me alone, you cowards! Leggo! You wouldn't dare to touch me if my dog Buster was 'ere!"

"Hold the cad, you fellows!"

It was Levison's voice.

Dick Brooke frowned darkly. He remembered the words that had floated in to his ears from the quad when he was writing out his lines in the Fourth Form Room. He paused, and turned from the path in the direction of the voices.

There was the sound of a struggle, and a heavy fall, and then a wild scrambling, and a choking voice crying out.

Dick Brooke ran through the thickets, his fists clenched and his eyes blazing, and caught sight of a ragged lad sprawling on the ground, with three fellows in St. Jim's caps holding him down.

CHAPTER 4.

A Licking for Levison!

LEVISON & CO. did not hear the approach of the newcomer. They were too busily engaged.

For Harthor, though he was only one against three, was giving a considerable amount of trouble to Levison, Mellish, and Foxe.

"Pin the cad down!" said Levison, between his teeth. "I'll make him smart now! Lucky we caught him without that rotten dog with him."

"We've got him!" grinned Mellish.

"What are you going to do with him?"

"Bump the cad!" suggested Foxe.

"I'm going to make the cad understand that it will be better for him to keep away from St. Jim's," said Levison, with a savage grin. "I've got a dogwhip here. You chaps roll him over and hold him down while I lick him."

"Lemme alone!" came a gurgling cry from Harthor. "Lemme alone, I say! I ain't done nothin'!"

"Kneel on the brute, and don't let him wriggle."

"Right-ho!"



A strange scene burst upon Tom Merry's view as he ran into the glade. Levison lay in the grass, with a big dog growling at him. Seated under a tree, coolly eating bread and cheese, was a youth in ragged clothes. "Guard 'im, Buster," said the vagrant. "Don't let 'im get away."

Levison raised the dogwhip. Before he could bring it down Dick Brooke came bursting through the thickets, his fists clenched and his eyes blazing with indignation. Levison started at the sight of him. Brooke ran straight at the cad of the Fourth with his fists up.

"Keep back!" muttered Levison, gripping the whip harder. "Keep back, or—"

Brooke did not heed him. He rushed right on, hitting out and receiving the lash of the whip across the face almost without feeling it. His knuckles crashed upon Levison's nose, and the cad of the Fourth went backwards into the grass with a thump.

"Let that kid alone!"

Brooke's voice rapped out sharply.

Mellish and Foxe, looking exceedingly suspicious, released Harthar and rose to their feet, exchanging uneasy glances.

"It's—it's all right!" muttered Mellish, backing away. "We—we weren't going to hurt him, you know. It's only a lark."

"Don't tell lies! You were going to lick him, three to one!"

"I—I—I—"

Harthar scrambled to his feet and picked up his stick, which lay in the grass.

Mellish and Foxe disappeared into the thickets. Levison, as he staggered to his feet, found that both his associates had gone.

He would gladly have followed them, but he was not to escape so easily. Dick Brooke sprang into his path.

"Let me pass!" said Levison, in a voice choking with passion. "Let me pass, you hound!"

"Put up your hands!"

"I'm not going to fight you!"

"You are!" snapped Brooke. "You picked a quarrel with me in class, and got me detained, and weren't decent enough to own up to it. Now you are disgracing the school, and I'm going

to show this chap that there are some fellows belonging to St. Jim's who aren't bullies and cowards. I'm going to lick you, or you're going to lick me."

"You charity cad—"

"That's enough! Put up your hands!"

And as Brooke advanced upon him with clenched fists Levison had no choice about putting up his hands.

He put them up quickly, and in a moment more the two juniors were fighting furiously.

Harthar stood and looked on, grinning.

"Go it!" he said. "My hey! This is as good as a circus!"

Levison was bigger than Dick Brooke, and rage, but not courage, stimulated him. He fought very hard, and Brooke received a good deal of punishment. But he gave more than he received. It was but seldom that Brooke, the quietest and most peaceable fellow in the Fourth, lost his temper, but he had lost it now. He hammered Levison till it seemed to the cad of the Fourth that the trees were spinning round him.

"Urrah!" shouted Harthar. "Pile in! Go it, my pippins! My hey, if this ain't great!"

Thud!

A heavy right-hander sent Levison crashing into the grass at last, and he lay there, gasping and blinking, and unable to rise.

Dick Brooke, panting for breath, stood looking down upon him, his face aflame, his eyes ablaze.

"Have you had enough, you cad?"

Levison groaned. It was only too evident that he had had enough.

"Oh! Ow! Groo! Yes, hang you! Let me alone!"

Dick dabbed his nose with his handkerchief. It came away very red.

"Very well," he said. "I'll let you alone if you've had enough. Get out!"

Levison rose painfully to his feet

and stood regarding Brooke with a look of steady hate. All the malice in his spiteful nature seemed to be in his face.

"I—I'll make you pay for this!" he stammered. "I'll get you kicked out of the school. You hear, you cad? I'll—I'll—"

Brooke clenched his hands again. "If you don't want some more you'd better clear," he said savagely.

And Levison, with one last look of hatred, tramped into the wood, and the trees hid him from sight.

Dick Brooke turned towards the lad he had rescued from the hands of the ragers.

Harthar grinned at him cheerfully. "I hope they haven't hurt you, kid," said Brooke.

The youthful tramp shook his head.

"I ain't 'urt," he said. "I reckon I should have been, though, if you 'adn't took a 'and. I'm very much obliged to yer. Do you belong to the same school as them blokes?"

Brooke nodded.

"Then it's very good of you to chip in like this for me," said Harthar.

"You're a gentleman, you are, sir! As for them blokes—" Harthar sniffed to express his opinion of Levison & Co. "I'll wallop any one of them, but they had me three together, and Buster wasn't 'ere."

"Who's Buster?" asked Brooke, with a smile.

"My dorg, Buster is," Harthar explained. "I've 'ad a job in Wayland this arternoon, and I 'ad to leave Buster. That's 'ow they caught me nappin'. My name's Harthar. Wot might yours be, sir?"

"Brooke—Dick Brooke."

"I won't forget that," said Harthar. "If ever I can do anythin' for you, sir, you'd only 'ave to say so. You live at the school, I s'pose?"

Brooke shook his head.

"No; I'm a day-boy. I live at home

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near Wayland. If you're going my way, you'd better walk a bit with me, in case those cads are hanging about."

"Glad to," said Harthar, "if you don't mind."

"Why should I mind?"

Harthar glanced down at his ragged clothes and grinned.

"I ain't exactly a toff," he explained.

Brooke laughed.

"Well, I'm not a toff, either. Never mind that. Come on, if you're going this way."

"Thank you kindly, sir."

And Dick Brooke and his queer new friend walked on together from the wood into the moor. Harthar explained that he was "dossing," as he called it, at Stayne, a village over the moor, where he had left his dog.

"You'll have to pass my home to get there," said Brooke. "There it is."

Harthar glanced at the rambling old house in the distance, half in ruins, with patches of trees round it, and a portion of the garden carefully cultivated.

"You live there?" he said. "Long walk to the school, ain't it?"

"Yes; it seems a long way in winter, but in summer it's jolly pleasant going through the wood," said Brooke. "I don't get too much exercise, and the walk does me good. Are you on tramp down here?"

"That's it!" said Harthar. "I'm tryin' the country for the summer; better'n knocking round stations in London carryin' parcels, and gettin' more cuffs than ha'pence. What do you think?"

"I suppose so," said Brooke.

"Oh, it's all right in the summer," said Harthar. "I get a barn to sleep in sometimes, and sometimes hunder a haystack."

"If you want shelter when you pass this way you can always drop in here," said Brooke, with a nod towards the house they were approaching.

Harthar chuckled.

"That's kind of you, sir; but I s'pose p'raps your people wouldn't be glad to see a visitor like me."

"Oh, that's all right! You can drop into the barn there, or one of the sheds," said Brooke. "They're never used now."

"Thank you kindly, sir. P'raps I will, sometime, if you don't mind, if I stay round this place. 'Ere's your gate. Good-bye, sir, and thank you for what you've done!"

"That's all right. Good-night!"

Dick Brooke stood at the garden gate a minute or two, looking at the tramp as he marched on over the moor, whistling cheerily. The boy was certainly in a bad way, so far as worldly goods went, but he seemed cheerful enough.

Life was not easy for Dick Brooke, but he realised that there were many degrees of hardship between his lot and that of Harthar.

A young girl came down the garden path, and greeted the Fourth Former of St. Jim's with a bright smile.

Dick's face lighted up as he turned towards her.

"I'm late, Amy. I was detained, worse luck!"

"You detained, Dick?" said his sister in great surprise.

Brooke laughed.

"It wasn't really my fault," he said.

"It was bad luck; but—"

"You've been fighting, Dick?" said Amy Brooke.

"Well, yes; and that detained me, too. Is my face very bad?" asked

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Brooke anxiously. "I don't want the mater to see if it is."

"Slip up to your room and bathe it first, then," said Amy. "Your nose is quite swollen and very red."

"Right-ho, Amy old girl!"

And the brother and sister went up the garden path together.

CHAPTER 5.

Glyn's Invisible Ink!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY quitted Study No. 6 and walked along the passage.

The last study in the Shell passage belonged to Bernard Glyn, Noble, and Clifton Dane. The latter two juniors were not likely to be there now. Bernard Glyn was an enthusiastic inventor, and when he was busy upon an experiment he usually shut the study door and locked it, and his study-mates might rage for hours in the passage without the slightest chance of getting in.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tapped at the study door, and found it locked. He tapped again and called through the keyhole.

"Glyn deah boy—"

"Buzz off! I'm nearly finished! Don't jaw!"

"But I want to ask you to tea—"

"Rats!"

"P'way open the door, deah boy! If you are workin' at an invention I shall be vewy pleased to help."

"Yab!"

After that polite rejoinder there was silence in the study. Arthur Augustus shook the handle of the door. It opened suddenly—so suddenly that the swell of St. Jim's started back.

Bernard Glyn gave a whoop.

"I've done it!" he roared.

"Eh?"

"Hurrah!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I've finished it!" Glyn ejaculated.

"Finished what, you fwightful ass?" asked Arthur Augustus, entering the study with Glyn.

"The invisible ink!" grinned the schoolboy inventor. "It's perfect! The best invisible ink that ever was made—though I say it! I'll bring a bottle of it along to your study and show you fellows. It's simply ripping!"

Glyn took up a jar containing liquid, and pointed to a bottle on the table.

"Hold that while I fill it," he said.

"Yaas, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus held up the ink-bottle for Glyn to fill it from the mysterious compound in the jar.

"Steady!" said Glyn.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Glyn began to pour. As the jar had a wide mouth, and no spout, and the ink-bottle a very narrow neck, the task was not easy.

Glyn swamped the liquid over, and it ran in two streams over Arthur Augustus' sleeves as he held the bottle.

There was a yell from the swell of St. Jim's, and a crash as the bottle crashed on the floor.

"Yawooh!"

"You—you ass!" yelled Glyn. "You're wasting my ink! You fearful ass!"

"You dangewous idiot!" panted D'Arcy. "You've soaked my trowsers with the filthy stuff, and wetted my beastly shirtsleeves. I shall have to go and change my clothes now. You are a fwightful idiot!"

And Arthur Augustus tramped out of the study.

Glyn snorted, and selected a fresh

ink-bottle, and filled it very carefully with what was left of his wonderful compound. There was just enough to fill the bottle, and Glyn grunted as he set down the jar on the table.

"The ass! Never mind, this is enough!"

And Glyn corked the bottle, put it into his pocket, and left the study. The stains on his hands and face did not seem to bother him. There generally were some signs of his latest invention about Bernard Glyn.

"Hallo! Where's Gussy?" asked Blake, as the schoolboy inventor entered the study.

The Shell fellow grinned.

"Changing his clothes, I believe. He got some of my invisible ink over him. I say, you chaps, I'm hungry. Didn't you tell me that there were sausages for tea?" asked Glyn, glancing round the table.

"Quite so!" said Blake cheerfully.

"So there were!"

"Well, where are they, then?"

"Gone, my son. You're late. The sausages are done in, but there are some sardines left. Pile into them before Gussy comes back."

Glyn chuckled, and sat down to the tea-table. He made a raid on the sardines, and bolted them at a great rate. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came into the study, newly swept and garnished, so to speak.

"Bai Jove! Where are the sausages?" he asked.

"Gone!" said Blake, with a grin.

"Weally, Blake! Where are the sardines?"

"Gone after the sosses!"

"Bai Jove! You'd bettah make me some toast, then!"

"I'll watch you make it."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"I want to tell you about my latest," said Glyn, finishing the sardines.

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"If it's any more mechanical dogs or men, you're warned off the course!" he exclaimed. "The whole House is fed-up with 'em!"

"It's my invisible ink—"

"You've got some on your chivvy that's visible enough," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Glyn. "That was only in experimenting. Look here! I'll show you how it works, if you'll clear the table!"

"Weally, Glyn, I haven't had my tea—"

"Take it on the coal-locker, or on the mat," said Glyn. "That will be all right."

"I wefuse to do anything of the sort!"

"Well, let's have part of the table," said Glyn cheerfully, shoving back the tea-things, and upsetting two or three cups and saucers. "Look here! This invisible ink is simply ripping. You write your name with it, and after five minutes it fades away."

"Well?"

"And if you want it to become visible again, you can hold it to a fire—"

"Bai Jove! There are lots of invisible inks that will do that," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking round from the fire, where he was making toast. "I've seen lots of fellows usin' them."

"Yes; but my ink is something very special," said Glyn warmly. "Instead of requiring a lot of heat to make it show, the slightest warmth is enough. If you lay the sheet out in the sun for an hour or so, the writing comes up as plain as anything."

"Well, let's see how it works," said

Tom Merry, who, like most boys, was interested in anything of an inventive character. "Got any of it with you?"

"Yes. Got any impot paper here?" "Heaps of it," said Blake. "Brooke keeps his paper here, as he does a lot of his work in this study. He never runs out of things; qucer chap, you know. He's always got pen-nibs with him, and a pencil, and anything."

"Well, hand out some paper, and I'll show you!"

Impot paper galore was laid upon the table before the schoolboy inventor. He took a pen, washed it in the milk-jug, and dried it on the corner of the tablecloth—a proceeding that was watched with mixed feelings by the chums of Study No. 6.

"Now, suppose I write some ordinary sentence—such as 'Gussy is an ass!'"

"Weally, Glyn—"

Glyn rapidly scrawled that polite sentence upon the paper, and in a few minutes it dried and sank out of sight. Glyn held the paper up to the light.

"Now, can you see anything on that?" he exclaimed.

The juniors examined it.

"Quite blank!" said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Now hold it to the fire."

Tom Merry held the sheet to the fire. As the paper browned, the writing came out white on the brown: "Gussy is an ass!" was plainly read.

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "But there are lots of invisible inks that will do that."

Glyn snorted.

"Yes; but not that will come out through being laid in the sun, ass!"

"And this hasn't yet," grinned Blake.

"I'm going to prove it to you, you giddy set of doubting Thomases!" said Glyn, with a grunt. "I'll write that sentence again on the top sheet of paper here—"

"I refuse to allow you to wite that sentence again, Glyn! I should be sorry to have to give a feahful thwash-in' to any visitah in this study, but undah the circs—"

Bernard Glyn laughed.

"Well, I'll write something else; something from Shakespeare, if you like." He dipped his pen into the invisible ink, and wrote:

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

The line sprawled across the page.

The juniors watched the ink fade into indistinctness, and then invisibility. When it was invisible Blake put the paper back into the cupboard.

"Nobody will disturb that," he remarked. "We'll try to-morrow to see if it will come out in the sun. If it answers, we can use this giddy ink for a lot of japes."

"We could put it on Figgins & Co.'s exercise paper," grinned Glyn. "'Down with the New House!' And things of that sort."

"If the ink's a success," said Tom Merry dubiously.

"We'll see that to-morrow morning," said Glyn confidently.

And Monty Lowther remarked that they would see what they would see. And as that was undoubtedly the case, no one disputed it.

CHAPTER 6.

The Plotters!

"YOU look pretty seedy!"

Mellish made that remark in the study he shared with Levison and Lumley-Lumley.

Lumley-Lumley had finished his pre-

paration, and gone down. He seldom remained with the cads of the Fourth. Time had been when the three had been very "thick," but that time was past. Levison and Mellish had the study to themselves just now, and Levison was sitting in the armchair, his hands thrust deeply into his pockets, and a scowl upon his bruised face.

Mellish spoke rather maliciously. He was chums with Levison, but he did not like him. It was not in his nature to like anyone, and certainly Levison was not the kind of fellow to inspire affection. It was not wholly without satisfaction that Mellish saw upon Levison's features signs of his encounter with Dick Brooke in Rylcombe Wood.

Levison started out of his black thoughts, and looked up.

"Do I?" he said.

"Yes. You'll have a blue eye to-morrow."

"Is that anything to cackle at, you rotter?"

Mellish drew away a little. Levison looked angry enough to attack him, and Mellish did not like fighting.

"I—I wasn't cackling," he said. "I—I was only wondering if I could—could do anything for you, you know."

"Don't tell lies!"

"Ahem!"

"I should have licked the cad easily enough, if you two cowards had stayed to help, instead of bolting," said Levison, between his teeth.

Mellish shifted uncomfortably.

"Well, you see, it wouldn't have been fair play. Man to man's fair," he said.

"You care a fat lot for fair play!" sneered his study-mate savagely. "But I'll make the cad sorry he laid hands on me!"

"I—I say, you're not thinking of any rot, are you?" said Mellish uneasily.

"I—I should be careful, you know."

"I told him," said Levison, speaking slowly, and with a bitter tone, "that I'd get him kicked out of St. Jim's."

Mellish laughed.

"That's a tall order," he said. "You can't do it."

"I'm going to do it!"

"What do you mean, you ass?" said Mellish nervously. "Don't play the giddy goat. If you've got one of your rotten plots on, you can leave me out."

"I'm going to keep my word to Brooke."

"But you can't do it! The masters look on him as a giddy model!" said Mellish, with a sneer.

"He had lines given him this afternoon," said Levison, apparently not hearing Mellish's remarks.

"What about that?"

"He was told to leave them on Mr. Lathom's desk."

"Yes. I suppose he's done so."

"So do I. I want those lines."

Mellish grinned.

"Oh, you want to take them, and give old Lathom the impression that Brooke never wrote out those lines," he said.

"Yes, and for something else. You can go and get them."

"I—I'd rather not," muttered Mellish. Levison scowled.

"I've agreed to write out your imposition," he said. "I haven't done it yet. I shan't do it unless you get Brooke's lines for me."

"Why can't you get them for yourself?"

"Because I don't choose to."

"Well, I—I don't mind doing it," said Mellish. "It would be a good joke on the cad, and they would never prove we did it—in fact, Mr. Lathom won't believe him when he says he did the lines if he doesn't find them there in the morning."

"Exactly. Cut off and get them, and bring them here. I'll get on with your impot while you're gone."

"Good!"

Mellish quitted the study. Levison sat down at the table and drew a sheet of impot paper towards him. Mellish had written a single line upon it, as a model of his handwriting for Levison to copy; and Levison's pen ran swiftly, and each



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RICHARDS*

A fellow who sets out to mind everybody else's business but his own is bound to find his path a thorny one. Such is the case with Horace Coker, the champion chump of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, when he endeavours to get on the track of a man whom the police are anxious to interview in connection with a bank robbery. If you want a feast of fun and thrills read

"FACING THE MUSIC"

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line as he wrote it was in Mellish's hand and not in his own. For Levison had the gift of penmanship; he could imitate any hand, and after a little practice he was perfect. He had often written lines for Mellish, and Crooke, and other fellows who made it worth his while, and the hand had never been detected by the masters.

Even a keen master like Mr. Rateliff of the Fifth, who always examined impositions very carefully in order to discover whether the culprit had had any help from his chums, never detected Levison's forgeries—to give them their right name.

