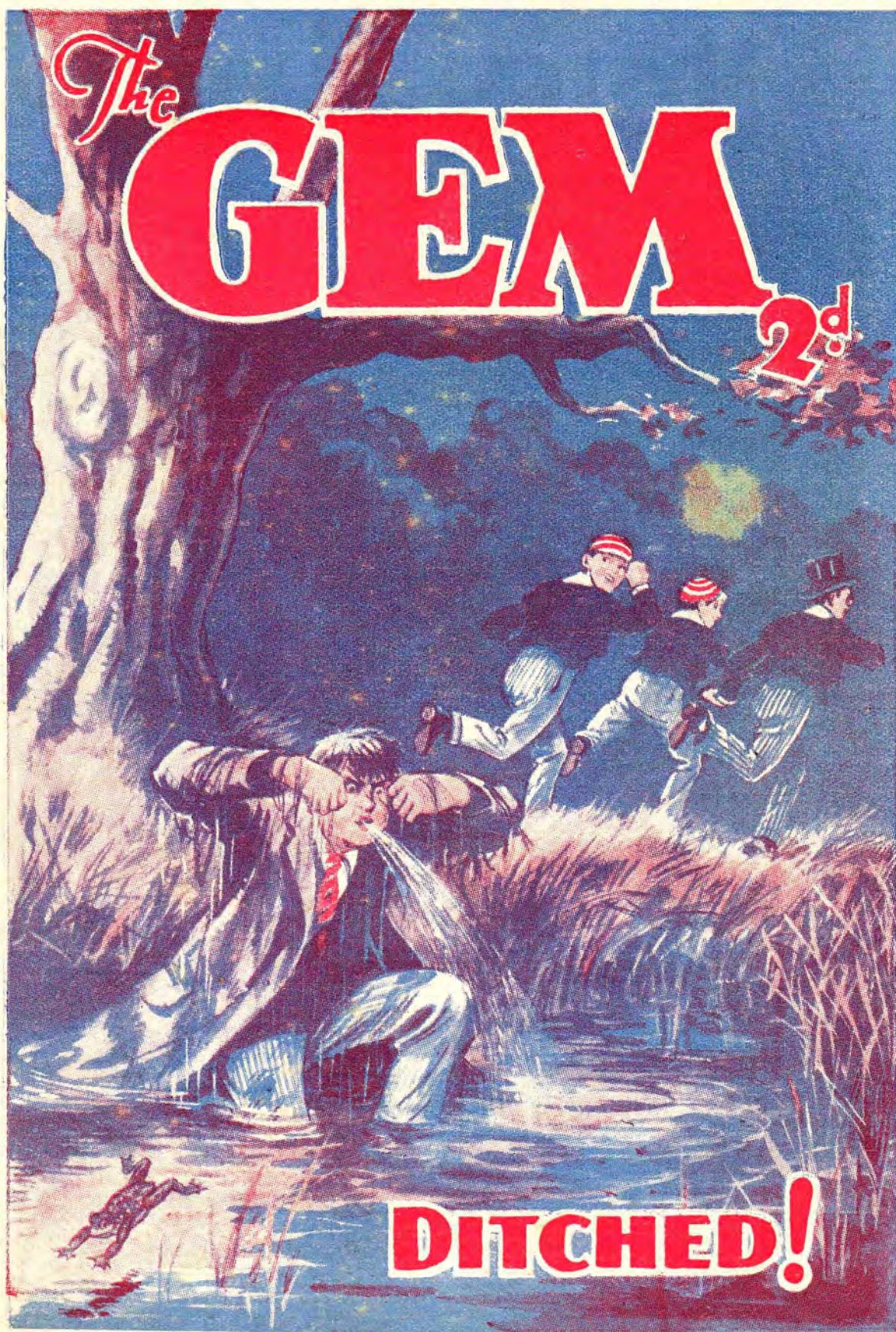


"THE MYSTERY OF LEVISON!" CRIPPING LONG ST. JIM'S YARN **INSIDE.**



DITCHED!

THE BAFFLING MYSTERY AT ST. JIM'S THAT IS SOLVED THROUGH A BLACK EYE!

The MYSTERY of LEVISON!



As Sefton looked through the chink in the shutter he saw that he had run down his prey. Mr. Banks, Mr. Joliffe, and another man were playing cards with a boy in grey, and the New House prefect felt certain that the boy was Levison!

CHAPTER 1.

Lagged at Last!

"LOOKS like trouble!" murmured Monty Lowther.

And Tom Merry and Manners simultaneously made the same remark:

"What-ho!"

It did look like trouble—for somebody.

The Terrible Three were chatting in the Hall of the School House at St. Jim's with a group of juniors when Kildare came in.

Outside, it was a dark and blustery evening, and the wind was whistling through the old elms in the quadrangle. A gust of wind followed Kildare in and brought an eddy of smoke from the fire. Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, banged the big door shut behind him and looked round the lighted Hall with a frowning glance. Frowns were unusual on the handsome, good-natured face of the captain of St. Jim's, but he was looking very angry now. And his look evidently boded trouble for somebody.

"Has Levison come in?" he rapped out.

He addressed nobody in particular. Tom Merry took it upon himself to reply. Evidently Levison of the Fourth was the subject of Kildare's wrath.

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"Haven't seen him, Kildare."

"Anythin' the mattah, deah boy?" ventured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form. "You are lookin' wathah watty."

Kildare's frown deepened.

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

"Bai Jove!"

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

And Kildare strode away towards the Head's study.

"My bai!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Levison's lagged at last!"

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

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

"Lagged at last!" said Lowther.

"It was bound to come, deah boys!" said D'Arcy oracularly. "Weally, Levison could not expect anythin' else. But I wondah what he has been doin' this time?"

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

"And he looked awfully watty!"

"I guess Levison's number is up this time," remarked Lumley-Lumley. "It was bound to come."

"Yaas, wathah!"

That was the general view.

Levison, the black sheep of the Fourth, had tempted fate once too often, and now, as Blake put it, the chopper was coming down.

The juniors did not waste much sympathy on Levison. A fellow who smoked, and played cards, and broke bounds after lights out was bound to come a "mucker" sooner or later. In Levison's case, it had been "later," for he had always shown a phenomenal cunning in extracting himself from scrapes.

That Levison had been caught now in some rascality was evident, and the juniors were only curious to know what variety of rascality it might happen to be.

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

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

"Hasn't Levison come in?" he demanded.

"No, Kildare!"

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

"He has!" snapped Kildare. "I ran into him coming out of the Green Man. He dodged me in the lane, coming home. I've suspected him for some

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD

time. I believe you fags know a good deal about it, too."

"Ahem!"

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

"Well?" snapped Kildare.

"Weally, Kildare, we have nothin' to say on the subject. I should not think of statin' to a pwefect what I know concernin'— Yawwoh! Oh cwums!"

"Eh? What are you yelping about, you young ass?"

"Wow! Some beast has twodden on my foot!" wailed Arthur Augustus.

"The beast has twodden vewy hard!"

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

"Did I?" murmured Blake.

"Yes, you did."

"Well, I—I—I—ahem!"

"You feaful ass, Blake, I was not goin' to say anythin' about—"

Arthur Augustus broke off with a gasp.

"Talbot, you ass, what are you dwivin' your silly elbow into my wibs for?"

"Did I?" murmured Talbot.

"Yaas, you ass! I considah—"

Kildare looked at the juniors frowningly. He went to the door, opened it, and glanced into the quadrangle. But there was no sign of the missing Fourth Former there. The captain of St. Jim's banged the door, granted, and went to his study.

The group of juniors broke up, still discussing Levison.

The Terrible Three made their way up to their study.

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

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

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

"They want some finding," growled Manners.

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

Tom Merry shook his head.

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

Tom Merry halted in blank astonishment.

The chums of the Shell were passing Levison's study in the Fourth Form passage to get to their own quarters.

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

The Shell fellows stared at him blankly.

For it was Levison.

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

"Levison!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Levison, by gum!"

"Then he's not out."

The Fourth Former glanced up carelessly.

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

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

"Eh?"

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

Levison stared.

"Nothing surprising in that," he said.

"You could hardly see me come in when I haven't been out."

"You—you haven't been out?"

"No!"

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

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Levison.

"But Kildare says he caught you!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He came in about twenty minutes ago and said—"

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

"And he's reported you to the Head," added Manners.

"And you're to go to the Head's study at once," went on Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded the Shell fellows together.

"Your little joke!" said Levison. "I don't quite see the joke, but I thought

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*Can Ernest Levison be Herbert Smith, a young waster who haunts the Green Man? They are exactly alike in looks—yet every time Smith is seen in shady circumstances the St. Jim's junior produces a convincing*

*alibi!*

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you expected me to laugh. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass—"

"Thanks!"

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

"Oh, chuck it!" said Levison testily.

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

"But Kildare says—"

"Oh, rats!"

"He caught you—"

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

"But Kildare said—" roared Tom Merry.

"Bow-wow!"

"I tell you—"

"You don't mind if I go on with my lines while you're being funny?" asked Levison politely. "Old Schneider will be in a wax if they're not handed in to-night."

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

CHAPTER 2.

The Benefit of the Doubt!

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

There was a buzz of amazed voices.

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

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

The crowd thickened outside the study, and fellows squeezed and shoved for room, to stare at the unperturbed Fourth Former.

Levison went on writing lines with perfect self-possession. For a fellow who was in imminent danger of the "sack," he was certainly remarkably cool and composed.

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

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

"How did you get in, Levison?"

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

Levison yawned and laid down his pen.

"Done!" he remarked.

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

"I mean my lines are done," said Levison. He looked at his watch.

"Twenty past nine! Just in time to take them to Schneider before I go to bed."

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

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

"Then how did Kildare—"

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

"Weally, Levison—"

"Oh, keep it up!" said Levison, rising from the table and collecting up his lines.

"I'm off to see Schneider."

And Levison, with perfect coolness, left the study, and proceeded along the passage with his imposition in his hand.

The juniors stared after him blankly.

"Well, this beats it!" said Tom Merry. "He must know he's going to get a flogging, and very likely the sack."

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

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

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

"Yon, too!" ejaculated Levison.

"What do you mean?"

"I thought it was a joke of those

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fellows," explained Levison. "They've been pitching me a yarn. I haven't been out this evening."

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

"How dare you tell me such barefaced falsehoods, Levison!" exclaimed Kildare, his voice trembling with anger.

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

Levison shook his head.
"Whoever told you that was pulling your leg, Kildare."

Kildare made a threatening gesture.
"You know that I caught you myself, you lying young rascal!"

Levison looked astonished.

"You caught me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Where?" demanded Levison.

"Coming out of the Green Man."

"My only hat!"

"You cannot mean to deny it?"

almost shouted Kildare.

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

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

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

"Come with me at once!"

"Oh, all right!"

Levison accompanied the captain of St. Jim's. He had no option, for Kildare's grasp was already on his collar.

Tom Merry & Co. looked on with growing wonder. If Levison was guilty, he was displaying an extraordinary coolness. Was it possible that Kildare had made a mistake in the misty evening?

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

"Perhaps what, you ass?" asked Blake.

"You wemembah what happened to Tom Mewwy recently. He was kidnapped, and his double took his place here at St. Jim's, and behaved like a wottah to disgrace Tom Mewwy. Even I was taken in, so it was not surpris'n' that the othah fellows were," said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps Levison has a double, too."

"Rats!"

"Piffle!"

"Bosh!"

"Weally, deah boys," ejaculated Arthur Augustus, rather taken aback by that uncomplimentary reception of his suggestion, "it is not at all impos. If Tom Mewwy has a double, why shouldn't Levison have a double? It is said that ewevy chap has his double, you know, if he could find him."

"Rubbish!"

"Bow-wow!"

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

The door of the Head's study had closed on Levison.

The juniors, intensely curious to know how the strange affair would turn out, waited for the black sheep of the Fourth to come out again.

They were pretty certain that he

would come out under sentence of a flog-by name—I mean, did you address him as Levison?"
"You know I did."
"I don't know. And what did he answer? If it was somebody else, I should think that he would tell you that his name wasn't Levison."

The Head looked inquiringly at Kildare, who appeared angry and uncomfortable.

"In what way did the boy answer you, Kildare?" asked the Head.

"He cheeked me, sir," said Kildare.

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

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

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

"I can prove that I've been in my study a long time, sir," said Levison.

"A lot of the fellows saw me there."

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

"Half-past eight, sir."

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

Levison appeared to reflect deeply.

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

"Call Merry here, Kildare."

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

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

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

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

"Yes, sir."

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

"I certainly did not," said Levison.

