

"WANTED BY THE MOUNTIES!" and "THE SLACKERS' ELEVEN!"
GREAT SCHOOL YARNS INSIDE.

The **GEM**

2^D



A Lively Scene from This Week's Exciting Story of Tom Merry & Co. "THE TOFF'S ENEMY!"

OUR GREAT STAMP-COLLECTING OFFER!

500 FREE FOOTBALLS



FIVE Hundred Grand Footballs are waiting to be won by "Footer-Stamps" collectors in our October contest! Are you in this? Remember, you simply have to collect the "Footer-Stamps" which are being printed every week—they consist of pictures of six different actions on the football field. As in previous months, the object of this great competition stamp-game is to score as many "goals" as possible, and by the end of October for this month's prizes.

TO SCORE A "GOAL" you must collect a complete set of six stamps (they're numbered 1 to 6), made up of the following movements: **KICK-OFF—DRIBBLE—TACKLE—HEADER—SHOT—GOAL.** (Note that the "goal" stamp by itself does NOT count as a "goal"; you must get a set of the stamps 1 to 6 each time.)

The more stamps you collect the more "goals" you can score, and this week we give another ten stamps to add to your collection, five here and another five on page 35. Cut them out, there's one complete "goal" among them, while the others may fit in with odd stamps you've got already; or again, perhaps you can exchange them usefully with your pals. The great thing is to go on accumulating all the "goals" you possibly can! If you have any odd stamps left over from the two previous competitions they can be included, too.

If you want to score some other quick "goals," remember that "Footer-Stamps" are also appearing in "Modern Boy" and "Magnet" each week. There are more "goals" waiting in those papers!

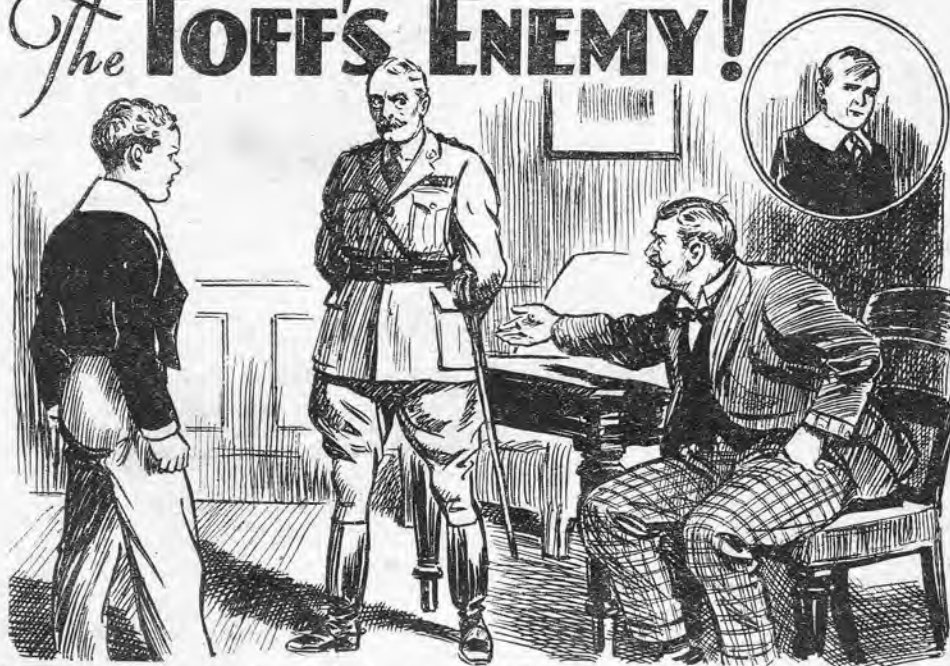
The 500 Footballs in the October competition are going to be awarded to the readers scoring the highest numbers of "goals" with "Footer-Stamps" for the month. So don't send any stamps yet, wait until we tell you how and where at the end of the month.

FIVE "FOOTER-STAMPS" HERE—FIVE MORE ON PAGE 35!



TALBOT FALLS A VICTIM TO THE CUNNING OF HIS COUSIN—CROOKE
BY NAME AND CROOK BY NATURE!

The TOFF'S ENEMY!



"Wot's the 'arm in a man droppin' in to see an old pal?" asked Mr. Lodgey in an injured tone. "I didn't want to get the young gentleman into a row. We've 'ad some good times together, the Toff and me, we 'ave!" "That is false!" said Talbot quietly.

CHAPTER 1.

A Ragging for Three!

"SOMETHING'S up!" remarked Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry and Manners nodded.

That something was up was quite clear to the Terrible Three, though what it was was a mystery.

The chums of the Shell were seated in a row in the window-seat at the end of the Shell passage in the School House. They were waiting for Talbot of the Shell to join them, to go down to footer practice.

Crooke and Racke of the Shell, and Mellish of the Fourth, and Piggott of the Third stood in a group in the passage. They were whispering and chuckling together, and glancing occasionally towards the Terrible Three.

Once or twice Tom Merry & Co. had caught the name of Talbot, amid the whisperings and chuckles of Crooke and his merry friends.

"Some merry little joke on," went on Monty Lowther. "Something up against old Talbot."

Tom Merry frowned.

"Talbot can take care of himself!" said Manners.

"Hallo, Crooke!" called out Lowther.

The black sheep of the Shell looked round, grinning.

"Hallo!" he responded.

"What's the merry jokelet? Can't you let us into it?" asked Lowther. "You know we are rather humorous merchants ourselves!"

Crooke & Co. chortled.

"You'll be let into it this afternoon," he replied. "So will all St. Jim's, for that matter."

And Piggott, Racke, and Mellish burst into a roar of laughter.

"It's only a pleasant little surprise in store for Talbot!" chuckled Racke. "He will be glad to see an old friend."

"An old friend?" said Tom Merry, puzzled.

"Yes; a dear old acquaintance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crooke & Co. yelled again. Talbot came out of his study, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,599.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

With greedy eyes on Colonel Lyndon's will, Crooke schemes to disgrace the cousin who has usurped from him the colonel's favour—Reginald Talbot!

glancing at the merry group as he passed them to join the Terrible Three. At the sight of the handsome Shell fellow the merriment of Crooke & Co. seemed to redouble.

"Anything on?" asked Talbot, as he joined Tom Merry & Co.

"Looks like it," said Tom, frowning. "Racke says you're going to see an old friend this afternoon."

Talbot looked surprised.

"This is the first time I've heard of it," he said.

"Old friends drop in sometimes without being expected!" chortled Crooke.

Talbot looked steadily at the cad of the Shell. The two were cousins, but there was no pretence of friendship between them.

"You seem to know more about my affairs than I do, Crooke," said Talbot quietly.

"You'll know soon enough," said Crooke. "I wish you a merry meeting when your dear old pal comes along."

"Whom are you speaking of?"

"Run over the list of your old friends, and guess!" suggested Crooke. "The merry crew you palled up with when you used to live in Angel Alley you know, before you set up to be respectable."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Talbot started.

"That will do, Crooke!" said Tom Merry curtly. "Another word like that, and you go over on your back, you cad!"

Crooke laughed scoffingly.

"Mustn't Talbot's old friends be mentioned now?" he asked. "Is he going to give his old pals the go-by now he's respectable? What a disappointment for the Toff's old chums!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry pushed back his cuffs. Any reference to Talbot's unfortunate past was enough to make his chum angry; and Crooke never let the subject rest if he could help it.

Talbot caught him by the arm.

"Never mind him, Tom! Let's go down to footer!"

"I'm going to shut him up!" said Tom Merry. "I've warned him, haven't I? Mop up the passage with them, you chaps."

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Mellish, in alarm.

"Give 'em socks!" said Manners. "It's about time they were bumped!"

Tom Merry was already charging at Crooke, and Manners and Lowther followed his lead.

Piggott of the Third flew down the passage promptly; but his companions had no time to follow.

The charge of the Terrible Three bowled them fairly over. There was no need for Talbot to chip in. In a few seconds the three weedy slackers were on their backs, yelling.

"Get up and give us a tussle, dear boys!" urged Monty Lowther. "We're spoiling for a fight!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Keep off, you rotters!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Bump them!" growled Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three grasped Crooke & Co. and bumped them on the floor with terrific energy.

"Leggo!" shrieked Crooke. "Yaroooh!" You rotters! Levison, lend us a hand, you cad!"

Levison of the Fourth had just come upstairs. He stared at the scene in the passage and laughed.

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Levison was more or less a pal of the black sheep of St. Jim's; but he did not seem inclined to go to their aid.

He stood with his hands in his pockets, laughing, while the Terrible Three smote the passage floor with Crooks, Racke, and Mellish.

"Quite an entertainment!" grinned Levison.

Talbot laughed. The scene was entertaining, perhaps, to a spectator, but Crooke and his friends did not find it so.

They roared.

"Now, dear boys, are you sorry?" asked Monty Lowther, softly as the cooing dove. "Are you sorry, Racke, for your bad manners?"

"Leggo, hang you!" shrieked Racke.

"I'm going to bang your head on the floor till you're sorry—like that!"

"Yoooop!"

"Are you sorry?"

"Oh crumbs! Yes!"

"Good! Are you sorry, Crooke?"

"Yes!" gasped Crooke. "Oh, hang you—yes!"

"What about you, Mellish?"

"Sorry!" yelled Mellish. "Awfully sorry! Oh dear!"

"Then let this be a lesson to you, my young friends!" said Monty Lowther chidingly. "Now I think we may as well get down to the footer. Ta-ta, dear boys!"

The Terrible Three went downstairs with Talbot, who was looking a little moody.

Crooke & Co. sat up on the floor and gasped.

"Ow, ow, ow!" moaned Mellish.

"Grooogh!" spluttered Racke.

"Oh dear!" groaned Crooke. "The beasts! The rotters! Levison, you cad, what are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Levison. "I'm cackling at a crew of funky malingerers! Why didn't you put up a fight?"

"Go for that cad, anyway!" muttered Racke, scrambling to his feet.

But Levison promptly beat a retreat, still chuckling; and Crooke & Co. went in search of a brush-up. They needed it badly.

CHAPTER 2.

Levison's Good Angel!

TALBOT'S handsome face was clouded as he walked down to the footer ground with the Terrible Three.

Any reference to the dark old days he had known before he came to St. Jim's touched Talbot on the raw. Between Talbot of the Shell and the "Toff" of the old days there was a great gulf fixed. Looking back on the old days seemed almost like a dream to Talbot.

Tom Merry understood what was in Talbot's thoughts, and his own face grew dark.

"Don't bother about those cads, Talbot," he said; "they're not worth wasting a thought on."

"I'm not thinking of them," said Talbot. "But—but it's queer what they were saying—about an old friend coming to see me."

"You can't guess whom they were speaking of?"

"No," Talbot coloured. "Of course, in the old days I knew a shady lot. That's no secret. I was one of them then. But—but the old gang was broken up long ago. The Professor's in South America, Hookey Walker has gone to Canada, and he's living an honest life there. Tickey Tapp has cleared off, for good, I think. And—" He paused.

"Well?" said Tom.
 "There's that fellow Lodgey, who's staying at the Green Man in Rylcombe," said Talbot. "He knew me at that time. But I never had anything to do with him. And since he put up in Rylcombe, I've only seen him once—and that was when I punched him. He wouldn't come here."
 "Better for him if he doesn't!" grinned Lowther. "We'll make an example of him if he shows his beery nose inside St. Jim's."

Talbot nodded.
 "We will!"
 "Bai Jove! You look wathah down, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form when he greeted the Terrible Three as they arrived on Little Side. "Anythin' w'ong?"
 "Nothing but your merry pronunciation, old chap," said Monty Lowther cheerily. "How do you do it?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"
 "Hallo, fags here?" said Manners, glancing at Levison of the Third Form, who was in the field.
 "I am coachin' Levison minah," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "He is comin' on wippingly, and I am givin' him the benefit of my knowledge of the game."

"My dear chap," said Monty Lowther solemnly, "what you know about footer would fill a quarter of the books in the school library."

"You flattah me, deah boy!"
 "And what you don't know would fill the other three-quarters," added Lowther.

"You uttah ass!"
 Arthur Augustus walked into the field with his noble nose in the air.

The Terrible Three looked on for a few minutes. Frank Levison, the younger brother of Levison of the Fourth, was certainly coming on. He was enjoying the practice, too, and was evidently very keen on the game.

Levison of the Fourth joined the Shell fellows by the ropes, and his somewhat saturnine face lighted up as he saw his minor's cheery, flushed face in the field.

"Go it, Franky!" he called out, and Levison minor looked round with a nod and a smile.

"Time we went it, too," remarked Talbot.

"Come on, you fellows!"
 "Hold on a minute, Talbot," said Levison. "I came down here to speak to you."
 "Go ahead!"

"There's something on," said Levison. "I don't exactly know what it is. I'm not quite in the confidence of Crooke & Co. as I used to be." Levison grinned a little. He had been on bitter terms with his old friends since he had set his feet on the path of reform for the sake of his minor. "They've left me out of their little game, whatever it is. But it's up against you."

"I don't care for their little game," said Talbot curtly.

"Don't get on the high horse," said Levison coolly. "I know you don't care, but I care for you. I understand that your uncle—and Crooke's uncle, Colonel Lyndon—is coming over to see you this afternoon, later."

Talbot nodded.
 "He is coming to say good-bye before he goes back to his regiment in India," he said. "He is coming to see both Crooke and me."