It was a very dangerous gift for a boy to possess, and likely to lead its owner into trouble unless he had an unusually well balanced mind, which Levison certainly had not. Levison was ready to use that gift, as well as any other that he possessed, for the sake of his revenge upon the boy he hated—Dick Brooke of the Fourth.

Levison's pen worked quickly, and he had the imposition almost finished by the time Mellish returned with the paper from the Fourth Form Room. The cad of the Fourth came into the study grinning, and closed the door behind him, and drew a couple of folded sheets from the inside of his jacket.

"There you are," he said. "There was nobody round the Form-rooms, and it was as easy as rolling off a log. Brooke had left them on Lathom's desk, all ready for him to find in the morning. He won't find 'em now."

Levison took the sheets, and scanned them keenly. He thrust one of them into the study fire, and it blazed up and disappeared. The other sheet he carefully folded. Mellish watched him in amazement.

"You're not going to keep that?" he asked.

"Yes, I am."

"I say, it's dangerous. If it came out that we had collared the impost, we should get into a fearful row," objected Mellish.

"It won't come out."

"Why not burn the lot?" demanded Mellish impatiently. "What's the good of keeping it when it's only dangerous?"

"I need it."

Mellish stared.

"What on earth do you need it for?"

"A specimen of Brooke's handwriting."

"But what do you want his handwriting for?" asked Mellish curiously. "His name's not signed there, if you were thinking of imitating his signature for any reason."

"I wasn't, you idiot! Do you think I'm a forger?" said Levison angrily.

"Ahem!" Mellish coughed, and did not reply to the question. "Well, what do you want it for?"

"I want a specimen to copy. And I want some of the impost paper that Brooke uses," said Levison.

Mellish's face changed.

"Look here, Levison, what's the little game?"

"Suppose," said Levison, in a low voice—"suppose a paper was found in the Form-room, containing an insulting message to Mr. Lathom?"

"My word!"

"They'd inquire into it—eh?"

"I should say so! The chap would be expelled from the school. You're not thinking of doing that, surely?"

"Yes, I am. Only when they inquire into it, the handwriting will turn out to be Dick Brooke's, that's all!"

"Levison!"

"And, in case of the strictest inquiry, The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,417.

I want it to be written on paper belonging to Brooke."

"But—but—but—" stammered Mellish.

Levison smiled contemptuously.

"You needn't shiver like a drowning rat!" he exclaimed. "There's no risk—for you, at all events. After I've practised Brooke's hand for an hour or so, I shall be able to write anything in his writing, so near that he wouldn't be able to tell the difference himself. And it will be written upon his paper, and there can be no mistake about that. He can swear to his innocence till he's black in the face, but no one will believe him—not even Tom Merry or Blake or Figgins!"

"But—but—"

"I told him," said Levison, between his teeth, "that I'd get him kicked out of the school. I'm going to do it. And I'll give old Lathom some worry, too, for being down on me, at the same time. Of course, Brooke will be supposed to have done it for revenge on old Lathom for detaining him."

"Levison! It's too thick! I—"

"You don't run any risk. I'm going to do the writing."

"But—but suppose you're seen practising it. Lunley-Lunley can't be kept out of the study, and anybody might come into the Form-room—"

Levison laughed scornfully.

"You ass! Do you think I would risk it inside the school? I shall take this paper of Brooke's out to-morrow, with a fountain-pen, and a blotting-pad, and do the practice somewhere right in the wood. It's a half-holiday to-morrow, and I shall have plenty of time."

"Well, that will be safer," said Mellish, with a breath of relief. "But it's awfully risky. I—I don't like having anything to do with it."

"You won't have anything to do with it," said Levison. "All you've got to do is to get a sheet of Brooke's impost paper."

"But—but he hasn't a study here, and—"

"He uses Blake's study when he does anything here, and he keeps his paper there. You know where it is as well as I do—in the study cupboard. Take only one sheet, in case they should miss any more—I don't know how much there is there. Wait till those cads in Study No. 6 have gone downstairs. They always go down for half an hour before bed-time."

"I—I don't half like it!" said Mellish nervously. "But I'll get it, if you'll keep watch in the passage so that they won't catch me there."

"Come on, then!"

Study No. 6 was deserted and dark as the two juniors went down the passage. Levison lounged at the head of the stairs with a careless air, but with his eyes keenly open in case any of the Fourth should come up. Mellish slipped into Study No. 6. The light was out, but he knew the study well enough. He struck a match as he looked into the cupboard. There was a little pile of impost-paper, and Mellish whipped off the top sheet and slipped it under his jacket, and dodged quickly out of the study.

He rejoined Levison in the passage, breathing very quickly.

"Got it?"

"Here it is!"

"Good!"

Levison's eyes gleamed as he took the sheet. He hurried back into his study with it, to replace it in concealment. All was prepared now for the dastardly plot he had laid to ruin Brooke of the Fourth; and Levison, thinking it over

carefully with his cool, keen, unscrupulous brain, could not see a single point that was left unguarded, not a single loophole by which his victim could possibly escape.

CHAPTER 7.

Very Invisible!

BERNARD GLYN was the first fellow up in the Shell dormitory in the School House the next morning.

Tom Merry & Co., it is to be feared, had forgotten about that interesting experiment with the invisible ink, but the schoolboy inventor hadn't forgotten. He was only too keen to prove to the Doubting Thomases of the School House that the invisible ink was a howling success. Indeed, he wanted to prove it to the New House fellows, too—and, in fact, everybody he knew.

"Get up, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "The sun's very bright this morning, and it's all right for the experiment. We shall have time before morning school."

Tom Merry sat up and yawned.

"What experiment?" he asked.

"The invisible ink!" said Glyn. "You don't mean to say that you have forgotten about it, you silly ass!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Blessed if I hadn't!" he said.

"Good! Well go along and see. If it's a success, we can dig up a lot of fun out of that invisible ink."

"If, you ass! Of course it will be a success!"

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" yawned Monty Lowther.

"Oh, rats!"

Bernard Glyn was the first down, and he went at once into Study No. 6. He opened the cupboard door, and found the little pile of paper just as it had been left—so far as he could see, at all events. He picked up the top sheet, and examined it in the light of the study window. There was no trace of writing on it, and the schoolboy inventor chuckled with satisfaction.

"It's simply a ripping success!" he murmured.

There was a blaze of early sunshine at the window of Study No. 6. Glyn opened the window, and laid the sheet upon the window-sill, and placed an inkpot upon it by way of a paper-weight. The rays of the sun fell full upon the paper, and if there was anything in the qualities that Glyn attributed to his latest invention, the writing should have become visible during the next hour or so.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther followed him into the study a few minutes later, and looked gravely at the sheet spread upon the window-sill.

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy came in, and they all surveyed it solemnly.

"Expewiment goin' all wright, deah boy?" Arthur Augustus asked.

"Of course it is, ass!"

"Weally, Glyn—"

"The writing's not visible yet," Herries remarked.

Glyn snorted.

"If it was visible now, it wouldn't be invisible ink, would it, fathead?" he said. "Of course, there isn't the slightest trace of writing on the paper now. That's the beauty of the thing. But the action of the sun will gradually bring it to light."

"Bai Jove!"

"We'll come up here after breakfast, just before school, and look at it," said Glyn. "The writing will be perfectly clear by then."

"Oh, good!"

And the juniors went downstairs. The smile of satisfaction on Glyn's face was beautiful to see. The faith of his chums was not strong, but Glyn had the most complete confidence in his invention.

He confided the matter to several of his friends, and invited them to Blake's study to see the invisible ink become visible. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—Figgins & Co. of the New House—were very interested, and they promised to look in just before morning lessons. So did Redfern of the Fourth.

Five minutes before the bell was timed to go for first lesson, quite a little crowd gathered in Study No. 6 in the School House.

Bernard Glyn walked towards the open window with the air of a showman who had something very special to display to an interested public.

He stopped at the window and gazed at the paper, and a peculiar expression came over his face.

"Well, hand it in!" said Blake.

Bernard Glyn did not hand the paper in. Blake winked solemnly at Tom Merry.

"Quite a success, I'm sure, Glyn," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's have a look at it," said Figgins. "We've come a long way specially to see this wonderful invention, haven't we, Kerr?"

"Just so," said Kerr, with a grin. "Hand it out, Glyn, old man!"

"Only three minutes to first lesson," said Fatty Wynn.

"We've got to buck up, you know, Glyn," Kangaroo observed.

"Ahem!"

"We're already to cheer," remarked Monty Lowther. "All you fellows open your mouths ready, and give a yell when I say the word."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's see the giddy marvel, Glyn."

"Ahem!"

Bernard Glyn, with a very red face, handed in the sheet of paper at last. The sheet was perfectly blank. There was no sign of writing on it, whatever. It was slightly wrinkled with exposure to the sun, and that was all.

The juniors all stared at it.

"Well?" said a chorus of voices.

"It doesn't seem to have come out," said Glyn.

"It's an invisible ink, isn't it?" asked Kerr.

"Yes."

"Well, that's all right. It's staying invisible, that's all. You had better rechristen it 'Glyn's Permanently Invisible Ink.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" growled Glyn.

"There goes the bell!" exclaimed Blake. "I'm off!"

"Leave it to cook," said Figgins, with a chuckle. "It may come out by the time we get out of the Form-room, Glyn."

Glyn nodded angrily.

"Yes; that's rather a good idea. I suppose it requires a little more time. I'll leave it in the sun here."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway excuse me now! I shall be late!"

And the Fourth Formers and the Shell fellows streamed off to their respective Form-rooms. Glyn stayed behind to arrange the unfortunate sheet upon the sunny window-sill again, and then ran after them; and was a minute or so late in the Shell-room, and received twenty lines from Mr. Linton.

But Glyn did not mind the lines; he was thinking of his experiment. He had tried it before with success. And it was too bad that the first public

experiment should be a blank failure. So far as he knew he had been perfectly careful with the experiment, and he simply could not account for the ink so obstinately remaining invisible.

There was a recess after third lesson, when the boys were free from the Form-rooms for a quarter of an hour. Bernard Glyn ran at once from the Shell Form Room to Study No. 6.

There had been a bright sun on the window of the study for some hours now, and if the invisible ink would become visible at all, it must have done so by now. A crowd of sympathetic fellows followed Glyn into the study—all the same fellows who had been there before.

Glyn took in the crinkled sheet of paper.

The juniors gazed at it.

It was a beautiful blank.

Not a single sign of writing was to be seen upon it.

Glyn's face was so disappointed that the juniors forbore to grin. It was very rough on the schoolboy inventor, and they reserved their laughter till afterwards.

"Well?" said Blake sympathetically.

"It hasn't come out," growled Glyn.

"There must be something peculiar about this paper of Brooke's."

"The papah looks quite ordinawy, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Quite ordinary," said Monty Lowther.

Glyn grunted discontentedly, and tore the sheet into fragments, and scattered them in the grate.

"Blow the thing!" he said. "I'll go to my study now and write out a fresh sheet, and we'll try it this afternoon. You'll see that it's a complete success."

"Ahem!" murmured Blake.

Glyn strode away, and when he was gone the juniors allowed themselves to chuckle.

"We were going to give you New House chaps quite a high old time with that giddy invisible ink," grinned Blake. "But there's something rotten in the state of Denmark, somehow. It hasn't come off."

"My pwivate opinion, deah boys," said D'Arcy thoughtfully, "is that Glyn's an ass. I co-sidah—Pway do not walk away while I am talkin', deah boys; it's bad form."

But the juniors were guilty of bad form.

CHAPTER 8.

Harthur is Suspicious!

"GOOD!" muttered Levison.

The cad of the Fourth was sitting under a tree in a deep, shady glade in the heart of Rylcombe Wood. It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and Tom Merry & Co. were playing football against the New House. But Levison was devoting his afternoon's leisure to the furthering of his scheme to get Brooke expelled from St. Jim's. On the ground beside him lay a sheet of paper covered with writing in Latin. It was one of the sheets of Dick Brooke's imposition, which Levison's confederate had purloined from the Fourth Form Room the previous evening.

To Levison's disappointment, the loss of the impat had not led to its being renewed or doubled for Brooke, as he had confidently expected.

Brooke had explained, when the Fourth Form master questioned him, that he had left the lines on the desk,

(Continued on next page.)



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Send your Joke to *The GEM Jester*, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

IT SUITED HIM.

Butcher: "I want a lad who's not afraid of early hours."

Boy: "That's me! I don't care how early you close!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Watson, 46, Thorndon Road, Pitsmoor, Sheffield 4.

NOT LIKELY!

Mike: "Why aren't you on the diet the doctor ordered, Pat?"

Pat: "Faith, I don't mane to starve meself to death just for the sake of living longer!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Caupe, 74, Darlington Road, Rochdale, Lancs.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Constable (catching small boy who has just broken a window): "Now then, what's your name?"

Boy: "Jones, sir."

Constable: "I want your right one."

Boy: "All right—Horatio Nelson."

Constable: "That's right—don't try any of that Jones stuff on me!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Fitzgibbon, 57, Shere Road, Ilford, Essex.

WRONG STATION.

Post: "This is the picture of my great-grandfather, who lost his arm at Waterloo."

Guest: "Yes, isn't it a place for losing things? I lost my bag there last week."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Wilkins, 40, Coombes Road, Dagenham, Essex.

FULL INSTRUCTIONS.

"Now, guard," said the dear old lady, handing over her little dog to the railway guard, "before you give him his food you must say, 'Diddum Dinkie want ooe dindins?' And if he yawns he is not quite ready."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Hughes, Sunnyside, Twiggworth, near Gloucester.

SAFER.

James: "I hear Bashem, the boxer, is conductor on the tramcars now."

Jones: "Yes. You see, now he can punch without being knocked out!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss N. Mubrenan, Uitzicht, P.O. Brackenfel, Cape Province, South Africa.

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and Mr. Lathom had not even thought of doubting his statement.

They were gone, and the Form-master supposed that they had been blown away, or removed by chance; he never thought of doubting Brooke's word.

Levison was disappointed. But that, after all, was a small matter in comparison with the rest of the scheme. He had the stolen imposition beside him now, as a copy. He had been at work an hour in the deep woods. He had a blotting pad across his knees, and a good supply of paper and a fountain-pen. He had covered sheet after sheet with writing, in imitation of Brooke's.

He began by copying out the imposition word for word, making the writing as like as he could, and when he had secured a good copy of the impot he began to write other words, keeping the original sheet before his eyes so as to get the exact form of each letter in his mind.

A dozen sheets lay in the grass about him. Such words as "Mr. Lathom" and "old fool" and "sack" appeared many times, and each time that they were written they were more like Dick Brooke's handwriting.

Levison raised his head at last from his task.

"Good!" he ejaculated. "I'll get the cad kicked out of St. Jim's!"

He had a paper before him upon which sentences were written in a hand so like Dick Brooke's that Brooke himself would have been puzzled to tell the difference.

Brooke would have known that he had not written the words, because they were words that he never would write; but from the handwriting he could not have told it, so exact was Levison's cunning imitation.

The Fourth Form cad's eyes gleamed as he read over what he had written. He grinned with satisfaction and folded up the sheet and put it in an inside pocket.

"That will do for me to copy from," he muttered. "I'll get rid of the rest here now, including Brooke's impot. It would be dangerous to keep it."

Levison never dreamed as he spoke aloud that there might be ears to hear in the silent wood. He rose to his feet and stretched himself.

"Brooke's got his quietus now, if he only knew it," he muttered. "It will do me good to see the cad's face when the Head expels him from St. Jim's."

He stooped to pick up the sheets of paper lying in the grass—a dozen of them, at least, covered with writing in various stages of imitation.

As he did so there was a rustle in the thickets, and he saw a face, much in need of washing and surmounted by a ragged cap, looking out.

Levison started and turned.

His eyes became fixed upon the grimy visage of Harthar. He drew a quick breath of relief; he had feared that it might be a St. Jim's fellow.

The youthful tramp grinned at him. "Ere we are agin, my lord!" he muttered. "Quiet, Buster, old man! You ain't got to go for him unless 'e cuts up rusty!"

Levison cast a nervous glance at the dog. Buster looked very much inclined to go for him, in spite of his master's prohibition.

The cad of the Fourth gathered up the papers with a quick, nervous hand. Harthar came out of the thickets.

"Wot's the little gime?" he demanded.

"Mind your own business!" said Levison fiercely. "What do you want here?"

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Harthar grinned.

"I don't want nothin'," he said. "I bin watchin' you the last ten minutes, that's all. I bin havin' my lunch in the wood 'ere and fell asleep arter it. What are them papers?"

"Mind your own business!"

"You was sayin' somethin' about Brooke; that's the chap that 'elped me ag'in' your gang," said Harthar. "'E told me his name—and a fine feller 'e is; wery different from your breed. You've got your knife into 'im for 'elpin' me, and you're playin' some rotten gime ag'in' 'im."

Levison gritted his teeth.

"I'm not," he said. "I—I came here to do some of my exercises, that's all."

Harthar gave him a suspicious look. "You was copyin' orf that paper," he said.

"Yes; they're Latin verbs."

"Lemme see."

Harthar was evidently very suspicious. He read Levison's character like a book—it was not difficult to read. He suspected, from the muttered words he had heard, that the cad of St. Jim's had some scheme in his mind for revenge upon Dick Brooke, and Harthar would have taken a very great deal of trouble for the fellow who had rescued him and befriended him.

Levison would gladly have prevented Harthar from looking at the papers, and he clenched his fists once, but a deep growl from Buster warned him to be careful. He unclenched his hands, grinding his teeth with rage, while Harthar examined the papers.

"Wot's all this 'ere?" asked Harthar, examining the impot with puzzled eyes. "Latin," said Levison sullenly.

"Wot's that?"

"A language, you ignorant brute! We learn it at school."

"Does yer?" said Harthar. "Well, you been imitat'in' the writin'. This 'ere ain't your writin'. You been copyin' it."

"It's an exercise in penmanship," Levison explained, with a great appearance of candour. "We copy the writing, and learn the verbs at the same time."

"My heyo! Do you?" said Harthar. "Hallo! This ain't Latin verbs, or whatever they are—this 'ere is English!"

And he looked at one of the sheets upon which the name of Mr. Lathom and several other words were written in imitation of Brooke's hand.

"Yes, that was because I got sick of the grammar," said Levison.

Harthar looked at him sharply.

"You're tellin' lies," he said, with simple directness.

"What?"

"You wouldn't explain it all so neat and clear if you wasn't up to some dirty trick," said Harthar, with great keenness. "My belief is that you are up to somethin' agin' Dick Brooke."

Levison forced a laugh.

"What nonsense!" he said. "Those papers were merely exercises, and of no value. I was going to destroy them—they're no good."

"Oh, they ain't no good, ain't they?" said Harthar slowly. "Then I'll keep them."

Levison started.

"What do you want them for?" he exclaimed.

"Maybe I might wanten learn Latin one o' these days," grinned Harthar. "Maybe I might meet Master Brooke, and ask 'im to explain them to me."

Levison turned quite pale.

"Look here, they're my papers. Hand them over to me!" he exclaimed, with a show of bluster.

"Wot for, if they ain't any good?" asked Harthar.

Levison set his teeth.

"Give me those papers, you low cad, or—"

Buster growled ominously, and Levison broke off. The young vagrant chuckled. He was not afraid of Levison, even without Buster to aid him.

"Well, what will you do?" he asked.

"Look here, I'll give you five bob for them," said Levison desperately.

Harthar's expression changed.

"Now you're talkin'!" he exclaimed. "I tell you wot I'll do. I don't know wot all this means, but if it's anythin' up ag'in' Dick Brooke, I'm down on it. You says as 'ow these papers ain't no good."

"Yes, I want to destroy them."

"Ere's a go, then; if they're done in, it's all right," said Harthar. "You make an end of 'em with me lookin' hon, and I'll take the five bob, and it's a go."