"Tom Merry will tell you that I was finishing my lines when he came into my study. I've done the lot—two hundred in German. Did I look as if I had just come in when you saw me, Tom Merry?"

"No," said Tom.

Dr. Holmes looked worried.

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

"Never, sir! But it happened in my own case, as you well know, sir," said Tom.

"I am aware of that," said the Head.

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

"Just as Tom Merry was nearly expelled, sir," said Levison. "It was

Remembering the case of Tom Merry and his double, the kind old Head naturally hesitated at the thought of committing such an injustice as had very nearly been committed in Tom Merry's case.

"The fellow you collared, Kildare," said the junior—"did you speak to him

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

"I know Kildare says so," replied Levison.

Kildare flushed crimson.

"You young rascal," he began, "do you dare—"

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

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

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

"What do you say now, Levison?"

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

"Where have you been?"

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

The Head looked perplexed.

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

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

"It may be somebody like me that he saw," suggested Levison. "You remember, only two or three weeks ago, Tom Merry was kidnapped, and a fellow just like him took his place in the school. He deceived everybody, and Tom Merry nearly got into disgrace over it."

"That is true," said the Head slowly. Kildare started.

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

Levison shrugged his shoulders. He saw that he had made an impression on the Head, and that was what he was chiefly concerned about.

Remembering the case of Tom Merry and his double, the kind old Head naturally hesitated at the thought of committing such an injustice as had very nearly been committed in Tom Merry's case.

"The fellow you collared, Kildare," said the junior—"did you speak to him

It did not seem to disturb him.

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

At breakfast, all the fellows looked round from their tables at Levison, as he sat with the Fourth.

When he came into the Form-room, little Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, blinked at him curiously through his spectacles.

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

But the Head, though anxious not to commit an injustice, took every possible step to ascertain the truth. But no discovery could be made to Levison's disadvantage.

The School House dame, Mrs. Minns, of course, knew all about the clothes of the juniors; but to her knowledge, at least, Levison did not possess such a light-grey suit as Kildare described.

Levison's box and his study were searched, but nothing came to light to discredit him—neither cigarettes, nor cards, nor anything of the kind. Which was a marvel to his Form-fellows when they heard of it, and showed pretty plainly that Levison had foreseen that search, and prepared for it accordingly.

Whether Kildare had spotted him at the Green Man or not, a good many of the fellows knew that he kept cards and cigarettes in his study, and that sporting papers were not unknown there.

But the black sheep of the Fourth was not to be caught napping. And the search, which was carried out by Toby, the page, under the eyes of the Housemaster, revealed nothing—or, rather, it revealed nothing to Levison's discredit—for the Housemaster made one or two discoveries of a quite contrary nature.

In Levison's box was found a diary, with such entries as "Yesterday I was careless with my lessons. I must be more careful." And "Mr. Railton is a very just Housemaster." And "This morning I was tempted to tell a lie, but I thought of Washington, and I told the truth."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Certainly it is very surprising, sir. I have observed Levison, and was far from supposing that he was the kind of boy to keep a diary like this. But I suppose it may be taken as evidence that Kildare's suspicion of him is unfounded."

"It would certainly seem so," said the Head.

The Head glanced further through the diary, and was more and more puzzled. If Levison was, as his diary hinted, a "goody-goody" prig, certainly he was not the kind of fellow to pay visits to the Green Man. The writer of that diary might have been expected to hold up his hands in horror at the bare thought of such an escapade.

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

Mellish looked into the dormitory, and found him chuckling over the diary.

"What's the joke?" asked Mellish.

"Shut the door, and look at this."

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

"Whose is that?" he inquired.

"Mine!"

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mellish.

Levison took out a fountain-pen, and proceeded to make a new entry in the diary.

Percy Mellish watched him with great interest.

"Yesterday I was unjustly suspected of visiting a dreadful public-house called the Green Man. Kildare, whom I respect highly, though he does not like me, made a dreadful mistake, taking some abandoned youth for me in the dark. I am very, very sorry for that wretched boy whom Kildare mistook for me, and I shall try to find him out and speak a word of warning to him. But for the great sense of justice of our kind headmaster, Kildare's mistake might have been very serious for me."

"N.B.—I must remember never to judge others harshly on mere appearances."

"My only hat!" gasped Mellish.

"How's that for high?" murmured Levison. "Next time Railton comes nosing in my box, he can read that—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

CHAPTER 4.

Levison, or His Double?

"GWEAT SCOTT!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that exclamation quite suddenly.

That afternoon was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and for once Arthur Augustus had left the regular cricket match to the tender mercies of Tom Merry & Co., though with some inward misgiving as to the result.

Arthur Augustus had been busy that afternoon. The swell of St. Jim's had been over to Wayland town to do some shopping. As Arthur Augustus was in funds, he had not stinted himself in purchasing new ties, shirts, and socks, and the goods were to be sent to the school.

As he started for home, Arthur Augustus reflected with satisfaction upon the contents of the parcel of new things.

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

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

The shepherd's hut was not unoccupied. There were three persons in the hut, seated on broken old beams round an upturned bucket which served the purpose of a card-table.

One of them was a fat, red-faced man, whom Arthur Augustus recognised as Mr. Banks, the bookmaker. Another was a dingy-looking young man with watery eyes and flabby features, and a general air of dissipation which comes of late hours, late rising, and too much stimulating liquor.

D'Arcy had seen him before—he was employed in Wayland, and was a local "nut." His name was Stubbs, and he honoured a local estate agent's office with his valuable services.

But it was the third of the trio upon whom the eyes of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were fixed.

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

"Levison, bai Jove!"

The three card-players looked up.

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

"Right-ho!"

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

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

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

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

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

Arthur Augustus stood and watched them.

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

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

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

"Your deal, Smith," said Mr. Banks. The junior in grey took the cards, shuffled them, and dealt them.

"Levison, you wottah!"

The junior looked up.

"Hallo! Who are you?" he asked.

"Bai Jove! I know your voice, too, Levison. You are perfectly aware who I am!"

"Don't know you from Adam!" said the junior. "You're something like the dummy in Mr. Wiggs' window in Rylcombe."

"You uttah wottah—"

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

"You are Levison."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"You have prowbably changed your clothes outside the school," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The junior laughed.

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

"I am quite sure that you are Levison!"

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

"You would be sacked, Levison, if a mastah or a pwelect found you gamblin' in that disgustin' mannah."

"Bow-wow!"

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

"I came in out of the wain."

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

"His name is not Smith, you boundah. He is Levison of St. Jim's."

"Which he is something like Master Levison," admitted Mr. Banks, with a



grin. "I noticed it myself. I used to know Master Levison afore he turned his back on his old pals. But this 'ere young gentleman is 'Erbert Smith."

"Wats!"

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

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

"I wufuse to keep my head shut. I will not stand by and see a St. Jim's fellow disgwacin' himself in this mannah," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"Levison, I appeal to you to chuck it, and come back to the school with me."

"Oh, buzz off!"

"If you wufuse, Levison, I shall take you by the sewuff of the neck."

"Rats!"

"I wufuse to allow these disgustin' pwoceedings to pwoceed," said Arthur Augustus. "I weward it as my duty to intahfere. At one time, Levison, I had hopes that you had chucked up this wotten conduct. It is a vewy great shock to me to find that you are still a wewoltin' blackguard."

"Is that chap wound up?" asked the junior.

"Sounds like it!" snorted Mr. Banks.

"I know that if he ain't run down pretty soon, he'll be run out of 'ere on his bloomin' neck!"

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

"Bow-wow!"

"For the last time, you wottah!"

"Oh, shut up!"

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

"Leggo!" roared the junior.

"Wats! You've got to come."

The junior kicked off frantically as he was dragged backwards. The up-turned pail was kicked over, and the cards went scattering in all directions.

With a snort of wrath, Mr. Banks leaped to his feet, and Mr. Stubbs followed his example. The junior in grey was struggling with Arthur Augustus, and the two men promptly went to his

aid. Three pairs of hands grasped Arthur Augustus at the same moment. "Kick him out!" roared Mr. Banks. "Outside, you cheeky sweep!" "Bai Jove! Welcase me! Fair play, you wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he was propelled violently towards the door. "I will thwash you all, one aftah anothah. Oh cwumbs! Gweat Scott! Yawwooh!"

Bump! Splash!

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

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

"Oh cwikey!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

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

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

CHAPTER 5.

Levison at Home!

"O H cwumbs!" Arthur Augustus sat up dazedly.

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

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

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

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

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

He had a long time to wait.

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

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

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

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

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

There was a sound of squelching footsteps in the mud, and from behind the

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

Arthur Augustus looked after him, and hesitated.

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

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

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

He was justified in shadowing the cad of the Fourth in order to prove his deception. Of course, he had no intention of "sneaking" on the subject. But for the satisfaction of himself and his friends it was necessary that Levison's trick should be revealed.

Under cover of his supposed "double," Levison was playing the blackguard, and taking risks that could only end ultimately in disaster. A ragging from his Form-fellows would be an excellent thing for him, if he was bowled out; and once it was established that he had no double, he would not be able to tell that falsehood again.

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

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

The junior in grey did not look back.

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

But the fellow in grey was not on his guard at all, evidently, for he did not glance back once, and did not even

hear, apparently, the occasional squelch of the amateur detective's boots in the puddles on the moor.

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

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

D'Arcy ran in among the trees. It was a narrow footpath, a mere track winding among the trees.

The junior in grey had vanished.

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

But the junior was gone.

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

Arthur Augustus halted, breathing hard.

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

"The wottah!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "The uttah wottah! I have lost him! But it is all wight. I'll return to St. Jim's and be there before him. He will not be able to say that he was in his study doing lines this time."

Arthur Augustus hurried off towards the school.

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

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

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

He came in breathlessly at the gates. He paused a moment at Taggles' lodge to speak to the porter.

"Taggles, deah boy!"

"Allo!" said Taggles.

"Have you seen Levison come in?"

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

"Vewy good."

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

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

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

"Fathead! We've beaten the New House!" shouted Blake. "Talbot made the winning hit. Come and drink with us!"

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

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

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

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

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

"No," said Tom Merry, in surprise.

"What has he been up to now?"

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

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

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

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

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

The study was not empty.

There were two juniors there—Blenkinsop and Levison!

And the crowd of fellows in the passage gasped, with one voice:

"Levison! My hat!"

CHAPTER 6.

Trial by Jury!

LEVISON glanced round carelessly. Arthur Augustus' eyes almost devoured him.

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

When Friends Fall Out!



Even the best of friends will quarrel at some time or other. And so it is with Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, who have been given the cut direct by their old chums Marjorie Hazeldene & Co., of Cliff House. What has caused this unhappy state of affairs? You will be surprised when you read:

THE FEUD WITH CLIFF HOUSE!

the opening yarn of a grand new series specially written by famous Frank Richards. It's in today's issue of

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up at any time in the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!"

"Levison!"

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

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

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

Levison looked surprised.

"What are you driving at?" he inquired.

"You know very well what I am drivin' at. I expected to be back at the school before you, but you got ahead somehow."

"Have you been out?" asked Levison.

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

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

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

Levison laughed.

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

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

"Wats!"

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

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

"Anything else?"

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

"Oh, pile it on!"

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

"Keep it up!"

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

"Hear, hear!"

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

"Bravo!"

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

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

"I wefuse to hold on, Tom Mewwy!"

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

"Oh, let him begin!" said Levison coolly. "I've got the poker ready! Let him run on!"

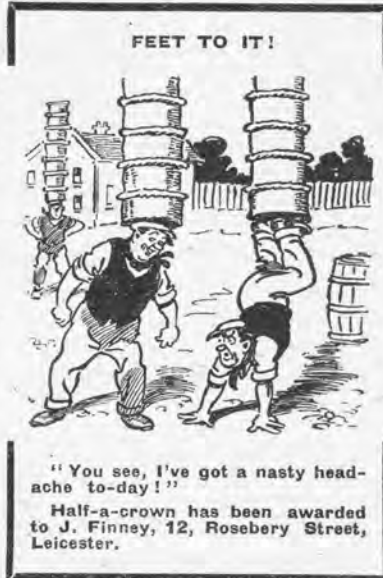
"You uttah wottah!"

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

"Wubbish!"

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

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



"Yaas, wathah!"

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

"Oh wats!"

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

The juniors crowded in and the door was shut.

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

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

"Hear, hear!"

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

"It's only fair," said Talbot.

"Yaas, but—"

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

"Oh rats!" said Levison.

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

"Hear, hear!"

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

"We remember," agreed Blake.

"That was what put it into your head to start a double—eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Bow-wow!"

"Wats!"

"We'll give Levison a fair trial," said Monty Lowther. "This is the judge's

seat, and I'm the judge." He sat on the table. "Now, prisoner at the bar—"

"Adsum!" grinned Levison.