"Exactly! And Crooke is laying some little scheme in connection with his visit," Levison said. "I don't know what it is; but, as Crooke has a hand in it, you can depend on it it's something caddish. I thought I'd give you the tip."

"Thanks."

"But you'd rather I minded my own business?" grinned Levison.

"No, I don't mean that," said Talbot quickly. "But I don't want any row with Crooke, especially the day my uncle is coming. We can't be friends, but there's no reason why we shouldn't keep the peace."

"I'd keep my eye on Crooke this afternoon, all the same, only I've got an engagement out of doors," said Levison. "I'm going to see Lodgey at the Green Man."

"Levison!"
 "But only to collect a quid he owes me," grinned Levison. "I beat him at his own game the last time I saw him, and he didn't square."

Talbot looked very grave.
 "Levison, you know it's frightfully risky going to that place. You nearly got caught there before."

"I rather like the risk," said Levison coolly. "That's what makes it amusing."

"I know you do; but you'll take the risk once too often one of these days. Let Lodgey keep the quid, and have nothing more to do with him. Stick to footer this afternoon."

Levison hesitated.
 "You think I should get drawn into the old



"Why are you begging with two hats?"

"Trade is so brisk, sir, I've had to enlarge my premises!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to T. Crisp, 168, Sherwood Park Road, Mitcham, Surrey.

game if I went among those bounders again?" he said.

"I think it's very likely."

Levison yawned.
 "Do you really care twopence whether I go or not?" he inquired.

"More than twopence," said Talbot, smiling.
 "I'll stay, then."

"Good!"
 And Levison dismissed the matter from his mind and joined the footballers.

Talbot's face cleared while the game was on, but when the footballers left Little Side he looked very thoughtful as he walked back to the House.

He went back alone, before the other fellows left, as he had to change and get ready for his uncle's visit.

A touch at his elbow made him look round as he was about to enter the School House.

Frank Levison was at his side.
 "Hallo, young 'un!" said Talbot kindly.

"I heard what you said to Ernie," said Levison minor, his face flushing. "I—I'm glad you made him stay, Talbot! You know, Ernie never means to get into—into rotten things, but he does sometimes. He only laughed when I asked him the same thing, and said it would be all right."

Talbot nodded, his expression very kindly. He had wondered a little—other fellows had wondered

a good deal—at Levison minor's affection and admiration for his major; but it made him like the fag better.

Levison's faults—and their name was legion—never made any difference to the loyal affection of his minor, and Frank could find excuses for the black sheep of St. Jim's that other fellows never troubled to find.

"Ernie thinks an awful lot of you and what you think," went on Levison minor confidentially. "So long as you back him up it will be all right. And—and you always will, won't you?"

Talbot laughed.

"Rely on me," he said.

"Now then, young Levison, we're waiting for you!" bawled Wally of the Third, and Levison minor scuttled off.

CHAPTER 3.

Wally & Co. Take a Hand!

"YOU'VE been keeping us waiting, you young ass!" said D'Arcy minor.

"I—I had to speak to Talbot—"

"That's no reason for keeping us waiting when we're just ready to start."

"Well, I'm ready, too!" said Frank.

"Got the cake?"

"No; I've been playing footer."

"Look here, you young ass—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Joe Frayne. "Let's go and get the cake. We shall never get off at this rate."

"If you tell me to cheese it, young Frayne—"

"My hat!" chimed in Jameson. "Are we going to Abbotsford this afternoon, or are we going to hear Wally do a jawbone solo?"

"You'll go to Abbotsford with a thick ear if you don't mind your p's and q's, Jimmy!" said D'Arcy minor darkly.

"Bow-wow!" said Jameson.

"Look here—"

"Rats!"

"Let's go and get the cake," said Reggie Manners, interposing between Wally and Jameson, whose argument was growing decidedly warm. "We've wasted enough time."

"Who's wasting time?" demanded Wally.

"Oh, come on!"

The party of fags proceeded to the tuckshop.

D'Arcy minor had planned a ramble that afternoon to Abbotsford. And as Levison minor was in funds it had been decided unanimously to take one of Dame Taggles' two-shilling cakes in case they got hungry—not that there was much doubt on that point.

"By the way, there's something on this afternoon concerning Talbot," said Curly Gibson. "I got it from Piggott."

"Piggott's a little beast," said Wally.

"Agreed!" said Curly. "But, according to Piggy, there's a chap in Rylcombe who knew Talbot when he was a crackman," said Curly. "Awful rotter named Lodgey—I've seen him hanging about the Green Man—shocking sort of beast. I don't believe Talbot ever knew him, but Piggy says he did."

"Blow Piggy!" growled Wally. "I'm fed-up with Piggy. I held his head under the tap yesterday for smoking."

"Well, this beast Lodgey is going to drop in on Talbot, according to Piggott," said Curly. "I think it's a rotten game, with Talbot's uncle coming here this afternoon. Piggy says it will be

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great fun to see the colonel's face when Lodgey claims his nephew as an old pal."

"By gum, it will be funny," grinned Hobbs. "Talbot's uncle is a stiff old ramrod, and looks right through you like a gimlet! Fancy him talking to that beery rotter Lodgey! He, he, he!"

"Rotten trick!" said Wally. "How does Piggy know anything about it?"

"He's got it from Crooke of the Shell."

"I dare say Crooke's worked it with Lodgey to do it," granted Wally. "He's cad enough for that, or anything else. If I were Talbot, I'd give him a prize thick ear. Come in and get that cake, Levison."

Levison minor halted.

"Look here, I—I'd rather not go—"

"Well, of all the silly asses!" exclaimed Wally in exasperation. "Here we've arranged it all and settled it, and now you don't want to go. Come in and get the cake, then, and we'll go without you."

"Yes, buck up!" urged Hobbs.

"Hold on," said Levison minor. "I've got an idea—"

"No, you haven't. Get a move on!"

"About Talbot—"

"Bless Talbot!"

And Wally grabbed Levison minor by the arm and fairly rushed him into the school shop.

"But I say—" gasped Levison minor.

"Dry up! Mrs. Taggles, Levison minor wants a two-shilling cake—sultana, and not too jolly stale, you know."

"Yes," said Dame Taggles, with a smile.

The cake was wrapped up and handed over, and Frank paid out his two-shilling piece. Then the fags left the tuckshop and started for the gates.

Wally had hold of Levison minor's arm.

"But I say!" protested the fag. "I've got an idea. I want you fellows to stay with me—"

"Well, we won't!"

"To wait for that rotter Lodgey to come along—"

"What?"

"And collar him!" explained Frank.

"Eh?" ejaculated Wally. "Collar Lodgey?"

"Why not?" said Levison minor boldly.

"There's seven of us, and he's only a boozy waster, anyway. We could handle him as easy as falling off a form."

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"Just think of it," urged Levison minor, as they went through the gateway. "Talbot is jolly decent—he's a real good sort, and you know it. That beast Lodgey is coming here to show him up while his uncle's here. Suppose we meet the cad on the road and—mop him up?"

"Mop up Lodgey?" exclaimed Jameson, with wide-open eyes.

"Well, we could do it!"

"We couldn't," said Hobbs.

"We jolly well could," said Wally at once.

"I'd like to see the chap we couldn't mop up if we wanted to. Lodgey's only a beery bouncer, and he will come along full of beer. We could wipe up the road with him."

"Hallo, here's the giddy colonel!" murmured Hobbs.

The fags drew aside as a motor-car turned in at the school gates.

A grim-looking officer in khaki sat in the car, looking straight before him. The fags knew the brown face and the white moustache, and the keen, steely eyes that gleamed under puckered brows. It was Colonel Lyndon, the uncle of Talbot and Crooke of the Shell.

The car glided up the drive to the School House.



"There's the rotter!" exclaimed Frank Levison as Mr. Lodgey was seen coming across the field. "He's been watching for the colonel to arrive." "Very likely," said Wally D'Arcy. "Get back to the gates and collar him!"

"That's Talbot's uncle," said Jameson.

Wally gave vent to a low whistle.

"My only Aunt Jane! Fancy that beery beggar Lodgey dropping in to see Talbot with him present. I wonder what he'd do?"

"We're going to stop Lodgey dropping in," said Levison minor. "You chaps back me up, and we'll collar him——"

"Back me up, you mean," said Wally. "Who's leader?"

"You are, old chap," said Levison minor amicably. "Let's lay for Lodgey on the road. We can eat the cake while we're waiting."

"Well, that's a good idea," admitted Wally.

And the fags went down the road to lay for Lodgey when he came to pay his visit to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4.
Levison's Way!

"THERE'S a car," remarked Monty Lowther. The Terrible Three were chatting with Talbot in the Shell passage after the footer practice, when the buzz of a car was heard in the quadrangle.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came along from the end window.

"Your uncle has awwived, Talbot," he remarked.

"Thanks! I'll get down," said Talbot.

The Shell fellow went downstairs.

Crooke came out of his study with a grinning face; he had seen the car from the window.

Tom Merry & Co. gave him an expressive look,

to which Crooke replied with a scowl. He passed them and went downstairs.

"That rotter's got something up his sleeve," said Tom Merry, knitting his brows. "I know there's something on."

"Yaas! wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Those wottahs have been whispewin' and gwinnin' like anythin' togethah. I wondah if Levison knows anythin' about it?"

Levison came along the passage, and stopped as he heard his name.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Is there some scheme on this afternoon?" asked Tom Merry. "I suppose you know what Crooke & Co. are up to, as they're your friends?"

Levison's lips curled satirically.

"If they're my friends, you can't expect me to give my friends away, can you?" he sneered.

"If there's something going on against Talbot, you oughtn't to have a hand in it, I should think!" exclaimed Tom angrily. "Talbot's stood by you a good many times when nobody else would."

"Thank you for reminding me. I had quite forgotten," said Levison sarcastically. "Trifles like that do slip the memory, you know."

"Weally, Levison, I wegard your remarks as flippant and in bad taste. Is there anythin' on against old Talbot, to cause him twouble with that gwim old uncle of his?"

"Yes."

"And you're going to allow it to go on?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yes," said Levison coolly.

"Well, you rotter——"

"Thanks!"

Tom Merry clenched his hands, and advanced upon Levison with his eyes gleaming.

The black sheep of the Fourth regarded him mockingly.

"Hold on, Tommy!" murmured Manners.

Tom made a fierce gesture.

"I'm going to have the truth out of him!" he said, between his teeth. "You know that cad Croke has played no end of tricks to cause trouble between Talbot and his uncle. If there's another trick going on, I'm going to chip in!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus emphatically.

"What is it, Levison?"

Levison yawned.

"Better ask Croke."

"You won't tell me what it is?" exclaimed Tom.

"Exactly!"

"And you don't intend to interfere?"

"Exactly, again!"

"Then put up your hands!" said Tom Merry furiously.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jack Blake, coming along the passage. "What's the excitement?"

"Tom Mewwy's goin' to thwash Levison, Blake."

Levison was facing Tom Merry coolly. He pushed back his cuffs, and struck a fighting attitude.

"Time!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Hold on!" Talbot of the Shell came hurrying along the passage from the stairs, and he pushed between Tom Merry and Levison.

"Oh, don't interrupt!" drawled Levison. "The circus was just going to begin."

"Don't interfere, Talbot—"

Talbot pushed the captain of the Shell back.

"Shut up, Levison!" he said. "What's the row, Tom? You've got nothing to fight Levison about."

"Nothing at all," agreed Levison. "But let him go on!"

"Look here, Talbot!" exclaimed Tom Merry savagely. "Croke has some trick on this afternoon; something to cause you trouble with your uncle. Levison knows it."

Talbot's brow clouded.

"Have you seen your uncle?" asked Lowther.

"Yes; I'm going back with him to Abbotsford," said Talbot. "He's talking to Croke now in the visitors'-room. I know Croke would harm me in that quarter if he could, but he can't do anything."

"Levison knows, I tell you."

Talbot looked inquiringly at Levison.

"It's a fact," said Levison calmly. "I know Croke's got a little game on, and I'm not going to tell you, and I'm not going to interfere, exactly as I told that cheerful idiot. If he had inquired a little further, I'd have explained why. I don't know what it is Croke intends to do; he's keeping it dark, and I'm as much in the dark as anybody."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry, rather taken aback.

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps we have been wathah hasty, deah boys," remarked Arthur Augustus, in a thoughtful way.

"Levison has already warned me of what you spoke about, Tom," said Talbot, "but he couldn't tell me what he didn't know."

"Well, he should have explained that," growled Tom. "If a fellow chooses to be an irritating beast, he must expect to get his nose punched!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

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"Well, go ahead with the nose-punching," said Levison. "I'm ready!"

Tom's hands clenched again. But Talbot drew Tom's arm through his own, and walked him up the passage.

Levison laughed and went into his study.

"Blessed if I know how you can stand that chap, Talbot!" said Tom, with a deep breath. "I never wanted to punch a fellow's nose more."

"He isn't a bad sort in his way," said Talbot. "He tried to put me on my guard, too. But I can't think that Croke is up to anything. I don't see what he can do. Anyway, don't row with Levison if you can help it. It's a bit rotten for me, as a friend of both parties."

"Oh, confound Levison!" said Tom. "I don't want to row with him. Come to think of it, I believe he would back you up, too!"

"I know he would."

"It's queer that he doesn't know Croke's little game, whatever it is. He was always thick with that rotter."

"He doesn't have much to do with that set now."

Tom gave a grunt.