Levison almost gasped with relief. So long as he got the papers destroyed, it did not matter a button to him whether Harthar was looking on or not. He assented eagerly.

"It's a go. Hand over the papers, and here's your money."

"I ain't 'andin' them over," said Harthar, with a shake of the head. "I ain't trustin' you. I'll finish 'em for you, and you can watch me. Come this way!"

He stepped through the wood to where the Feeder—a little tributary of the River Rhyl—ran foaming and tumbling under the shadows of the trees. He drew the papers from his pocket, and folded them up into a tight ball.

"Now, 'and over the dibs, and the papers goes into the water," he said.

"Look here, can I trust you?" muttered Levison. "You won't take the money and keep the papers?"

"Course, I won't!" said Harthar. "You gotta trust me."

It was not Levison's way to trust anybody; but he had no choice in this case. He unwillingly placed the five shillings in the hand of the vagrant. Harthar raised his hand, and the ball of twisted paper shot out into the stream, and was whirled away on the swift current in the twinkling of an eye.

"Ain't I done it?" he demanded.

Levison drew a gasping breath of relief.

"Yes, yes, that's all right."

And with a weight gone from his mind, the cad of the Fourth tramped away through the trees. He heard the voice of the vagrant behind him.

"Down, Buster! Down!"

Levison quickened his pace. He was terribly afraid of the dog. As a matter of fact the dog was not moving. Harthar had called out those words for the especial purpose of accelerating Levison's departure. There was a grin on the face of the young vagabond. As Levison's hurried footsteps crashed away through the wood, Harthar turned from the spot, and hurried down the stream.

A dozen yards below where he stood the waters shallowed, and thick green rushes grew across the stream from side to side, forming a kind of barrier, through which the waters flowed with ease, but upon which drifting sticks and twigs caught and swayed. Bobbing up and down against the reeds was the ball of paper Harthar had tossed into the stream, not yet soaked through, and still floating. Harthar patted the head of his "dorg," and pointed.

"Fetch it, Buster!"

The dog plunged into the shallow stream.

In a few seconds he had the little bundle in his teeth, and was swimming

back with it held high and dry above the water. Harthar took it from the dog's jaws, and wiped it on his ragged coat.

"'Arf of 'em soaked," he muttered, examining his prize; "but 'arf's all right, and the rest'll dry. I wonder wot it all means? That feller is as full of mischief as a hegg is of meat. 'E's got 'is knife into Master Brooke, I can see that. 'E was plannin' something. I told im I'd chuck the papers into the water for five bob, and I kept my word." Harthar grinned over his rather sharp practice; he had not been brought up among persons of the strictest morality. "I'm goin' to keep these 'ere papers, and if I ever see Master Brooke again, maybe 'e'll know whether there's any 'arm in them. I don't trust that Levison feller—not 'arf an inch!"

And in that Harthar was certainly wise.

"Is anything wrong, sir?" asked Redfern.

Mr. Lathom gasped.

"I—I never was so insulted in my life!"

There was a general exclamation from the Fourth. They all liked and respected Mr Lathom very much. He was kindness itself to them, and probably the most respected and beloved master at the school. And his short sight and his absent-mindedness gave the Fourth a sort of protective feeling towards him. They never japed him, and as for insulting him, there was hardly a fellow in the Fourth Form who would not have punched anybody's head for suggesting such a thing.

"Insulted, sir?" exclaimed the Fourth Formers, with one voice.

"Yes, insulted! It is scandalous, disrespectful, infamous!"

"Oh, sir!"

paper, but he was too far away from the juniors for them to make out what was written there.

"I've always done my best," he said, "to make myself liked and respected in this Form. I have had occasion to detain boys, and to cane them sometimes, but I think you know that I have done my best to be a good master."

"We know it, sir. We—we'd back you up like anything, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yet I have found this paper in my desk," said Mr. Lathom. "It has been written and placed there by some evilly-disposed boy. I am not a hard-hearted man, I hope, but I cannot let this insult pass. The culprit must be found out and punished. I shall place the matter in the hands of the headmaster."

"May we see the paper, sir?"

"Yes, yes. Certainly!"

The Fourth Formers crowded out of



There was a wild yell from Arthur Augustus as Glyn swamped the ink over his cuffs and trousers, and the bottle he was holding crashed to the floor. "Yawwooh!" roared D'Arcy. "You ass!" exclaimed Glyn. "You're wasting my ink!"

CHAPTER 9.

A Shock for Mr. Lathom!

"GOOD heavens!" Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, uttered that startled exclamation.

It was Thursday morning, and the Fourth Form were assembled in their Form-room for morning lessons.

Little Mr. Lathom had come in, cheerful and good-tempered as usual, and blinked at the juniors, and given them his kindly nod.

Then he had gone to his desk and opened it.

As he did so, he uttered that startled and amazed exclamation.

Two or three of the juniors rose to their feet in alarm. It was not uncommon for little japes to be played on a master, such as putting rats or frogs in a desk. The juniors concluded that something of the sort had taken place now.

Mr. Lathom took out a sheet of paper, which lay upon the top of all the other things in the desk. There were a couple of lines of writing across the paper. The juniors could see that, though they could not see what words were written.

"What is it, sir?" asked Levison. "Some rotten practical joke, sir? It must have been a chap in some other Form did it, sir. Nobody here would do it, I'm sure!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I agwee with Levison, for once," said Arthur Augustus. "We would wag anybody baldheaded, sir, for doin' such a wotten thing."

Mr. Lathom looked at his Form, and the paper in his hand.

"I have always thought that my Form respected me," he said.

"We do, sir!" exclaimed Figgins hotly. "If any cad has written anything insulting there, sir, we—we'll scrag him!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

Mr. Lathom gulped. He held up the

the Form. They gathered round the Form-master, and there was a general exclamation of anger as they read the paper. For this is what was written, in a clear, firm hand:

"Mr. Lathom is an old fool, and we all wish he would get the sack!"

"It's a lie, sir!" yelled Blake. "We don't wish anything of the kind. And I'm certain that nobody in the Fourth ever wrote that!"

"Quite imposs, sir!"

"Some awful cad must have done it, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Lathom choked.

"I—I have had a very painful shock," he said, in a faltering voice. "I am very happy to hear what you say about it, boys. I cannot conceive who could have been wicked and cruel enough to insult me in this way. I shall take this paper at once to the Head. Pray keep order while I am gone."

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"Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Lathom, very much agitated, quitted the Form-room with the paper in his hand. There was no disorder, but there was a babble of voices when he was gone.

"The uthah wottah who wote that—"

"Ought to be boiled!"

"In oil!"

"Poor old Lathom!" said Figgins. "It hits him harder than it would any other master here, because he's so jolly tender-hearted."

"Yaas, wathah! It's simply outside."

"I can't imagine any fellow here being cad enough to do it," said Blake. "But they'll find out. The fellow who did it must be as big a fool as rascal, for they will find him out by his handwriting!"

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!"

"The Head will think of it, you bet!" said Jack Blake. "And the sooner they find him out, the better. He will be expelled from the school, as sure as a gun!"

"And serve him jolly well right, whoever he is!" said Levison.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Mellish. "I should draw a line at putting a thing like that in a master's desk. It's altogether too thick. It wouldn't be so bad if it was old Ratty of the New House. But Mr. Lathom—"

"It's too rotten!"

"Caddish!"

"Beastly!"

"Yaas, wathah! By the way, did any of you chaps recognise the hand?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I nevah thought of it. But did you?"

"I—" began Brooke, turning very red.

All eyes were upon Brooke at once.

"Did you know the fist, Brooke?"

"It struck me as being something like my own handwriting," said Brooke, rather uncomfortably. "Of course, it wasn't mine."

Jack Blake laughed.

"No, we know it wasn't yours, Brooke, old man! You couldn't do a mean, rotten thing like that!"

"Wathah not!"

"Look out, here comes the Head!"

The buzz of voices died away as Mr. Lathom re-entered the Form-room, and with him came Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 10.

Expelled!

DR. HOLMES was looking sterner than the juniors had ever seen him looking before. Even on an occasion when they had seen him expel a fellow from the school, his brow had not been so dark and stern. Under his contracted brows his eyes were gleaming with a light that was not pleasant to see.

Little Mr. Lathom, still greatly agitated, peered through his glasses at the boys, who stood silent and respectful under the stern glance of the Head. The Head held the paper in his hand now.

"Boys!" His voice was deep as distant thunder. "The master of this Form has been insulted in a way that I can only describe as infamous. Boys have been guilty of many reckless things at this school, it is true, in the course of history at St. Jim's. But for sheer wanton wickedness and cruelty I do not think that this insult to Mr. Lathom can be equalled. It is infamous!"

The Head paused, and there was a murmur from the Fourth. The juniors

exchanged glances, and Jack, Blake stepped forward.

"We all think the same about it, sir," he said. "It's a rotten shame, sir! And Mr. Lathom knows that the whole Form likes him and respects him, sir. And if the fellow who wrote that paper is found out, sir, we all think he ought to be expelled."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

The Head's face relaxed a little.

"Thank you, Blake!" he said quietly.

"I am glad to hear that this outrage is condemned by the boys of this Form as much as by myself. The boy must and shall be discovered. And you may be certain that he will be expelled. I should not dream of showing him the slightest mercy. We shall now proceed to inquire into the matter."

"It can't have been a Fourth Former did that, sir," ventured Figgins.

"I shall examine the Fourth Form first, Figgins, and if there is no result I shall proceed to the other Forms," said the Head. "This message certainly sounds as if it were written by a member of this Form who nourishes a wicked hatred towards his Form-master. Each of you will take his pen and write out these words upon a sheet of paper, so that the handwriting can be compared."

"Yes, sir."

The juniors sat down at their desks.

Mr. Lathom, who seemed almost overcome, sank into a seat. Dr. Holmes stood like a rock while the juniors were writing. His brow was stern and relentless. It was only too clear from his look that the delinquent, when discovered, had no mercy to expect.

The writing was done in a few minutes. The sheets were taken up by the boys in turn, and compared with the one in the hand of the Head.

As Dick Brooke showed up his sheet Dr. Holmes was seen to start a little and fix a sharp look upon Brooke. He signed to Brooke to stand aside, while the rest of the Form came up. When the comparing of the papers was finished the juniors went back to their places, only Brooke remaining out. The face of Dick Brooke was pale.

"Brooke!" The Head's voice was stern.

"Yes, sir?" said Brooke firmly.

"Look at these two papers again, Brooke. Can you see any difference between the two sentences in the writing?"

Dick Brooke's brain swam as he looked.

Was it a horrible dream?

How did that sentence come to be written there in his handwriting? For it was his handwriting—every line, every curve.

An exclamation swept like a gust through the Form.

"Brooke!"

"Great Scott!"

Dick Brooke was almost the last fellow the juniors would have suspected.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dazedly. "It's—it's imposs."

"Well, Brooke?" said the Head.

Brooke started, as if out of a fearful dream.

"It's not my writing, sir," he stammered.

"Is there any difference?"

"I—I—I can't see any, sir."

"Mr. Lathom, look at this writing, please."

The Fourth Form master obeyed.

"Is it Brooke's writing?"

Mr. Lathom nodded.

"It is Brooke's writing, sir," he said

miseraably, "and his paper. Brooke uses this writing-paper with darker lines than that served out to the Form here on account of his short sight. It is his paper and his writing. I could never have suspected him of this without the plainest proof. I have tried to be kind to him. If I have detained him, if I have ever been hard upon him, it was because I thought it was my duty. I believed that this boy respected me, and, indeed, that he had some personal regard for me. I am shocked more than I can say."

And the little gentleman's voice broke as he concluded.

Dick Brooke staggered as he stood there.

"Have you anything to say, Brooke?" asked the Head icily.

Brooke panted.

"Yes, sir! I—I have to say this. I am innocent! I did not write that paper! I am innocent! I have never seen it before! Mr. Lathom, you cannot believe that I would so insult you!" Dick cried wildly, turning from the stern features of the Head to the kind little Form-master.

Mr. Lathom shook his head sadly.

"I would not willingly have believed it, Brooke," he said, "but I cannot doubt the evidence of my own eyes."

"I didn't do it!" shrieked the junior. "Oh, sir, I swear I know nothing about it! Some villain has done this to injure me!"

"Silence!" The Head's voice rang out sharply. "Don't attempt to excuse your wickedness by wild accusations against others, Brooke. Do you ask me to believe that there is a skilled and practised forger in this school, and one so base as to imitate a schoolfellow's hand in such a matter as this. And if there were, pray where did he get this special kind of paper, which belongs to you alone? You are a day boy. You have no study here."

"Brooke keeps some of that paper in our study, sir," said Jack Blake. Blake was shocked, bewildered by the proof of Brooke's guilt. But he would say anything that was possible for his friend. "There's generally some of it in the cupboard in Study No. 6, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Do you suggest that one of the boys in Study No. 6 used Brooke's paper, and forged his hand?" demanded the Head.

"Oh, sir! No, sir! I—I don't know what to think!"

The Head fixed his eyes upon Brooke. The lad's white, miserable face awoke no pity in his heart. Dr. Holmes had a kind heart, but he was adamant now.

"Brooke," he said, "your handwriting and the paper you used convict you. You have done this. Of your wickedness and ingratitude to Mr. Lathom I will not speak. I fear that you are too hard-hearted to feel a proper sense of shame. The only thing you can do now is to confess, and beg Mr. Lathom's pardon before you leave the school for ever."

Brooke gave a kind of groan.

"Leave the school, sir?"

The Head raised his hand.

"You are expelled!" he said. "You will leave this Form-room and this school, and never enter either again. I shall give you a letter to take to your father explaining the reason. I trust, Brooke, that when you have seen the trouble you have brought upon your parents your wicked heart may be touched. Have you sufficient decency left to beg Mr. Lathom's pardon before you go?"

Brooke raised his head. His eyes were flashing now.

"I would beg Mr. Lathom's pardon on my knees if I had done anything wrong," he said. "But I have not! I never wrote that paper!"

"Enough! Go!"

"Mr. Lathom!" cried Brooke, in an agony. "Don't you believe me, sir?"

The little Form-master shook his head. He could not speak. Dr. Holmes pointed to the door.

"Go!" he said. "Go, and never enter here again!"

Dick Brooke gave him one wild, hopeless look, and staggered towards the door. And as he went there was an angry yell from the Fourth. The culprit was discovered; his guilt was proved beyond doubt, and even his best friends found nothing to say for him. And in that yell were expressed all the anger and scorn of the Fourth.

"Shame!"

"Cad!"

"Shame! Shame!"

And with that ringing word in his ears Dick Brooke staggered away.

CHAPTER 11.

Under the Shadow!

"OH, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

Dick Brooke, lying in the deep, rich grass under the green shade of the trees, moaned out the words in dry, husky tones.

The day had been a long drawn-out horror to Dick.

He had left St. Jim's—left the school with the scornful voices of his former friends ringing in his ears. But he had not gone home. How could he go home and break the news to his mother and little Amy?

How could he go and tell the patient, gentle-faced women upon whom so much trouble had already fallen, that he was driven from the school with the shadow of shame upon him—driven forth like a pariah, despised by all.

Through the long, sunny hours Dick Brooke had tramped in the wood, or lain to rest his weary limbs and aching head in the thick grass, trying to think it out.

The long day was like a nightmare to him.

What was he to do?

It was now past the hour when the day-boy usually returned to his home; the sun was setting, and long shadows falling in the wood.

The day of dreadful loneliness and suffering had left its mark upon the sturdy junior. His face was white and drawn, there were lines in his brow, and his eyes seemed sunken. He must go home; if his return was longer delayed, his mother would be anxious about him. And she must know some time. But how was he to face her—how was he to tell her? He groaned aloud at the thought.

He was ruined. All that he had hoped for from his work at the school was at an end. The long struggle to keep at school, to earn money to pay his fees, all was for nothing—all had ended in this! He was expelled from the school, and no St. Jim's fellow would ever speak to him again. Yet it was not of himself that he chiefly thought. It was of his mother and sister. How could he return to them and tell them that he had left St. Jim's in disgrace, never to return?

He rose to his feet at last. It was dark in the wood—the sun was almost gone. With heavy limbs he tramped slowly on the way homeward. Even the knowledge that he was innocent of what

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther
Calling



Hallo, everybody! As one cannibal remarked to another, when they popped the seaman into the cooking-pot: "After you with the salt!" Quickly now: If an ostrich eats 10 tons of corn in a year, what will it take to keep a lion? Answer: A strong cage. "£60,000 Fire" reads a headline. Must have taken a lot of matches to get that one going. "30,000 whales to be killed," reads another. Wonder if they'll "blubber"? "And now," said the school inspector, "is there any question you would like to ask me?" "Yes, sir," answered Curly Gibson. "When does your train go?" The employer was examining an applicant: "Now, do you understand punctuation?" he demanded. "Oh, yes, sir!" came the response. "I'm always at work on time!" The matron was engaging a new maid. "Have you any references?" she inquired. "I have,

ma'am," said the maid, "but none of them do me justice." Kerr points out that the Scottish sport of tossing the caber is not such a "weighty" matter as it looks. Just one of those Highland "flings"! I hear arch-criminals are holding classes for burglars. Bill "Sikeology" lessons? A ten-pound note was found in a goose killed at Wayland. What rich "stuffing"! Remember, never lend a match to a Scotsman. He will surely make "light" of his obligation! Oh, I understand it is not true that Wally D'Arcy won the fag hundred yards by a fraction of an inch by putting his tongue out. Bernard Glyn has been working on a machine to cure criminals by electrical treatment. They've had one a long time in America! Latest: By means of electric welding, the new Wayland Town Hall is being built in absolute silence. Keep it quiet! Skimpole complains that he very often gets sleepy when delivering one of his long lectures. You should stuff cottonwool in your ears, Skimmy! We do! I hear they had an oracle in the shape of a horse's mouth in ancient Greece. Everything "straight from the horse's mouth"! As the shipwrecked sailor cried, sighting a Polar bear: "Food at last!" But for whom? Stop press: Wayland headline: "World's Largest Aeroplane Works." Well, it would have been a pity if it hadn't! Chin, chin, chums!

was imputed to him gave him little comfort. Of what use was his innocence when he was condemned by all—an outcast from the school? His mother would believe him, he knew that—so would Amy. They would never believe that he had done that blackguardly thing; but no one else would believe. Everyone else would say that he had been justly punished for a brutal insult, and the blackest ingratitude to his master.

Darkness lay upon the moor when Dick Brooke reached his home. The light gleamed from the little parlour window. The window was open—he could see Amy there, as he came slowly and heavily up the garden path.

The young girl heard his footsteps on the path and came out to meet him, with a bright smile of welcome on her face.

"You're late, Dick!"

She could not see his face in the gloom. But as he entered the house she saw it, and she gave a cry.

"Dick! What's the matter?"

The boy sank into a chair. He could not speak. Amy called out:

"Mother!"

Mrs. Brooke came into the room.

Her face changed at the sight of her son. She came quickly towards him.

"Dick, my dear boy! What has happened?"

The boy groaned.

"Oh, mother!"

"Dick, your father—"

She broke off breathless. When trouble came upon the little family it was only natural that her thoughts should fly at once to John Brooke.

Dick shook his head.

"It's not father this time," he said.

"Something has happened at the school?"

"Yes, mother."

"Dick! Tell me what it is. You are in trouble, but you have done nothing wrong—I know that!"

"I've done nothing wrong," said the boy hoarsely. "I know you'll believe me, mother. But—but—but—"

He gasped and broke off.

"But what, Dick?"

"I'm expelled."

Mrs. Brooke gave a sharp cry.

"Expelled! Dick! You're dreaming! It's impossible!"

Little Amy, scared and troubled, began to cry softly. Dick's mother put an arm round her boy's neck.

In husky, broken tones Dick Brooke told his story.