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

"Not guilty, my lord."

"The witness may now speak."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How was he dressed?"

"In gwey."

"Did you address him as Levison?"

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

"Did he admit that his name was Levison?"

"No. He pwetended to be his double."

"Did he state his name?"

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

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

"It was you, you wottah!"

"Rats!"

"You uttah wascal!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass—"

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

"Yaas; and lost him in the wood."

"What did you do then?"

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

"And did you arrive at the school first?"

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

"Is that all your evidence, witness at the bar?"

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

"Fathead! That isn't evidence!"

"I considah that—"

"Remove that witness!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fearful boundahs! Wesease me! I considah— Leggo! Yow-ow!" The witness was dumped into the arm-chair and held there, gasping, by several pairs of hands, and the prisoner at the bar was called upon for his defence.

CHAPTER 7. Not Guilty!

MONTY LOWTHER regarded the prisoner at the bar with a severe glance. He had placed a duster on his head in imitation of a judge's wig, in order to lend additional solemnity to the judicial proceedings.

Levison did not seem to take the proceedings solemnly, however. He was grinning. There were also smiles from the jury. The judge looked round with a portentous frown.

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Another disturbance like that, and I will have the court cleared. The court shall be clear even if the case is not clear. There, you can laugh now! That is humour from the Bench. Laughter in court! Good! Silence! Prisoner at the bar!"

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

"Yes, my lord!" said Levison.
"That's better. Do you plead guilty to playing the giddy goat and the disgusting blackguard in the circus stated by the witness D'Arcy?"

"No, my lord!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Why, you uttah wottah! Lemme gewwup!"

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

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

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

"Wats!"
"Keep that witness quiet!"
"Gwoooogh!"

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

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

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

"Go it. I—I mean, you may proceed."

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

"Wathah not. I was awfully deep."

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

"Ya-a-as; I pwesume so."
"Rubbish!" said Blake. "If it was Levison, you can jolly well bet that he knew he was being followed."

"Weally, Blake—"

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

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

"The point raised by the prisoner at the bar is of no importance," pronounced the judge. "The witness being well known to be a silly ass, it is most

likely that he gave away the fact that he was shadowing the fellow in grey."

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

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

"Look here—"

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Did you dawdle on the way?"

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

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

"Yaas, of course."

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

"Of course I did!"

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

"I should jolly well say so!" said Arthur Augustus, with a sniff. "I don't smoke filthy cigarettes. I would wun you off your legs any day."

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

"Bai Jove!"

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

"Wats!"

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

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

"Bai Jove! Ten minutes!"

"Yes; perhaps more."

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

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

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

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

"Bai Jove!"

"That is not evidence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Neither is that evidence."

Laughter in court!

"The case, therefore, goes to the jury

to decide," said Lowther. "I suggest to the jury that Levison has proved his case, as it is impossible for him to be in two places at once. Remarkable as it seems, Levison has a double—or, at least, there is a chap like him—like enough to deceive Kildare in the dark, and a howling ass like Gussy in the daylight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Hold on!" said Herries.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

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

"That settles it," said the judge.

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

"Oh, rats!" said the witness Herries.

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

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

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

"Hear, hear!"

"Bai Jove! I was only—I weally—in the circus—let go! I ordah you to welease me at once! I uttably wufuse to be bumped! I—I— Yawooch! Help! Ow!"

"Bump, bump, bump!"

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

"Hear, hear!"

"Rats! Chuck it!" roared Levison.

"Why, you silly idiots— Oh, my hat!"

"Bump, bump, bump!"

"Oh crumbs! You dangerous lunatics! Ow! Ow! Yow!"

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

The legal proceedings closed amid

howls of laughter from the court and deep groans from the prisoner and the witness.

"One moment," said Talbot. "I say, you—"

"You want to be bumped, too?"



"I will thwash you all, one aftah anothah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh cwumbs! Gweat Scott! Yawwooh!" Bump! Splash! Right out of the hut the elegant form of D'Arcy went hurtling—to land in a big puddle!

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

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Groogh!" mumbled Levison. "Get out of my study, you silly idiots!"

And the court broke up and dispersed to tea.

CHAPTER 8.

A Really Good Idea!

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

The next day Mr. Railton sent for Tom Merry and questioned him about the matter. Tom gave a frank description of the trial, which had established beyond doubt in the minds of the juniors the fact that Levison had a double.

Mr. Railton listened to him with great attention.

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

"Certainly, sir!" said Tom. "Unless

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

"I am very glad that this has been established," said the Housemaster. "But it is very remarkable, indeed, that practically the same case as your own should happen over again."

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

"Quite so. Send D'Arcy to me, please!"

"Yes, sir."

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

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

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

"Ahem! Go on, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus gave a description of his adventure.

"Ah! You say this boy's companions addressed him as Smith?" said Mr. Railton.

"Yaas; I heard them do so."

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

"Exactly, sir, excepting that he was a little stoutah."

"Ah, there was that difference! You

do not believe now that the boy in question was Levison?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

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

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

Mr. Railton shook his head very seriously when the swell of St. Jim's was gone. The affair was so strange that he hardly knew what to make of it.

The fact that Tom Merry had a double was proof enough that the thing was possible. Yet that the same thing should happen twice to boys in the same school was extraordinary.

It was much more probable that the fact that Tom Merry had a double had put this "dodge" into the cunning head of Levison to screen himself from punishment for his rascalities. Yet he had succeeded in convincing the School House fellows of the reality of the double, and the Housemaster could not find fault with the evidence which had satisfied them.

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

"I am awfully sowwy, deah boy!" he said, when he found the black sheep of the Fourth in the quadrangle.

Levison looked at him curiously.

"Sorry they bumped me yesterday?" he asked.

"Sowwy I suspected you," said Arthur Augustus. "As it turns out to be a mistake, I apologise to you as one gentleman to anothah."

Levison grinned.

"Oh, that's all right! I'm really very much obliged to you," he remarked. "You see, you've established the fact now that I have a double."

That makes it much safer for me when he does anything rotten in the future."

"Yaas, that's wathah satisfactory," said Arthur Augustus, with a nod. "But I've got a proposal to make to you, deah boy. It's wathah dangewous for you to have a wottah just like you hangin' about. When Tom Mewwy's double first appeahed on the scene, we all agreed to hunt the wascal down, and wag him till he got out of the neighbourhood. I'm goin' to suggest doin' the same for your wotten double, and I'm sure all the fellows will back me up. And you had bettah come along with me, you see, or we may bump you by mistake sometimes."

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

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

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

"Ahem! Yaas, but—"

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

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

Levison shook his head.

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

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

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

"Weally, Hewwies—"

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

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

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

"Wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard Levison's conduct as vewy noble and forgivin'."

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

"What on earth for?"

Arthur Augustus smiled the smile of superior wisdom.

"Don't you see, deah boys? When Levison's double has a black eye and Levison hasn't one, that will simply be pwoof positive. Even Kildare will be satisfied then."

Arthur Augustus' chums surveyed him admiringly.

"Where does Gussy get these ripping—"

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ideas from?" said Blake, addressing space.

"Some fellows think of things, you know," said Arthur Augustus modestly.

"Some fellows are wathah bwainy."

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

"Weally, Dig—"

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

"You are labourin' undah a misapprehension, Hewwies. The ideah is to prove that Levison has not been spoofin' us, and pwove it to the pwefects, too. I am quite aware that Kildare has a vewy suspicious eye on him."

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

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

"Yes, that's all very well; but—"

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

"Yes," said Herries. "But Towser—"

"Towsah?"

"Yes, Towser!"

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

"Towser isn't a rotten bulldog," said Herries warmly. "Towser's a splendid animal, and much better in every way than a pure-bred bulldog. Why, Towser—"

"Don't let's have a list of Towser's good qualities now, for goodness' sake!"

said Blake imploringly. "Life's too short, Herries, old man. Admitting that Towser is a first-class beast—in fact, a super-bulldog—what has he to do with Levison?"

"He doesn't like Levison."

"Bai Jove!"

"You can trust Towser," said Herries confidently. "Towser always knows when a fellow isn't straight. You remember how he went for Tom Merry's double when he was impersonating Tom here. I know Levison's made out his case awfully well. He always does. Still, Towser doesn't like him."

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

"Blow Towser!" said Blake and Digby.

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

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

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

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

To that question Dig replied only with a snort. But it was agreed that Levison's double should be found and licked, with a black eye if possible. The Terrible Three were taken into the scheme, and they entered into it heartily.

Only Herries, basing his opinion upon the well-known judgment of his bulldog Towser, held to the belief that if Levison's double were given a black eye, Levison would be seen with a black eye afterwards.

CHAPTER 9.

Sefton Chips In!

KILDARE of the Sixth wore a worried look.

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

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

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

"Of course, this isn't exactly my business, as a New House prefect," Sefton was saying. "I don't want to interfere. It's your business to look after the juniors of your own House. Still, when I see disgrace being brought on the old school, I feel that something ought to be done. I've heard you say sometimes that the seniors of both Houses ought to pull together for the good of the school."

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

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

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

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

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

"Name?"

"Levison of the Fourth."

"Oh!" said Kildare.

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

"Go on!"

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

"You are sure?"

"Quite sure."

"You might have collared him and brought him in."

Sefton shrugged his shoulders.

"As I say, I don't want to interfere. I don't want to be told that I'm meddling in the affairs of the School House prefects. Still, I don't want to

see a junior disgracing the school, and keep my mouth shut."

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

Sefton sneered. "In fact, it is quite well established," said Kildare, nettled. "His House-master is satisfied about it, and so am I."

"Well, if you're satisfied, I've nothing more to say," said Sefton, with a shrug of his shoulders. "This having a double must be mighty handy to the fellows of your House. We don't allow juniors to have doubles in the New House."

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

"Well, it is rather thick, isn't it?" said Sefton, laughing. "Only two or three weeks ago Merry had a double impersonating him—"

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

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

"Not that I know of. The kid

doesn't belong to the place, I believe, and he dresses quite differently from Levison; doesn't seem to be a school-boy at all. Certainly, the likeness is striking. I was taken in myself."

"Well," said Sefton, "I'll tell you what I think. I think that Levison has taken advantage of that story of Tom Merry's double to invent a double for himself, to cover up his precious goings-on. And I don't think the matter ought to be left where it is."

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

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

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

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

"Make it."

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

Kildare made a gesture of repugnance.

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

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

"I don't see how I can."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And Sefton went, with a sneering smile on his face which made Kildare long to kick him through the doorway. However, he restrained that longing, and the New House prefect departed in peace. Kildare was left in a very worried and thoughtful frame of mind.

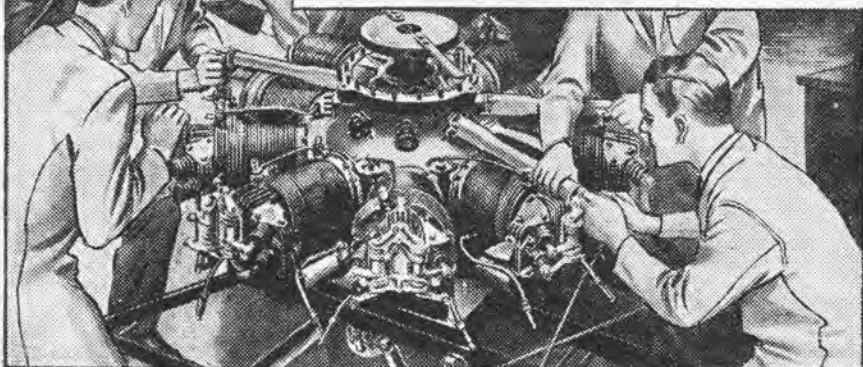
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After some cogitation, he sent his bag for Tom Merry.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Besides, you know Sefton is always chipping in where he has no business," said Tom. "You must have noticed that. Of course, we wouldn't play any jokes on our own prefect. We wouldn't put jam in your topper, Kildare, or old Darrell's. But—but Sefton's—"

Kildare burst into a laugh.

"You young ass, Sefton hasn't been here to tell me anything about jam in his topper!"

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

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

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

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

"Oh, Levison!" said Tom.

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

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

"You're quite sure of that?"

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

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

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

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

Tom Merry cleared off in a state of great indignation.

A meeting was promptly called in the study in the Shell passage, attended by

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the Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6, to discuss the new example of New House cheek, and to take measures for making Sefton sorry that he had "wedged" himself into School House affairs.

CHAPTER 10.

So Does Tom Merry!

"**U**TTAHLI wotten!"
 "Fearful cheek!"
 "That fellow's got neck enough for anything!"
 "Rotter!"
 "Cad!"