"You're a queer chap," said Tom Merry.

"Well, I don't know about that," said Talbot, laughing. "There's plenty of good in poor old Levison. I'm going to get my coat now. The colonel wants to take me to Abbotsford in the car—"

"Talbot!"

Kangaroo of the Shell shouted from the stairs.

"Hallo!" called back Talbot.

"Your uncle wants you," said the Cornstalk junior, coming along the passage. "Better mind your p's and q's, old chap; the colonel's in a rare rage!"

Talbot started.

"I don't see why. He was in a good temper ten minutes ago," he said.

"Well, he's in a wax now," said Kangaroo.

Talbot went downstairs with a clouded brow.

Tom Merry looked at his chums expressively.

Croke's little game, whatever it was, was evidently working.

CHAPTER 5.

Croke's Little Game!

COLONEL LYNDON was alone in the visitors'-room when Croke entered.

He had dismissed Talbot after a few minutes' talk to get his coat for the run to Abbotsford. He did not think of taking Croke. It was not difficult to see which was the favourite nephew.

Croke knew it only too well, and it filled him with bitterness. He had never taken any trouble to make himself worthy of the colonel's good opinion; he had never shown anything but the cold selfishness that was natural to him, and he was far from admitting that Talbot's frank, generous nature naturally found more favour than his own cold and selfish one. His view was that Talbot had cut him out with his uncle with a sole view as to what the old gentleman would leave Talbot in his will.

Croke had been brought up to regard Colonel Lyndon's money as his own at some future date.

Talbot never gave the colonel's money a thought, but a fellow like Croke was not likely to credit that. According to Croke, the cousins were rivals for the dead man's shoes, and Talbot was the more successful rival, and would remain so unless Croke could put a spoke in his wheel,

as he expressed it. And Talbot's miserable past was all Crooke had to work on to that end, and he meant to make the most of it.

The colonel's keen, grey eyes scanned the Shell fellow's face, and he gave a sigh. That sallow, furtive face was a contrast to Talbot's open, frank, and healthy countenance.

"So jolly glad to see you, uncle!" said Crooke, as he shook hands with the colonel. "It's good of you to come down to say good-bye when you must be frightfully busy!"

"I have plenty to do," said his uncle, "but I should not like to go without seeing both my nephews again. I am leaving England for India to-morrow. I hope, Gerald, that I shall leave you good friends with your cousin."

"Have you asked Talbot about that, uncle?"

The colonel frowned a little.

"I intend to do so," he said. "Your tastes are not similar, I fear, but there is no reason why you should not be good friends, Gerald."

"I am sorry, uncle, but there are reasons."

"Indeed!" The colonel raised his eyebrows. "And what are your reasons, Gerald, for disregarding my wishes in this matter?"

"I don't want to do that, uncle, of course. But

you know what Talbot was before he came to this school—"

"That is all past and done with. Your cousin was brought up among bad associates, and he was more sinned against than sinning. You know very well, Gerald, that he threw his old life over at the earliest opportunity. I understand that he's a great favourite in the school, and the Head has a very strong regard for him. It is not for his own cousin to drag up wretched things that had better be forgotten!" said the colonel sternly.

"Yes, if it was all over and done with—"

"Do you mean to say that it is not?"

"I do!" said Gerald.

"That is a very serious statement, Gerald," said the colonel at last. "Reginald has assured me on that point, and I accept his word without the slightest hesitation."

"He can take pretty nearly everybody in!" said Crooke bitterly. "He can't take me in!"

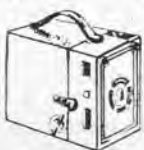
"You are suspicious—"

"Of course, I'm to blame," said Crooke. "But I don't care about associating with a fellow who was a pal of criminals and keeps up his connections with them!"

"If Reginald kept up connections with those

(Continued on the next page.)

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scoundrels, Gerald, I should not ask you to associate with him—indeed, I should forbid you to do so," said Colonel Lyndon. "You are making a serious accusation against your cousin. If you are not speaking from sheer malice, you must have proof of your assertion."

"There's a lot of proof," said Croke. "I suppose you won't believe a word against him—"

"Not without proof, certainly. What connection has my nephew with the associates of his earlier days?"

"There's one in Rylcombe now," said Croke spitefully—"a man named Lodgey, a regular blackguard and scoundrel! It's well known that he was one of the Toff's pals before he came here."

"Reginald could not prevent the man coming to Rylcombe, I presume. The question is, has he any connection with the man now?"

"Yes; they're still friends."

"Can you prove that statement?" asked Colonel Lyndon, his keen eyes searching the spiteful face before him.

"No need for me to prove it!" said Croke, with a curl of the lip. "A chap told me he heard Lodgey bragging in the village about his pal here—that's Talbot—"

"Foolish tattle of that kind is not evidence."

"That isn't all. The chap said Lodgey was boasting that he was going to call on Talbot here. The man had been drinking, of course. But I'm pretty certain he meant it, for they've met often enough—at least, I believe so."

"So this Lodgey is calling on Reginald?" said the colonel, frowning. "And when is this call to take place?"

"This afternoon."

"Do you know this man Lodgey?"

"I?" exclaimed Croke, with virtuous indignation. "Certainly not! The man's a billiards-sharper and sporting tout, from what I hear, and he's been in prison. I leave that kind of acquaintance to Talbot!"

"You declare that this bad character is actually coming to the school to see Reginald this afternoon?"

"Yes; I'm sure of it. Talbot will pass him off as something else, of course. He wouldn't be likely to let the Housemaster know the kind of friends he has!" said Croke, with a sneer. "But the man's appearance is quite enough to give him away. A regular boozy rascal!"

The colonel made a restless movement.

"It is impossible that Reginald can have deceived me so!" he exclaimed. "But the fact shall be ascertained."

He stepped to the door and opened it.

Kangaroo of the Shell was passing, and the colonel called to him.

Harry Noble cheerfully went away to fetch Talbot, and Colonel Lyndon turned back into the room.

"You've sent for Talbot, uncle?" asked Croke, rather uneasily.

"Yes. I shall question him. You cannot object to my repeating to Talbot what you have said."

Croke felt an inward tremor. He was prepared for it, yet his craven heart almost failed him at the thought of facing Talbot's clear, honest eyes. But he felt he had no choice in the matter.

"Do as you think best, uncle," he said.

"I shall!" said the colonel grimly.

Talbot entered the room in a few minutes. Kangaroo's good-natured warning had put him on

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his guard, and he was prepared for trouble. But his manner was quite calm.

"You sent for me, uncle?"

"Yes, my boy. Close the door."

Talbot obeyed.

"Your cousin declares that you have kept up connections with the associates of your early days, Reginald. Is it true?"

Talbot drew a deep breath.

"It is not true," he said.

"Do you know a man named Lodgey in the village?"

"I did know him.

"But now?"

"No."

"He is not coming to see you here?"

"He is not."

"Gerald tells me that a friend of his heard Lodgey boasting in the village that he was going to do so."

"That is no business of mine!"

Talbot's voice had grown cold and hard. Of late the Shell fellow had come to have a deep regard for his grim old uncle. The old antagonism had been completely forgotten. It seemed to be reviving now. The sharp questioning of the colonel had touched the junior's pride.

"You had no knowledge of the man's talk?"

"None."

"Then if he comes, he comes without your sanction?"

"Certainly!"

"That means that he will not come?"

"I neither know nor care whether he is coming," said Talbot slowly and very distinctly.

The colonel's grim brow grew grimmer.

"That is not the tone to talk to me with, Reginald!" he rapped.

Talbot met his eyes fearlessly.

"You are asking me if I have lied to you and broken my word to the Head," he replied. "The questions you have asked me are insulting."

"Gerald says—"

"I have nothing to do with what Croke says. If you can trust me, I have a right to expect you not to listen to a talebearer. If you cannot trust me, I ask nothing at your hands."

"You hear what Gerald says."

Talbot set his lips.

"I will not listen to a word!" he exclaimed passionately. "I will not bandy words with Croke. Croke is not worth my notice."

Talbot turned to the door and quitted the room before Colonel Lyndon could reply.

"By gad!" muttered the colonel, tugging at his white moustache in angry perplexity. "By gad! This disrespectful young rascal!"

"He knows it's bound to come out now," said Croke. "It's too late for him to warn his friend not to come—"

"Silence, sir!" rapped out the colonel. "I do not believe the man is coming at all. You have been misinformed by your tattling friends, or else the fellow was chattering nonsense under the influence of drink. I shall remain and see whether he comes. In that case, I shall know what to do. But I repeat that I do not believe that he will come at all."

Croke was silent; the colonel's tone did not admit of a rejoinder. With a grim brow, the colonel sat down to wait; and Croke waited, too, with a fervent longing that Mr. Lodgey would not delay his call.

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

I hear that during a motor collision in Rylcombe, one of the drivers lost his head. Forward, Detective Kerr!

Extract from "Tom Merry's Weekly": "The audience tried to spoil the play, but Figgins & Co., the New House Players, succeeded." Oh well, as long as somebody spoiled it, all right!

There's a new play which is all about a dentist. What about calling it "Molar Expedition"?

Story: "What's wrong?" asked the passenger in the rear seat of the very second-hand car when it stopped abruptly. "Sheep on the road," replied the driver. Shortly after, it stopped again. "What's wrong now?" asked the passenger. "I've caught up with those confounded sheep again," was the reply.

'Nother: The applicant for a position was filling in a form asking many questions. "It says here: Have you any insanity in your family?" pointed out his friend. "What are you saying to that?" "No, of course," said the applicant. "But what about your Uncle George—he thinks he's Napoleon," reminded the friend. "Oh, I never take any notice of him," replied the applicant; "he's potty!"

CHAPTER 6.

Levison Minor Does His Best!

"THERE he is!"

Wally pointed through the hedge. The fags of the Third knew Mr. Lodgey by sight; they had seen him often enough about the village.

Levison minor and his friends had posted themselves in the lane, supposing that Mr. Lodgey would come from the direction of Rylcombe.

But Levison minor caught sight of the billiards-sharper coming across the field from the direction of the river.

"There's the rotter!" he said. "I'll bet you he was watching for the colonel's car to come along."

"Very likely," said Wally. "My only Aunt Jane! Get back to the gates and collar him! He will go there before we do at this rate!"

Mr. Lodgey's path across the field led him towards the lane, close to a spot opposite the gates of St. Jim's. He had only about fifty yards to traverse when the fags spotted him.

News: A number from a famous opera is to be used for a new musical film. Another built-up aria?

STOP PRESS: I hear the police have two theories about the two recent burglaries in Rylcombe. One theory is that the two crimes were committed by one and the same person, and the other is that they are in no way connected. Bright lads the Rylcombe police!

Film story: "Is my new cinema big?" exclaimed one cinema magnate to another. "Why, boy, it will take two mayors to open it!"

A clothes brush without bristles is claimed to be the newest invention. We've had one like that in our study for terms.

"London Radio Programmes Heard in Borneo." Gosh, now we know what makes them wild!

Here's a pip from Rylcombe High Street: "Hey, wait a minute, where's the fire?" demanded P.-c. Crump of the speeding motorist. "Why should you worry?" retorted the motorist. "You're no fire-man!"

The best thing about telling the truth is that you don't have to remember what you've said.

Well, try this: "You woke me out of a sound sleep," complained Baggy Trimble to Gore. "I had to," said Gore, "the sound was too loud!"

Try this: The new recruit was missing the target completely at every shot. "Great snakes, man, where do you think your shots are going?" demanded the sergeant-major. "I don't know, sir," replied the recruit nervously, "they left this end all right."

"Wally & Co. were a hundred yards down the lane, so Mr. Lodgey was only half their distance from the gates.

The half-dozen fags sprinted up the road towards the school at top speed.

Racke and his friends were standing in the gateway and they had spotted Mr. Lodgey in the field, and were grinning at one another.

They stared at the fags as the latter came racing up.

"We're ahead!" panted Wally.

Mr. Lodgey, as he came through a gap in the hedge, found the fags between him and the school gates.

"Halt!" said Wally dramatically, raising a grubby paw in a commanding gesture.

Mr. Lodgey blinked at him.

"Wot!" he ejaculated.

"Halt!"

"Lemme pass, please!" snapped Mr. Lodgey. "I've no time for your little jokes, young gentlemen!"

"Let the man pass, you young sweeps!" called out Mellish from the gates.

"You shut up!" said Wally. "For two pins I'd come and mop you up, Mellish; and I will, too, if I have any of your cheek! Lodgey, my buck, there's your way!" Wally pointed down the lane towards Rylcombe.

"And the sooner you 'ook it, the better," said Joe Frayne.

"Look 'ere, wot's the game?" exclaimed Mr. Lodgey angrily. "You get out of the way, or you'll get 'urt!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I'm goin' in to see a young gentleman," said Mr. Lodgey.

"You're not going in to see anybody," said Wally coolly. "You're going to clear off, my pippin!"

"You cheeky young 'ound!" roared Mr. Lodgey, greatly exasperated. "Do you want me to knock you spinnin'?"

"Yes, if you can do it," said Wally at once.

Mr. Lodgey took a tighter grip on the stick he carried, and strode forward. He expected the fags to clear away before him. But they did not.

Levison minor made a jump at him, and shoved him back. Lodgey's stick whistled in the air, and descended upon Frank Levison's shoulders with a sounding thwack.

The fag yelled.

"Go for him!" roared Wally.