"Our Form-master found a paper in his desk this morning, with an insulting message on it. It was Mr. Lathom, you know. He detained me the other day, but he has always been kindness itself to me; he gives me extra tuition for nothing, and helps me in every way. The paper was mine; the handwriting was mine. I—I couldn't tell the difference myself. Somebody must have imitated my hand, to get me into trouble. I can't imagine who it is. It seems impossible that any boy could be skilful enough to do it—or villain enough! I don't understand it all. But—but they took it that I had done it. I—I can't blame them. I couldn't explain. I had nothing to say except that I hadn't done it. The Head told me to go. He's given me a letter for you explaining—the fellows all hissed me as I went. Oh, mother!"

The boy broke off with a sob.

"Dick, my poor boy!"

"I didn't do it, mother. Some awful rotter has done it to hurt me. I don't know who it was; and the Head would never believe such a thing. I couldn't believe any boy could be such a villain, only—only there's nothing else to account for it. They turned me out; I'm not to go back to St. Jim's any more."

"And—and this happened this morning, Dick?"

"Yes, mother. I—I couldn't come home and tell you; I—I've been hanging about all day," said Dick miserably. "But I had to come at last. Oh, mother! What shall I do?"

Mrs. Brooke wanted to say something to comfort her boy, but what could she

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say to comfort him? She believed him, but that was all she could do. She sank into a chair by the table.

Dick looked at her miserably. The letter from Dr. Holmes was in her hand; his mother would not look at it. She did not want to know what they had to say about her boy; she knew that he had been wronged, and that was enough.

"My poor, poor boy!" she muttered.

There was a sound outside the window in the dusk, a footstep, and the whine of a dog. Neither mother nor son heard.

Outside, in the night, a ragged figure came through the gloom, and if Dick Brooke had looked out, he would have recognised the boy vagrant whom he had befriended, and saved from a ragging at the hands of Levison and his associates. Harthur heard the sobs of Amy through the open window, and stopped, struck by the sound.

"My heye!" murmured Harthur.

The dog whined, and Dick Brooke looked round dully.

He caught sight of the boy outside.

Harthur came up to the window, and touched his ragged cap.

"Master Brooke, you're in trouble!"

"Yes," said Brooke heavily.

"I think I've kim along just in time," said Harthur. "I don't know. I wanted to show you something."

"Who is this boy, Dick?" asked Mrs. Brooke dully.

"The kid I told you about, mother, that Levison was ragging the other day."

"You may come in, my lad," said Mrs. Brooke, with an effort. "We must not let our troubles make us forgetful of others, Dick. Come in."

"Thank you, madam," said Harthur slowly. "P'raps I may be able to 'elp Master Dick; I think p'raps I can, ma'am, if things be as I reckon they is."

Mrs. Brooke smiled faintly; she did not think it likely. She called to old Martha, the old servant who remained to the fallen family, and Harthur was brought in.

CHAPTER 12.

What Harthur Knew!

HARTHUR ducked his head nervously to Mrs. Brooke and the sobbing Amy. He stood with his ragged cap in his dirty hands, with Buster behind him.

He looked a forlorn figure enough, so far as cloths went. But there was a light in his eyes now. Harthur might be wanting in education, but he was a keen and sensible lad, and he knew how to put two and two together. He could not help connecting Levison's muttered threat with the evil that had evidently fallen upon his friend Dick Brooke. And the papers he had saved from the wood and stream were still in the pocket of his ragged jacket.

"Askin' yer pardon, madam," he said awkwardly. "I think p'raps I knows somethin' that will help Master Dick. You're in trouble, sir?"

"Yes," said Dick. "But you can't nelp me, old chap. It's trouble at the school."

"That's jest what I thought," said Harthur sagely. "Jest so, sir. It's that feller who was goin' for me when you stopped 'im—Levison 'is name is?"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Dick.

"Then I knov the little game!" said Harthur emphatically.

Dick Brooke looked at him in wonder.

"My dear chap, you can't know any-

thing about it," he said, with a miserable smile.

"Is it anythin' to do with writin' on paper?" asked Harthur.

Dick stared.

"Yes," he said. "What on earth do you mean? I don't mind telling you what it is—somebody has copied my handwriting, and put an insulting letter in the Form-master's desk, supposed to be written by me."

Harthur gave a whoop of triumph.

"Ooray!"

"What on earth—"

"I saw 'im doin' of it!" roared Harthur. "I tell you I saw him a-doin' of it in the wood yesterday! I knew 'e was up to somethin'. He was a-mutterin' to 'imself about gettin' you drove out of the school, and 'e was a-copying the paper there. I knowed it was somethin' up ag'in' you, Master Dick."

Brooke drew a deep breath. Amazing as it seemed, the boy vagrant did know something about the matter. Was it possible that his kindness to this unfortunate lad the other day had won him a witness who could save him?

Mrs. Brooke looked, with a wild hope in her face, at the vagrant.

"Tell us what you saw," said Brooke breathlessly. "You say you saw Levison copying out a paper in the wood?"

"Yes, Master Dick. He had a sheet of paper there, and was copying it ag'in and ag'in. I got on to 'im, and 'e told me lies. I knew they were lies, and that 'e was fixin' up somethin' ag'in' you, though I couldn't rightly understand. 'E told me it was Latin that 'e was copyin'."

Dick gave a cry.

"My impot!" he exclaimed. "Levison must have been the chap who stole it from the Form-room, and he was using it as a copy of my writing! Oh, mother, if we could only prove that to the Head! But we can't—we can't! Levison would deny every word, and they would think I had got this kid to say so."

"But I've got the proofs!" yelled Harthur.

"Proofs! What proofs?"

"The papers he was writing!"

Harthur dragged the packet out of his pocket and opened it on the table. A dozen sheets rolled out, crumpled and crinkled.

"There you are!" said Harthur triumphantly. "There's the sheet he was copyin'—the one 'e said was Latin, or some sich nime."

"It's my impot. It was taken from the Form-room!"

"And these are the copies. I kept them; I knew it was some dirty trick ag'in' you, Master Dick, and I kept the papers to show you."

Dick Brooke with dazzled eyes, looked over the papers. Some had been smudged by their partial immersion in the stream, but all could be read quite clearly. Dick, as he examined them, could trace the progress of the forger. There were sheets in a



Sheet after sheet Levison covered with writing, and each time like Dick Brooke's. "Good!" he muttered. "I'll get that that Harthur was watchin'."

hand that was unmistakably Levison's, gradually approaching to a clearer imitation of Dick's writing, till on the last sheet the writing was so like Dick's that there was hardly any difference.

By arranging the sheets in consecutive order as they had been written, the whole progress of the schoolboy forger could be seen, from the writing that was certainly Levison's to a hand that approximated more and more to Dick's, till the forgery was finally hardly to be detected.

Dick's eyes blazed.

"Mother! Look! Do you understand? It's proof clear as daylight! Once the Head sees these papers he won't want any more proof. Mother, I can go up to the school in the morning and show these papers to the Head, and take this kid as a witness. Mother, I am saved!"

Mrs. Brooke burst into tears of thankfulness.

Harthur capered with delight.

"I've done it!" he exclaimed, with pardonable satisfaction. "I've done it! You did me a good turn, Master Dick, and now I done you one! 'Ooray!"

And in the exuberance of his feelings Harthur hugged Buster.

"It was Providence that sent you here," said Mrs. Brooke. "We are poor here, my boy, but while we have a home you shall never want one, if



the one was written the handwriting became more and more road-kicked out of St. Jim's!" But Levison never dreamed of him from the bushes.

you choose. Dick, it was your own kind action that made this boy your friend, and he has saved you! Cast your bread upon the waters, and it shall return after many days!"

Dick wrung the vagrant's hand as if he would wring it off.

"You've saved me, kid," he said. "The Head can't doubt when he sees these papers. Oh, my hat! Amy, old girl, it's all right! Hurrah!"

Needless to say, Harthur was made much of in the Brooke home that evening, and he went to bed cheerfully, after a supper that would have fulfilled all his dreams if he had had any!

CHAPTER 13.

Levison Lies!

"BROOKE!"

"My hat!"

"The cheeky bouncer's come back!"

"Bai Jove! Bwooke!"

Tom Merr & Co. were on the steps of the School House, in the bright sunshine of the morning. They had been looking somewhat gloomy; the happenings of the previous day had cast a shadow upon the school. That Brooke was guilty they could hardly entertain a doubt, and it was a great shock to them.

The sight of the day-boy walking

across the quadrangle of St. Jim's towards the School House, as if nothing had happened, was a greater shock still.

Brooke strode across the quad with a firm step, his head held proudly high. Harthur, the boy vagrant, was following him, looking much more uneasy. Harthur had come to back up his friend, but the great school and the crowds of well-dressed fellows had a very discomposing effect upon him.

"Brooke!"

"Get out, you cad!" shouted Levison.

"Shame!"

"Cad! Rotter!"

Dick Brooke came firmly up the steps of the School House. There was colour in his cheeks, and a gleam in his eye as he met the scornful looks of the juniors.

"Weally, Bwooke, this is too thick, you know."

"You shouldn't have come back, Brooke," said Tom Merry. "What the dickens do—"

"I have come back to prove my innocence," said Dick Brooke.

"Oh, rats!" said Goro.

"I have the proofs!"

"What?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Where are the giddy proofs?" asked Bernard Glyn.

"Invisible, like your ink," grinned Kangaroo.

Levison burst into a mocking laugh, though the sight of the grinning Harthur behind Brooke had struck him with a sudden chill of fear.

"What proofs have you got?" he asked sneeringly.

Brooke looked at him steadily.

"I've got the papers you were writing out in the wood on Wednesday afternoon," he said, with crushing directness. "And I've got this kid to prove that he saw you at practice forging my handwriting."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Levison!"

The blow was so sudden that the cad of the Fourth, with all his cunning, was taken utterly aback. He staggered against the wall, his face white as a sheet. Every eye was turned upon him at once.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, you know!"

"It's a lie!" shrieked Levison. "This is the tramp I had a row with the other day. He set his dog on me. Brooke has bribed him to come and tell lies about me."

Brooke's lip curled in scorn.

"The Head can judge whether they're lies or not," he said quietly. "I'm going to the Head now."

Levison sprang into his path, his fists clenched furiously.

"You're not going to the Head to tell lies about me! Show us your proofs! Let me see the papers?"

"You can see them in the presence of the Head. Mr. Lathom!" exclaimed Brooke, as the Fourth Form master looked out of his study.

"Brooke, what are doing here?" asked the Form-master sternly. "You

are expelled from the school! How dare you, sir!"

Brooke did not flinch.

"I have found proof, sir, that Levison forged the paper that was found in your desk!"

"What—what!"

"It's a lie!" yelled Levison, white to the lips.

"It's the truth!" said Dick Brooke. "Mr. Lathom, I demand to be taken before the Head, in company with Levison, to have the matter sifted!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom, in a great hurry. "You are certainly within your rights in asking that, Brooke. Come with me! Levison, you may come, also."

"Tell him to bring a specimen of his writing, sir," said Brooke. "It will be needed. And something that is already written, or he will try to disguise his hand."

"Very well," said Mr. Lathom. "You shall have every chance, Brooke, though I can hardly credit this extraordinary story. I have some lines of Levison's in my study. They will answer the purpose. Who is this—this untidy boy?"

"He's my witness, sir. He saw Levison forging my hand on Wednesday."

"Oh, indeed! Bring him with you, then. Levison, come at once!"

Mr. Lathom walked away to the Head's study. Dick Brooke and Harthur followed him, and Levison staggered on after them. The cad of the Fourth could not disobey; he hoped yet to be able to brazen the matter out, though the chill of deadly fear was upon him.

The juniors were left in an uproar. Indisputable proof had seemed to be against Dick Brooke, yet his old friends had never been able to reconcile what he had done with their knowledge of his character. But of Levison they had never thought much. And Goro suddenly exclaimed:

"It's true! I remember Levison writing out an impot for me in a hand exactly like mine. He's done it for Mellish, too. He could have imitated Brooke's hand if he liked."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "My deah boys, I am afraid we have been wathah hasty about poor old Bwooke. I always said he was decent. I'm goin' to the Head's study."

"Ass!" said Blake politely.

"I'm goin' to back up old Bwooke, because—"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You'll get shoved out," said Glyn.

"I'm goin' to back up my friend, Bwooke."

And the swell of St. Jim's walked after Brooke with a great deal of dignity, and followed him and Levison and Mr. Lathom into the Head's study. Dr. Holmes was about to leave his study for the Sixth Form Room; but he stopped at the sight of this unexpected invasion.

He frowned sternly at Dick Brooke.

"Brooke," he said harshly, "how dare you come here!"

Brooke met his eyes fearlessly.

"I've come to prove my innocence, sir."

"What!"

Dick Brooke laid the crumpled papers on the Head's desk. Dr. Holmes glanced at them with a puzzled expression; and then suddenly his glance became fixed.

"I accuse Levison of having forged

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the paper found in Mr. Latham's desk, in my hand, sir," said Brooke steadily. "Wednesday afternoon this boy here saw him making copies of this paper in the wood. I suppose he had gone there so as not to be seen practising forgeries. This sheet is part of an imposition I wrote out for Mr. Latham on Tuesday, and which was stolen from the Form-room. Mr. Latham will remember that."

"Yes—yes," muttered Mr. Latham dazedly. "I certainly recall the circumstances."

"Levison was using it as a copy," went on Brooke firmly; while the Head's brow grew darker and darker. "Here are the copies he made. You can see that the first ones are in Levison's own hand. And they get more and more like my writing as they go on. Mr. Latham has a specimen of Levison's handwriting to compare."

Mr. Latham laid Levison's lines on the desk. Dr. Holmes examined them, and then examined more carefully the dozen sheets practised upon by the schoolboy forger. Then he took from his desk the document that bore the insulting inscription, which had given so great a shock to Mr. Latham the previous morning.

There was a dead silence in the study as the Head compared the various papers, his lips growing very tight.

Brooke stood firm and confident, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stealthily clapped him on the shoulder. Levison was as white as a sheet. Had this crime found him out? What lie could save him now?

The silence was broken at last. Dr. Holmes raised his head from the papers as they lay spread out in the sunshine on his desk, and fixed his cold glance on the quaking cad of the Fourth.

"Have you anything to say, Levison?"

His voice seemed like a roll of thunder to the terrified ears of the schoolboy forger.

Levison licked his dry lips.

"Yes, sir," he stammered. "It—it's not true, sir. I never did anything of the sort. It's all lies, sir!"

"Here is your handwriting—gradually becoming more and more like Brooke's until the resemblance is complete," said the Head sternly.

"Brooke must have done it, sir."

"What!"

"That's what I say, sir," said Levison, regaining some courage. "Brooke has forged those papers, sir. He must have thought this out yesterday, and he's written out all that stuff to bring to you, sir, to take you in. It's all lies!"

Dr. Holmes pursed his lips.

"As for this tramp, sir—he's a ragamuffin who set a dog on me the other day, and I gave him a licking, sir," said Levison. "Brooke interfered. They're old friends, I suppose. Brooke has paid the young scoundrel to come here and tell these lies and back up his forgery."

"Oh my hey!" murmured Harthar. "Wot an awful young villain!"

"Silence!" said the Head. He sat at his desk, his hand resting on the papers. "Levison, your defence is that Brooke is the forger, and not yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Holmes passed a hand over his brow. In the first place, he would never have believed that such a forgery could be committed by a schoolboy. But it was evident now that it had been done; it was before him. But whether Levison had forged Brooke's hand in the message to Mr. Latham, or whether

Brooke had forged Levison's hand in the other sheets—how was he to decide that?

Brooke's heart sank. He had succeeded in proving that his guilt was not proved, but not his innocence. Levison's defence almost confounded him. There seemed no end to the cunning and resource of the young rascal.

There was a long silence in the study. Dr. Holmes broke it at last.

"I hardly know what to say," he said. "This is a shocking case—most shocking! One of you boys has forged the writing of the other, and there is no proof which is guilty. I can hardly accept the evidence of a vagrant against a boy of this school. Good heavens! That such a thing should have happened in this college!"

"I—I hardly know what to think, sir," said Mr. Latham slowly. "But in the circumstances Brooke cannot be condemned. The balance of proof seems equally divided, and I must say that Brooke's previous record is much better than Levison's. Until this wretched happening I always found him a most high-minded and honourable lad."

"I cannot adjudge either guilty without further evidence," said the Head, "and—and yet I cannot adjudge either innocent."

There was silence again. It was a strange position of affairs, and Levison's heart was beating with relief. At all events, he had warded off the blow, he told himself. The shadow of shame might be upon both of them, but Levison could still protest his innocence. But Brooke congratulated himself too soon.

CHAPTER 14.

Unexpected Proof!

IN the midst of the silence there was a sudden yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had not been noticed when he entered the Head's study behind the others.

Dr. Holmes turned towards him angrily.

"D'Arcy, how dare you! What are you doing here?"

"I came here to back up old Bwooke, sir—"

"Leave the study at once!"

"Pway excuse me, sir. But—"

"Go!"

"Pway allow me to speak, sir. It's all wight about Bwooke! This is a remarkable thing—a most remarkable thing, and Bernard Glyn is not such an ass, after all!"

"If you are not insane, D'Arcy," said the exasperated Head, "tell me what you mean!"

D'Arcy pointed to the paper on the desk that bore the message to Mr. Latham.

"Look, sir!"

All eyes were turned in wonder upon the sheet, and as they looked the wonder increased. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Latham uttered a simultaneous exclamation.

Upon the paper was clearly written in black ink the insulting message to the Form-master, "Mr. Latham is an old fool, and we all wish he would get the sack!" That was all that had been visible upon the paper—till now. But now, as the sheet lay in the bright sunshine streaming in at the window, other words were becoming visible as if by magic. In a purple colour a line of writing had appeared upon the paper, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

Dr. Holmes gasped.

"What is it? is it a trick? How—"

How did that writing come there? Half an hour ago the paper was perfectly blank, and it has not left my desk! Am I dreaming?"

"Bai Jove! I can explain, sir! Glyn can explain! It's the invisible ink, sir!"

"What!"

"It's weally wemarkable," said the swell of St. Jim's excitedly. "You wemembah the expewiment, Bwooke. You weren't here when we twied it, but I told you about it in the mornin'."

"I remember," said Brooke in wonder. "Explain yourself, D'Arcy, and lose no time!" exclaimed the bewildered Head.

"Yaas, wathah, sir. Bernard Glyn of the Shell, sir, invented an invisible ink—he's always inventin' some piffle or othah—"

"Go on!"

"Yaas, sir. He brought it to our study to show us how it worked. He said that the ink would become invisible, you see, sir, and that it would come to light if exposed to sunshine instead of bein' held to a fire as usual. That was the beauty of it, sir. He wrote a sentence from Shakespeare on a sheet of paper in the study. It was some of Bwooke's impot papah, sir—Bwooke uses our study when he works here, and he keeps his papah in the study, and we use it sometimes, as Blake is a wathah careless ass—"

"Never mind that! Go on!"

"Well, sir, the sheet that Glyn wrote that sentence upon was left on top of the heap, and put back into the cupboard. The next mornin' he twied to make it become visible in the sun, but it wouldn't, and we all thought that the expewiment had failed."

"You say Glyn tried to make the writing show the next morning?"

"Yaas, sir."

"But you say that this is the sheet?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Then how—"

"Don't you see, sir?" asked D'Arcy, highly excited. "Glyn's expewiment failed, because somebody had taken away the top sheet of papah. When he twied the next mornin', it must have been the second sheet he twied with, the top sheet bein' gone. The invisible ink didn't show up because it wasn't there. And the pwoof is, that that is the sentence that Glyn wrote—'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown,' sir. That bein' there pwoves that it is the same sheet that was left on top of the heap in our study cupboard on Monday evenin', sir, and that somebody sneaked it out of the study, without sayin' a word to anybody."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Head, and a light dawned on him.