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

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

"Awful nerve!" growled Herries.

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

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

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

"Wathah not!"

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

"Hear, hear!"

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

"Never!"

"Well, hardly ever!" murmured Lowther.

"Nevah!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Bwitions nevah shall be slaves!"

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

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

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

"Hear, hear!"

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

"Hurrah!"

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

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

"Bravo!"

"I will speak to Figgins about it," said Tom. "Figgins & Co. are up against Sefton, because he's a beastly



"Remove that witness!" ordered the judge. "You utter at my yah like that I shall stwike you!" yelled D'Arcy, do so unless you welf

bully, and gives them lines for nothing. Figgy will give us a tip when Sefton goes on the warpath, and then we'll drop over the wall, and go on the warpath, too."

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

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

"Hear, hear!"

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

"Pax!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

And Figgins reluctantly dropped the cushion he had picked up.

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

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

"Our what?"

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

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

"Is it a feed?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Rats! No!"

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

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

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

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

Bump, bump!

"You—you rotters! I call peace!" howled Tom Merry.

"You don't call peace, and then slang our House!" grinned Figgins.

"Give him another!"

Bump!

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

"Hold on!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Let me explain, you asses! I was speaking of Sefton."

Figgins stopped the inkpot just in time.

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

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

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

"You silly ass!"

"Hand me that inkwell, Fatty!"

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

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

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

Figgins nodded. He admitted the force of that argument.

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

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

"Good egg! We're on!"

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry left the New House in a state of satisfaction. Matters were going well.

That very evening the heroes of the School House received the benefit of their temporary alliance with their old rivals. The Terrible Three were just settling down to prep in their study when Figgins came in with an excited face.

"He's off!" he announced.

The Shell fellows jumped up.

"Sefton?"

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

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

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

"What about prep?" he asked.

"Blow prep!"

"But old Linton in the morning—"

"Blow old Linton in the morning!"

"Oh, all right!" said Manners resignedly.

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

And within five minutes, seven determined juniors were on the warpath.

CHAPTER 11.

Sefton's Luck!

SEFTON gave a subdued chuckle. He was in luck.

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

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

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

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

And he was in luck. He had been prepared to waste several evenings—as many as were needed, in fact—in the not ungenial task of playing the

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owthah! I considah— Leggo! Blake, if you dwag it, I should be sowwy to have to thwash you, but I shall yah immediately!"

spy, in the hope of catching the School House delinquent "out." And low and behold, here was luck on the very first evening!

As he sneaked round to the back of the Green Man in the dusky garden by the side path, he caught the glimmer of light from a back window, through the shaky old shutters. He approached on tiptoe to them, and discerned a cheery, if somewhat dingy, company within.

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

For a prefect who was so zealous to punish a junior for wrongdoing, Sefton seemed to have a remarkably keen knowledge of the purlieus of the Green Man. Perhaps he was not a complete stranger to that delightful spot himself. Perhaps, as Monty Lowther had so sagely suggested, he had a double motive in view—not only to score off Kildare, but to make his own little excursions safer by excluding a junior from the scene.

For if Sefton was in the bad habit of dropping in at the Green Man, certainly he could not continue to do so while Mr. Joliffe & Co. received Levison there—not without getting under that young rascal's thumb.

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

Until the latest frequenter of the Green Man was "stony" it behaved Sefton to keep away from that quarter. And so it was an excellent opportunity for showing his zeal as a prefect—and, incidentally, scoring over Kildare.

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

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

"Of course, he doesn't change his clothes," he murmured. "Of course not! He shoves those grey things on over his flions. It makes him look stouter, and it saves him the trouble of changing. He simply has to slip them off—and there you are! Easy enough to buy a suit a few sizes too large for him. Oh, the deep young rotter!"

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

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

He decided to wait until Levison came

out, and collar him in the garden. Then he had to decide which way Levison would come. Certainly he would not dare to leave the house by the front in the lighted village street.

But there were several doors at the back. If he spotted Sefton he might escape by the path down to the river, or into the next garden. And if he got home to St. Jim's first he had only to repeat his story of a double to clear himself from the accusation.

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

The New House prefect, after a final glance into the lighted room, slipped quietly away from the window and trod cautiously into the side path, where the

lion from his lair, he rushed forth, and his grip fell upon a shoulder and closed there like a vice.

"Got you, you young cad!" he exclaimed.

What happened next seemed like an earthquake, a cyclone, and a nightmare all rolled into one to the unfortunate Sefton.

Dim forms started up on all sides; hands were laid on him in the darkness; he was wrenched away from his captive and bumped heavily on the ground.

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

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

Bump! Sefton, to his rage and disappointment, was whirled off the ground and bumped down on it again—hard.

He struggled furiously and tried to hit out, but his wrists were being held in a tenacious grip, and his struggles were useless.

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

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

Bump, bump, bump!

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

Splash!

"Gug-gug-gug-gug—"

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

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

"Gerrooooooh!"

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

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

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

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

"Levison, stop! I—"

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

Click! Jingle! Whirl!

In the darkness of the lane there was

(Continued on page 18.)



thick shadow of trees fell, effectually concealing him.

There he waited. Levison could not be long now. Levison—if he was Levison—must have broken bounds after calling-over, getting out over the school wall, trusting to luck not to be missed till bed-time. But he would have to be back in time for bed, or discovery would follow.

Sefton heard nine o'clock strike from the village church. The rascal could not be long now.

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

The sound of his chuckle was followed by a cautious footfall, and he started.

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

That was enough for Sefton. Like a

The Editor's Chair

Let the Editor be your pal.
Drop him a line to-day,
addressing your letters:
The Editor, The GEM,
Fleetway House, Farring-
don Street, London, E.C.4.



HALLO, chums! I've got some great news for you this week of an extra-special series of four St. Jim's stories, the first of which will be published in next Wednesday's number.

I've often noticed in my correspondence that readers in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales have made requests for stories featuring St. Jim's characters who hail from these countries. So now I am going to delight the hearts of all Irish, Scotch, Welsh, and English Gemites by telling you that this coming series will star St. Jim's characters who were born in one or other of the four countries of the British Isles.

How's that for a novel series? Grand, eh? I'll say it is, and so will all of you when you read these splendid yarns.

I am giving Ireland the honour of starting the ball rolling, and Eric Kildare is the first character to be featured. As he is captain of St. Jim's he takes pride of place. After him will follow in turn the Welsh junior, Fatty Wynn, then the canny Scot, Kerr, and finally Tom Merry as the English representative. They are four of the most popular fellows at St. Jim's, and every one can be relied upon to play his part nobly in this series.

The first story is called:

"HE WOULDN'T SELL HIS SIDE!"

It is a powerful yarn of real human interest, telling what happens when Kildare finds himself involved in the troubles of a scapegrace, irresponsible cousin.

Micky Kildare, a pilot-officer of the Royal Air Force, has gambled heavily on a horse and lost. He is fifty pounds in debt to the bookmaker, and the man threatens to show him up and blacken his name unless he meets his obligations.

On a visit to Kildare, Micky explains the "jam" he is in, but the St. Jim's skipper hasn't the money to help him. The bookmaker, however, suggests a way out—a way that is an insult to the Irish senior. It is to betray the St. Jim's first eleven in an important forthcoming cricket match, so that the bookmaker can win the bets he has made on the game! Kildare refuses to sell his side—yet it seems the only way to save his cousin from disgrace!

Martin Clifford relates this gripping yarn of sport, fun and adventure in his most forceful and entertaining style. See that you don't miss it, chums, and give your pals the tip. They will thank you for recommending it.

"THE GREYFRIARS VENTRILOQUIST!"

Readers don't need telling whom the title refers to—for Billy Bunter's

peculiar gift has long been a source of amusement and trouble to Greyfriars and himself. But in the early school-days of Harry Wharton & Co. Bunter was not the accomplished ventriloquist that he is now. This sparkling yarn deals with his first efforts at voice-throwing, and really it is too funny for words. But despite the ridicule of the Remove and other set-backs, Bunter is determined to become a ventriloquist—and securing lessons from an expert for nothing seems to Bunter a big step towards succeeding.

Frank Richards is in humorous form in this story, and readers will enjoy a hearty laugh—at Bunter's expense.

Now, another large mail confronts me, so I must lose no time or space in getting down to my

mensely. The joke you mention was not in your letter. Did you forget to enclose it?

P. Finnigan (Bowdon, Cheshire).—Pleased to hear that you enjoy reading the GEM and "Magnet." As I have said before, the reformation of Levison will be dealt with in due course. I'm sorry, but the names you require would take up too much of my limited space.

Miss V. Atkinson (London, W.1).—Thank you for your letter in appreciation of the "Toff" stories. The early adventures of Nipper & Co. were published in the "Nelson Lee" in 1933. The first story told how Nelson Lee and Nipper arrived at St. Frank's. I have no further news yet of the Greyfriars film.

R. Frary (Richmond, Surrey).—Thanks for your congratulations to Martin Clifford and me. Yes, this "reply column" seems to have proved very popular since it was started. I don't agree that Tom Merry & Co. have ever treated Levison unfairly. They have been deceived in him so often in the past that they cannot trust him. In any case, his slight reformation was only a passing phase. It is only towards Talbot that Levison's better nature asserts itself. The character you mention will be appearing in due course. Your second and third Greyfriars questions will be answered as you read the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. Greyfriars discarded Ettons at the beginning of 1930. Your joke was a "chestnut," old chap. Try again.

K. Osborn (Sutton, Surrey).—I am pleased to hear that you have become a reader of the GEM and "Magnet." Yes, they are companion papers of the "Modern Boy." Sorry your jokes were not quite suitable for illustrating.

H. Tout (Cooksbridge, Sussex).—Thanks for your letter. Yes, the "Toff" series and "The Mystery of Eastwood House" rank among Martin Clifford's best efforts. Glad you like the Greyfriars stories. Wibley doesn't make his advent for some considerable time. So you consider the 1937 "Holiday Annual" the best you have read? You'll find the next edition even better. Pleased to know you are trying to convert your pals to be GEM readers. They don't realise what they are missing. Sorry, your jokes didn't quite score. Have another shot.

D. Philip (Aberdour, Fife).—Thanks for your list of the best St. Jim's stories you have read. Your suggestion is a good one, but I haven't the space for it at present. The Jester liked your jokes, but he said they were rather "chestnuts."

All the best, chums!

THE EDITOR.

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REPLIES TO READERS.

D. Vleeskruyer (Holland).—Glad to hear from you again. I'm sorry your joke was not quite good enough. The notice of your pen pal must have gone astray for a time. You won't have to wait so long for your own notice to appear. The "Pen Pal" feature was suggested years ago by a sub-editor.

J. D. Smith (Glasgow, S.2).—The Christian name of the Head of St. Jim's is Richard. I will do my best to find room for those lists.

J. McLaren (Watford).—Pleased to hear that you have taken the GEM for four years, and that you consider every story has been top-hole. D'Arcy is fifteen years three months; Lowther, fifteen years eleven months. The ages of Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton are not disclosed.

I. Ralling (Leigh-on-Sea).—Thanks for your letter of appreciation. As I have said before, Martin Clifford is too modest to permit me to publish his photo. Yes, you may have the autographs of Martin Clifford and myself. Do you want them added to your album? Sorry, your joke didn't make the bell ring. GEM yarns are not repeated every four years. I should soon have readers on my track if they were!

Miss M. Boyes (West Hartlepool).—Glad you thoroughly enjoyed the "Toff" stories. Yes, Joe Frayne is still at St. Jim's; so is Tom Lynn. Talbot is sixteen years one month. Have another try to win half-a-crown.

Miss A. Mouton (Mowbray, Cape Town).—Many thanks for your letter and congratulations. Glad to hear that you enjoyed the "Toff" series im-

PEN PALS COUPON

29-5-37

the sound of a bicycle, and the figure in grey vanished.

Sefton halted, with an imprecation. "The young hound! He had his bike here! No go!"

It was evidently no go! The cyclist had already vanished. And Sefton, drenched and dripping, muddy and furious, tramped a weary way home to St. Jim's, not feeling that he had been so very lucky, after all.

CHAPTER 12.

Two Lovely Black Eyes!

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

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

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

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

All the same, they knew that the powers that were would not look upon it in that light. Ducking a prefect—even an interfering prefect—would be found to be a decidedly serious business if it came out.

And Tom Merry & Co. put their best foot foremost to get back to the school. It would be necessary to prove a very strong alibi that evening. By the time Sefton came squelching his way in, all those good boys had to be quietly doing their preparation in their studies.

"And the uttah ass called us Gore and Cwooke and the west!" chuckled Arthur Augustus, as they slackened down a little to take breath. "The fwithful duffah thinks he is on Levison's twack, and so he supposed it was Levison's fwends!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ting-a-ling-a-ling!"