D'Arcy minor and Reggie Manners piled on Mr. Lodgey at once, and Frayne followed suit.

Levison minor fastened on him like a cat. Under their combined efforts, Mr. Lodgey staggered and reeled, rapping out savage oaths as he struggled.

Jameson and Curly Gibson and Hobbs piled in. There were seven pairs of hands on Mr. Lodgey now, and he found them rather too many for him.

There was a terrific crash as the sharper went down in the road, with the Third Formers sprawling over him.

"Wow! Yoop!" gasped Mr. Lodgey. "Oh, lor! 'Elp!"

"Give 'im jip!" yelled Frayne.

"Sit on his head!" shrieked Jameson.

Mr. Lodgey struggled desperately under the fags, rolling in the dust. But they were too many for him, and he was pinned down.

"Dash it all!" muttered Racke to his friends. "They're spoiling the game! That man's got to be let in!"

"Let's chip in!" said Clampe.

"My hat! There's the colonel!" whispered Mellish.

Colonel Lyndon had come out of the School House, and he was pacing under the old elms in the quadrangle, his brows darkly knitted, his hands behind him. He was quite unaware of the scene that was in progress at the school gates.

That scene was noisy enough, and loud voices reached the colonel's ears from the distance; but he did not heed.

Mr. Lodgey was struggling to throw the fags off, and Wally & Co. were exerting themselves to roll the rascal along the road to the nearest ditch. And Wally & Co. were getting the best of it.

The Third Formers were warming to their work. They were doing Talbot a good turn, as they considered, and they liked Talbot. And Mr. Lodgey was a boozy sharper, who deserved to be handed, if ever a rascal did.

So they put their beef into it.

And into the ditch Mr. Lodgey certainly would have gone had not Racke & Co. chipped in to his

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rescue. The fags found themselves attacked in their turn.

Wally and Frayne, and Manners minor were dragged off struggling and shouting with wrath. Mr. Lodgey threw the others off and staggered up.

"What are you chipping in for, you cads?" yelled Wally furiously. "Let us alone. Take your paws off me, Racke!"

"Leggo, Clampe!" shouted Reggie.

"Let the man alone!" said Racke warmly.

"You've no right to interfere with him. I'll call a prefect if you don't look out!"

"Rats! Rescue Third!" yelled Wally, hoping to get reinforcements if any of the Third were within hearing.

"Hallo! What's the row?" Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came out of the gates. "What's all this thumping row about?"

"Lend us a hand!" panted Wally. "Collar that cad—Leggo, Racke, you beast! Collar him!" yelled Wally. "He's going to see Talbot!"

"Who?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Lodgey—collar him!"

Taking advantage of the diversion in his favour, Mr. Lodgey had torn himself free and was making for the gates at a run.

The Terrible Three rushed after him.

Wally's excited shout made the matter clear to their minds—this was Crooke's little game!

"Stop him!" shouted Levison minor, struggling with Mellish.

"We'll stop him!" panted Tom.

Mr. Lodgey was almost in the gateway when the Shell fellows reached him.

They did not stand upon ceremony. They laid violent hands upon Mr. Lodgey and dragged him over backwards.

Mr. Lodgey smote the earth with great force for the second time that afternoon. He uttered a yell that rang from one end of St. Jim's to the other.

The disturbance was drawing a crowd now. Figgins & Co. of the New House came dashing out; Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence followed them; then Julian and Kerruish of the Fourth, and Gore and Glyn and Kangaroo and half a dozen others. They stared at the sight of Mr. Lodgey rolling and struggling in the grasp of the Terrible Three.

"What the merry thunder!" exclaimed Figgins.

Levison minor butted Mellish over and tore himself away. He rushed to join in collaring Mr. Lodgey.

"Hold him!" he panted. "Yank him away! He wants to go in to see Talbot while his uncle's there. We tried to stop him—"

"I understand," said Tom Merry grimly.

"Roll him along, you fellows!"

"Bump him!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Mr. Lodgey frantically. "'Elp! Perlice! 'Elp! Oh lor! Oh crikey! Yoooop!"

"Let the man alone!" shouted Racke. "Why shouldn't he see his friend if he wants to? It's no business of yours, Tom Merry, Yaroooh!"

A savage back-hander from Tom Merry sent Racke spinning.

A tall form loomed over the crowded juniors in the gateway. A bronzed face and two keen grey eyes looked over their heads into the road. The disturbance had attracted Colonel Lyndon's attention at last.

"What is the trouble here?" rapped out the colonel.

As a governor of St. Jim's the colonel had a right to chip in.

Tom Merry panted,

"Nothing, sir! Only this rascal wants a ducking. Yank him along!"

"Elo!" raved Mr. Lodgey.

"It's a visitor for Talbot, sir," said Racke, seizing his opportunity. "The man seems to have been doing no harm."

Colonel Lyndon started.

"A visitor for my nephew?"

"Yes, sir."

"Release the man at once!" rapped out the colonel.

The juniors hesitated to obey. Colonel Lyndon strode out into the road and pushed them aside.

They relinquished their hold upon Mr. Lodgey very reluctantly.

The sharper lay in the dust, gasping for breath. Seldom had Mr. Lodgey, even in his career as a welsler, been so roughly handled.

The colonel's hard eyes looked down upon him coldly and scornfully. It was easy to see the man's character at a glance.

"Is your name Lodgey?" snapped the colonel.

The sharper blinked at him breathlessly.

"Yes, my name's Lodgey!" he gasped. "Oh crumbs! I'll 'ave the law of them young demons! I ain't goin' to be 'andled like this 'ere!"

"Get up!"

Mr. Lodgey scrambled to his feet, shedding dust on all sides. He presented a wretched aspect—torn and rumpled and dishevelled and dusty.

"What are you here for?" snapped the colonel.

Mr. Lodgey gasped.

"I came 'ere to see a young friend," he replied.

"Them young demons set on me, blessed if I know why—"

"Is your friend expecting you?"

"Ow should I know?" said Mr. Lodgey sulkily. "I told 'im I'd give 'im a look in some time. It ain't your business that I know of, old cock!"

"I happen to be your friend's uncle," said the colonel grimly. "You shall see him in my presence."

"Strike me pink! Look 'ere, I don't want to do the young gentleman no 'arm!" Mr. Lodgey had learned his lesson well. "I didn't know as 'e 'ad any relations visitin' 'im to-day, an'—an'—"

"Probably not." Colonel Lyndon glanced round at the silent juniors. "Who was stopping this man from coming in?"

"I was," said Levison minor at once. "These chaps were helping me."

"Why were you stopping him?"

"Because—because—"

"Because you thought it would do Talbot no good for such a man to call upon him while his uncle was at the school?"

"Yes," said Levison minor unsuspectingly. "We were going to clear the cad off, and—"

"I understand! You seem to be a better friend to my nephew than he is to himself," said the colonel bitterly. "Come in with me, Mr. Lodgey, if that is your name."

"Look 'ere—"

"You don't understand, Colonel Lyndon!" broke out Tom Merry hotly. "Talbot never asked that man to call; he knows nothing of him—"

"My nephew can probably explain quite as well as you can explain for him," said the colonel icily. "Come with me, my man!"

"I don't want to do Master Talbot no 'arm—"



"'Elo!" raved Mr. Lodgey as he sprawled on the ground in the grasp of the crowd of juniors. "What is the trouble here?" rapped out Colonel Lyndon. "It's a visitor for Talbot, sir," said Racke. The colonel started. "A visitor for my nephew?"

"You will do as you are told!" said the colonel. Mr. Lodgey accompanied the colonel in like a lamb.

"Well, my only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally. "This is a go! We might as well have gone to Abbotsford, after all!"

Tom Merry clenched his hands hard.

"We—we tried to stop him," faltered Levison minor. "It was Crooke who fixed it up for him to come. We knew, and we tried—"

Tom Merry nodded.

"You did your best, young 'un," he said. "But it's all right; it's bound to be all right. Colonel Lyndon is going to know who's at the bottom of it, and I'm going to tell him!"

And Tom Merry strode in.

CHAPTER 7.

The Parting!

CURIOUS glances were cast at the dusty Mr. Lodgey as he crossed the quadrangle by the side of the tall, bronzed old soldier.

Mr. Lodgey, who was already recovering himself, cast impudent glances round.

The colonel looked neither to the right nor to the left. He strode right on to the School House and entered it with his slovenly companion, and they passed into the visitors'-room.

Crooke turned from the window. He made no sign of recognition as he saw Lodgey. Neither did Mr. Lodgey appear to have the slightest knowledge of Crooke.

"Gerald!"

"Yes, uncle?"

"Find your cousin and send him here."

"Certainly!"

Crooke quitted the room.

Mr. Lodgey sank down in an armchair, stretched out his legs, and rubbed his heated face with a dirty handkerchief.

The colonel's eyes gleamed for a moment; but he turned away to the window, and stood staring into the quadrangle while he waited for his nephew.

Crooke hurried away to Talbot's study.

Talbot was there alone. His face was dark. The interview with his uncle had been bitterly wounding to the Toff. His eyes glittered at the sight of Crooke's sallow, mocking face at the door.

"What do you want?" he rapped out.

"Nothing," said Crooke coolly. "Colonel Lyndon wants you, that's all, and he's sent me to tell you so. You can go or not, as you choose."

And Crooke walked away.

Talbot rose to his feet, but he hesitated. Should he go. It was but a short time since the colonel had sent him to get his coat for the motor-run to Abbotsford. But it seemed a long while ago; much had happened since then. Crooke's blow had fallen, and it had fallen hard.

Levison of the Fourth stepped into the study.

"You know Lodgey's here, Talbot?" he asked quickly.

Talbot started.

"Lodgey here?" he exclaimed.

"In the visitors'-room with the colonel," said Levison quietly. "I thought I'd tell you."

"What is he doing there?" muttered Talbot.

"It's a trick of Crooke's, of course," said Levison, shrugging his shoulders. "I warned you that there was a game on. I see it now. Crooke's fixed it for Lodgey to come here while your uncle is here. That's the little game."

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"But—but why?"

"You'll see soon, I expect. My minor got hold of it somehow, and he tried to stop Lodgey coming in," grinned Levison. "The fags collared him in the road, and they'd have cleared him off, only the colonel came on the scene, unluckily. Rather surprising of young Franky, wasn't it?"

Talbot smiled faintly.

"Very," he said. "But I don't see— Well, I'd better go, as my uncle wants to see me."

"You'd better. But be on your guard," said Levison anxiously. "There's something arranged between Crooke and Lodgey. I am sure of that. He hasn't come here for nothing."

Talbot nodded and left the study. He descended the stairs. His step was firm and his face calm as he entered the visitors'-room.

Colonel Lyndon, stiff as a ramrod, turned on his heel from the window.

Mr. Lodgey half-rose, making Talbot a very affectionate sign of recognition. Talbot took no notice of him. But the rascal's gesture was not lost on the colonel.

"Mind your eye," whispered Mr. Lodgey warningly; "mind what you say—"

"Silence, you!" snapped the colonel.

Mr. Lodgey sat down again, with an injured expression. He had given the colonel the impression that he was on familiar terms with Talbot, and that he was trying to put him on his guard—which was exactly the impression Mr. Lodgey wanted to give.

"Reginald"—Colonel Lyndon's voice was hard as iron—"you know this man?"

"I have known him," said Talbot wearily.

"In your former life, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Did you ask him here?"

"No."

"He has come to see you."

Talbot was silent.

"Wot's the 'arm in a man droppin' in to see an old pal?" asked Mr. Lodgey in an injured tone. "I didn't want to get the young gentleman into a row. We've 'ad some good times together, the Toff and me, we 'ave!"

"That is false," said Talbot quietly. "Have you anything further to say to me, uncle?"

Colonel Lyndon knitted his brows.

"This matter must be explained!" he said harshly. "This man came here to visit you. Some of your friends, knowing I was here, tried to turn him back, and there was a scene outside the school gates. If they had succeeded I should not have seen him, and I should never have known the truth."

Talbot smiled bitterly.

"You mean that you cannot rely upon my word!" he said. "I don't blame you. You have a right to doubt me if you choose, considering the past. But you have no right to put me upon my defence like this!"

"No right?" thundered the colonel.

"None," said Talbot quietly. "When you learned that I was your nephew, you acknowledged me of your own free will. I did not ask it. If you regret your kindness, you need have nothing further to do with me. I ask nothing of you."

The colonel's brow darkened.

"This insolence—" he began.

"I do not mean to be insolent. But I will not be doubted, questioned, and put on my defence!"

"You will not?" exclaimed the colonel.

"I will not!" said Talbot firmly.

"You take that line, I presume, because you



Detective Kerr Investigates

No. 12.

The Tower Of London Mystery!

TO promote interest in the history class, Mr. Linton offered a valuable prize to any junior who cared to make the trip to the Tower of London and write an essay on its past. Several juniors jumped at the chance. All went to town under the care of Kildare, who, however, left them outside the Tower, calling back later. Next day, it was reported that a boy wearing a St. Jim's cap had been seen entering a cinema near the Tower, when he should have been going over it! The report gave no clue as to his identity, so Mr. Linton was obliged to "gate" all the juniors who were supposed to have visited the Tower until the culprit confessed. Meanwhile, "Detective" Kerr set to work to investigate:

KERR: Let's see, Merry, you and Lowther and Manners were among those who went to the Tower of London, I think?

MERRY: Correct, Kerr! So did Blake, D'Arcy, Herries, Digby, Reilly, Hammond, Talbot, Gore, Skimpole, Mellish and Trimble.