"That is the sheet, sir. It was taken from our study, sir, without a word bein' said, and poor old Glyn was workin' on a blank sheet the next mornin'. And why was it taken, sir? Because it was Bwooke's impot papah, and this wottah wanted a sheet of Bwooke's papah to wite that wotten, insultin' message on in Bwooke's handwitin'."

"But if the paper was Brooke's, may he not have taken it from the study himself?" the Head asked slowly.

"Imposs, sir!" explained D'Arcy triumphantly.

"Why impossible?"

"Because Glyn wrote in the invisible ink afoah Bwooke had gone home, sir. He's a day-boy, you see. He had gone home, and the next mornin' Glyn twied to make the ink come up before Bwooke got here for lessons. He was awfully keen on the thing, you see, sir, and he

(Continued on page 28.)



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The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
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HALLO, chums! Take up a pin and look at the head of it. It's about one-sixteenth of an inch in diameter. Yet on that infinitesimal area of space a man has engraved the twenty-six letters of the alphabet! That's merely one of the amazing feats of Mr. Harry Barker, and he accomplished it in the record time of five minutes. Mr. Barker is a sixty-year-old engraver, but his hand has not lost its skill with advancing years. His hobby is doing things with pins, and he has also engraved a clock-face on the head of one. Four times, too, he has etched the Lord's Prayer on a threepenny-piece!

But Mr. Barker's most wonderful achievements are the making of models with pins. He has made with one pin only a model of Sir Malcolm Campbell's famous "Bluebird" racing car, complete with wheels and axles which revolve! It must be easily the smallest model of a motor-car ever made. And among Mr. Barker's collection of models there is a three-wheeled car and a wheelbarrow, each made with one pin!

"BARRED BY THE SCHOOL!"

Martin Clifford has once again "hit the high spots" with his next great story of the chums of St. Jim's. It is the sequel to the powerful yarn in this number, and, believe me, it's a story that will give you hundred per cent enjoyment.

Not once but several times has Ernest Levison deserved expulsion, but never more than when he schemes for that fate to befall Dick Brooke, as described in "The Outcast of St. Jim's!" Everyone expects the chopper to fall at last, but it doesn't. Once again Levison's

cunning saves him. The chums of St. Jim's are greatly indignant when they learn that he is not to be sacked because it would endanger his health. They know only too well that the cad of the Fourth is malingering. So in defiance of authority, they decide among themselves to expel him! Never before in the history of St. Jim's has a junior been expelled by his own school-fellows—but it happens in next week's grand yarn. Levison is compelled to go. But that's where Tom Merry & Co. make a big mistake, as you will see when you read this ripping story.

SOCCER'S LAST KICKS!

The end of the Soccer season is drawing near, and it is the period when the big League clubs concerned in promotion and relegation problems have an exciting time. They have to stand or fall by the players on their staffs, for no man signed on now—March 16 is the closing date—can assist a club fighting for the League championship or struggling to avoid relegation.

Every match which has a bearing on championship or relegation issues is like a Cup-tie. Every point is vital, every goal scored or conceded might make all the difference in the final reckoning on the last Saturday of the season.

In 1924 Huddersfield Town and Cardiff were neck and neck for the First Division Championship. Cardiff were one point in front and with a slightly better goal average when the last match

was due to be played. Everything, therefore, depended on Cardiff's final game at Birmingham, and they succeeded in drawing, 0-0. Huddersfield were playing at home against Notts Forest, and they won, 3-0. The two teams were thus level on points, and their goal averages were almost identical. Cardiff's read, 61 goals for, 34 against. Huddersfield's was, 60 for, 33 against. So the latter won the Championship with a .02 better goal average! What a thrilling finish!

No less thrilling must have been the struggle to avoid relegation which was staged on Millwall's ground on the final Saturday of last season. The London club had 33 points and they were playing Manchester United, who were immediately below them at the bottom of the League with 32 points. Millwall only had to draw to stay in the Second Division. The United had to win. What a needle match! Both playing to hold their position in the higher League. The occasion was too much for Millwall, apparently, and they went down, 2-0.

So the up-and-down struggle of end-of-season Soccer goes on, and the uncertainty of it all is one of the great attractions of football.

"THE BAD MAN FROM BAR-O!"

When Yuba Peto hit Packsaddle School he was sorely in need of food, money, and a horse. Yuba was a hobo, and a very unpleasant specimen, and with Bill Sampson, the headmaster, away, the tramp bethought him that the cow town school would be a cinch to get what he wanted. So it was that the bad man blew in, with a six-gun in his grip, thinking that it was his lucky day. But it proved anything but a lucky day for Yuba Peto! You will delight in the next grand Wild West school yarn by Frank Richards. Look out for it.

With more thrilling chapters from our serial "The Secret World," and our popular shorter features, another ripping number of the GEM is complete. Don't forget to order early.

TAILPIECE.

First Mother (after reading son's letter from college): "Jack's letters always send me to the dictionary."

Second Mother: "That's nothing! Jim's letters always send me to the bank!"

PEN PALS COUPON

13-4-35

THE EDITOR.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal, post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

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Leslie Crosbie, 20, Ben Jonson Road, Stepney, London, E.1, wants pen pals; stamps, microscope, astronomy.

Will Jack Nugent, of Manor Park, write to Frank Wood, 9, St. Lawrence Terrace, Pudsey, Yorks, who also wants other correspondents.

Miss Joan Hesketh, 34, Whitegate Drive, Blackpool, Lancs, wants girl correspondents; age 17-20; films, swimming, tennis; overseas preferred.

Miss R. Keeling, 49, Cavendish Road, Highams Park, London, E.4, wants a girl correspondent abroad; age 15-16; stamps.

Miss Margaret Mackenzie, 42, Gelston Street, Sandyhills, Glasgow, E.2, wants a girl correspondent; age 14-16.

G. E. Allatt, 29, Gloucester Road, Kew, Surrey, would like to hear from readers who are keen on the old "Nelson Lee" and the "Monster Library."

Victor Mann, 579, Logan Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wants correspondents; age 12 upwards; aviation.

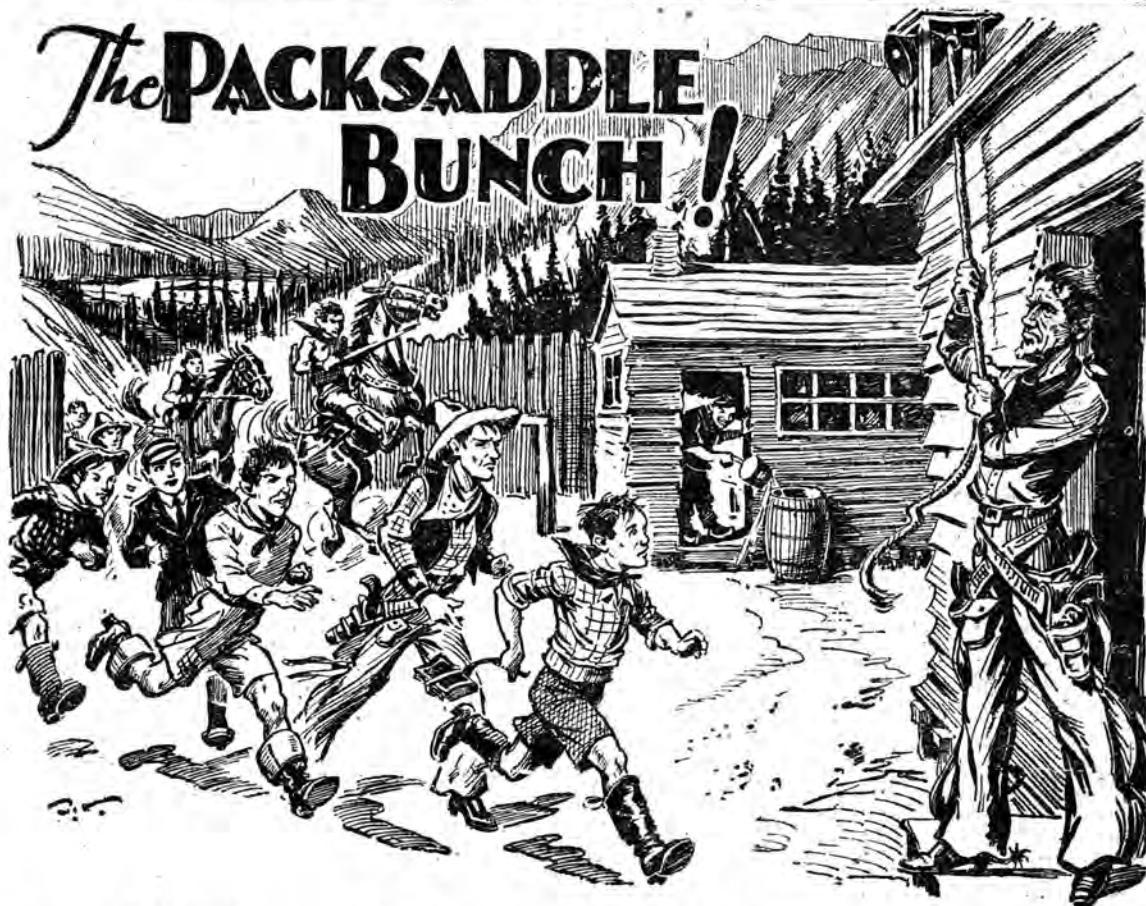
D. Dutton, 9, Albert Avenue, Skegness, Lincs, wants pen pals in Europe; age 11-13; chemistry.

Miss Kath Francis, Tawai Street, Trentham, Wellington, New Zealand, wants girl correspondents; sports, film stars, Girl Guides.

(Continued on page 27.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,417.

The PACKSADDLE BUNCH!



Tit for Tat!

DICK CARR grinned. Bill Sampson reached for his quirt.

Certainly, Dick ought not to have grinned. Bill Sampson was his headmaster. Neither was it a safe game to grin at Bill, with his quirt lying so handy on the desk.

Morning school had been dismissed at Packsaddle. Small Brown, the teacher, had gone out, followed by the bunch. Bill called to Dick as he was going out with the rest, and the tender-foot of Packsaddle came up to his desk.

On that desk lay a paper written in Bill's hand.

Bill's fist was more used to handling a quirt, a bronco's reins, or the butt of a six-gun than a pen. And Bill, who knew all about punching cows, did not know a lot about spelling. He was the man to run the cow town school—only a guy like Bill could have handled that tough bunch. But Small Brown did all the teaching in the school-room. Small as he was, Mr. Brown had much more knowledge packed into his five feet six than Bill had in his six feet five. Dick Carr grinned quite involuntarily at the sight of the paper written by the Texas headmaster:

"LORST!

"Baccy powch, full of terbacker, sumwhar in Packsaddle. Dollar to the guy what totes it to Packsaddle Skool."
"BILL SAMPSON."

"I guess," said Bill, fixing the tender-foot schoolboy with a cold eye, "that I want you to tote this here notice down THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,417.

to the burg, and stick it on the door of Hanson's store. I guess I don't want to see you snigger none."

"Sorry!" gasped Dick. "But—Whoop!"

Crack!

The quirt curled round his legs.

Dick jumped and dodged. One lick from Bill's quirt was enough for any guy at Packsaddle. Bill had a heavy hand. He had been accustomed to handling steers before the citizens of Packsaddle appointed him headmaster

Outside in the playground Slick Poindexter and Mick Kavanagh were waiting for him by the porch.

"Say, what's biting Bill?" asked Slick.

Dick held up the paper.

"I've got to take this down to Hanson's store. Coming along?"

"You said it," agreed Mick.

The three schoolboys walked out of the gates, to go down the school-trail to the cow town. It was only a short distance, and they did not trouble to fetch their horses from the corral.

But half-way to the town there was a clatter of hoofs on the trail behind them.

Steve Carson came down from the school gates at a reckless gallop. Dick, Slick, and Mick had just time to spring out of the way of the galloping bronco. Catching his foot in his haste in a trailing mesquite root, Dick Carr went headlong.

The bully of Packsaddle laughed loudly as he tore by on the galloping bronco. Dick scrambled up, red with anger.

"Say, you pesky gink!" roared Slick Poindexter. "You figure you've bought this here trail?"

"Aw, go and chop chips!" called back Big Steve over his shoulder.

And he galloped on, and disappeared into the rugged street of the cow town.

"I guess that big stiff is asking for it a few," growled Slick.

And the three schoolboys resumed their way, and arrived at Hanson's.

Hanson's store was the biggest building in Main Street, Packsaddle. It stood next to the Red Dog Saloon. A good many people were going in and

TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD!

By
FRANK RICHARDS.

of the school. Sometimes he seemed to figure that he was still handling steers.

"You sniggering some more?" hooted Bill.

"Oh! Ow! No!" gasped Dick.

"Vamoose the ranch, then, and git that there notice stuck on Hanson's door!" growled Bill. "Beat it, pronto!"

Dick picked up the paper from the desk, and beat it.

—MORE BIG THRILLS WITH THE PALS OF THE COW TOWN SCHOOL.

out of the store. The big door stood wide open, and on the door a good many papers were pinned or stuck.

Packsaddle did not boast a newspaper. Local publicity was secured by a notice stuck on Hanson's door. Everybody in Packsaddle, sooner or later, was sure to see it, or hear about it. If a man had a horse to sell, or wanted to buy a bunch of steers, he would stick up a paper at Hanson's.

There were several other papers already on the pinewood door. Dick found a vacant spot, and proceeded to affix Bill's notice thereto. The writing was wildly scrawling, the spelling was extraordinary, but the meaning was clear. All Packsaddle was going to know that the schoolmaster had lost his tobacco-pouch, and was prepared to pay one dollar for the recovery and return of the same.

"Pull in!" said Slick Poindexter, as Dick was turning away after finishing his task. "I guess Steve is around. Pipe that bronco!"

A brown bronco, with a white "stocking" on one forefoot, was hitched to the rail outside the Red Dog. It was Steve Carson's bronco, and the three recognized it at once. Steve's father, Two-Gun Carson, the gambler, was generally to be found at the Red Dog, and it was clear that Steve had gone into the saloon to see him.

"That's Steve's cayuse," said Poindexter, with a grin. "I guess I got a stunt."

"I'll buy it," said Mick.

"Big Steve figured that it was funny to ride us down on the trail," said Slick. "I guess he can walk back. He sure does hate hoofin' it."

"Good!" said Dick Carr, laughing. Slick unhitched the bronco, and led it away up Main Street. Steve was still in the Red Dog Saloon when they hit the trail again, and trotted the bronco back to the school.

It was about a quarter of an hour later that Big Steve came out of the Red Dog, and discovered that his cayuse was missing. He stared round the rugged street in anger and alarm. Broncos cost dollars, even in the cow country, and horse-thieves were plentiful.

A Kicking Mule puncher was riding up the street, and Steve shouted to him. But the puncher had seen nothing of his horse.

Steve rushed into Hanson's Store to make alarmed inquiries. Hanson, the fat Dane, gave him news that relieved his alarm, but added to his anger.

"Dose poys frem te school, Dig, Slig, and Mig," said Mr. Hanson. "Dey take der hoss, isn't it? Dey gum here to stick a notice on der door, and dey take der hoss. I see dem from der vinder."

Steve grunted angrily, and tramped out again. He paused at the door, to look at the notice placed there by the schoolboys. He grinned at the spelling, as Dick had grinned when he first saw it. Having read the notice, Steve passed on; but he paused and stepped back. The notice was scrawled in pencil, and Steve had a pencil in his pocket.

Taking care that no one observed his action, Steve added a figure and a letter to Bill's scrawled notice in similar scrawl. He put "20" before the word "dollar," and added an "s" to that word.

The notice now read as if Bill Sampson was offering twenty dollars reward for the return of his "lorst" tobacco-pouch.

Grinning, Steve walked up the street. The offer of twenty dollars, he figured, would set every idle loafer in the cow town hunting for that baccy-pouch, and it was certain to be found. And when the finder presented himself at Packsaddle School, and claimed twenty dollars, it was certain that Bill, who had offered only one, would refuse to pony up. There would be a rookus, and very likely a fight. And what was Bill going to think when he found that the trouble was caused by an alteration of his notice? That Dick, Slick, and Mick had done it, of course. Bill's quirt would get busy, and Steve figured that the three would be sorry that they had walked off his horse.

He tramped up the trail to the school, arriving a little late for chuck. Tin Tung was serving the meal when Steve tramped into the chuckhouse, and a laugh greeted him as he entered.

"Say, you lost a cayuse?" chuckled Poindexter. "I guess you'll find him safe in the corral if you give it the once-over, Steve."

"You been hunting around for that critter, Steve?" grinned Mick.

"You can think twice before you ride a fellow down again!" said Dick Carr.

"I guess it's one on you, Steve!" chuckled Pie Sanders.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

To the surprise of the bunch Steve

LOST—the headmaster of Packsaddle's tobacco pouch—ONE DOLLAR REWARD. Read what happened when the "bad lad" of the cow town school made the reward twenty dollars!

laughed, too. It was not his way to take a joke against himself good-temperedly. But Steve, thinking of what was coming to the three when Bill got going with the quirt, roared. And when, after chuck, he told his pals, Slim Dixon and Poker Parker, they were tickled to death.

Bill Sampson, who was greatly attached to his old tobacco-pouch which had cost him four dollars at Tombstone, hoped that he would get news of it that day. Big Steve was sure that he would.

Mesquite Gets Mad!

SCHOOL was on at Packsaddle. The bunch were in their places at the pinewood desks. Small Brown was teaching them, and he had a very orderly class—for the excellent reason that Bill was seated at his high desk, with his quirt ready to his hand. When Bill was around the tough bunch were as meek as little lambs, and Mr. Brown found life worth living.

When Bill was not around it was quite a different matter. At the present moment the bunch were quiet and attentive; only Carson, Dixon, and Parker every now and then exchanging grinning glances. They fully expected something to happen that afternoon.

And something did! The door on the wide porch was open, letting in the bright sunlight of Texas. Across that sunlight fell a shadow, and Bill looked round, and all the bunch looked up.

Mesquite Sam, a puncher of the Kicking Mule Ranch, stepped in—a big figure in his heavy cowman's boots and

ten-gallon hat, with one cheek bulged by a big "chew" of tobacco.

Bill frowned. Having once ridden the ranges of the Kicking Mule himself as a puncher of cows, Bill was always glad to see an old acquaintance of the prairie. But not in school hours.

Bill was no great shakes of a schoolmaster, so far as education went. Of book-knowledge he had little, though he had a great store of knowledge that was perhaps more valuable. But though he could not teach like Mr. Brown, Bill could keep order as Mr. Brown never could, and he was very particular that class should never be interrupted. Even Marshal Lick had been called a pasky piecan, and told to beat it when he horned in while lessons were on.

So Bill waved a large hand at Mesquite, waving him away.

"Vamoose the ranch!" he rapped. "This here is a school, not the Red Dog Saloon. Mesquite! Beat it!"

Mesquite blinked at him.

"Doggone you, Bill!" was his answer.

"You put up a notice asking galoots to s'arch around for your baccy-pouch, and you shoot off your mouth that-a-way when a guy horns in to put you wise that he's found it!"

"Aw, you allow you've cinched that pouch, Mesquite?" said Bill. "All the same, you've no call to horn in while classes is on! Ain't you never been to no school, you uneducated cowpuncher? Don't you savvy?"

"Can it, Bill!" said Mesquite. "I guess I got to get back to Kicking Mule, and ain't got a lot of time for chewing the rag. I'll say that when I seed your notice at Hanson's. I jested rubbering around arter that baccy-pouch, and I sure cinched it. It took me more'n two hours to raise it where you lost it, you old piecan."

Bill stared at him. He had offered a dollar for the return of the lost pouch, to pay any guy for the trouble of coming up to the school with it. But a dollar was hardly enough to set a man searching, especially for the length of two hours. Bill gave a snort.