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

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

"Get aside!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors had almost reached the cross-roads, where a lamp shed a dim light over the four turnings, glimmering over a signboard. They all looked

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indignantly at the cyclist as he swept by without a light.

Tom Merry uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Levison's double!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Collar him!" yelled Blake.

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

They closed round the cyclist at once. They knew that Sefton was still far away, and there was no chance of his coming up for some time. They had been running like the wind.

It was an opportunity that might never occur again for dealing with Levison's double. They had laid a deep little scheme all ready for their next meeting with Master Herbert Smith, who had the cheek to resemble so strongly a St. Jim's fellow—and the meeting had come unexpectedly.

"Stop!" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Halt, you wascal!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"We've got him!"

The junior in grey panted.

"Let me go! I don't know you! How dare you stop me on the road!"

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

"I—I've got to get home!"

"Wubbish! Stand wound in a wing, deah boys, while I give him a faithful thwashin'! It won't take me long to thwash a smokin', boozin', gamblin' cad!"

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

"Wubbish! He has the cheek to be exactly like a fellow in my Form. He is not the beastly double of a Shell fellow. Besides, he tweated me with gwoss diswespert last week. Thwee of the bwutes chucked me out in the wain and spoiled my clobbah. This cad gave me a faithful knock while the other bwutes were holdin' me. I am goin' to thwash him!"

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

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

"Look here, I'm not going to fight

you!" exclaimed the junior in grey savagely.

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

"Buck up!" said Manners.

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

"I won't fight!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly idiot—"

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

"I'm not satisfied that it isn't Levison," growled Herries.

"I know Towser—"

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

"No, I am not!"

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

"Let me go!"

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

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

"Hear, hear!"

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

"Stop it!" yelled the boy in grey.

"I—I—I won't have it! I—"

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

"I—I can't help that."

"Nunno; but you can help being a gamblin' blackguard. If you were decent, it wouldn't matter. You could resemble me if you liked, and I wouldn't say a word," said Lowther generously. "As it is, we've got to crop your mop a bit to make a distinction, see?"

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

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

"Put up your hands, you wottah! I warn you that I am goin' to give you a faithful thwashin'."

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

"Honour bright!" said Tom Merry.

"Without cutting my hair, or anything?"

"That's understood."

"Good! I am ready!"

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

"Oh! Gwooh!"

"Here, fair play!" exclaimed Tom

Merry. "D'Arcy wasn't ready, you cad!"

"Oh, my eye! Bai Jove! I'll make mincemeat of the wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, scrambling to his feet. "I wegard that as a foul blow! How-ehah, I'm weady now."

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

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

He lay gasping on the ground, and the warlike Gussy pranced around him, calling on him excitedly to come on.

"Had enough, you cad?" demanded Blake.

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

"Wats! I'm not finished yet."

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

The junior in grey staggered to his feet. He clutched at his cycle, threw himself into the saddle, and rode away without a word, but at a breathless speed.

The juniors did not raise a hand to interfere with him. The fellow was evidently an utter cad, as the foul blow he had struck testified; but he had had his licking, though not as complete as he deserved.

"Kim on!" said Blake.

The juniors hurried on their way. Arthur Augustus caressed his eye tenderly. There was no doubt that he, as well as Levison's double, would have a beautiful black eye on the morrow.

That had not been part of the programme at all, and so Arthur Augustus was not wholly satisfied. Tom Merry looked back, and in the light of the lamp they had left behind he spotted a muddy figure tramping on.

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 13.

A Startling Discovery!

"WHAT— Who is that?"

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

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

"Sefton, bejabbers!" ejaculated Reilly of the Fourth. "Ha, ha, ha!"



Though the juniors were all round his machine, the cyclist made a desperate effort to pedal on at full speed. Blake and Herries reeled away from the wheel as it crashed into them, and a hard blow landing on Arthur Augustus' nose sent him staggering. But Tom Merry and Lowther had a grip on the rider!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a ripple of laughter among the School House fellows. Nobody liked Sefton, and there wasn't the faintest sympathy for him in his plight. In fact, the School House fellows seemed to regard his horrid plight as a first-class joke. Even Kildare was grinning.

Mr. Railton made a gesture, and the laughter died away. But there was still subdued chuckles.

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

Sefton was spluttering with fury.

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

"Shocking!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

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

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

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

"It has not been proved," said the Housemaster. "However, if you can prove that it was Levison you saw behaving disgracefully, it is your duty to do so. Kildare, will you see whether Levison is in the House?"

"Certainly, sir."

Kildare ran up the stairs to Levison's study.

There was a big crowd in the Hall now. Curiously enough, seven juniors who were generally well to the fore when

anything was "on," were absent just now.

The Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 were in their quarters, grinding away at preparation. They discreetly deemed it wise to keep away from public observation just then, and, besides, they had their prep to do or as much of it as possible.

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

Kildare came downstairs alone.

"Is not Levison in the House?" asked Mr. Railton, with a start.

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

"Indeed! It is not bed-time yet."

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

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

"Faith, he told me he was going to bed early, I remember," said Reilly.

"Sure, I asked him at tea if he'd have a game of chess this evening, and he said he didn't feel quite equal to it, sir."

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

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

"Sure, Levison hasn't a bike," said Reilly. "We all know that he sold it

at Hanney's a couple of weeks ago at least."

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

"I do not see how a boy could take out or bring in a bicycle after the gates were locked, and Levison was certainly present at calling-over after locking up," said Mr. Railton. "You will see that you are mistaken, Sefton."

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

"Have you any idea of their names?"

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

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

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

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

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

Sefton's jaw dropped.

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

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

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

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

Kildare smiled. Sefton had evidently carried out the scheme he had announced in the captain's study, but it did not seem to have been a howling success.

The bully of the New House did not reply to Mr. Railton. He swung away, and tramped out of the House, baffled. Indeed, he was beginning almost to believe in Levison's double himself now. He left a muddy pool where he had been standing in the Hall.

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

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

"Shan't get finished at all," said Manners.

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"He was simply swimming in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Behold! It is black, but not comely," grinned Monty Lowther.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Certainly!"

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

"The left, Master D'Arcy."

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

"Master D'Arcy!"

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

"He has gone to bed."

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

And Arthur Augustus hurried away, in a state of suppressed excitement and exasperation.

It was bed-time now, and Arthur Augustus just caught the Terrible Three as they came away from their study, and their unfinished prep.

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

"Anything out?"

"Yaas, wathah! Make it ten o'clock, so that we shall be safe fwom the beastly pwefects. Don't fail; it's awfully important!"

"A feed?" asked the Terrible Three together.

"Wats! No!"

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

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

"Well?"

"Levison's got a black eye!"

"My only hat!"

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

CHAPTER 14.

The Way of the Transgressor!

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

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

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

Kildare turned out the lights and retired from the dormitory.

There was the usual chatter from bed to bed, but Arthur Augustus did not join in. He wanted the prefect on duty to be quite clear before proceedings were started.

Not a sound came from Levison. D'Arcy did not believe that he was asleep.

Having failed to obtain a beefsteak, Levison had no means of curing his black eye. It would show up plainly enough on the morrow. The cad of the Fourth was probably thinking it over as he lay feigning sleep, trying to devise some scheme for accounting for it. Possibly he would get up before rising-bell, and contrive a fall downstairs to account for the black eye.

By going to bed before the others, he had succeeded in keeping it secret for that evening—or so he believed. And that gave him a respite—time to plan a dodge.

He knew what to expect if his precious story of a double was howled out. The juniors would not betray him to the Housemaster, much as he deserved it. But they would make him suffer for his sins, and the useful double would have to vanish for good. And without that cunning invention, Levison's little games would be too risky to be kept up.

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

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

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

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

"What on earth for?"

"The Shell fellows are comin' in."

"My hat! What are they coming for?"

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

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

"Are you off your rocker?" he demanded.

"Wats! Levison has got a black eye."

"What?"

There was a gasp from Levison's bed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Snore!

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

Levison sat up in bed.

"What do you want?" he growled sullenly.

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

"I won't!"

Bump!

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

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

"Faith and phwat's the matter?" asked Reilly. "What has Levison done?"

"Lied and spoofed and rotted, and taken us all in!" said Blake. "He's lied to the Head, he's lied to the House-master, he's lied to Kildare, he's lied to us, and now he's going to pay the piper!"

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I—I got this black eye—er—falling



downstairs," said Levison, with trembling lips.

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

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

"When?"

"Nearly half an hour ago."

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

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

That was enough for Levison.

"I—I—I don't mind owning up," he stammered. "It—it was only a lark."

"You've not got a double?"

"N-n-no."

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

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

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

Levison grinned faintly.

"On my bike," he said.

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

"Well, you see, I was hard up," said Levison, "and—and I wanted a bit of

a fling, you know. I sold my bike to Hanney's for seven pounds. Then I bought a second-hand old crock for a pound. It wasn't worth much, you see, but it was good enough to ride on, and it didn't matter if it was left in the open air at night; it was an old crock. I've kept it in the wood. Then—then, with the rest of the money, I had a bit of a fling. I bought that grey suit, and I used to wear it over my own clothes. It made me look stouter, and—and it was less trouble to change. The—the bike's in a thicket not a hundred yards from the school now. It—it was only a joke."

"Nuff said!" said Tom Merry. "As judge—"

"Hold on!" said Blake. "I'm judge!"

"Rats!"

"Look here—"

"Order!" said Lowther. "We don't want the prefects here. Go it together, and see if you can keep in tune."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, as judge," said Tom Merry firmly, "I sentence you to be shown up to the Housemaster if you ever tell another whopper about having a double."

"As judge," said Blake, "I endorse the sentence of my respected colleague on the bench, and sentence you to be bumped, rolled, ragged, whacked, punched, and made to run the gauntlet of the whole dormitory."

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I say—I won't—I— Yaroooh!"

The sentence was executed promptly. On second thoughts, the bumping was omitted, as that would probably have brought prefects up to the dormitory.

The blackguard of the Fourth was rolled, ragged, pommelled, and ducked in a basin of water. Then he was given a sound slipping, stretched across his bed face downwards, with Blake wielding the slipper.

And after the slipping he was ducked once more, and then—in case he should catch cold, as Blake remarked—he was made to run the gauntlet; and every fellow in the dormitory "expressed himself," as the French say, to get in his whack with a slipper, a pillow, or a bolster.

By the time Levison had run the gauntlet some of the ragers were getting tired, and so it was pretty certain that Levison was tired.

Then he was allowed to crawl back to bed, and the Terrible Three returned to their dormitory with a satisfied feeling of having done their duty well.

Levison thought they had done it too well. It was long before the unhappy black sheep slept, and when he did sleep it was to dream that he was being passed through a mangle. That was what he felt like. He had learned—not for the first time—that the way of the transgressor is hard.

The next day there were two fellows in the Fourth Form with black eyes, and both of them received lines for it from Mr. Lathom.

That day Levison crawled about looking as if life was not worth living. It was some time before he got over the effects of that dormitory ragging.

His lesson had been severe, but it had done him good; and nothing more was heard at St. Jim's of Levison's double.

(Next Wednesday: "HE WOULDN'T SELL HIS SIDE!") Look out for this great yarn, chums—starring Kildare, St. Jim's Irish skipper. Order your GEM early.)

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BLACK PIKE MOUNTAIN HELD NO TERRORS FOR BULSTRODE & CO.—UNTIL THEY WERE LOST IN MIST AND RAIN!



It was borne in upon Nugent's dazed mind that there were searchers on the Pike. He sat up and shouted huskily. "Help, help!" Lights glimmered through the mist, and an answer came back. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" It was Bob Cherry.

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK

Having had no success as a hypnotist, Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove at Greyfriars, takes up thought-reading. But after several attempts at reading the thoughts of juniors, he gives it up as a bad job.

The next half-holiday Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, and Levison decide to try to reach the summit of Black Pike, a mountain not far from the school. Billy Bunter tucks on to them by offering to carry the lunch-basket.

Before the three juniors leave Greyfriars, they are warned about the mists which descend on the mountain when it rains—and rain is threatening when they start. But they take no heed of the warning and set out. They reach the lower slopes, Bunter, panting and perspiring, plodding along with the lunch-basket on his shoulder—until Levison relieves him of it for a spell.

(Now read on.)

Bunter Loses His Way!

STEEPER became the path, wilder the scenery round it, as Bulstrode, Levison, and Billy Bunter tramped along it. Edges of rough rock cropped up in the path, more than once causing the juniors to stumble.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Bulstrode.

Billy Bunter gave a grunt of relief.