KERR: But you visited the Tower in small groups, at different times in the afternoon?

MERRY: That's right. That's what makes it difficult to check who really went and who didn't.

KERR: You three did, of course.

MERRY: Yes. We did the White Tower, and saw the suit of armour King Henry VIII. wore as a boy. Then we went over the Bloody Tower, and saw the room where the princes were murdered. After that we had a peep at the Crown Jewels.

KERR: What did you think of the Tower of London, Blake?

BLAKE: Oh, very interesting; but we've some fine old castles equally well worth visiting in Yorkshire—

KERR: Quite. You went over the White Tower, naturally?

have no defence to make!" said the colonel in a bitter tone. "I have been deceived in you!"

Mr. Lodgey struck in:

"Look 'ere—"

"Silence, man!"

"I ain't goin' to keep mum with you a-raggin' my pal!" said Mr. Lodgey. "Why shouldn't a young gent speak to an old pal? That's wot I want to know! Wot's the 'arm in a game of billiards occasionally?"

"So you have played billiards with this man, Talbot."

"No. He is lying!"

"Why should he lie?"

"Lyin', is it?" exclaimed Mr. Lodgey warmly.

D'ARCY: Yaas, where the pwinces were murdered in—in— Bai Jove, the Beefeatah told us the date, but I forget it now—

BLAKE: In any case, the princes were murdered in the Bloody Tower, which we visited next, you ass.

D'ARCY: Yaas, that's wight. Then we saw the Cwown Jewels—and that was the lot.

KERR: Well, Skimpole, how did you like your trip to London?

SKIMPOLE: It was of absorbing interest, Kerr. But I could not help thinking, when gazing at some of the ancient weapons of war in the White Tower, what a terrifying amount of carnage they represented. It seemed to me that if our ancestors had paid more attention to the works of the philosophers, they might have avoided much bloodshed—

TALBOT: Skimpole liked the third item—the Crown Jewels. Didn't you, Skimmy?

SKIMPOLE: Yes, indeed, Talbot. But there again I could not help reflecting upon the vainglory of mere material wealth—

KERR: Quite! See you again, Skimpole!

KERR: Have a good time at the Tower of London, Trimble?

TRIMBLE: Yes, rather, Kerr. Simply great!

KERR: What did you see?

TRIMBLE: Oh, they charge one-and-sixpence, you know—and then you go in and look at the Crown Jewels.

KERR: And after that?

TRIMBLE: The Bloody Tower. That was where the little princes were murdered in 1483. I remember the date.

KERR: And after that?

TRIMBLE: The White Tower, last of all. Oh, there was a lot of armour and things there—it didn't interest me very much, though. I say, if you want to know who it was they spotted spending on the pictures the special allowance Linton made us, it was probably Mellish. You just ask him!

KERR: Excuse me, Mellish—

MELLISH: If you want to ask me about the Tower of London, you can save your breath. I saw the White Tower, the Bloody Tower, and the Crown Jewels, like the rest, but I was bored stiff the whole time, and can't remember a thing about them. I'd much rather have spent the day with Racke and Crooke, enjoying a quiet game of nap. Good-bye!

(Who is the guilty junior? Turn to page 33 for Kerr's solution.)

"That's a bit 'ard on an old pal, Toff. I don't mean no 'arm. Why couldn't you give me the tip the old gent was 'ere? I wouldn't 'ave come within a mile of the place."

"I have no doubt of that!" said the colonel bitterly. "If you have no acquaintance with this man, Talbot, why has he come here?"

Talbot made a weary gesture.

"He has come here to injure me if he can!" he said. "His object is to make you distrust me! He is my enemy!"

"Oh, Toff!" said Mr. Lodgey reproachfully. "Arter the pals we've been!"

"I believe, too, that he was informed of your

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visit, and came here intentionally because you were here," added Talbot.

"Indeed! And who informed him?"

"I think I know; but I have no proof, naturally."

"S'elp me!" said Mr. Lodgey. "I knowed nothin' about it, or I wouldn't 'ave come. An' I'll go now, too! I ain't the man to stay where I ain't welcome! If I've done you any 'arm by comin' 'ere, Toff, I'm sorry, and I 'ope it won't make any difference to our friendship."

Talbot made a gesture of contempt.

"Stay where you are, man!" snapped the colonel, as Mr. Lodgey made a movement towards the door. "I have not finished with you yet!"

"Look 'ere—"

"Hold your tongue!"

Mr. Lodgey's eyes burned, but he held his tongue.

Colonel Lyndon turned to the window, his brows knitted in deep and painful thought.

Talbot stood motionless.

The colonel swung round sharply at the sound of a whisper. Mr. Lodgey was winking and making signs to Talbot. He ceased to do so after he was quite sure that the colonel had seen him.

"You may speak aloud!" said the colonel, with bitter contempt.

"I—I wasn't sayin' nothin'," stammered Mr. Lodgey, who certainly ought to have been upon the stage, so well did he play his part.

"You were whispering, you rascal!"

"I—I—I— Look 'ere," said Mr. Lodgey, "I'm goin' to own up. I don't know this young gentleman!"

"What?"

"I ain't 'ad nothin' to do with 'im," pursued

Mr. Lodgey. "'E ain't never come down for a game of billiards at the Green Man, an' 'e never treated me like a pal, or asked me to come an' see 'im, or—or anythin'. 'E ain't never 'ad anythin' on a 'orse that I knows of, an' 'e ain't never broke bounds of a night to see 'is old pal. Nothin' of the sort. I take back heverythin' I may 'ave said agin' 'im!"

Talbot stared at the sharper. This was a change of front, with a vengeance! The colonel's look grew more bitter. He thought he understood. This was the outcome of the signs made while his back was turned—so he considered—which was exactly what the astute Mr. Lodgey wanted him to consider.

The colonel was a keen man of the world, but he had had little experience with men of Mr. Lodgey's kind, and he was not quite equal to that gentleman's vulpine cunning. Mr. Lodgey, in fact, as he boasted later to his pals in the Green Man, played the old sport like a "blinking fish."

"Is that all?" asked the colonel grimly.

"That's about all," said Mr. Lodgey. "The young gentleman is as innocent as a baby. I've been drinkin', or I wouldn't 'ave come 'ere. And I 'ope as I 'aven't done any 'arm!"

"You may go!" said Colonel Lyndon.

"Good-afternoon, gentlemen!" said Mr. Lodgey affably, and he went.

There was a deep silence as the door closed after him.

Uncle and nephew faced one another.

"Have you anything to say, Talbot?" asked the colonel at last.

"Nothing!"

"Did you expect that man to deceive me with his falsehoods—falsehoods uttered too late?"

"He has told the truth at last!" said Talbot.

The colonel made an angry gesture.

"He has retracted every word at a sign from you!" he exclaimed. "Do you deny that you were making signs to him while my back was turned?"

"Yes."

"Then why did he suddenly retract every statement he had made?"

"He knows best," said Talbot coldly.

"That will do," said Colonel Lyndon in concentrated tones of anger. "You supposed me an old man—an old fool—who could be deceived as easily as a child. I am not in my second childhood yet, Reginald. You should have primed the man earlier; it was too late in my presence. You may go, Reginald! I claim no further authority over you. From now on I have only one nephew!"

Talbot left the room without a word.

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CHAPTER 8.

Crooke's Triumph!

TOM MERRY was waiting in the corridor. He came quickly towards Talbot as the Shell fellow, his handsome face very pale and set, walked away.

"Talbot, what's happened?"

Talbot made a weary gesture.

"It doesn't matter, Tom."

"But it does matter!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Can't you see, Talbot, Crooke got that man here to claim acquaintance with you? It was a scheme—"

"I know it was."

"And the colonel believes him?"

"Yes."

"Then you've got to open his eyes!" said Tom.

"He's got to know about Crooke—"

"I shall not tell him one word about Crooke!"

"But why?"

"I've no proof, for one thing, Tom. Crooke would deny it, Lodgley would deny it. It would only come to bandying accusations. But that isn't all. Colonel Lyndon does not trust me. Perhaps I have no right to expect him to!" said Talbot bitterly. "But if he cannot trust me, it is better for him to have done with me. I will not submit to incessant suspicion and questioning! Why should I be put upon my defence whenever Crooke chooses to play the tale-bearer and slanderer? Even the Toff has a little pride, you know!"

"But—but—"

"The matter's ended, Tom. Colonel Lyndon has done with me, and I have done with him. Let it drop!"

"I won't let it drop!" growled Tom Merry.

"You've got your back up, Talbot; but if you won't tell him the facts, I will!"

"Tom!" exclaimed Talbot.

But Tom Merry was already hurrying down the passage to the visitors'-room. He reached it as the door opened and the colonel came out.

Colonel Lyndon would have passed him, but Tom planted himself in the old soldier's way.

"Colonel Lyndon," he exclaimed, "you must—"

"What is it?"

"About Talbot—"

"I desire to hear nothing about Talbot!" said the colonel coldly. "Kindly let me pass, boy!"

"You ought to know—"

"Let me pass, I tell you!" thundered the colonel.

He thrust the junior aside, and strode away down the passage. Without a glance at his nephew as he passed him, he strode out and stepped into his car.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

Talbot smiled slightly.

"My uncle is not a man to be reasoned with, Tom," he said. "He has made up his mind, and there is nothing more to be done."

"But—but I say, old fellow—" stammered Tom, in dismay.

"Don't worry about it, Tom! It's still light enough for some footer," said Talbot calmly. "Come along!"

There was the buzz of a car in the quadrangle.

Tom Merry looked out at the door.

Colonel Lyndon's car was gliding away to the gates, the massive figure in uniform, upright as a ramrod, in it.

The car turned out of the gates and disappeared.

Tom Merry looked round at his chum.

Talbot's face was pale. What had happened had been a blow to him. But he was quite composed.

"I—I say, Talbot, this is awfully rotten!" muttered Tom. "Crooke must have made him believe—"

"I suppose it was Crooke," said Talbot.

"Lodgley may have come here of his own accord, for all I know. But he knew the colonel was here—that is certain. He played his game well—very well. I suppose Crooke was at the bottom of it."

"I know he was!" said Tom savagely. "That was what the cads were chortling about this afternoon when we bumped them for it!"

Talbot nodded.



PROFESSOR SKIMPOLE'S HOROSCOPE

This Week:

GERALD CROOKE.

PERHAPS when a fellow is writing out a five-hundred-line imposition it is hardly the moment to ask questions, but how was I to know that Crooke had been caught smoking in his study by Kildare? "Buzz off!" said Crooke tersely. "Go and pick on some poor goof who will swallow your taradiddles whole. Get going," he added menacingly, "Before I spill this ink all over your waistcoat!"

I was able, however, to get confirmation from Racke, who was just coming into the study, that Crooke is a Sagittarian (November 23rd to December 21st), born under Neptune, the cold and aloof planet. This special degree indicates a rather vicious temper, which may prove fatal to the character if it is not kept carefully under control. Crooke seems fated to follow the less bright paths, transgressing against the codes, unless he exercises caution. A stronger character, under identical portents, might rise superior and prosper—but I doubt if Crooke has the necessary reserve.

I had no chance to put my delineation before him, since Crooke suddenly snarled: "Hasn't that bespectacled baboon gone yet, Racke? Chuck him out, will you? His face gets on my nerves!" So I left, before Racke could attempt such a thing. Dear me, what manners!

|||||

"It can't be helped, Tom. If it hadn't happened now, it would have happened some other time. Crooke was determined to make a break between my uncle and me, and he would not stop at any dirty trickery. I could not prevent my uncle being deceived. And"—Talbot's eyes burned for a moment—"I will not enter into a competition of accusation with Crooke. Let him say what he likes, and do as he likes. If the colonel is deceived, that is his business. I am tired of it all!"

"But—but this will make a lot of difference to you, old chap!" said Tom anxiously.

"You mean about money? Of course it will! But I still have my scholarship," said Talbot, with a faint smile. "I shall not have to leave St. Jim's, Tom."

"But—but it's rotten—"

"It can't be helped!"

Crooke and Racke came out of the School House together. They looked at Talbot as they passed, and chuckled. It was the hour of George Gerald Crooke's triumph, and he was enjoying it.

Tom Merry clenched his hands and made a rapid step towards the cad of the Shell.

Talbot caught his arm in time.

"That won't do any good, Tom," he said quietly. "Let's get down to footer. I'd like to forget all about this."

"The rotter ought to be smashed!" muttered Tom savagely.

"He's not worth it, and it wouldn't do any good, either. Come on!"

The two juniors went down to the footer field. Talbot joined in the practice before tea, and few would have guessed, as they watched the keen footballer, that a heavy blow had fallen upon him that day.

The Toff was accustomed to the vicissitudes of fortune from of old, and he had learned endurance in a hard school.

Tom Merry found it difficult to put his mind into the game, however. He was more concerned about his chum than Talbot seemed to be about himself.

For the break with his uncle meant a serious difference to Talbot. Probably the colonel, in spite of all, would wish to be generous; but it was quite certain that, after what had happened, Talbot would accept nothing at his hands.

The rich man's nephew would be once more the poor scholarship junior—a change of situation that might have dismayed even a strong character. It did not dismay Talbot. He had never given a thought to his uncle's money—he did not give it a thought now. He was young, strong, resolute, and he could look after himself.

There was one regret in Talbot's heart—it was that this break should have come on the eve of the colonel's departure for India. But it could not be helped; it was not his fault.