"I guess you Kicking Mule guys has got time to burn, if you can waste two hours that-a-way!" he grunted. "But now you're here you hand over that pesky pouch and quit! I'm telling you that you're horning in where guys ain't wanted to come chewing the rag."

Mesquite tossed the tobacco-pouch on the desk. Bill picked it up and examined it. It was a big leather pouch, full of tobacco, though not so full as when Bill had lost it. The bulge in Mesquite's cheek hinted that he had helped himself to a "plug" to chew, as he came up to the school—and the size of the bulge hinted that it was a good big plug!

There was little about that big leather pouch to distinguish it from a score of others. Still, Bill knew his own property and he was satisfied. He groped in the huge pockets of his crakers for a silver dollar.

"I'll say I'm powerful glad to see that pesky old pouch agin!" said Bill, more graciously. "Here's your dollar, Mesquite."

He extended the silver dollar towards the puncher.

Mesquite Sam did not take it. He stared at it, and stared at Bill.

Mesquite might or might not have "time to burn," but certainly he would not have rooted up and down Packsaddle for a couple of hours to earn a single dollar! Mesquite was thinking of twenty dollars.

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"Say, Bill, what you call that?" inquired the puncher warmly.

"Ain't you never seed a silver dollar before, you pican?" asked Bill.

"I'll say yep!" agreed Mesquite. "And I'll jest ask you, Bill, where's the other nineteen?"

"Nineteen nothing!" yapped Bill. "Say, you gone loco. There's your dollar, like it was said in my notice down to Hanson's Store."

"Forget it!" roared Mesquite. "You figure that I've bin rubbering all over Packsaddle for a dollar!" Mesquite made a stride nearer to the headmaster of Packsaddle. "I'm asking you to pony up them twenty dollars, like it was said in your notice down to Hanson's."

"Twenty jumping painters!" gasped Bill. "You figure I'm paying a guy twenty dollars for an old baccy-pouch what cost no more'n four at Tombstone and that was seven years ago?"

"I guess I figured you was loco, or else you wanted that baccy-pouch bad!" agreed Mesquite. "But that ain't no consarn of mine! You stick up a notice about twenty dollars—"

"Twenty howlin' coyotes! I put one dollar on that paper—"

"I'll say you put twenty!" roared Mesquite.

"And I'll say you was as drunk as a Mexican, and you saw double!" roared Bill. "I'll say—"

"Say nothing!" howled Mesquite. "I'll tell all Texas I'm here for twenty dollars, Bill Sampson, and don't you forget it!"

"Twenty ring-tailed gophers!" snorted Bill. He turned to the staring class. "Here you—Carr!"

"Yes," gasped Dick Carr.

"You gave the notice the once-over, afore you moseyed down to Hanson's. You tell this bone-headed puncher what was wrote on it."

"One dollar reward for finding the tobacco-pouch," said Dick Carr, at once.

"I guess that's so!" said Slick Pindexter. "I read it, too."

"You said it!" exclaimed Mick.

Mesquite stared at them. Then he shook a big fist at them. Mesquite knew what he had read on that paper on Hanson's door. He knew that he had started to search for the lost pouch like a dozen other guys, simply because the munificent reward of twenty dollars was offered. Mesquite's temper was rising fast.

"You ornery young picans!" he roared. "There ain't a word of truth in it. Bill, you pesky old lobo-wolf. Packsaddle won't hone to be keeping you on hyer as a schoolmaster, you teaching them young guys to lie like Mexican half-breeds!"

Bill Sampson leaped from his desk, red with rage.

"Pack it up!" he roared. "And beat it, afore I spread you over this hyer school-room in little pieces—"

"Pack up nothing!" bawled Mesquite. "I'm hyer for my twenty dollars, and I'll say—Whoooooop!"

Bill hurled the silver dollar at him, catching him fairly on the nose. Mesquite broke off with a wild yell.

"There's your dollar!" bellowed Bill. "Take it or leave it, and quit! You want to beat it while you're in one piece."

Mesquite did not beat it. He clapped his hand to his nose. Then he rushed at Bill. The next moment a terrific scrap was raging in the school-room of Packsaddle, and all the bunch were on their feet, watching it with breathless interest.

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Gun-play at Packsaddle I

TRAMP! TRAMP! TRAMP!
To and fro went the headmaster of Packsaddle School and the puncher from Kicking Mule Ranch, grappling and thumping and punching.

It was a terrific combat.

The bunch watched breathlessly. Small Brown watched, his eyes almost popping through his horn-rimmed spectacles in alarm. Steve Carson chuckled. He had figured that trouble would follow that misunderstanding about the amount of the reward. He had been right.

Mesquite was a powerful man. But he was not a match for the gigantic headmaster of Packsaddle.

For full five minutes they struggled and swayed, panted and gasped. Then Mesquite was off the floor.

Bill had a grip with his right on the slack of Mesquite's trousers, with his left on the back of the cattleman's neck-scarf. Mesquite swung in the air, arms and legs flying.

"Good old Bill!" chuckled Slick.

"I'll say Bill's cinched that ornery guy!" chortled Mick.

"Say, you let up on a galoot!" came Mesquite's frantic roar. "Say, I guess I'll come a-shooting—"

Unheeding, Bill Sampson strode out of the school-room, through the porch, with the big cattleman struggling and wriggling vainly in his grasp.

There was a rush to the door to watch him as he went.

Right across the playground went Bill, to the gate in the fence that guarded the edge of the high bluffs over the Rio Frio.

On the top of the bluffs he came to a halt. Ten feet below was the bed of mud beside the river. It stretched for a good distance from the foot of the bluff to the waters of the Frio.

A fearful yell from Mesquite told that he guessed what was coming next. He swung dizzily in Bill's powerful hands.

"Say, you let up!" raved Mesquite. "I'll sure come back with a gat in my grip, and fill you with holes like you was a colander! I'll tell all Texas—"

Mesquite's yell was lost in the air as he was tossed over the bluff. There was a heavy squash in the mud below.

Bill glared down at the cattleman, almost buried in soft mud, struggling wildly to his feet, spluttering and gurgling.

"I guess that's yours, Mesquite!" roared Bill. "You horn in at this here school agin, and I'll say I'll fix you up for a front seat in a funeral!"

And, leaving the hapless puncher to splutter and crawl out of the mud, Bill tramped back to the schoolhouse.

He found the porch crammed with staring schoolboys. Bill glared at them.

"Say, what's this game?" he roared. "What you young picans rubbering around this-a-way for, when Mister Brown's a-teaching you lessons! You figure that this here is a doggoned rodeo? Beat it!"

Luckily for the bunch, Bill's quirt still lay on his desk. There was a rush back into the school-room, and Bill followed it, landing out with his heavy boots to speed it up. There were loud howls from the members of the bunch who were rearmost.

In record time they were back at their desks. Small Brown, twittering with nervousness, resumed his instruction. Bill sat down, pushed back his stetson, and mopped his perspiring brow. Even Bill had had to exert himself in handling Mesquite.

However, the "rookus" was now over, and the school settled down again, and

Bill comforted himself with a chew from his recovered pouch. But the bunch noticed that he took his big Colt from the holster, examined it, and put it back again.

Mesquite had threatened to come back "a-shooting," and it was quite possible that he might make his words good. Bill reckoned that it was wise to have a gun handy and ready.

It was about an hour later that footsteps were heard coming up to the porch. The bunch exchanged eager glances. They wondered whether it was Mesquite on the warpath.

The same idea evidently occurred to Bill, for he was seen to give his gun-belt a hitch, to bring the butt of his Colt nearer to his grasp.

Again a shadow blotted the sunlight at the door. But it was not Mesquite Sam this time. It was a plump, swarthy Mexican who entered—dark-skinned, with black ringlets under a big sombrero, and silver buttons on his bell-trousers.

Most of the Packsaddle bunch knew him. He was Jose Gomez, who ran a pulque joint in the cow town, where Mexican vaqueros congregated to soak their national drink.

Why Gomez had come up to Packsaddle School was rather a puzzle. Bill, already not in the best of tempers, glared at him.

"Say, you greasy gink—" he hooted.

Gomez came into the school-room, removed his sombrero, and bowed to Bill with Spanish politeness. But Spanish politeness was a sheer waste on the headmaster of Packsaddle. He had no use for greasers, and least of all for Jose Gomez, whose reputation in the cow town was a juicy one.

"Senor Sampson—" began Gomez.

"Pack it up and quit!" snorted Bill. "No guys ain't allowed in this here school-room! Vamoose!"

"But you lose a pouch!" said the Mexican. "You offer a reward! I find a pouch, senor!"

He held up a leather tobacco-pouch so like Bill's that it might have been its twin!

Bill stared! The bunch stared! Gomez grinned and bowed.

"Jumping painters!" gasped Bill.

His tobacco-pouch, already found and returned by Mesquite Sam, was in his pocket! Evidently the Mexican was not aware of that!

Every guy in Packsaddle had seen Bill's pouch at one time or another. There were plenty more like it to be had at the store!

Evidently the offer—or supposed offer—of twenty dollars reward had tempted Mr. Gomez! Unaware that the lost pouch had been found and returned, the cool rogue had come along with another just like it, packed with tobacco! It was worth the expenditure of three or four dollars to cinch twenty!

Bill gazed at him agape!

But for the fact that he had already recovered his old pouch, it was very probable that he would have fallen for the trick!

Not that he would have handed over twenty dollars, as the Mexican supposed. Gomez, of course, knew nothing of Steve's trickery, and took the notice at Hanson's at face value.

"Howlin' coyotes!" gasped Bill, almost stupefied. "I'll say this is the bee's kneel! Yep!"

"Your pouch, senor!" said Gomez, approaching him with another bow, the bunch watching him spellbound. "Often I see him, senor, when you honour the town with your presence! 'Si, senor! When I find him in the street I know

him at once—he is yours! I hasten to return him to you, Senor Sampson."

"Oh, gum!" breathed Slick Poindexter. "I'll whisper that that greaser is sure asking for trouble!"

"You said it!" grinned Mick.

"Doggone my cats!" gasped Bill. "You figure that baccy-pouch is mine, Mister Gomez! You jest hold it up for a guy to see!"

Mr. Gomez held up the tobacco-pouch.

Bill whipped the Colt from his belt.

Bang!

There was a fearful yell from the

the trail. Jose Gomez was burning the wind for the cow town, fervently wishing that he had never thought of attempting to play that cunning trick on the schoolmaster.

Bill Sampson tramped back into the school-room, grinning.

"I'll say that greasy guy is sorry he called, a few!" he remarked. "Say, you young piecans rubbering agin? You want to 'tend to Mister Brown, or you honing for the quirt?"

Bill picked up the quirt from his desk. The bunch decided immediately to attend to Mister Brown!

altered it. So they were puzzled and perplexed, and so were the rest of the bunch. Bill was as puzzled as any man! Mesquite's mistake, and the Mexican's trickery, had him equally beat.

When there came a galloping of hoofs on the school trail, the Packsaddle bunch rushed to the gate. Big Steve, grinning, shouted:

"Say, you'uns, here come the Kicking Mule guys and I guess they're sure going to put it over Bill!"

"Gum!" exclaimed Slick, and he drew a deep breath as he stared at the



"Look at your dockymnt!" roared Mesquite. "If that ain't twenty dollars wrote on it, I'll sure eat my six-gun. I've horned in to collect them twenty dollars, and if you kick, Bill Sampson, you'll get what's coming to you!"

Mexican. The bullet from Bill's six-gun tore the tobacco-pouch from his hand, and a strip of skin from one of the fingers at the same time.

"Caramba!" yelled Gomez, in surprise and rage.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Packsaddle bunch.

Bang! roared the six-gun again. The bullet chipped leather from one of Gomez's boots! Bill, rising from his desk, strode at him with smoking gun, red with wrath.

"Beat it!" he roared. "Hop, you dog-goned greaser—hop!"

Bang, bang!

With a yell of terror Gomez hopped! Bill was "fanning" him with the six-gun, firing at his feet. Gomez had to hop to save his feet, and he hopped frantically.

The Packsaddle bunch roared with merriment. Even Small Brown grinned. Hopping wildly, the Mexican gained the doorway of the porch. Bang! roared the gun, and the Mexican darted through the porch and ran for his life.

Bill rushed after him.

Bang! roared the last shot of the six-gun, and a yell floated back as it spun the sombrero on the fleeing man's head.

Then there was a clatter of hoofs on

Not Funny for Steve!

"I GUESS I'll buy it!" said Slick Poindexter, rubbing his nose in puzzled amazement.

But nobody had it to sell.

It perplexed all the bunch, excepting Steve, Slim, and Poker. They knew.

School was over and the bunch were in the playground. Steve lounged in the gateway, rather in hope of seeing Mesquite Sam coming back for trouble. The other fellows discussed the strange happening of the afternoon.

Why Mesquite had fancied it was worth twenty dollars to recover that lost baccy-pouch was one mystery. Why the greasy Mexican had horned in with a put-up tale was another. Jose was rogue enough for anything, but he had spent money on that tobacco-pouch he had tried to palm off as Bill's; not much, perhaps, but certainly more than the dollar that was offered as a reward. So it really looked as if Jose Gomez, as well as Mesquite, fancied that the reward was larger than that stated by Bill.

Dick, Slick, and Mick knew what was on the notice they had posted up at Hanson's. They did not even know that Big Steve had seen it at all, let alone

riders on the trail. "I'll say that looks like trouble."

Mesquite Sam was riding up the trail with four companions—men from Kicking Mule Ranch. All of them packed guns, and all of them looked grim. Grim, bearded faces frowned under the stetson hats.

There was a deep buzz in the school bunch. Only too clearly the Kicking Mule punchers were hitting Packsaddle for trouble.

Dick Carr cut across to the school-house. Bill was in a rocker in the porch, his long legs stretched out, a frown on his rugged brow. He was still puzzling over the afternoon's happenings.

"They're coming, Bill!" panted the tenderfoot of Packsaddle. "Mesquite, with four more—"

Bill shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I guess if they've come a-gunning after this baby they won't all be riding hum to Kicking Mule at sundown!" he remarked. "You beat it, kid, and tell the bunch to keep clear. I guess there may be hot lead spilt around hyer."

Dick rejoined his friends, but the bunch did not keep clear. Nearly all crowded round as the cowmen dis-

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mounted at the gate and strode in, clattering in their heavy boots with jingling spurs. Mesquite Sam roared to the schoolboys.

"Say, where's that doggoned schoolmaster of yorn what throwed a guy into the mud of the Frio? Shoot!"

"I guess Bill's along to the schoolhouse, Sam," answered Slick, "and all ready to throw you into the Frio again, and your side-kickers after you."

"Can it, you!" snapped Sam, and he strode over to the schoolhouse porch, followed by his friends. "Say, you doggoned schoolmaster," he roared, as he advanced, "you hiding away like a doggoned coyote?"

"Not so's you'd notice it!" drawled Bill, as he stepped into view from the schoolhouse with a gun in either hand. "I guess I'm at home, you'uns, and if you want me I'm your antelope. Sure!"

There was an angry buzz from the punchers. Hands were on guns, but none was drawn for the moment. Bill Sampson was lightning on the shoot, and with either hand he was a deadly marksman. And with a big Colt in each hand he faced the angry outfit coolly.

Mesquite Sam had a crumpled paper in one hand. He unfolded it and held it up. Dick, Slick, and Mick recognised the notice they had pinned on the door at Hanson's.

"Look at that, you pesky old piccan!" roared Mesquite. "I guess you know your own doggoned dockment agin."

"I sure do, old-timer!" assented Bill.

"Look at it, you ornery old gink! If that ain't twenty dollars wrote on it I'll sure eat it, and my six-gun arter it!" hooted Mesquite. "And I'm mentioning that I've horned in to collect them twenty dollars, and my pards have come to see that I do it, and if you kick, Bill Sampson, you'll get what's coming to you!"

"You surely will, Bill!" said several of the punchers at once. And there was a glimmer of pulling guns.

Bill Sampson made no answer. He was staring blankly at the notice extended in Mesquite's hand.

Plain to the eye was the statement that twenty dollars would be paid for the return of the 'lorst' tobacco-pouch.

Bill's eyes were good, but he could hardly believe them. He knew what he had written on that paper, but what he read now was not what he had written.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Bill, at last.

He showed his guns back into the holsters, heedless of the fact that every one of the punchers now had a gun in his hand.

"You ownin' up, you piccan?" shouted Mesquite. "You allow that's twenty dollars wrote on that bill, doggone your ornery hide?"

"You said it!" agreed Bill.

Dick Carr gave a shout.

"That was not on the paper when I posted it up at Hanson's. Slick and Mick know that it wasn't. It's been changed."

"Aw, forget it!" yapped Mesquite. "Say, you Bill Sampson, I want to know, and I want to know quick! You spillin' them twenty dollars?"

Bill gave the paper another earnest stare. He breathed hard and deep. The mystery was clear to him now.

"You hear me a-shouting?" roared Mesquite.

"You doggoned, ornery, locoed roughneck!" snorted Bill. "Pack it up and let a galoot shoot! I'm telling you I put one dollar on that paper, like young Carr's sung out, and some ornery guy has fixed it up different while it

was stuck on Hanson's door! You got that?"

"Aw, what you giving me?" grunted Mesquite, taken aback.

"Ain't you knowed me to be a square man?" roared Bill. "Ain't I rode with you'uns afore I was a schoolmaster, on the Kicking Mule ranges? And did you ever know me throw a guy down? If I allowed I'd squeeze out twenty dollars, ain't I good for twenty bucks and some over, doggone you? I guess this was fixed up for a joke on me!"

"Great gophers!" said Mesquite.

"How'd I know there was twenty dollars wrote on that paper when you come up with that baccy-pouch?" snorted Bill. "It was done arter I sent it down to Hanson's! And if you ain't taking a white man's word, goldarn you, get going with them shooting-irons—and I'll sure mention that Rancher Dunwoody will miss some boneheads from his outfit!"

But the punchers packed their guns. What had occurred was clear to all of them now—even to Mesquite, sore as he was from his dip in the mud of the Frio.

"I guess I'd like to intervieo the guy what played that fool trick!" growled Mesquite surlily. "I allow you're giving us the goods, Bill, but I'd sure like to meet up with that guy!"

"I guess I'm going to cinch that guy!" snapped Bill. "I guess he ain't fur off." He stared round over the crowd of schoolboys. "Say, which of you guys has been down to the burg to-day?"

"I guess Carr took the notice down to Hanson's, Bill!" grinned Steve Carson. "I'll say he could put you wise if he liked."

"That notice hadn't been altered when I left it," said Dick Carr quietly. "And Slick and Mick will say the same."

"You're shouting," agreed Slick.

"You said it!" exclaimed Mick.

Bill's eyes fixed on Steve.

"I reckon you've been down to Pack-saddle, Steve Carson!" he rapped. "You hit Hanson's Store while you was there?"

"Nope," answered Steve coolly. "I guess I seen the popper in the Red Dog; never went near the store. Never knew there was a notice up at all till Mesquite blew in this afternoon."

There was a shout from one of the punchers in Mesquite's crowd; he made a stride towards Steve.

"You ornery young piccan!" he roared. "Didn't I see you? Didn't you yaup out to me that you'd missed your cayuse, and ask me if I'd seen it around? And when I allowed I hadn't, didn't you horn into that store to ask Hanson? Didn't I see you go in?"

Steve started.

He remembered the Kicking Mule puncher in Main Street, to whom he had called when he had missed his

bronc outside the Red Dog. This was the man. Steve had forgotten that incident. He was reminded of it now.

"Carry me home to die!" roared Bill. "You allow you never went near Hanson's Store—and here's a guy what seen you horn into that very shebang!"

"I—I—I guess I forgot!" stammered Steve. "I jest went in to ask Hanson about my bronc—"

"Pack it up!" snorted Bill. "Why, you young piccan, I suspicioned you first of all, and now you cough up a hatful of lies! I guess I ain't looking no farther for the guy what pulled this stunt on me! Nope! Mr. Brown!"