"Going to picnic here?"

Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove at Greyfriars, grinned ill-naturedly.

"No, ass! We're going to picnic on top of the Pike. There's another mile and a half yet. This is the end of the lower road. It's climbing after this."

"Better not go any farther," suggested Bunter. "It would be better to picnic here in the shade of the trees."

"Come on!" said Levison.

"You're going to rest here, anyway, surely?"

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"Of course not! We've got to get to the top and down again before dark."

"Well, it gets dark very late, and—"

Levison did not wait for Bunter to finish. He followed Bulstrode, who was tramping on without a pause.

The three crossed a level plateau in

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The PERIL of BLACK PIKE!

By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

|||||

the shade of the trees, a spot to which the explorers of Black Pike often came, and where black patches under the trees showed that camp-fires had been lighted at different times. Beyond the level the Upper Pike rose abruptly.

Now it was climbing in real earnest. The trees were growing fewer and

thinner, and the sky could be seen more clearly. The vegetation was of a more stunted growth, the soil harder and rockier. The path was very ill-defined, but here and there marks on the trees and rocks showed them that they were going the right way.

Levison threw down the basket again with a grunt.

"By Jove, that's heavy! Take your turn now, Bulstrode."

"Rats!" said Bulstrode. "If that young cormorant is coming along for a feed, he can carry the grub!"

"I don't see why you can't take a turn."

"I will if Bunter goes back."

"Oh, I say, Bulstrode, it's no good my going back after coming so far. I really think you ought to carry the basket a bit."

"No, fear!"

"Get hold of it, Bunter," said Levison.

"Wouldn't you like to carry it a bit farther, Levison?"

"No, I wouldn't!" snapped Levison.

"I'm fagged now. Carry it or clear!"

"Oh, I'll carry it!"

And the fat junior shouldered the basket again.

The three juniors pressed on, halting now and then to make sure of the path. The trees grew scantier, and from the bare slopes they had a far view of the countryside. In the distance they could see Greyfriars School, with its ivied tower.

"Splendid view from here," Bulstrode remarked.

"I say, you fellows, this is a ripping view, and I suggest that we picnic here instead of going to the top of the Pike."

"Oh, cheese it!"

Levison kept on. The slopes were stony, hard, and dusty, patched here and there with stunted bushes. The ground was broken into gullies and rifts, and the path wound among the irregularities in a puzzling way. False paths branched off in all directions, and the juniors

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several times followed the wrong track and had to retrace their steps.

Bunter was growing more fatigued, and he lagged considerably behind the other two.

"Come on, you young ass!" called out Bulstrode from far in advance.

"I'm coming, Bulstrode!"

"Mind you don't miss us."

Bulstrode and Levison were turning the corner of a knoll, and they disappeared from Bunter's view for a moment. Billy Bunter put the basket on the ground and sat on it.

"I really think I ought to have a rest," he murmured. "I'm getting quite fagged."

"Come on, Bunter!"

It was Levison's voice ringing back. "I'm coming!" gasped Bunter.

He groaned as he rose and picked up the basket again. He pushed on and came to a branch in the way, and halted. Whether Levison and Bulstrode had gone on through the bushes, or rounded the knoll and turned to the left along a ridge, he had not the faintest idea.

"Hallo!" he shouted. "Where are you, Levison?"

"Come on!" rang out a shout from the distance.

"I'm coming!"

The shout was no guide. There was a choice of ways towards the shout, and Bunter did not know which one to take. He chose the easiest, and tramped on by what looked like a beaten track through the thickets. He had not gone twenty yards before the track—if track it was—ended abruptly in a mass of impenetrable bushes.

Bunter halted. The day was close, and here, as it happened, grew a large tree, towering over the thickets. The shade was welcome to Bunter, and he staggered under the wide-spreading boughs, and sank on the grass with a gasp of relief.

Through the silence of the mountain rang a distant sound, like the faint echo of a far-off shout. Bunter did not heed it. He sat gasping for breath and fanning himself with his handkerchief.

"My word, but it's hot!" he murmured. "They've missed me. But it's lucky I've got the lunch-basket with me. I'd better have a snack to keep up my strength ready for when they find me."

The thought of setting out to find the others never even occurred to Bunter. He was quite content to remain where he was till they found him. The lunch-basket was with him, and that was the most important point.

Bunter opened the basket and began to sample the contents. In this pleasant occupation he quite forgot Levison and Bulstrode, and everything and everybody else. He was quite happy, and the supplies in the basket diminished at an alarming rate.

A sudden swishing in the branches overhead made him pause and look up at last. Big drops of water splashed down on his face. He started to his feet.

"Rain!"

It was a sudden and heavy rain. It came down in sweeping gusts, and in a few minutes the dry, dusty hillside was saturated. Bunter scrambled closer to the trunk of the big tree for shelter, and stood there dismayed.

The Summit of Black Pike!

"WHERE'S that young scrampus got to?"

It was Bulstrode who grunted out the question, as he paused on a high point of the Black

Pike and looked backwards. Bunter had been out of sight for some time, but the two Removites had no doubt that he was following. But Bulstrode had grown uneasy at last.

"Oh, don't stop!" said Levison. "Let's get on to the top. It's not more than another quarter of a mile, I should say."

"Yes; but where's Bunter?"

"Hang Bunter!"

"That's all very well; but it would be no joke to get to the top and have all the way to go back on an empty stomach," said Bulstrode uneasily. "I know this part, and you don't."

"Bunter's following us."

"I haven't seen or heard anything of the ass for some time. It's occurred to me that he may have stopped to have a feed."

"Shout for him, then," said Levison, leaning up against a stunted fir to rest.

"Bunter! Billy Bunter!"

Bulstrode yelled as loud as he could, but no reply came back, save the echo of his own voice. It was evident that the fat junior was not within hearing.

"The young cormorant! I thought so!"

"Well, I'm going on."

"I'm not. It's a good step to the top, and there are miles back, and— and— By Jove!"

"What's the matter now?"

Bulstrode pointed to the north.

"Look there!"

~~~~~

*Harry Wharton is on the worst of terms with Bulstrode and Levison. But the captain of the Remov doesn't hesitate to go to the rescue of his enemies when they are lost in mist and rain on Black Pike Mountain!*

~~~~~

Levison looked. The cloud they had seen when starting was thicker and blacker, and had extended over half the horizon. The peculiar glimmer of the sun showed that it was raining there, some miles away.

"It's going to rain," said Bulstrode. "We're going to have a rainstorm on the Pike."

"Who cares for a little rain?"

"I do, for one!" said Bulstrode promptly. "Why, we haven't even got a coat with us. And no grub! Don't be an ass! We've got to get out of this just as quickly as we can. There's no getting down the Pike in the rain."

"Why not?"

"The mist comes up from the valley. You can't see a foot before you, and then the ground is slippery when it's wet. Look here, there's danger!"

"Oh, why don't you say you're fagged out, and want to give in, and have done with it, Bulstrode? That would be more sensible."

"I'm not so fagged as you are."

"Then come on!"

"The rain will be here in a quarter of an hour, at least."

"Blow the rain!"

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Bulstrode angrily. "I'm not fooling you. Do you know you risk losing your life if you're caught in a rainstorm on the top of Black Pike?"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Well, I'm going back."

"I'm going forward. Harry Wharton and his lot reached the top of the Pike on Saturday afternoon."

"It was a fine day."

"I don't suppose they would have turned back for a little wet. Anyway, I'm not going to be outdone by Harry Wharton. Nice pair of asses we should look if we went back now and told the fellows we had set out to do what Wharton did, and turned back because we were afraid of getting a little wet."

"I suppose it's no good talking to you," said Bulstrode, "and there's no time. I'm going back—and you'll come too, if you're not an idiot."

"Well, I'm not coming!"

"Then stay!"

Bulstrode swung away, and his footsteps rang down the stony hill.

Levison looked after him with a sneer on his lips.

"I say, Bulstrode," he called out, "if you see Bunter, hurry him up with that basket!"

Bulstrode did not reply. He disappeared from sight in a few moments, and Levison was left alone on the mountain.

For a moment the boy's obstinacy wavered. The solitude of the Pike was oppressive, and as he looked at the rainy sky he could not doubt that the rain was approaching the Pike.

But it was scarcely possible to go back now. He knew how Bulstrode would gibe at him, after all he had said.

Levison set his teeth and tramped forward up the dusty slopes of the Pike.

Higher and higher, till it seemed to the junior that he was piercing the clouds, and the trees on the lower slopes seemed to be dwarfed to the size of ferns. He paused on the last slope and looked round him.

Then he gave an uneasy start.

He was looking in the direction of Greyfriars, but the old school was no longer visible. A thin white mist was creeping up from the valley, and already it was surrounding the Pike. Even as he looked it was creeping closer, and wrapping the trees of the lower slopes in its chill embrace. It shut off the countryside, it shut off Greyfriars, and it was shutting off the Lower Pike.

Levison was uneasy now; but it was too late for retreat. The mist was creeping up the Pike, and he would have to pass through it in his descent to reach the bottom again. Perhaps it would clear off when the rain ceased.

Levison did not turn back. The chief thought in his mind was that he would not fail where Harry Wharton had succeeded. He tramped on up the last slope, though the exertion of the ascent had fatigued him so much that he could hardly put one foot before the other.

Still forward, till the last ascent was crowned, and the summit of the Pike lay before him.

A rugged, rocky plateau, patched with stunted trees and ragged bushes.

Levison staggered out upon the level and sank into the ferns at the foot of a rock. On the rock, where his glance fell, two initials had been cut: "H. W."

"Harry Wharton!" muttered Levison. "Well, I've climbed the Pike, too; there's no getting out of that. I'll put my initials next to his."

He opened his pocket-knife. There

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was a gust of wind over the Pike, and raindrops dashed in his face.

He started. The raindrops were a warning of what was to come. And it came the next minute—a pelting of heavy rain!

Levison rose and looked round him with scared eyes. On the summit of the Pike there was no shelter; he was exposed to the full force of the beating torrent. In a few seconds he was wet to the skin.

Round the rainy Pike the wet mist was creeping on, folding the hill closer and closer in its chill embrace, creeping closer to the junior, as though seeking to envelop him and shut him off from the outer world.

Closer and closer, till the white vapour was round him, and he could not see his hand before his face—could see nothing, could hear nothing but the pelting of the heavy rain.

To the Rescue!

RAIN! There was a hurrying and scurrying at Greyfriars for shelter. The rain came down suddenly, and some of the juniors were still at the nets. Some of them had their flannels soaked before they gained the shelter of the pavilion.

Bob Cherry came rushing in with his bat under his arm, and bumped against Nugent, who was standing looking out into the field.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob cheerfully. "Nice weather, isn't it? I say, Inky, buck up!" he went on, turning and shouting to the nabob, who was running towards the pavilion. "Or the colour will begin to run!"

The Nabob of Bhanipur arrived, dripping and panting.

"Oh, it's all right!" said Nugent, grinning. "Inky's complexion is done up in fast colours, isn't it, Inky?"

"The excellentness of the esteemed joke is only equalled by the sublime fatheadedness of the honourable joker," purred Hurree Singh.

"Cricket's all over for to-day—and to-morrow, too, I expect," remarked Hazeldene. "This is going to be a soaker!"

"The soakfulness is terrific!"

"Wherefore that pensive brow, Wharton? Are you mourning for the cricket, or have you lost a threepenny bit? Where's Billy Bunter to read his thoughts?"

But Wharton did not smile.

"I'm thinking of those fellows who've gone up the Pike."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"My hat, I'd forgotten them! They're in for it!"

"They are, and no mistake!" Nugent remarked. "If they're on the Pike now, I pity them. Did Bunter go along?"

"Yes; he went to carry the grub."

"Ha, ha! He'll get a wash this time."

"Perhaps they've come in," said Hazeldene. "I know I'm going in."

Most of the juniors put their collars up and cut across to the House. But the Famous Four remained in the pavilion.

They were looking serious. They knew that the explorers of the Black Pike had not come in, and they felt anxious.

"They're a pair of cads," Bob Cherry remarked; "but it's a serious business being caught on the Pike in a rain-storm."

"There's Billy Bunter, too," Harry Wharton said. "He would be less able to stand it than either Levison or Bulstrode."

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"Surely they'd have sense enough to turn back when the rain came on?"

"They might have gone too far."

"I don't see what we can do," said Nugent. "Not much of weather for going to look for anybody, and, as a matter of fact, I don't feel inclined to go and look for Levison. You know what we should be likely to get. You know how he greeted us that time we yanked him away from the gipsies."

"The ungratefulness of the rotter was terrific."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I dare say they're under shelter," said Bob Cherry. "Anyway, it's no good bothering. Let's get in."