Talbot joined the Terrible Three at tea in their study, and, though he was a little more subdued than usual, he was quite cheerful. It was Tom Merry's face that was the more clouded of the two.

Tom wondered whether the trouble would blow over, and a reconciliation would come; but he had little hope of that. One glance at Talbot's quiet face was enough to tell him that the first step would not come from the Toff. And on the morrow Colonel Lyndon would be gone!

CHAPTER 9.

Levison Minor Missing!

"WELL, you're a cheery chap, and no mistake!" said Gore.

Talbot started a little.

He was in his study, where he had returned after tea with Tom Merry & Co., and he had fallen into a deep reverie. Gore and Skimpole, his studymates, had both spoken to him without eliciting a reply.

"Eh? Did you speak?" asked Talbot confusedly.

"Only twice," grunted Gore.

"I'm sorry. I was thinking."

"I asked you if you were coming down to the gym," said Gore. "You were going to have the gloves on, with me."

"Another time if you don't mind," said Talbot, colouring. "I am not feeling quite up to boxing just now."

"Right you are," said Gore amicably. And he went out of the study.

Skimpole blinked sympathetically at Talbot through his big spectacles. Skimmy was a sympathetic youth.

"I have observed that you have been in a very thoughtful mood for some time, my dear Talbot," said Skimpole benevolently. "I think I know what is the matter."

"I hardly think you do," said Talbot, smiling.

Skimmy, the Determinist of St. Jim's, had a sympathetic heart, but not a very discerning head.

"I am sure of it," said Skimpole. "My remarks on social questions have fallen upon fruitful soil. You have been reflecting, my dear Talbot, upon social inequalities."

"Not at all!" said Talbot. "Don't begin on that now, Skimmy, there's a good chap."

"If you like, Talbot, I will read you Professor Balmcrumpet's latest article upon the submerged tenth."

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"Go and read it to D'Arcy," said Talbot. "It will do him good, as a member of the bloated aristocracy, you know."

"That is a very good suggestion," said Skimpole, with a nod of approval. "I will take your advice, my dear Talbot. Have you seen my copy of the 'Burbler'? Ah! Here it is."

And Skimpole left the study, much to Talbot's relief.

He was glad to be alone.

The Toff was in one of his rare moods of despondency. The parting in anger with his uncle weighed heavily upon his mind, and the weight seemed to grow heavier with the passing hours.

His whole nature shrank from a contest with Crooke for his uncle's favour. He could not



"You supposed me an old man—an old fool—who could concentrate tones of anger. You may go, Reginald! I have only one nephew!"

subdue his pride to enter into anything of the sort. Unless his uncle took him as he was, he could leave him. Talbot asked nothing of him. His pride had been bitterly wounded by the colonel's questioning, and the implied doubt and suspicion.

Since he had abandoned the old gang with whom he had been trained, he had kept as straight as any fellow at St. Jim's. The whole school respected him. The shadow of the past was lifting from his life and from his mind. Yet all that, it seemed, went for nothing. At a cunning whisper from the enemy, he was to be called upon to defend himself—to be put upon his defence like a suspected criminal.

His handsome face flushed hotly at the thought.

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He could not, and would not, endure such a position. Either there must be faith or he and his uncle could go their different ways.

But—there was a but! His uncle had left him in anger—misjudging him—and he was going away to India, thinking him a hardened rascal and an ungracious nephew. He knew that the parting caused the old man pain as well as anger.

Yet the junior was helpless. What could he say—or do? Even if he entered into a contest of recrimination with Crooke, he could prove nothing. And the thought stung him. Crooke believed that his object was to secure his uncle's fortune. What if the same suspicion should come into the mind of the colonel? Thinking of Talbot as he did now, was it not more than likely, if the lad made advances towards reconciliation?



old fool—who could be deceived as easily as a child," said Colonel Lyndon in
may go, Reginald! I claim no further authority over you. From now on I
one nephew!" Talbot left the room without a word.

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He could not take the first step; it was impossible. Yet Talbot would have given many years of his life for his uncle to have left him in confidence and affection as of old. But he was helpless.

He was pacing to and fro in the study, his brows lined with painful thought, when a timid tap came at the door. He did not hear it. He was thinking miserably of the great change that half-holiday had made in him.

The door opened, and Levison minor looked in.

"Can I come in, Talbot?"

The Shell fellow turned quickly.

"Yes, come in!" he said.

He was glad of the interruption to his anxious thoughts, which led him nowhere.

Frank came in and closed the door.

"I—I—I wanted to ask you something, Talbot, if you'll let me?" he said hesitatingly.

"Go ahead, kid!" said Talbot. In spite of the weighing trouble on his mind, Talbot's tone was as kind as ever.

"You—you won't think it's cheek?" stammered the fag.

"No. Pile in!"

"About—about that fellow coming here to-day," said Levison minor hurriedly. "I—I got to know of it. Piggott had been jawing, and—and I got Wally and the rest to help me, and we tried to stop him."

"I know," said Talbot. "I'm much obliged to you, kid. It was rather a queer idea, but I know you meant well."

"I did, really," said the fag eagerly. "I'd do anything for you, Talbot, after the way you've stood by Ernie. But—but it wasn't any good; he came, all the same."

Talbot nodded.

"But—but did he do any harm?" asked Frank. "I know it's cheek to ask you, but—but I'm anxious about it. I know what your cousin wanted—to get you into a row with your uncle. Will you tell me—"

He broke off.

Talbot hesitated.

"You know I shan't jaw, Talbot," said Frank.

"I know you won't," said Talbot, his troubled face breaking into a smile. "You're a good little kid, Frank! Yes, he did do harm; but it can't be helped."

"He made the colonel think he was pally with you, and that you chummed with him and asked him here?" said Frank shrewdly.

"Yes, that's it."

"And that's what Crooke and his friends are grinning about, isn't it? You're in a row with your uncle?"

"Yes; I suppose they would be grinning about it," said Talbot bitterly. "It must be very entertaining—to Crooke."

"But—but it will blow over, won't it?"

Talbot shook his head.

"You—you mean it's all off—your uncle won't have anything more to do with you?" stammered Frank.

"Yes; but don't you worry, kid."

"But—but it's a rotten shame!" burst out Frank indignantly. "Why, it was Crooke all the time! He pals with that rotter, and you don't. He planned the whole thing. We all knew it."

"The colonel doesn't know it."

"You could tell him."

"I'm afraid it wouldn't be any use, kid. He won't take my word now," said Talbot, his lips setting a little. "But it can't be helped. Don't you bother your head about it. I dare say it will all come right in the long run."

"But your uncle is going away to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"It's a rotten shame!" said Frank again. "Crooke ought to be shown up. I—I suppose there isn't anything a chap can do?"

"Nothing," said Talbot, smiling. "Only don't jaw about it in the Third. But I know you won't do that."

"Not a word," said Frank.

He left the study with a troubled brow.

Talbot went down to the Common-room with as cheerful a face as he could assume.

Frank Levison had gone out into the quadrangle.

The fag's heart was throbbing with indignation. He would have given a great deal to help Talbot. The big, handsome Shell fellow was a hero in the eyes of the Third Form fag, and his patient friendship with Levison major, the outcast and black sheep, had earned Frank's undying gratitude.

The little fellow was thinking of the problem, cudgelling his brain for some means of helping Talbot. And as he thought and thought over the matter, a strange idea came into his head, which startled him at first, but which, as he thought over it, appeared more and more feasible.

Levison minor went into the School House for his coat. As he came out, with coat and cap on, Wally hailed him in the passage.

"Where are you off to, young Levison. Don't you know it's near calling-over?"

Frank hurried out without replying, leaving D'Arcy minor staring after him.

Ten minutes later the St. Jim's fellows gathered for roll-call in Big Hall.

Mr. Railton took the roll, and there was a pause when he came to Levison minor's name.

Levison major had answered "Adsum!" and the next name on the list was Frank's.

"Levison minor!"

No reply.

Ernest Levison glanced over at the Third Formers. His brother was not there. Wally was looking about him, too.

"Levison minor!" repeated the Housemaster.

Levison minor was marked down as absent, and the roll was finished, and the St. Jim's fellows streamed out.

"Where the dickens is my minor?" asked Levison, stopping Wally in the passage. "Why has he cut call-over?"

"Blessed if I know! He went out ten minutes ago."

"Went out?" exclaimed Levison. "The gates are locked!"

"Well, he had his coat on, and he went out."

"The young ass!"

"Picking up some of your manners and customs, Levison major!" sniggered Hobbs of the Third.

And there was a laugh.

When the Third Form went into their Form-room for evening preparation with Mr. Selby there was one member of the Form absent.

Mr. Selby noticed the absence of Levison minor at once, and made a mental note of it. Mr. Selby's cane was ready for Levison minor when he came in late.

But Levison minor did not come in late. He did not come in at all.

The Third Form prep ended without his having put in an appearance.

CHAPTER 10. Bearding the Lion!

"**H**ALT!" The challenge rang out sharply through the darkness.

The man in khaki, at the gate of Abbotsford Camp peered out on the muddy, dark road.

A diminutive figure, in coat and cap and scarf, came out of the gloom. A big bronzed soldier stared down at the boy.

"Hallo! What do you want, young shaver?" he asked good-humouredly.

"I want to see Colonel Lyndon, please!"

"Hey?"

"I want to see Colonel Lyndon, please!"

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The man in khaki chuckled. That request from a small schoolboy tickled his sense of humour. Levison minor realised it, and his face flushed. But he did not budge. He had come there to see Colonel Lyndon, and he meant to see him somehow.

"The colonel isn't on view this evening, my little man," said the sentry good-temperedly. "Call next Christmas, or the Christmas after."

"But—but I must see him. It's important!" faltered Frank.

"Must be important," agreed the sentry gravely. "Awfully important, I dare say. But it can't be done. Better go home to bed. Hasn't your nurse missed you yet?"

Levison minor's face crimsoned.

"Now, cut along, kid, and none of your little jokes!" said the soldier at the gate.

"I've got to see Colonel Lyndon."

The sentry began to get impatient. He was accustomed to dealing with all kinds of queer callers at the camp, but for a diminutive schoolboy to call to see the colonel was really the limit.

"Cut along!" he repeated. "The colonel's busy."

"I know. He's going away to India to-morrow," said Frank. "That's why I've to see him to-night. It's only for a few minutes. Ask him—"

"I can't leave the gate, you little duffer!"

Frank felt a chill. He realised that it was absurd to expect to see the C.O. The colonel did not even know his name if it were taken in. But he had come there with a purpose, and he did not mean to be beaten. The distress in his face arrested the soldier's attention.

"Who the dickens are you, young shaver, and what do you want with the C.O.?" he asked.

"I'm Levison minor," faltered the fag.

"Not a relation of the colonel?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, cut along!"

A handsome officer came out of the gate, and he glanced for a moment towards the schoolboy.

Frank caught sight of his face and uttered an exclamation.

It was Captain Lord Conway, the "major" of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's. The fag had seen him at the school when he had come to see the Head.

"Lord Conway!" exclaimed Frank eagerly.

"Hallo!" said the captain.

"You know me!" exclaimed Frank. "I'm Levison minor of St. Jim's! I—I want to see Colonel Lyndon."

Lord Conway smiled.

"I'm afraid you can't, my little man," he said. "The colonel's very busy this evening. He's off to India to-morrow. What the dickens are you doing out of school at this hour?"

"I—I came to see the colonel. It's important."

The sentry had gone back to his post, leaving the matter to the officer. Lord Conway looked curiously at the flushed, eager face of the fag.

"If it's really important I will speak to Colonel Lyndon," he said. "What is your business here, my boy?"

"Oh, thank you!" gasped Frank. "It—it's about something that happened when the colonel was at St. Jim's this afternoon. There was a—mistake, and I want to explain. It's about Talbot. He's in disgrace with his uncle. You know Talbot?"

"I know him," said Lord Conway briefly. "Wait here a few minutes. I will speak to the colonel, anyway."

"Oh, thanks—thanks!"
The captain disappeared. He came back in about ten minutes, and he beckoned to the fag. Levison minor followed him.

He traversed the great camp at the heels of the striding officer, hardly looking about him as he went. They passed into a room where half a dozen officers were talking, all of whom glanced curiously at the fag of St. Jim's. Then the fag was taken into an inner room, and Lord Conway left him there.

As a tall, bronzed, grim-looking man rose from his chair, with knitted brows, Frank realised that he was in the presence of the colonel.

His heart almost ceased to beat as the grim face turned on him and the sharp eyes under the grey, puckered brows were fixed upon his face.

"Well?" The monosyllable came like a bullet, and the little fag trembled in spite of himself.

"What is it?"

"I—I—I—" Frank's voice died away.

The grim, bronzed face before him relaxed. "There's nothing to be afraid of, my boy." The hard voice was kinder now. "You wanted to see me. You have something to tell me about my nephew. I cannot spare many minutes. What is it, you want?"

Frank took his courage in both hands, so to speak. It was now or never.

"I—I thought I ought to come!" he gasped. "I—I want you to know that—that it was all lies—all lies about Talbot. He's the best fellow that ever breathed, and every chap at St. Jim's knows it, and—and—"

The colonel's keen eyes searched his face. He read nothing there but honesty and loyalty.

"You know something of what happened to-day, my boy?"

"Yes, sir. That man—Lodgey—"

"What do you know of him?"