"Sir!" gasped Small Brown.

"Tote out my quirt!"

Small Brown hopped into the schoolhouse for the quirt. Steve Carson gritted his teeth. It looked as if the quirting he had planned for Dick Carr was coming home to roost.

"Now," roared Bill, as he grabbed the quirt from Small Brown, "you're mighty free offering twenty dollars around and making fools of galoots! Here's Mesquite, what has come up for twenty dollars! I never offered no twenty dollars, and I ain't standing for it! But you did, Steve Carson, and you're standing for it, or else you're going to be quirted like you was an ornery steer—and then some! You get me?"

"Not a cent!" hissed Steve. "I guess—"

"If you got twenty dollars in your rags, you want to hand it over to Mesquite—like you allowed you'd do, putting it on that notice," said Bill grimly. "I guess you got it and more—and I guess you want to pay up and make your word good, young Carson. You squaring?"

"Nope!" yelled Steve. "I—"

Bill grasped him with his left hand. The quirt sang in his right. There was a fearful yell from Steve as it rang round him.

"Let up! Let up, you old piccan!" howled Steve. "I guess I'll pony up!"

"I guess you will," roared Bill, "or else I guess I shall want a noo quirt arter wearing this one out on your hide!"

"You said it, Bill!" chuckled Mesquite. "You got to stand for what you wrote up on that notice, young Carson! You ain't got no kick coming!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the bunch.

Steve Carson's face was a picture as he sorted out four five-dollar bills. The gambler's son had plenty of money, but he did not like parting with it. He had to part with it, however. With a furious face he handed the bills over to Mesquite Sam, who chuckled as he packed them away in the pocket of his chaps. Then, with grinning faces, the Kicking Mule punchers rode away, with a clatter of hoofs, down the school trail.

"I guess," said Bill, "that I'm powerful obliged to you, young Carson, for offering a reward of twenty dollars for finding that old baccy-pouch, what I reckon I might never have seed agin but for you. One dollar might never have done it, but twenty sure herded it home. I'll say I'm obliged!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The bunch roared. Steve's pals, Poker and Slim, yelled with the rest. Steve was the only guy in the bunch who did not laugh. Steve's trickery had set him back twenty dollars—and the joke, after all, was on him. It was a long time before the Packsaddle bunch ceased to chuckle over that twenty dollars reward!

(Next Wednesday: "THE BAD MAN FROM BAR-O!" another gripping yarn of Texas school adventure.)

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The SECRET WORLD!



As the motor-boat swept down on the Gothland ships a burst of arrows hissed through the air. "That's done it!" roared Dorrie. "They've opened fire, so now we'll give 'em a taste of lead!" A moment later he sent a shattering volley of bullets at the enemy.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Willy—Adrift!

WAR! The Gothlanders are about to make their threatened invasion of Northestia. Their immense armada is already half-way across the large lake which separates the two countries.

For many years Gothland has prepared secretly for this moment, while Northestia has gone slowly about its business. But Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, and a party of St. Frank's boys and Moor View School girls, who are all stranded in Northestia when their airship crashes, rapidly bring about a change in the country. After many adventures, the visitors discover the true state of affairs in the secret medieval world, and they succeed in awakening the Northestrians to their peril.

Princess Mercia, the girl ruler, makes Nelson Lee commander-in-chief of the Northestrian army, and he puts hurried preparations in hand for repulsing the Gothland invasion. To the disappointment of the St. Frank's boys, they are sent as Princess Mercia's bodyguard to a safe retreat. Meanwhile, Willy Handforth, from an observation balloon, has reported the approach of the enemy. Lord Dorrimore flies out in a plane to try to scare them off, but it has little effect, and the Gothland armada sails on to the attack.

Willy Handforth scratched his head. "Rummy!" he muttered. "Thundering rummy!"

He was perched up in his observation basket, and his eye was glued to his telescope. He had just seen Lord Dorrimore drop his second dose of bombs, and he had seen them all explode harmlessly, well clear of the enemy.

"What's the giddy idea, anyhow?" went on Willy, picking up the telephone. "Hey! Anybody down there?"

"What now, young 'un?" came the voice of Nelson Lee. "Can you see what is happening?"

"Dorrie just dropped another three bombs, sir," said Willy. "He went pretty low down just before that, and I believe they loosed off some arrows at him. It was a pretty near thing, sir."

Lee, on the ground, pursed his lips.

"Confound the reckless idiot!" he muttered. "He'll get himself killed if he goes on like that. Willy, what effect did the bombs have?"

"None, sir."

"None?"

"No, sir; he dropped them harmlessly into the sea."

Nelson Lee nodded. He could quite understand Dorrie's motive, and Willy was beginning to appreciate it now, too. From the ground, of course, Lee could see nothing whatever, for the Goth-

lander fleet was still well beyond the range of vision from the earth level.

"All right, Willy," Lee said. "Report anything fresh if you note it."

"Right you are, sir!" came down Willy's voice. "The fleet is still twenty miles off, and without the telescope it looks like a flock of sparrows on the water. They're coming slowly, sir, but they evidently mean business."

"What of the royal galley?"

"Going down the coast well, sir—over two or three miles away now."

Willy glanced round and spoke again. "Dorrie's just coming back, sir," he reported.

This latter piece of information was rather needless, for a few seconds later the aeroplane came into full sight, and swooped down with the obvious intention of landing. Dorrie wanted to make his own report, and he was anxious to tell Lee precisely how matters stood.

And then an unforeseen incident happened.

The aeroplane, gliding steeply, opened up again for a moment near the ground, and the sudden burst from the engine had an alarming effect upon a number of horses which happened to be almost immediately beneath.

A company of lancers were riding past. Several of the horses took fright. The shattering din from the aeroplane

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sent them into a panic. The riders were thrown violently, and the frenzied animals ran madly, galloping at random. Several men only just leapt aside in the nick of time.

Willy Handforth was just applying his eye to the telescope again when he was nearly torn out of the basket. The captive balloon gave a wild, dizzy plunge. The young observer uttered a gasp of dismay. He had no idea what was happening, but the balloon was still acting erratically.

As a matter of fact, one of the frightened horses had fouled the cable, and, somehow, the animal's heavy harness got entangled with the rope. The frenzied steed pranced and reared alarmingly.

And then, before anybody could attempt to calm the horse, the rope cable snapped! It was a most unlooked for incident. That rope had been strong enough to hold the balloon under all normal circumstances, but nobody had anticipated such an affair as this.

"Whoa! What the—" gasped Willy. He suddenly felt himself moving—rising higher and higher, and moving outwards over the lake. The balloon above him was swaying and rolling, and he clung to the basket instinctively.

"Well, my hat!" Willy muttered, as he realised his perilous position. "I was longing for a bit of excitement, and now I've got it! By the look of things, I shall either drop in the middle of that fleet, or land somewhere in Gothland! Or I may take a dive into the lake. It doesn't much matter which—the end will probably be just the same."

Willy had strong nerves for a youngster of his age, but he couldn't disguise from himself the fact that he was

in a nasty fix. He was moving much more rapidly than he liked, and he was already well out over the lake. And now he could see that he was dropping. Perhaps the violent plunging of the balloon had torn a section of the fabric, and the gas was escaping? He was dropping into the lake, and it did not need much calculation on Willy's part to see that he would reach the water several miles farther down the shore, and a good distance out. And, by the look of things, it would be impossible for any boat to get to the spot in time to save him.

Lord Dorrmore, landing, found Nelson Lee and Captain Waring running up as he jumped out of the cockpit.

"Yes, I know!" shouted his lordship anxiously. "Confound my infernal clumsiness! I scared those horses, didn't I? Any chance of chasin' the poor young beggar in a boat?"

"There's the motor-boat!" replied Lee, as he looked anxiously out at the drifting balloon. "But if we waste time in chasing after Willy, I shall be unable to put my plans into execution. It may be an hour before that balloon drops, and I was thinking of taking the motor-boat out to the enemy. What's the news, anyhow?"

"Yes, but about young Willy—" "He's safe for the time being. The news, Dorrie!"

His lordship gave it, and his information proved to be much more graphic than any Willy had supplied. Nelson Lee was looking anxious and grim by the time Dorrie had finished.

"An endless fleet?" he muttered. "We've got to engage it, Dorrie, even if we only have the motor-boat and a couple of machine-guns! We've got to

do everything we can to harass the brutes. If such a thing is remotely possible, I want to turn them back in disorder."

"What about Willy?"

"I am sorry for the youngster," replied Lee steadily, "but unless we do something at once we shall all perish. If that horde lands on this coast, Dorrie, we shall never be able to hold 'em. We can leave Willy for an hour, anyhow, and search for him later. The main thing at the moment is to attack the enemy."

Lee was undoubtedly right. It seemed rough on the unfortunate Willy, but his was only one life compared to thousands, and among those thousands were a big proportion of women and children.

So Willy was almost forgotten in the dire urgency of the general peril.

There were many activities afoot. The two "cruisers"—the Northeastrian ships, fitted with the auxiliary aero-engines—were already well out over the lake, in command of two parties of the airship engineers. They were going out to engage the enemy. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrmore were getting into the motor-boat to dash out to the attack, too.

Dorrie refused to wage warfare from the aeroplane.

"It's no good, Lee, I can't do it," he declared. "I'll fight as hard as you like in any straightforward way, but I can't drop bombs. Get me behind one of these machine-guns, and I'll do plenty of damage, though."

"Perhaps you're right, Dorrie," agreed Lee.

Mite Against Might!

"WELL, I'm jiggered!" Edward Oswald Handforth was standing up and staring into the sky.

"Look out, Handy!" growled Church. "These sweeps aren't like the oars of a rowing-boat, you know! You can't mess about—"

"But look!" roared Handforth, pointing. "Willy! And he's adrift!"

"My only hat!"

"Good gad!"

"Willy, by Jove!" Practically all the members of the Royal bodyguard ceased work at the sweeps, and the graceful galley slid onwards through the water under her own impetus. Her crew were all staring up at the drifting balloon.

"There must have been an accident!" cried Doris Berkeley. "Poor Willy is dropping into the lake, I believe. Aren't they doing anything for his rescue?"

"Perhaps they're too busy," said Irene. "Can't you see the boats making out into the lake, far away? They're all going in the opposite direction."

There was no mistaking the signs. The escaped balloon was plainly visible to everybody on board the Royal galley. The balloon was taking such a course that it must inevitably fall into the water, far from any possibility of help.

"Perhaps we're wrong," said Nipper, after a moment. "Perhaps it's only the balloon—without anybody in it—"

"No; I can see Willy clearly," put in Pitt, staring through his binoculars.

"By George!" muttered Handforth. "What the dickens are we going to do? The poor kid will drop into the water and drown!"

They all looked at one another in alarm. There was no immediate danger, but anybody could see that the escaped balloon was sinking rapidly.

The sweep's bag burst, the soot gushed out.
The sweep never heard the old gent shout:
He'd seen a good thing. "My word!" said he,
—"I reckon that yarn would just 'soot' me!"



THE SIX-GUN MANAGER

by Walter Edwards

Leedsfoot United were "down on their uppers" when "Nails" Fargo, the American booster and sports promoter, was appointed general manager. "Say, listen, you guys!" he told them. "This club's going

to lift the F.A. Cup—and I don't mean maybe!" He set to work with six-gun and stock whip. And did he win through? Read all about "Nails" in this rousing football yarn. It's a winner! Ask for No. 473 of

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It was the Princess Mercia who settled the point.

"The boy is your young friend," she said simply. "We must go to save him, since it seemeth unlike that other help will reach him."

Browne looked dubious.

"While appreciating your kindly motives, your Majesty, I must point out that we are under orders to escort you to Westwood without delay," he said. "And if we venture out into the lake we shall not only delay, but there is more than a chance that we shall touch the fringe of the battle."

"Good egg!" said Handforth eagerly.

"Even if we undergo risk, we must alter our course," declared the young princess. "'Tis thy brother, Handforth the Bold, who is in peril. Enough! Our course must be altered."

And while the galley veered round and commenced a race with the descending balloon, Nelson Lee and Lord Dormmore were in the midst of some excitement. Lee had considered it advisable to leave the land defences to themselves for the time being. He wanted to get to close grips with the enemy. The motor-boat contained only Dorrie and himself, and an officer to look after the engine.

There seemed something farcical in this venture. These two were going out in an attempt to turn the Gothland fleet back! Two Britons against a veritable horde of savage fighters! They had the advantage of the swiftly-moving motor-boat and the machine-guns, but, even so, their task was well nigh impossible.

But Lee had a vague hope that these heathens would be so terrified that panic would set in. For a panic would mean disorder—and after that anything might happen.

"It's a piece of infernal nerve, when you come to think of it, but there's nothin' like tryin'," remarked Lord Dormmore. "Those other two boats are comin' up behind, an' they'll be able to lend a hand soon. But this is goin' to be our show, for the present."

The Northeastrian navy was about to come into action!

The two "cruisers" were behaving remarkably well. The aero-engines were roaring with their utmost power, and the vessels were attaining quite a respectable speed, with the assistance of the sweeps. Compared to any ordinary motor-driven craft, they were slow; but they made up for this in noise. And, in any case, they were quite nippy, compared to the sluggish, heavily-laden enemy vessels.

In advance, the motor-boat was opening the fight.

The little craft swept down upon the Gothland fleet, and at first it seemed as though the speeding boat was going to charge the enemy. But at the last moment Lee whirled the wheel and the boat slewed round, leaving a creamy mass of foam in her wake. And as she passed the nearest ships a burst of arrows came hissing through the air.

"That's done it!" roared Dorrie. "It's all I was waiting for. They've opened fire, so now we'll give them a taste of lead!"

He was at one of the machine-guns, and a moment later the weapon delivered a shattering volley of bullets.

Arrows were still hissing around, but they were futile compared to the machine-gun fire.

Zurrrh!

Numbers of men fell in the enemy boats, and the manner of their deaths and injuries so frightened the others that panic broke out. Scores of men fell into the water, and no attempt was

Eastwood League.

LEAGUE LEADERS AND THEIR CHALLENGERS AT GRIPS.

Vital Match for St. Jim's and St. Frank's.

With St. Jim's and St. Frank's level on points at the top of the League, the match between them on the Saints' ground was one of vital importance to both teams. It promised to be a great battle and the large crowd of spectators were not disappointed.

In the first minute there was a sensation. Before the Saints' defenders had found their feet, St. Frank's were one goal up. Right from the start Tregellis-West raced away down the wing and, beating Kerr, flashed in a centre. Nipper's head met it—and the ball was in the net.

St. Jim's pulled themselves together, and employing the close-passing game, they kept up a continual pressure on the St. Frank's goal. But they found Handforth a tough custodian to beat. Eventually, however, Jack Blake scored after Handy had saved from point-blank range.

St. Jim's went all out to add to their lead. They were definitely on top now, and after a series of hot attacks, Tom Merry crashed the ball into the net to give them the lead.

St. Frank's then set about recovering the lost ground, but their attacks, though always very dangerous, were spasmodic. Nearing the interval, however, McClure punted the ball hard down the middle, and racing between the St. Jim's backs, Nipper left Patty Wynn helpless with a hard drive. St. Frank's hardly deserved to be on terms, but Nipper is to be congratulated for snapping up his only two chances.

After the change of ends, the game became ding-dong, each goal being visited in turn. Then St. Frank's forced a corner on the right wing, and from the kick

made to pull them out. Many of the vessels collided, and two were sunk, owing to the force of the impacts. The lake became alive with struggling, drowning men.

They had no chance of being saved. Some vessels of the fleet started to turn about.

Nelson Lee's eyes were gleaming as he brought the motor-boat round and sent it sweeping along the line again.

Zurrrh! Zurrrh!

Again the machine-gun sang its ugly song, and this time it became a duet, for Lee relinquished the steering-wheel to operate the second gun. The original confusion became worse, and all the foremost ships were turning about, their officers and crew panic-stricken to a point of frenzy.

"We're doing the trick, Dorrie!" roared Lee.

"Absolutely!" grinned Dorrie. "We'll beat the blighters yet!"

And it seemed, during those tense moments, that there was some justification for his hope. The enemy was in flight, all the leading vessels turning about. Several had sunk, others were crippled, and large numbers of men were killed and injured.

But, compared to the actual numbers, the casualties were a mere handful. It was the moral effect that was the most devastating. With thousands of men frightened out of their wits, and with scores of boats fleeing, the entire fleet was upset.

Travers scrambled the ball through to give them the lead.

The Saints put on a spurt, and once again their attack kept the St. Frank's defenders on the run. A quarter of an hour from the end Tom Merry put St. Jim's on terms. Right from the re-start Gussy dashed down the wing, and cutting in to the centre, scored with a lightning drive—the best goal of the match.

From then on to the end St. Frank's pressed hard for the equaliser, but the St. Jim's defence kept their forwards at bay. When everyone was expecting the game to end in a St. Jim's victory, there came another sensation. There was barely a minute to go when Figgins accidentally handled in the penalty area. The ref pointed to the spot. The silence over the ground could almost be felt as Nipper prepared to take the kick. Fortunately for St. Frank's Nipper is a cool-nerved customer, and he made no mistake with that kick. And so the great game ended all square, and the fight for the League championship continues.

LEAGUE TABLE.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.P.s.
St. Jim's	...	20	13	5	2	108 52 31
St. Frank's	...	20	14	3	3	82 46 31
Greyfriars	...	20	13	3	4	87 41 29
Rookwood	...	21	12	4	5	73 55 28
Highcliffe	...	20	10	5	5	55 33 25
Rylcombe Gram.	...	20	10	4	6	53 43 24
River House	...	20	8	6	6	55 47 22
Abbotsford	...	20	5	4	11	32 63 14
Redclyffe	...	20	3	6	11	37 81 12
Bagshot	...	21	3	5	13	29 51 14
Claremont	...	20	3	5	12	40 78 11
St. Jude's	...	20	0	4	16	21 82 1

FULL RESULTS.

ST. JIM'S ...	4	ST. FRANK'S	4
Merry (2) Blake,		Nipper (3)	
D'Arey		Travers	
BAGSHOT ...	1	CLAREMONT ...	1
GREYFRIARS	3	RYLCOMBE G.	2
REDCLYFFE	1	ROOKWOOD ...	5
RIVER HOUSE	2	HIGHCLIFFE	2
ST. JUDE'S ...	2	ABBOTSFORD	6

Again and again the motor-boat skirted the enemy, sending forth its double hail of bullets. The panic grew worse, and the confusion more confounded.

Arrows were coming in showers over the motor-boat continuously, but both the daring occupants crouched low and took care not to expose themselves when they were at close quarters. The noisy little craft was like a wasp harassing a mighty elephant!

But Lee's hope proved futile. Although the morale of the leading boats' crews was utterly destroyed, there were hundreds of other craft to be reckoned with, and it was impossible for Lee and Dorrie to be in more than one place at one time.

They soon saw that the enemy's fleet was breaking up. Those in the rear were steering out in new formations, and it seemed that Kasker the Grim was not without strategy.

He was abandoning those leading ships of his, and adopting new tactics. Instead of sending his fleet across the lake intact, he now broke it up into a dozen different units, each one making in a new direction. As soon as Lee became aware of this, he steered the boat well clear of the engagement, and he and Dorrie gazed at one another.

"The cunnin' blighters!" said his lordship.

"I was afraid of it, Dorrie," muttered Lee. "If only we could have

caused that panic to spread throughout the entire fleet, all would have been well. But we're done now."

"Done?" repeated Dorrie. "That from you, old man?"

"I mean, we're done as far as this one boat is concerned," said Nelson Lee grimly. "We cannot fight scores of flotillas at once."

"Well, what's the programme?" asked his lordship, scratching his head.