The juniors made a run through the rain to the School House. There they changed their things, and then Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Nugent settled down to a game of chess in the Common-room. The room was thronged with juniors the rain had driven indoors.

Harry Wharton went up to Study No. 1, the window of which overlooked a part of the Close, and stood at the window looking out. The driving rain blurred the glass, and he could dimly see the old trees.

From time to time some unlucky fellow, who had been spending the afternoon on the road, would come in on a bicycle, soaked to the skin, and muttering uncomplimentary things about the weather.

Harry Wharton started a little as he felt a tap on his shoulder. He looked round and saw Nugent.

"Finished your game?" asked Harry.

"Yes; Inky mated me, all through my moving my knight when I ought to have pushed up the pawn," said Nugent. "If I'd moved my knight, and if Inky had moved his queen instead of his rook, and if he hadn't seen what I was after, I should have had him in four moves."

Wharton smiled.

Nugent was a beginner at the great game of chess, and a very bad player; but he always imagined that he was very near to victory when he was beaten, and he was always quite sure he would have won if about four or five "ifs" had come to pass.

"Inky is tackling Bob now," said Nugent. "He's taken on Bob and Hazeldene together. I wondered where you were. What are you up to—meditating on your sins, or composing a poem on the weather, or an ode to a rotten afternoon?"

"No; the fact is, old man—" Wharton paused.

"Oh, out with it!" said Nugent, laughing. "You're thinking about that ungrateful rotter Levison."

"Well, it's the truth. He is several sorts of a cad—and so is Bulstrode. But you know what it means to get caught in a storm on the Pike. And we're bound in a way to look after Bunter. He's with them."

"He wouldn't be if he wasn't such a greedy young cormorant."

"Still, he's out in this, as a matter of fact. It's getting dark, old chap, and there's no sign of them yet."

"They're on the Pike right enough."

"And if they're on the Pike, what chance have they of getting off it, now that the mist is on the mountain?"

"None at all."

"That means that they're booked to stay there till the morning?"

"I suppose so," said Nugent gravely.

"and that's rough on them."

"It may be worse than rough on them—a night in the open in weather like this," said Wharton quietly.

"They have no coats even."

"Suppose we tell Quelch? He can think of something to be done."

"What can he do that we can't do ourselves?"

"You're not thinking of going out in this, Wharton?"

"I am," said Harry quietly. "Look here, I've been up the Pike more than once, and I know the path well. You know it better than any fellow in the school. If we tell Mr. Quelch, he can only send a search-party. And who can he send? Nobody who's likely to do the business better than we could."

"Something in that, but—"

"Well, what?"

"They're not worth the trouble and risk!"

"Perhaps not; and I know I've no right to ask you to go."

"Rats!" said Nugent cheerfully. "If you go, I'll go. That's settled! What about Bob and Inky?"

Wharton shook his head.

"No need to drag them out. If anything can be done, we can do it."

"Yes, that's so. Jolly weather for an excursion, I must say," grunted Nugent.

"But I'm game, if you are. But what about telling Quelch?"

"It's calling-over in a quarter of an hour now, and he'll know then. No need for us to tell him. He would forbid us to go out if he knew we were going."

"True. The sooner we're off, the better."

"That's so. Let's get our things together—macintoshes—and some grub, in case we get stuck up there."

"Right-ho!"

The preparations of the Removites were soon made. They left the house quietly, only Skinner, who was in the hall, observing their departure. He called after them in amazement:

"Where on earth are you chaps going?"

"Going to see if it's raining," said Nugent cheerfully.

Harry Wharton looked back for a moment.

"We're going to look for the chaps on the Pike," he said. "You can tell Quelch at calling-over."

"But I say—"

But they did not listen to what Skinner had to say. They strode on, and the rain and the mist swallowed them up from sight.

Bulstrode and Bunter Found!

THE rain drove furiously in the faces of the two Removites as they left the gates of Greyfriars and tramped down the road.

They had long macs on, buttoned round the neck, but still the driving rain found them out.

"Wet, isn't it?" grunted Nugent.

Wharton did not reply. They tramped on, and turned into the footpath through the weeping wood. The rain dashed down, and the trees were streaming with water, the grass swimming under their feet.

But the two juniors tramped on doggedly. They came on the lower slopes of the Pike, and then Wharton suddenly stopped. Nugent halted, too, looking at him.

The mist was round them now, like a dim white veil, shutting off the view in every direction.

"Fagged?" asked Nugent.

"No. I heard something."

"You hear such curious things in this mist," said Nugent. "It's full of echoes and you never know what the sounds are, or where they come from. What do you think you heard, Harry?"

"A footstep, I think."
The juniors listened intently. A dull sound came through the mist.

"Better shout."
"Good! Both together."
The juniors shouted. To their relief a shout came back from the mist, and a heavy, staggering footstep echoed on the soaked ground.

"Hallo, hallo!"
"Hallo!"
"It's Bulstrode's voice," said Nugent, with a grunt of relief. "They're here. We shan't have to go up the Pike."
"I suppose the others are with him."
"We shall soon see."

Wharton shouted again, and Bulstrode answered, and a minute later he loomed up through the mist. He was soaked with water, and almost sinking with exhaustion.

"Who's that?" he exclaimed.
"Wharton."
"My hat!"
"Where is Bunter—and Levison?"
"Blessed if I know!" gasped Bulstrode wearily. "I'm done up. I've been wandering about for hours, but I couldn't find my way in the mist. How did you fellows come here?"
"We came to look for you."
"You must have been in want of something to do," said Bulstrode. "Blessed if I'd go out and look for anybody in this weather. Where are we now?"

"Just off the footpath through the Friar's Wood."
"Thank goodness! Then I'm right down at last."
"How far up have you been?"
"Nearly to the top. I left Levison on the last lap. I could see that the rain was coming on. But the silly ass wouldn't turn back."

"Did he keep on when you left him?"
"Yes; though I warned him what it meant, the obstinate idiot!"
"What about Bunter?"
"He missed us soon after we passed the half-way plateau. He was lagging behind with the grub basket. I shouldn't wonder if he missed us on purpose to tuck into the grub. Hasn't he turned up yet at Greyfriars?"
"No."

"Then I suppose he's lost, and so is Levison. Have you chaps got anything to eat with you? I'm famished."
"Here's a sandwich."
"Thanks! Are you coming back to Greyfriars now? You can lend me a hand; I'm almost too fagged to drag along. The rain takes it out of you."

Bulstrode looked a pitiable object. He was soaked to the skin and covered in mud from head to foot.
"We're not coming back," said Harry quietly. "We're going on to find Bunter and Levison. You'll get to Greyfriars all right now. Once in the footpath you can't miss the way, and the mist is all on this side of the wood."

"Right you are. You'd be much more sensible to come back, too, though. You can't find them in this mist."
"We're going to try."
"Don't be an ass! They have wandered from the path, for a dead cert. And how are you going to look for them over a couple of square miles?"
"Come on, Frank."

Bulstrode was still remonstrating when Wharton and Nugent tramped on, and left him to grumble alone. He finished the sandwich and tramped on wearily through the woods towards Greyfriars.

The chums felt a little relieved in their minds as they passed through the mist. One of the absentees had been found and was safe, and that was something. And they had learned enough to guide

them somewhat in their search for the other two.

"We know now that they're past the plateau," Harry Wharton observed. "We can keep right on past that, and then begin the search."

"They may have come down."

"Not likely in the mist. If Levison was going on when the rain started, he couldn't possibly have got down to the plateau again. As for Bunter, I imagine that he would stick just where he was when the rain started and not make a move at all. He wouldn't know which way to turn."

It was hard work getting up to the plateau. There was no wind, but the steady downpour of rain was hard to face. In spite of their macs, the juniors were very wet. Their caps were soaked through, and were limp as if they had been soaked in the river. They came out on the plateau at last, and Nugent sank down on a rock.

Harry Wharton halted.
"Feeling done up?" he asked.
"Pretty well," gasped Nugent. "This beastly mist chokes one, too. I feel as if I had my head in a sack."

Wharton looked around him. There was no sign of the mist clearing off. It rose like steam from the valley, thicker and thicker. He could hardly see Nugent.

"We shall have to take care not to get separated," he said quietly. "We should never find each other again. I think the rain is clearing off a little."

"Yes, it seems to be thinning down; but the mist is getting thicker."

"No chance of that clearing off for some time," said Harry ruefully. "Still, it's something to have a little less rain."
He sat down on the rock beside Nugent. He was fatigued himself, but

he was standing the test better than his chum.

"Blessed if I think I shall be able to get to the top!" said Nugent, with a gasp. "It took it out of us pretty well last Saturday, you know, and it was fine weather and daylight. Still, we'll stick it out as long as we can."

"I'm ready to go on when you are."

"I'm ready."

Nugent rose with something of an effort, and they faced the ascent again. It was not easy to pick up the path across the plateau in the mist, and it was slow work. But they did it, and were at length on the steeper slopes of the Pike.

"Now we shall have to look out for Bunter," said Harry.

Looking was not of much use. They shouted at intervals, and the mist echoed and rolled back their shouting. Their progress was slow, and growing more and more laborious.

The rain was passing off to the south, but rivulets were running down every hollow of the hill, and every gully was a stream. The ground was wet and slippery, and the mud deep and clinging.

Soon it was only Harry who shouted into the mist. Nugent needed his breath for the difficult climbing, and it was all he could do to keep up with his harder companion.

"Hark!" exclaimed Harry suddenly.

They listened intently.

There was a faint sound through the mist. Was it the echo of Harry's last shout? No; it was repeated, and faintly they made out the word:

"Help!"

"Thank goodness!" gasped Nugent. "There's one of them, at any rate. Let's get on."



Harry Wharton had scarcely taken a dozen paces across the top of Black Pike when he came upon a form that lay on the wet ground. Harry bent down with a fast-beating heart. "Levison!" he muttered.

"The sound came from the left, I think."

"Then it's in these bushes. That's leaving the path."

"Well, we know that Bunter left the path, from what Bulstrode said."

"True! Come on!"

They plunged into the dripping thickets. That they were on the right track was soon proved. The shout rang feebly through the mist again, this time clearer and nearer, and unmistakably in the voice of Billy Bunter.

"Help!"
They plunged on through bush and mud and rain, blindly in the mist. Nugent bumped against the trunk of a tree and stopped. Wharton halted also as he caught sight of the outlines of a form stretched on the ground in the wet grass.

It was Billy Bunter!

The Rescue of Bunter!

BUNTER sat up and whimpered.

"I say, Levison, is that you? I think it's about time you came back to me. I'm jolly well soaked!"

"I'm jolly glad we've found you," said Harry Wharton, while Nugent sank down exhausted at the foot of the tree.

Bunter gave a jump.

"That isn't Levison. It's you, Wharton."

"Yes, Bunter."

"How on earth did you get here?"

"We have come to look for you."

"I wish you had come a bit sooner,

then," said Bunter. "I'm soaked! Did you think of bringing a coat for me?"

"We found it hard enough to get along without anything to carry," said Harry quietly. "But you can have my coat."

"Oh rot!" said Nugent. "I'll give the fat idiot mine."

"No, you won't!"
Nugent, as a matter of fact, was too exhausted to move. Harry Wharton stripped off his coat and wrapped it round Bunter, who was trembling and shivering. The night was growing bitterly cold, and the mist had a clammy, chilly grip.

Bunter was soaked with rain and shaking in every limb. He grunted with satisfaction as he felt the raincoat put round him.

"That better?" asked Harry.

"Yes, it's better, Wharton. But how the dickens am I to get back to Greyfriars?"

"Haven't you tried to get back?"

"No. I've been under this tree ever since it started raining," said Billy Bunter. "It seems a jolly long time. I don't know the way down the mountain, and I can't see anything in this mist. The beastly stuff is sticking to my glasses, too, and it's worse with them on than with them off."

"Have you seen anything of Levison?"

"Not since I lost them on the path—a fairly long time ago. It was lucky I had the lunch-basket with me to keep up my strength."

"Has Levison nothing to eat with him?"

"Not that I know of. I haven't,

either, for that matter. I've finished up all there was in the basket. I'm beginning to get hungry again, and I'm cold."

Harry Wharton was silent and troubled. Levison, in a much more exposed part of the mountain, must have felt the force of the storm more than Bunter, and he had nothing to eat. He remained to be found, and the task seemed hopeless. But, hopeless or not, Harry meant to see the matter through.

The difficulty was, what to do with Bunter. It seemed impossible to leave him alone, and, indeed, Nugent was in no state to continue the ascent. Wharton thought it out and made up his mind.

"Nugent, old chap, will you stay here with Bunter?"

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to look for Levison."