"I know Talbot had nothing to do with him, sir. It was all Croke's lying!" burst out Frank. "He was Croke's friend, not Talbot's! Croke made him come, and there's a dozen fellows at St. Jim's who know it, too!"

"You are the boy who seized him in the road, I think?" said the colonel.

"Yes. I found out what was on, and meant to keep him away," said Frank. "Croke's friends knew what was on, and we got it from Piggott, Piggott's a little beast—like all Croke's friends! I—I don't want to run down Croke, of course, but you ought to know, because you're down on Talbot now."

The colonel's face had changed strangely.

"You are a friend of my nephew?" he asked.

"Well, not exactly," said Frank. "I'm in the Third Form, and Talbot's in the Shell. But I'd do anything for him after what he's done for my brother."

"What has he done for your brother?"

Frank hesitated. But he realised that it was best to speak freely; Talbot's future depended on the result of that interview. And so it came out—in faltering tones—of Levison's recklessness, due, as the fag sincerely believed, to bad companions—of Talbot's steady influence over him which had drawn him to the path of right and decency.

The colonel listened, hardly uttering a word; content to watch the flushed, eager face of the fag; to read there loyalty and truth, to know that every word the little fellow uttered came from his heart. A cunning rascal of Mr. Lodgey's type could hoodwink the plain old soldier; but he knew truth when he heard it, and he knew that he heard

(Continued on the next page.)

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it now. And it was his nephew, whom he had mistrusted and disbelieved, whom this innocent little fellow regarded as the good angel of his reckless brother—Talbot, the supposed associate of rascals—who had tried to hold the black sheep of St. Jim's to the right path.

Frank paused breathlessly at last.

"And—and Talbot never had anything to do with Lodgey," he faltered, "except once when he knocked him down. Lodgey knew you were there to-day, sir. He was in the field, watching for your car, and he was following you in when we spotted him and collared him. And we'd have got him in the ditch, too, only Crooke's friends chipped in to stop us. They didn't want us to spoil Crooke's game."

"Did Talbot send you here to tell me all this?"

Levison minor started.

"Talbot? No. He doesn't know."

"You came on your own accord?"

"Yes."

"Have you leave to be out of school so late?"

"No fear!" said Frank. "I've cut prep. I shall get an awful licking from my Form-master. But I don't care."

"And what you have told me is known to others?"

"Yes. Wally knows—that's Lord Conway's young brother, you know, sir—and Tom Merry knows. Talbot knows. And—and I don't believe Crooke would have the nerve to deny it, either, if you asked him straight. He's a funk," added Levison minor contemptuously.

"Indeed! My nephew is a funk, is he?" said Colonel Lyndon grimly.

Frank turned crimson.

"I—I didn't mean—I—I forgot he was your nephew for a minute. Only it's a rotten shame

he should make you waxy with old Talbot for nothing."

The colonel burst into a laugh.

"I'm glad you came here, my lad," he said. "I think I see matters a little more clearly now. One of my nephews, I fear, is a young rascal. Not that I was unaware of that," he added to himself. "Wait here."

The colonel passed from the room. Five minutes later the fag heard the sound of a motor-car outside the building. A natty young lieutenant looked in. He beckoned to Levison minor, who followed him out.

"Get into the car, young 'un!"

Levison minor, with his brain in a whirl, stepped into the car.

Colonel Lyndon was already there. The car buzzed away through the night, and Abbotsford Camp was left behind in the darkness.

Frank Levison stole a glance at his companion; the colonel's face was so grim that he did not dare to speak. But the fag felt that he had won the victory. He had cleared Talbot of unjust suspicion, and his cheery little face was full of satisfaction. Not a word was uttered as the car hummed on through the evening, to stop at last at the gates of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 11.

The False and the True!

MR. RAILTON looked into the Junior Common-room in the School House.

"Talbot! Crooke!"

Talbot rose from the chess-table, where he was playing chess with Tom Merry.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Colonel Lyndon wishes to see you. You will find him in the visitors'-room," said the House-master.

Talbot started violently.

"My uncle!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Crooke, kindly go with Talbot."

Gerald Crooke came forward reluctantly. What had the colonel come back for? he wondered savagely.

Some of the fellows looked curiously after the cousins as they left the Common-room.

Colonel Lyndon's return, after his visit in the afternoon, was surprising enough. Most of the fellows knew that Talbot's uncle was leaving on the morrow for India. But Tom Merry's face had brightened. The hope rose in his breast that the colonel's visit meant that he had repented of his harshness to his nephew.

Crooke gave his cousin a look of hatred in the passage, but did not speak.

Colonel Lyndon rose as they entered the visitors'-room. Never had the bronzed old face looked so grim.

"You are surprised to see me here to-night," he said. "You did not expect to see me again, Reginald?"

"No, uncle," said Talbot.

"I have received some information which lets in light upon the happenings of to-day."

Crooke trembled.

The colonel's grim eye was upon him, and he noted how the cad of the Shell changed colour.

"It seems"—the colonel's voice was like the rumble of thunder—"it seems, Gerald, that you were kind enough to arrange a little comedy for me this afternoon."

"I!" faltered Crooke.

(Continued on page 36.)



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WANTED BY THE MOUNTIES!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

*A fugitive from the Mounties, Rufus Slimmey comes to Cedar Creek—and disappears!
For he borrows the identity of his twin brother, the master of the backwoods school.*

A Startling Discovery!

"YOU must go!" Frank Richards started and looked up from his book. Frank was seated under a tree on the bank of the creek, some distance from Cedar Creek schoolhouse. He had "De Bello Gallico" open on his knees, improving the shining hour by giving Cæsar a look up.

Latin was not in the curriculum at the backwoods school, but Frank, who was of a studious turn of mind, sometimes had a "go" at it in his leisure hours. He had brought his old school books with him when he came to the Canadian West.

His chums, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc, were canoeing on the creek, and Frank had retired to that secluded spot for a quarter of an hour with the Gallic War, which had been very familiar to him in the old days.

Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master at Cedar Creek, was a good Latin scholar, and he sometimes gave Frank a little help in that line. Mr. Slimmey was a somewhat irresolute young

man in glasses, and the Cedar Creek fellows not infrequently made fun of him, and of his respectful adoration of Miss Meadows, the schoolmistress. But he was kind and good-natured, and Frank had a good deal of regard and respect for him.

It was Mr. Slimmey's irresolute voice that came to the schoolboy's ears suddenly from the timber behind him.

"You must go, Rufus! Do you hear?"

"I cannot go!" It was a hard, cold voice that replied. "I've come to you for help, Paul."

"How can I help you—you, a fugitive from justice? And I ought not, if I could!"

"You can—and must! Are you thinking of handing over your own brother to the Mounted Police?"

Frank Richards rose to his feet. His cheeks were burning. Chance had placed him in the position of an eavesdropper, but he had not the slightest desire to hear Mr. Slimmey's business. But he paused as he stood under the big tree. The tree was between him and the speakers in



"The Mounties will be here to-morrow to seek me," said Rufus Slimmey. "They will find me—but in your name. You will be locked in this room—silent. You understand?" Paul Slimmey's eyes glittered, but he could not speak.

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the timber, and if he went along the bank he would come out into full view of them.

That Paul Slimmey, the quiet and irresolute assistant master, had a brother who was a fugitive from justice, was a startling discovery. Frank realised how humiliated the young man would be if he found that his secret had been discovered, however unintentionally.

Frank was in an awkward position. As he stood hesitating, wondering what he ought to do, the voices went on.

"You've got to help me, Paul! I've got to get clear somehow. Hang it all, your own twin brother—"

"What kind of brother have you been to me?" said Mr. Slimmey bitterly. "You have always disgraced me. I had to give up a good position in England on your account. And then, even in this country, you turned up again."

"I swear that was by chance. I was surprised when I first saw you in Thompson. I never intended to trouble you—"

"And yet you have come here?"

"I had no choice. I got into trouble at Vancouver, and I had to clear out."

"The same old tale, I suppose. Drink, cards, and the rest!"

"Never mind that. I was never built your way, Paul—mentally and morally, I mean, though physically it's not easy to tell us apart. Look here, you've got to help me get clear! They are on my track!"

"The police?"

"Yes. There are two Mounties in Thompson now, making inquiries. I can't run for it—where could I go? I thought of you as a last resource. You can hide me somewhere, Paul, till the affair blows over."

"Hide you—a thief!"

"You've got some quarters here, I suppose? Where do you live?"

"I have a cabin near the schoolhouse."

"You are alone there?"

"I live there alone. Miss Meadows' servant looks after the place, and I take most of my meals in the schoolhouse. It would not be possible to hide you in my cabin. But if it were possible I would not do it. I will not shelter a thief! If I did I should be a criminal myself."

"Don't drive me too far, Paul!" The voice had a deep, menacing tone in it. "You know I am desperate."

"I am not afraid of you. I will not give you away, but I cannot give you help. That is final."

There was a rustling in the undergrowth as the master moved away.

"Paul!"

There was no reply. Paul Slimmey was gone.

Frank Richards heard a muttered oath in the timber, and then there was another rustling as Rufus Slimmey crept away.

Frank stood rooted to the ground. He would have given worlds not to have heard that muttered talk. But, at least, not a word of it should pass his lips, and Mr. Slimmey should never know that he knew.

The boy did not move till long after the receding footsteps had died in the distance. Then, with a troubled face, he moved away along the creek.

"Hallo, here you are!" A canoe bumped into the grass, and Bob Lawless jumped out, followed by Vere Beauclerc. "Hallo, Franky!"

"Had a good study, Frank?" asked Beauclerc, with a smile.

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"Eh? Oh, yes!" said Frank confusedly.

The conversation in the timber was still troubling his mind.

Bob gave him a curious look.

"You look worried, my son!" he said. "Have you been getting into a poker game with Gunten and Hacke, and losing your dollars?"

"Fathead!" said Frank, laughing.

"There goes the bell!" said Beauclerc.

The three chums started for the schoolhouse. Bob was in his usual high spirits, and Beauclerc looked very cheerful. But Frank Richards' face was overcast. He could not help thinking of what he had unluckily heard, and he was troubled about Mr. Slimmey.

A Secret to Keep!

MR. SLIMMEY was already in the school-room, and Frank Richards gave him a curious glance as he went to his place. The young master's face was pale and harassed.

Frank had noticed that he had been looking disturbed all the morning, and he realised now that he must have heard from his brother before the meeting in the timber after dinner.

Mr. Slimmey was absent-minded that afternoon to such an extent that the boys and girls in his class noticed it, and smiled to one another about it. But when lessons began Frank had no time to bestow on Mr. Slimmey.

Miss Meadows was a hard worker, and she made her pupils work, and Frank Richards' attention was kept to his own occupation.

He could not help thinking, however, of the strange state of affairs, and wondering what would happen.

When classes were dismissed for the day, and the Cedar Creek fellows poured out of the log schoolhouse, Mr. Slimmey took his way towards his cabin. He walked with his face downcast and a deep wrinkle in his brow.

"Slimmey looks down on his luck, doesn't he?" remarked Bob Lawless. "Kids have been bothering him, I suppose."

"He's not a bad sort," said Frank.

"One of the best!" said Bob, grinning. "But a chap can't help making fun of him. He really asks for it. Some of the kids rag him no end in class. Well, get off, Frank, if you're going to see him before we get home. Beau will hang about with me till you're done—won't you, Cherub?"

"Yes, rather!" said Beauclerc.

"By Jove, I'd forgotten!" said Frank.

"Forgotten you were going to do half an hour's Latin with him after school!" ejaculated Bob.

"I don't know whether I ought to bother him this evening," said Frank Richards, hesitating.

"Well, he's expecting you, you know."

"Perhaps I'd better go."

"I guess so. Get a move on."

Frank Richards followed the young master, who had gone into his cabin.

Once a week Frank remained for half an hour's tuition in Mr. Slimmey's cabin. The kind-hearted young man had made the offer when he had discovered that Frank was trying to keep up his Latin, and naturally Frank had been glad to accept.

He tapped at the cabin door and opened it. Mr. Slimmey's cabin was a small but very neat building, and it contained only two rooms, both on the ground floor. One was a bed-room, the other a study, as the master took meals with the household at the school.

Mr. Slimmey had made no preparations for Frank's lesson, and the schoolboy guessed that it had slipped his memory.

Instead of having the books on the table ready, the young man was pacing the room, his face pale, and his brows wrinkled.

He stared as Frank came in and endeavoured to calm himself.

"Richards! What is it, my boy?"

"My lesson, sir," said Frank.

"Oh! I had forgotten," said Mr. Slimmey, passing his hand across his brow. "If you will excuse me, Richards, I would like to put it off for once. I—I am not feeling very well."

"Certainly, sir!" said Frank. "Good-night, sir!"

"Good-night, Richards!"

Frank hurried back to his chums.

"Hallo! Not finished yet?" asked Bob.

"Putting it off," said Frank cheerily. "Mr. Slimmey's not very well. We can get off home!"

"Right-ho! I'll admit I'm hungry," said Bob, laughing.

The cousins walked their ponies down the trail to the spot where Vere Beauclerc's way branched off. Then they mounted and rode away in the gathering dusk to the Lawless Ranch.

Frank Richards hardly spoke a word during the ride home. He was concerned for poor Mr. Slimmey. He had received many kindnesses from the young man, and he was not ungrateful. He would have been very glad to hear that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police had succeeded in running down the fugitive from Vancouver.

In the Dead of Night!

"WHAT—what shall I do?"