"For the moment we can only retreat, and join up with our other forces," replied Lee. "It's a mere waste of time to stay here, using our ammunition on two or three of these groups. While we're doing that, the others will be getting ahead. No, we've got to get back, and organise our full defences."

"Then it looks like an invasion, after all?"

"It not only looks like it, but an invasion is inevitable," replied Lee grimly.

Touch and Go!

WILLY HANDFORTH had been almost completely forgotten by Nelson Lee and the others.

The approach of the enemy was so grim and relentless—the advance of that great fleet was so menacing—that Nelson Lee had no time to think of the unfortunate fag. There were thousands of lives at stake, and even the resourceful Nelson Lee could not see how the disaster could be averted.

So the unhappy Willy was left to his fate. At least, he would have been left to his fate, but for the fortunate proximity of the Royal galley, with its crew of St. Frank's fellows. Against Nelson Lee's strict orders, the galley was deviating from its course.

But the Princess Mercia herself had given the order, and Willy's life was in the balance. Scarcely any of the young people on the Royal craft gave a thought to the possible danger. It never occurred to them that they might run into the enemy—and suffer not only capture, but death.

It was a race for life.

Willy Handforth was aware of it. Over three points of the compass there was nothing but the open lake, with the vast enemy fleet just coming into sight over the horizon, and with a number of Northstrian vessels preparing to challenge the invaders. They were all far distant—for Willy had drifted miles. He knew that he could not hope for any help from these quarters.

In the one other direction the open lake contained only one boat—and that was the Royal galley. Willy was well aware of the fact that his chums of St. Frank's were making a gallant attempt to reach him in time.

But Willy was quietly dubious.

By now the observation balloon was only fifty feet above the surface of the water, the descent having become precipitate. At first, Willy had drifted out over the lake, descending slowly. But the gas was leaking rapidly from the strained balloon, and by now there was so little buoyancy that he was dropping fast. With a plunge the basket struck the lake.

Willy leapt clear. He dived, swimming hard, and he rose well clear of the debris.

"That's something, anyhow," he muttered, spluttering. "Phew! I think I ought to be able to do it!"

He was gazing over the water towards the barge. From aloft, it had seemed comparatively close. But now that he was in the lake, swimming, he knew the truth. The barge was well over a mile

distant, and the St. Frank's fellows were pulling desperately at the clumsy sweeps.

They were pale with anxiety now.

"It's all up!" muttered Chubby Heath miserably. "He's gone, poor chap!"

"I saw him jump for it, but he didn't come up again," wailed Juicy Lemon. "I believe he was smothered—"

"No, he's there—swimming!" roared Handforth excitedly. "Pull away, you chaps! He's swimming!"

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, St. Frank's!"

All thought of the grim invasion had fled from their minds. They were out to save a single life—a life that was very dear to at least two people on that ship—Edward Oswald Handforth and his sister. And the other affair, which involved the fate of a nation, seemed trivial.

"It's all right—no need to worry!" said Reggie Pitt breathlessly. "It's only about a mile, and Willy's a first-class swimmer—"

"I'm not worrying about that," interrupted Handforth, as he strained at his sweep. "Pull, you fellows! Put more strength into it, for goodness' sake! This lake's full of monsters! Poor old Willy may be dragged under at any minute."

"Oh, rot!" muttered Church. "We can't believe those yarns—"

"They're true!" panted Edward Oswald. "Oh, why can't we go faster?"

The others said very little—they saved their breath for the strenuous work. They believed that Handforth was right. The lake was an inland sea, but no one knew exactly what lurking dangers the water held. The fellows had heard many stories of death-dealing fish—strange and ugly creatures which rendered bathing dangerous, even near the shores. And the Northstrians would not tell such stories unless there was some foundation for them.

At any moment the luckless Willy might be dragged under, never to be seen again. But he was still swimming—he was still getting nearer.

But for the fortunate presence of the galley, Willy's fate would have been indeed sealed, for there was no other boat within several miles. Handforth and the other fellows had been indignant earlier, when they had been sent off on this safe journey. But now they were fervently thankful, for their presence might mean the saving of Willy's life.

Willy himself was quite serene now. After all, a mile swim was nothing much to worry about—and the galley was sweeping up pretty quickly, too. He was just telling himself that things couldn't be better, for he would find himself among his own companions, and the St. Frank's party would be intact to a man. Nothing could have happened more fortunately—

And then suddenly Willy forgot everything.

As he was swimming, he felt something sweep past one of his legs. He caught a glimpse of a curious object near him in the water. He stared into the limpid depths, and his jaw set. He saw a shape—a great shape which brought the thought of sharks into his head.

"Things are going to be lively!" he muttered.

The thing was no shark. A long, glistening tentacle shot out of the water, and lashed down with devastating force near his head. He was almost stunned by the power of it. Then he caught a glimpse of a scaly mass immediately in front of him. At first he believed that he was surrounded by the monsters, but

then he realised that there was only one—an enormous creature which he could not define. But it was after him—it was intent upon destroying him.

The thing was neither octopus nor shark. For a second he thought he saw its shape—a great, long body, with thick, tapering tentacles. It was obviously a creature peculiar to this lake.

Willy thought rapidly. The galley was now only a mere fifty yards distant, but it seemed to be miles away.

Quick as thought Willy twisted round in the water and struck out in the opposite direction. His major and the other juniors were surprised at this manœuvre, for they had seen no sign of the monster of the lake. But Willy's swift manœuvre probably saved his life. For even as he twisted like an eel in the water, two of the ugly tentacles rose up, and lashed at the spot he had just vacated.

"Look!" yelled Handforth aghast.

"There's something after him!" muttered Nipper. "By Jove, we're too late!"

They strained every nerve, and the galley swept on. As though acting by the same thought, all the fellows yelled at the top of their voices—subconsciously thinking, perhaps, that the noise might scare the brute.

Willy was still swimming—he was still alive. He knew that salvation was within a few yards, but even now it was touch and go. That thing was close upon him, and with every second he expected to feel a grip on one of his submerged limbs. The suspense was a sheer agony.

And then the galley surged up. All those on board felt a peculiar jarring thud, and the speed of the craft was checked, as though it had stuck upon a sandbank. Several of the Moor View girls were thrown off their balance, and the fellows at the sweeps ceased their efforts.

"We hit it!" muttered Pitt. "By jingo, we've rammed the brute!"

"Willy!" cried Ena. "Quick! Oh, quick!"

The fag was alongside now, and willing hands reached out to grasp him. The next moment he was lifted out of the water—as two of those ugly tentacles lashed out, and missed him by inches.

The Tanks!

"THANKS, you chaps!" panted Willy breathlessly.

"Thank goodness we arrived just in time!" gasped his major. "We thought you were going to be dragged under!"

"A miss is as good as a mile, old son," said Willy, looking over the side of the galley, with a slight shudder. "Crikey! There it goes—sinking deeper and deeper! I think you must have croaked it just now."

"Good man, Willy!" said Nipper fervently. "That twist of yours a minute ago was the only thing that saved your life."

"Let us all be thankful that his life has been spared," said Princess Mercia quietly. "We came not in vain, and he is spared. Our great lake is not so beautiful as it seemeth. Many have died in these placid-looking waters."

They were about to question the young princess, but Nipper brought their minds back to other affairs.

"Man the sweeps, you fellows," he said urgently. "We're too far out—unless we're careful we shall be in the thick of the fighting. And that's just what the gov'nor wanted to avoid."

They looked up, and saw ships in the

distance. They were coming shorewards, getting nearer and nearer. And they needed no telling that these vessels were manned by the bloodthirsty savages of Gothland. The galley was swung round, and the sweeps were plied with frantic energy.

The St. Frank's fellows had no wish to be caught by these hostile ships. They knew they wouldn't stand an earthly chance against such numbers. So they got back to their original course, and made for the gorge, which was only a mile or two down the coast, and clearly visible.

With the Princess Mercia in their care, they could not take any chances, and the run for safety continued. They were well in time, and when the entrance to the gorge was reached there was no danger of being captured by the enemy. They had saved Willy, and had come to no harm. So far as the St. Frank's party was concerned, all was well.

But what of the others?

What of the invading hosts? Even at that moment the first real action was taking place—and it was destined to be an action which would decide the issue.

The full Northestrian navy was entering battle.

It consisted of the motor-boat, with Lee and Dorrie in command. Then came the two "cruisers," with their aero engines. In addition, there were dozens of other vessels, manned by picked men. They were carrying archers, and these determined fellows were only awaiting the moment when they could get to close grips.

The action opened with machine-gun fire.

Nelson Lee had selected the biggest of the oncoming groups—for the whole armada had divided itself into infinite formations, each making for a different section of the Northestrian coast.

Zurrrh!

The machine-guns barked harshly, and a hail of bullets swept over the enemy vessels. Arrows came shooting over the water in answer, but the majority of them fell short. The air was made hideous by the roaring of the aero engines on the two cruisers—for these motors had open exhaust-ports, and they were roaring under full throttle.

To the Gothlanders such a craft must have been truly terrifying. With their engines spurting flames and their air-propellers whirling, they were enough to startle even the Northestrians. And then another factor came into the affair.

Overhead, the aeroplane swooped—the machine that Dorrie had left behind on land. She was performing a number of evolutions high above, and both Lee and Dorrie glanced at one another inquiringly.

"Waving, of course," said Lee.

"Yes; but what's his game?" asked Dorrie.

"I think we shall soon know—" Lee broke off. "Yes, there you are! Jove, he's rather too close to be comfortable!"

Boom! Crash!

A bomb dropped—a direct hit on the foremost of the Gothlander craft. The result was devastating. The vessel simply ceased to be. Men and fragments of wood went hurtling high into the air. Sounds of anguish arose, and all the other ships were flung into confusion.

"It's justified now, old man," muttered Dorrie. "I couldn't bring myself to drop bombs on these brutes, but Waring's right. It's touch and go. If a few of the ugly curs aren't bombed, they'll overrun Northestria!"

"I'm afraid they'll do it, in any case!" said Lee curtly.

Boom!

Another bomb dropped—and this one fell between two of the enemy craft, heeling them over so acutely that they capsized. In the meantime, the other factions were waging battle continuously.

The motor-boat, speedy and nippy, was dashing to and fro, harassing the enemy continuously. And at last the affair grew too hot. The disorganised fleet broke up and turned.

The Gothlanders fled in panic.

Many of the officers attempted to control their men, but they were helpless. The frightened rank and file mutinied, and set off back to Gothland.

But in the meantime something else had happened.

One of those groups of enemy vessels

had reached land! All along the beach the ships were disgorging their troops, and the Gothlanders were sweeping in. The invasion had actually started.

"What shall we do, Dorrie?" asked Lee quickly. "Leave the Northestrians to deal with the invaders, and confine our attention to these other fleets, or shall we get ashore?"

"Get ashore!" growled Dorrie. "The tanks!"

Nelson Lee nodded.

"I think you're right," he said. "Those tanks in action will be seen from far out to sea—or, rather, on the lake. The sight of such juggernauts might have a telling effect. Swing her round!"

His lordship, who was at the wheel, turned the motor-boat's nose towards Dunstane.

Within five minutes the motor-boat was driving her prow into the beach, and Lee and Dorrie leapt ashore. One of the first to greet them was Umlosi, the African chief—Dorrie's friend in many a grim fight.

"Wau!" he roared. "Thou hast come, N'Kose! The dogs are sweeping inland, yonder. And many warriors are rushing to the attack."

"Then get on with it, Umlosi—join in the fray!" said Dorrie.

"I waited for thee, my master," said Umlosi.

"That's all right—I'm comin' in one of the tanks," replied his lordship. "I think you'd better join us—"

"Nay, N'Kose, I fight with my spear," interrupted Umlosi. "'Tis no fight at all otherwise. For many days have I awaited this hour. Much blood will flow, and these curs shall taste my blade!"

And while Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrmore ran madly towards the tanks, Umlosi charged into battle, with a rush which brought terror into the hearts of the enemy.

The Turn of the Tide!

BURRRRRRRRII!

The din was absolutely shattering.

Lumbering across the low-lying land near the shore were two monstrous-looking objects. One of them was controlled by Lee, and the other by Dorrie.

PEN PALS

(Continued from page 17.)

Miss K. Jones, 41, South Street, Walworth, London, S.E.17, wants girl correspondents in Arizona; age 14-16.

Miss Agnes A. Whitelaw, 381, Wellshot Road, Tolleross, Glasgow, E.2, wants girl correspondents in Canada and South Africa; age 14-16.

Miss Yvonne Wilkinson, 51, Northwood Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23, wants a girl correspondent; age 13-15; British Isles, Canada, U.S.A.

Miss Eileen Finch, 41, Crompton Street, Derby, wants a girl correspondent; age 13-15; cage birds.

William Haley, 191, Boundary Road, Leyton, London, E.17, wants a pen pal; age 15-16; art and electricity; South Africa, Canada, Spain.

S. Kirk, 42, Wilfred Street, Moston, Manchester 10, wants pen pals; age 15-18; preferably outside England.

Billie Lloyd, Albemarle Hotel, Marine Parade, Brighton, wants to hear from stamp collectors; age 13-15.

Harold Davies, 68, Downhills Park Road, Tottenham, London, N.17, wants to hear from readers keen on the old stories in the Gem.

Bernard Haughey, 28, Craig Street, Queen's Road, Harpurhey, Manchester 10, wants correspondents overseas; age 16-22; films, Test matches, newspapers, sports.

Miss G. Williams, 22, Bruton Street, Moss Side, Manchester, wants a girl correspondent; age 11-12; America or Australia; pets, books, magazines.

Miss Ada Harrison, c/o The Greave, Luddendenfoot, near Halifax, Yorks, wants girl correspondents; age 20-22.

Ivor Shaw, 4, High East Street, Dorchester, Dorset, wants to hear from stamp collectors in Roumania and Iceland; age 12-16.

Miss Helen Walker, c/o The Greave, Luddendenfoot, near Halifax, Yorks, wants girl correspondents; age 16-17.

Miss Florence Brackley, 138, Willesden Lane, London, N.W.6, wants a girl correspondent who belongs to the St. John Ambulance Brigade; age 14-15.

George Keeling, 49, Cavendish Road, Highams Park, London, E.4, wants a correspondent abroad; age 10-12.

John G. Maskill, 33, Haigh Road, Mooredens, near Doncaster, Yorks, wants a correspondent; age 17-19; films, photos; Australia preferably.

George Edward Bowen, 116, Mansfield Road, Durban, Natal, South Africa, wants a pen pal in Honolulu; age 20-24.

R. J. Hevey, 28, Denison Street, South Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, wants to hear from readers who make a hobby of the old issues of the Companion Papers and "Nelson Lee."

Rex Hevey, 28, Denison Street, South Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, wants pen pals; England, U.S.A., Canada, China; stamps, cigarette cards.

Terence McGowan, 5, Lord Street, Blackley, Manchester, wants correspondents; drawing, boxing, swimming.

W. Murphy, 36, Birmingham Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, wants correspondents; stamps, postcards.

A. G. Mair, The End House, Meadow Road, Gravesend, Kent, wants correspondents in the British Empire; stamps; age 15-16.

Norman Tapping, 6, Dundale Road, Tring, Herts, wants to hear from readers keen on the old copies of the "Nelson Lee."

Laurie Brimfield, Grove Road, Glenorchy, Tasmania, Australia, wants a correspondent in England or Scotland; scouting, camping; age 15-17.

And several of the airship's engineers were controlling the motors.

The tanks were about to enter into action.

And now that the actual moment of the test had come, these weirdly contrived tanks were more terrifying than even Lee had suspected. In any ordinary modern battle they would have been useless.

But against foot soldiers and archers they were impregnable. They rolled on relentlessly. It was only just possible to steer them roughly, but they were making for the heart of the enemy forces.

Umlosi was fighting with all his usual ferocity. Many of the North-eastrians had given battle to the Gothlanders. Five hundred men strong, sweeping up to the point of attack, were engaging Kassker's men. And so fierce was the fighting that the archers were helpless. It was a hand-to-hand struggle, with battle-axes swinging and swords flashing.

Umlosi's spear, however, was the most deadly weapon of all.

Nelson Lee had seen the giant negro fighting on many an occasion, but seldom had he fought with such abandon as now. He was like a man possessed. The havoc he wrought with that one spear was staggering. The enemy fell back before him, aghast, and the ground was littered with dead.

And then came the tanks.

The North-eastrians, previously warned, knew what to expect. They broke away at the last moment, and those great monstrosities lumbered on, plunging a way into the closely packed ranks of the foe.

Kassker's soldiers, already half-demoralised, were stricken with terror. They fled—they ran screaming back to their boats.

Hundreds of men were trampled down, many of the ships were captured by the creatures who tried to crowd into them. The rest escaped.

And the other groups of enemy

vessels, coming up, could see that something was wrong. The tanks were in full evidence—roaring and lumbering. And the panic spread. The freshly arriving ships, instead of disgorging their human freights, turned, and fled back towards Gothland.

The enemy had been routed!

All the North-eastrians knew, however, that they had to thank Nelson Lee and his lieutenants for the victory. They were the real conquerors. And if these strangers within the gates had been idolised before, they were now hailed as the saviours of Northestia.

And so the episode ended. Kassker the Grim was defeated in his first attempt to invade Northestia. But would he be content to let matters stand?

There were signs of excitement ahead!

(Don't miss the thrilling developments in next week's chapters. *The St. Frank's boys fall into the hands of pirates!*)

THE OUTCAST OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 16.)

went at it the moment he came down from the dorm.

Dr. Holmes nodded slowly.

"The other fellows will bear out what I say, sir," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his eyeglass carefully. "That sheet of papah was stolen from our study at a time when it was utterly impossible for Bwooke to have had anything to do with it. That proves that a fellow in the School House wanted a sheet of Bwooke's impot papah, and sneaked it, and the fellow who sneaked it, sir, wrote that wotten message upon it. I presume it cannot be supposed that he sneaked it to give to Bwooke the next day to write upon."

"No," said the Head, with a slight smile. "I think the matter is clear now. Glyn's peculiar inventions have sometimes given trouble in the House,

but certainly this one has helped to right a great wrong. Levison, what have you got to say now?"

The cad of the Fourth tried to speak, but he could not. What could he say? He was caught in the meshes of his own net. With all his cunning, how could he have hoped to foresee a contingency like this? He buried his face in his hands, and groaned.

Dr. Holmes gazed at him in contempt.

"Levison, you have forged your schoolfellow's hand; you have blackened him with shame, and almost ruined him! By chance—or, perhaps I should say by Providence—your wicked scheme has come to nothing. Wretched boy! What caused you to do this?"

Levison did not reply. He reeled, and fell heavily to the ground. Mr. Latham sprang towards him. The Fourth Form cad's face was white, his eyes closed, his teeth clenched.

"Good heavens, he is in a faint!" the Form-master exclaimed.

Dr. Holmes glanced at the boy.

"He cannot be punished in this state," he said. "Have him removed to the dormitory. Mr. Latham, Brooke, your innocence has been established. You

are clear in my eyes, and I shall explain the matter fully to the whole school. Give me your hand, Brooke, and forgive us all for doubting you."

"Oh, sir!"

Brooke shook hands with the Head. He left the study like a fellow walking on air. He could afford to forgive even Levison now. The shadow of shame was lifted. He could look his schoolfellows in the eyes again. The news spread over St. Jim's like wildfire, and from Kildare, the captain of the school, to the smallest fag, everybody congratulated Dick Brooke, and most asked his pardon. And that day the juniors of St. Jim's celebrated the clearing of Dick Brooke's name with a terrific celebration, and Harthur was the guest of honour in Tom Merry's study, in company with Dick Brooke.

Levison, for a time, was forgotten, and all the school rejoiced that Brooke of the Fourth was no longer the outcast of St. Jim's.

(Next week: "BARRED BY THE SCHOOL!" Watch out for this powerful yarn—the sequel to this week's story. It's another winner!)



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