"You're not going alone," said Nugent, staggering to his feet. "I'm coming with you."

Bunter gave a whimper.

"I say, you fellows, you can't go on and leave me alone here. I don't know the way down the mountain. I'm f-f-frightened!"

"Cheese it, Bunter!"

"I won't! You can't leave me. If you had cashed up the ten bob you owe me, I shouldn't have come up the Pike at all to picnic with Levison. Jolly sort of picnic this is!"

"We're not going to leave you alone, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "You see how it is, Frank? One of us will have to stay with Bunter. I'm not so knocked up as you are, and I'll keep on?"

"But—" began Nugent uneasily.

"It's the only thing to be done. As soon as you're rested a bit, you can find your way down the mountain with Bunter."

"I say, that's a really good idea!" said Bunter. "Only it would be better for you to come as well, Wharton. You can't possibly find Levison in this mist, and if you come, you'll be able to take an arm each and help me along."

"Dry up, you fat rotter!" growled Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"I suppose there's nothing else to be done?" said Nugent. "I couldn't keep on up the hill—or down it, either—till I've had a rest. I don't like your going on alone, Harry!"

"That's all right!"

"Look here! Take my coat, then; you're not going like that."

"I'm all right. It's easier to climb without a coat, and I can't get much wetter than I am."

"You'll have a rest before you go on?"

"I've had a bit of a rest now. I think I'll push on. You don't know where Levison may be, or in what state I may find him—if I find him at all!"

Nugent was silent. It was evidently the only thing to be done; but his heart was heavy at the thought of his friend going on alone into the thick mist.

"I—I suppose you must go, Harry," he said. "But mind how you go."

"I shall take care."

"There are precipices, and the gullies are full of water. Where it was dry on Saturday, it's deep enough now to drown you if you tumbled in."

"I know. I shall look out, old chap."

"I say, suppose we fix Bunter up comfy under the tree, and I came with you?"

A howl from Billy Bunter interrupted Nugent. The fat junior caught hold of his sleeve in his terror of being left alone.

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"You can't! You shan't! Wharton, tell him he's to stop!"

"Look here, you young ass!" began Nugent wrathfully. "You're all right. You—"

"I won't be left alone—I won't!"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Harry. "Nugent is going to stay. I shall be all right, old chap. Stay here and rest a bit, and then get Bunter down the mountain."

He gripped his chum's hand in the gloom with a hard grip. Then Wharton plunged away through the thickets and resumed the ascent of the rugged steep.

Nugent sank down exhaustedly into the wet, clinging grass, and listened with a heavy heart to the crashing of the thickets growing fainter as Harry pushed on. The sounds died away at last, and silence closed upon the mountain again—silence broken only by the lashing rain.

Billy Bunter whimpered.

"I say, Nugent, I think we ought to be getting down the mountain, you know. Do you think you could carry me?"

"Yes, if you want to break both our necks!" growled Nugent.

"I don't see how I can walk; still, if you hold me by the arm, I think I can manage. Are you ready, Nugent?"

"I'm resting."

"I think it's rather selfish of you to rest when I'm soaked to the skin and ready to make an effort!" said Bunter. Nugent staggered to his feet.

"Come on!" he said.

"Hold my arm so as to guide me, and if you could let me lean my weight on you, it would save my strength."

"If you lean your weight on me, I'll shove you into the first gully!"

"Oh, really, Nugent!"

"Come on, you fat idiot!"

Nugent grasped Bunter by the arm, and the descent of the Pike commenced. Billy Bunter enlivened the way with endless grumbling, which Nugent endured with all the patience he could muster.

Neither junior ever forgot that terrible descent in the mist and rain. They frequently had to stop and rest in the open, or under the weeping trees, and many times Nugent had to retrace his steps, having missed the track in the blinding mist.

Bunter ceased to grumble at last, being too exhausted to utter a sound, and he staggered blindly along, grasping Nugent's arm convulsively.

"I—I can't go any farther!" he gasped at last. "I—I'm dying, I think!"

And he sank in a helpless heap to the ground. Nugent panted—exhausted, bewildered. His own senses were swimming, and leaden weights seemed to be dragging on his limbs.

"Make another effort, Bunter!" he gasped. "We can't be far from the bottom now."

"I—I can't!"

Nugent bent over him and lifted him in his arms. Bunter was no light weight, and Nugent was exhausted. He had not carried the junior more than twenty paces, when he sank down, overcome.

They lay on the wet grass, with the rain beating upon them. Nugent had but a hazy idea of where they were. How long had they been in the descent—hours or years? It seemed like years. What time was it? Where were they? He had no idea. He was conscious now only of an overpowering desire to snuggle in the wet grass and sleep.

Suddenly he started from his drowsiness. A sound had echoed through the blinding mist—the sound of a human voice!

"Hallo!"

Faint, far away, but unmistakable. It was borne in upon Nugent's dazed mind that there were searchers on the Pike—that help was at hand. He sat up in the rain and shouted huskily:

"Help, help!"

An answer came back, and another, and another. Lights glimmered dimly through the mist.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

It was Bob Cherry. He loomed up out of the mist and turned his hurricane-lamp on Nugent and Billy Bunter.

"Nugent!"

"Bob! Thank goodness! You're not alone?"

"No; there's a party of us—Quelch and Wingate, Dabney and Temple—and they let Inky and me come, because we know the way up the Pike. We've been shouting for hours. We met Bulstrode, and he told us. But where's Wharton? Farther back?"

"He's on top of the Pike."

The lamp nearly dropped from Bob Cherry's hand.

"What?"

The others were gathering round now, and every face looked serious as Nugent gasped out the words:

"He's on top of the Pike, looking for Levison."

A Night on the Pike!

HARRY WHARTON was indeed on top of the Pike.

After leaving Nugent, he set himself steadily to the ascent of the last slopes of the mountain, feeling his way, step by step, through the blinding vapour that enveloped the mountain.

More than once he missed his footing on the rough stones, and fell; and once he rolled into a deep gully, where the water splashed over his head as he fell. But he struggled out and resumed his way—dripping, exhausted, but invincibly determined.

Steeper and steeper grew the rugged way, thicker the mist. The rain was not coming down so heavily, but it was still thick. Wharton felt his strength failing him, but he struggled desperately on.

At last, aching in every limb, he crawled out on the level, and lay exhausted, exposed to the beating rain on the summit of Black Pike.

For a full quarter of an hour he lay, hardly conscious of the wet and the chill, while his spent strength came slowly back to him. Then he slowly gained his feet, breathing hard and deep.

He was on the summit of Black Pike—but was Levison there? Had the lost junior attempted the descent in the mist, and wandered away into the trackless thickets, or fallen into some cleft or gully?

Harry had shouted at intervals in his ascent, but there had been no reply, save the distant echoes. He stood on the summit of the Pike now, and shouted into the mist.

"Hallo! Hallo-o-o! Hallo!"

The echoes rolled back from the mist. Again and again he shouted, and still there was no other reply.

His heart sank.

The summit of the Pike was not extensive, and if Levison had been there he should have heard.

"Hallo-o-o-o!"

The shout rang out again through the mist; but only echo replied, and he desisted at last, with a heavy heart.

He moved slowly forward, peering through the mist, feeling his way. Scarcely a dozen yards forward, and he came across something dimly visible that lay on the wet ground.

Harry Wharton bent down with a fast-beating heart.

PEN PALS

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"Levison!"

It was a boy who lay there in the soaking rain, and, though he could not see a feature of the cold face, Harry knew who it must be.

With a chill of fear at his heart, he groped over Levison's breast.

He drew a deep breath of relief. "Levison's heart was beating; his body was warm. And as Harry's touch stirred him, there came a moan from the prostrate junior."

"Levison!" said Wharton. "There was a groan. Harry raised the fallen junior in his arms. Levison was half-submerged in a pool of water. The junior was unconscious in his grasp."

"What is it?" muttered Levison huskily. "I— Have I fainted?"

"I suppose so; or else you've been asleep. Thank goodness, I've found you."

"Where am I?"

"On the summit of Black Pike."

"Ah, I remember! How did you come here?"

"I came to look for you."

"What?"

"Never mind talking now. Are you up to fifty to get down?"

Levison groaned.

"I've been trying. I fell over something, and rolled in a gully. The water was more than my depth, and I thought I should be drowned. Then I was afraid to descend the Pike again. I tried to find shelter from the rain, but there wasn't one. I—I don't remember any more."

"His whole weight hung upon Harry Wharton. It was evident that he was too exhausted to move, and Harry was far too worn out to aid him much. It was clear that there was no getting Levison down from the summit of the Pike without help."

"We can find some shelter," said Harry quickly. "There's an overhanging rock somewhere here. I think I can find it. Lean on me."

Levison was leaning on him heavily. The cold, shivering, manner was gone from him now. He was exhausted, and only Harry Wharton stood between him and a terrible ordeal, and he knew it. And that knowledge was not without its effect.

Harry moved slowly through the mist, with Levison leaning on him. He had some idea of the position of the rock he had spoken of, but in the vapour it was difficult to find. Levison spoke no word.

A dark mass loomed up from the mist. Harry gave a gasp of relief.

"Here we are!"

The rock was something of a shelter from the pouring rain. They plunged under the shadow of it, and the incessant drops no longer beat upon them. Both sank, exhausted to the ground, leaning up against the rock.

"Have—have you anything to eat?" muttered Levison. "I'm famished. We lost Bunter with the grub. Have you seen Bunter?"

"He's safe, and so is Bulstrode. I've got some tummy here—sandwiches and cake. Here you are."

Levison ate almost voraciously. It was a late hour of the night now, and he had fasted nothing for six hours or more.

Harry ate a sandwich, for the first time becoming conscious of hunger himself. Levison leaned his head back against the rock and closed his eyes. Then he started again.

"I say, are you there, Wharton?"

"Yes."

"You came out to look for me?"

"Yes; you and the others."

"You can't get me down."

"I'm afraid not."

"Do you think help can get here?"

"I hope so."

Harry Wharton tried to speak cheerfully, but in his heart he knew that the rescuers, even if they were already on the way, could never reach the summit of the misty Pike before early morning.

"That means that you don't expect

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help," said Levison in something of his old tone. "I understand. Look here! It's no good your staying."

"Do you want me to go?" asked Wharton quietly.

"Of course I don't. But look here! This is a serious business. You had better get home, if you can."

"I'm not going to leave you."

"You'd better. What's the good of two sticking it out instead of one? Are you going?"

"No."

Levison was silent for some minutes. Harry did not speak. There was no sound, save the lashing of the rain through the mist.

"Wharton?"

"Well."

"I—I've got something to say. I've been a rotten cad! I own up. When we get out of this I'll try to make up for it."

"That's all right, old chap," said Harry quietly. "Don't worry."

"I'll make up for it somehow."

Levison's head sank back again, and the junior slept. He slept the sleep of utter exhaustion, but his struggle was broken by starts and sitters and tremblings.

Harry Wharton, quietly and without waking the sleeper, stripped off his jacket, and wrapped it round Levison, and the calmer sleep of the junior that followed showed how beneficial was the warmth.

Sleep was overcoming Wharton now. He leaned his head back against the rock, and the wet and cold could not keep him awake.

And so the searchers found them, when the morning sun was glimmering through the clearing mists of the Black Pike.

The searchers, themselves muddy, soaked, exhausted, came upon the two juniors at first, and looked down on them—Levison, wrapped in Harry's jacket, leaning on the captain of the Remove, Harry, in shirt-sleeves, blue with cold, sleeping, and shivering, in his sleep.

"My hat! Poor old Wharton!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "They both look done up!"

"We must carry them down, the moment we find get them to bed," said Mr. Quick.

Neither junior awoke during the transit to Gretna, so deep was the sleep, or, rather, the insensibility they had fallen into.

They came to themselves in the school hospital first. At first they were amazed to find themselves there, with Nugent, Bulstrode, and Billy Bunter sitting up in neighbouring beds and eating broth.

And it was some days before either Wharton or Levison left the school hospital. It was not a bad time for them, when it was certain that they were in no danger.

Their friends were allowed to come in as often as they liked, and the convalescence was pleasant enough. And there was another source of satisfaction for Harry Wharton.

He had succeeded in his self-deposed task.

Levison was changed.

That terrible night on the summit of Black Pike had changed him, and though he did not say much about it, the change was very pleasant.

From that night forward Harry Wharton would never have a truer friend than the boy who, though in many respects the same Bunter, cynical Levison, never forgot that Harry Wharton had come to his rescue in a time of danger.

(Next week: "THE GREYFRIARS VENTRILOQUIST!"—a humorous story of Billy Bunter's first efforts to become a ventriloquist. Don't miss the laughs!)

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