The hour was late, and the assistant-master of Cedar Creek School was pacing his cabin, sleepless, restless.

Midnight had passed, but Paul Slimmey was not thinking of bed. He could not have slept.

He was thinking of his brother. The man who had disgraced him in the Old Country—the man who had been a black shadow on his life from boyhood—was at hand again.

Paul Slimmey had refused to help him. He knew that it was only too probable that the wastrel had about him at that very moment the proceeds of the robbery for which he was being tracked down by the Mounties.

To give him shelter and aid was impossible—indeed, the young master could not have done so if he would. Where was he to hide him?

But rascal as his twin brother was, he could not help feeling some concern in his fate. And his fate was sure.

If the Mounties had tracked him as far as Thompson, the end was certain. In Thompson they could not fail to learn that a Mr. Slimmey was a master at the lumber school. Rufus Slimmey's reason for coming to the district would be apparent to them at once when they knew that fact.

They would know that he had come there seeking his brother's help, and they would follow. He would be questioned. They would want to know if he had seen the fugitive. What was he to say?

"What shall I do?" muttered the young man again and again as he paced the cabin restlessly.

He stopped suddenly, as there was a sound at the door. Was it the police already? His heart almost ceased to beat as he faced the doorway, waiting.

The door opened. Framed in the doorway,

with the blackness behind him, stood the figure of the outcast.

"Rufus—you have come here!" panted Paul Slimmey.

The man stepped in and closed the door behind him. Without a word he dropped the wooden bar into its place. Then he turned to his brother. There was a moment of tense silence as they looked at one another in the light of the lamp.

Strangely alike they looked as they stood thus. Dissimilar as they were in character, Nature had cast the twins in the same physical mould. In height, in build, they were almost counterparts. The difference was marked in their clothes, and by Rufus Slimmey's moustache, and the fact that he did not wear glasses.

Mr. Slimmey stood rooted to the floor. His eyes were fixed upon his brother as they might have been fixed upon a serpent.

A mocking grin crossed Rufus Slimmey's face. "You're surprised to see me here, I guess!" he remarked.

"You must be mad to come here!" said Mr. Slimmey huskily. "You were mad to see me at all. The police will be here to-morrow at the latest."

"I know it."

"They will want to know if I have seen you."

"And you will tell them?"

"No!" said Mr. Slimmey. "But you must go while there is time. I will refuse to answer any questions when the police come. That is the utmost I can do."

The wastrel smiled and sat down on a stool at the table.

"Have you any food here?" he asked.

"Yes, if you are hungry."

"I am hungry."

"I will give you a meal before you go. But—"

"The food—the food!" interrupted the outcast. "Your eloquence can come later, my dear brother. You were always given too much to preaching."

In silence the young man set the food before him—corncakes and ham. The outcast devoured the meal ravenously.

Mr. Slimmey drew a deep breath when he had finished.

"I have done all I can for you—more than my conscience justifies," he said. "Now go!"

"I am not going yet," said the outcast coolly.

"My dear brother, it is years since I have enjoyed the pleasure of your company. Let me enjoy it a little longer. Do you remember the old story—what happened in England when you had to resign your position in a school—"

"I remember only too well!" said Mr. Slimmey bitterly. "Taking advantage of your resemblance to me, you penetrated to the place and committed a robbery. I had great difficulty in proving my innocence; and I had to resign and leave. It was like you—base and treacherous from your birth!"

Rufus Slimmey laughed.

"That old story came into my mind while I was dodging the Mounties," he remarked. "A game that was played once can be played again—if you choose to help. Look at me. In your clothes, and with a clean shave—"

"What do you mean?"

"Can't you guess? You are free to come and go as you like. Disappear for a week, and leave me in your place."

"What!"

"I have more than brains enough to take your place here," said the outcast, with a contemptuous curl of the lip. "And as Paul Slimmey, assistant-master to a backwoods school, I am safe—I can defy the police. They will see the resemblance—they will note that in any case. But I should play my part well. Your Miss Meadows would answer for it that I am Paul Slimmey—"

"That is enough! Will you go?"

"I guess not!"

Mr. Slimmey clenched his hands.

"Listen to me!" he said. "I have had more than enough of your rascality and insolence. If you are not gone within five minutes, I shall call in the stableman to help me secure you and hand you over to the police when they arrive. I mean that!"

The outcast watched his face, with a mocking smile.

"I believe you do!" he said.

"You will find that I do."

Rufus Slimmey rose to his feet.

"Then there is nothing for me to do but go, or else—"

"Or else what?"

"This!"

And as he spoke, the outcast was upon the young master with the spring of a tiger.

A Borrowed Identity!

CRASH! Mr. Slimmey went to the floor, taken wholly by surprise by the sudden attack. The knee of the outcast was planted on his chest, and two savage eyes looked down at him.

The young master struggled. But similar as they were in build, the outcast was twice a match for the young master in strength. He held him as helpless as an infant.

Mr. Slimmey opened his mouth to shout for help. But a heavy hand was laid upon it, choking back his cry.

"Silence, you fool!" hissed the outcast.

There was a panting gasp from Mr. Slimmey. Feeble as he was in the grasp of the unscrupulous ruffian, his courage was undaunted, and he still resisted.

Rufus Slimmey had grasped his right wrist. Now he shifted his knee to Mr. Slimmey's left arm, pinning it down; and all the time he kept his iron grip on his mouth.

In spite of Paul Slimmey's resistance, his right arm was forced under the outcast's left knee. Then the ruffian had his other hand free.

He extracted Mr. Slimmey's handkerchief and jammed it savagely into his mouth.

"That silences you, you fool!" he muttered.

He drew a length of cord from his pocket and bound the young master's wrists together. Then he rose to his feet.

Mr. Slimmey lay on the floor, helpless. But the ruffian had not finished yet. He bound another cord about the young man's ankles, reducing him to complete helplessness. Then he proceeded to fasten the gag more securely.

"That finishes you, Paul!"

Mr. Slimmey's eyes burned at him.

The ruffian opened the door of the bed-room, and lifted the bound man through the doorway and laid him on the bed. Carefully he covered the little window with the blind.

The bound man watched him, with fierce anger in his eyes, and amazement, too. He could not understand yet the scheme that was working in the rascal's cunning brain.

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Rufus Slimmey carried in the lamp from the other room. He searched about the bed-room and found shaving materials. Then he carefully shaved off his moustache before the little glass.

The moustache gone, his resemblance to the bound man on the bed was more striking. He stood looking down at his brother, with a sneering grin.

"You savvy?" he asked.

Mr. Slimmey shook his head.

"The Mounties will be here to-morrow to seek me. They will find me—but in your name. You will be locked in this room—silent. I shall face the inquiries of the police—and put them off the scent. You understand?"

Mr. Slimmey's eyes glittered, but he could not speak.

"If you had chosen to help me, it would have been easier," grinned the outcast. "But I have nerve enough for such a game. I never wanted nerve. And now I must trouble you for your clothes."

The bound man's face brightened for a moment. If he was unbound, there was a chance. But hope died almost as soon as it rose. The outcast was leaving nothing to chance.

He unfastened one limb at a time to remove the outer garments from his victim, and replaced the cords. In a quarter of an hour Mr. Slimmey was stripped of his outer clothes and he still lay bound on the bed.

Rufus Slimmey discarded the muddy, travel-worn garments from his own limbs and slipped on the clean, neat homespun the master had been wearing. His own garments he packed out of sight in a box.

The ruffian searched in the cabin and came back with several pieces of cord. The helpless man, already bound, was secured to the bed he was lying on. The outcast threw a buffalo robe over him.

"Sleep if you can," he said. "I'm sorry for this, Paul, but it's the only way. You will have to remain tied up unless you give me your promise not to betray me."

There was no sign from the master, and Rufus Slimmey shrugged his shoulders.

"Be it so!" he said.

He carried the lamp back into the other room, and closed the bed-room door and locked it, and placed the key in his pocket.

Then he replenished the stove, extinguished the lamp, and laid himself down to sleep, his feet to the stove. In three minutes the rascal was sleeping soundly.

There was no sleep for the unfortunate man in the next room. He counted the weary minutes till the light of dawn glimmered through the closely drawn blind. But after dawn was creeping in at the cabin window, the outcast was still sleeping.

He awakened as a knock came at the door. In a moment the buffalo robe was thrown aside, and the outcast was upon his feet. He stepped to the door, removed the bar, and opened it.

A smiling Chinese stood without.

"Good-mornee, Mistel Slimmey!"

"Good-morning!"

"Mistel Slimmey goee breakfast," said the Chinese.

"I guess so."

The Chinese servant glanced at him rather quickly as he spoke, and the keen-witted impostor divined at once that Mr. Slimmey was not in the habit of "guessing."

"Oh, yes, certainly!" he said.

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There was no suspicion, however, in the Chinaman's face. It was evident that he believed that the man before him was the assistant master of Cedar Creek School.

The outcast stepped back into the cabin, and the Chinaman followed him in. He was moving towards the bed-room door when the outcast interposed.

"What do you want?"

"Me doee loom," said the Chinaman, mildly surprised. "Makee beddee, allee samee."

For a moment the impostor's heart throbbled. He had expected something of this kind, and it had to be warded off.

"I could not sleep last night," he said. "I did not go to bed. There's nothing to do in my room!"

"Me dustee—"

"Oh, don't bother!"

Rufus Slimmey spoke sharply, and the Chinaman nodded and glided out. The sharp tone was enough for him, and he was not sorry probably to be relieved of his usual morning's work.

Rufus Slimmey watched him go, and breathed rather hard.

"There's risk!" he muttered. "Confounded risk! But it's the only way!"

Ten minutes later, Rufus Slimmey entered the log schoolhouse. Miss Meadows was already at the breakfast table, and he could see her through the open doorway from the hall.

The schoolmistress gave him a pleasant smile and greeting. The impostor's heart almost stood still as the Canadian girl's clear, honest eyes rested for a moment on his face. But there was no suspicion in her glance.

To her, as to the Chinese servant, the man was Paul Slimmey, the assistant master of Cedar Creek.

With cool confidence, Rufus Slimmey sat down to breakfast, and if he was listening intently for sounds from without, Miss Meadows did not observe it.

That morning he was well aware the Mounted Police would come—that day at the latest. He had to face the ordeal when they came, and in spite of his iron nerve there was apprehension in his heart. But not by the quiver of a muscle did he betray it.

Frank's Resolve!

"HERE'S the Cherub!" said Bob Lawless cheerily.

Frank Richards and his cousin jumped off their ponies at the fork of the trail. Vere Beauclerc, coming from the direction of Cedar Camp, was already there.

The three chums walked on together towards the school.

Frank Richards was very silent. He was thinking about what was likely to happen at the lumber school that day if Rufus Slimmey was still in the neighbourhood, and he had little doubt on that point.

The more Frank thought about it the more he felt that something ought to be done. Mr. Slimmey was not the kind of man to deal with that hardened and unscrupulous scoundrel. He might yield to Rufus Slimmey's demands, and involve himself in deep trouble by breaking the law in helping him.

His thoughtfulness drew the attention of both

his chums. Bob Lawless had already remarked on it more than once.

"Look here, Frank!" Bob exclaimed suddenly. "Get it off your chest!"

Frank started and coloured.

"What?" he asked.

"What ever it is that you're fogging your poor old brain about," said Bob. "You've been like a wooden image ever since yesterday morning. What on earth is it that you've got on your mind?"

"Out with it, Frank!" said Beauclerc, with a smile. "I've noticed that there's something up."

Frank paused for a minute.

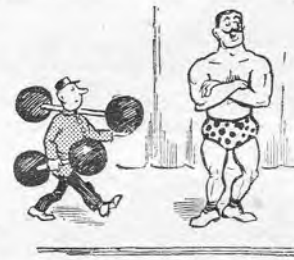
"Look here!" he said, at last. "I've been thinking of telling you fellows. It's about poor old Slimmey."

"What's the matter with him?"

"It's his secret, really, and I've no right to know it," said Frank, flushing. "But I do know it, by chance, and I don't know what I ought to do. I'll tell you fellows; but, of course, not a word at school about it."

Frank Richards explained what he had overheard on the bank of Cedar Creek the previous day.

"By gum!" said Beauclerc, when Frank had



"Now I, Monsieur Brown, will give my famous weight-lifting act."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Burnett, Ransom Sanatorium, Rainworth, Notts.

finished. "How rotten for poor old Slimmey! No wonder he looked worried."

"Poor old chap!" said Bob. "What a precious brother to have. I'd dot him in the eye if he were mine, I know that. Slimmey ought to have knocked him down and kicked him out."

"What I'm afraid of is that he may do Mr. Slimmey harm," said Frank. "He spoke like an utterly reckless rotter—and if he's going to be taken near the school it will be a rotten disgrace for poor old Slimmey. I wish the Mounties had caught him before he got here."

"They ought to have him," said Beauclerc. "I suppose Slimmey won't give him away, though."

"But it's a rotten position for him. He will be questioned. He can't very well tell lies about it."

"He wouldn't," said Bob decisively. "Slimmey's a bit of an ass, but he's straight all through. If he started telling lies they'd see through it at once. He might be arrested for harbouring a criminal. I think that's what it's called."

"Slimmey's not going to be done for on account of a rascal like that!" said Frank, with a gleam in his eyes. "Look here! We know he's hanging about this place in the timber. It's not our business exactly, only for Mr. Slimmey's sake the rascal ought to be collared. You agree to that?"

"I guess so."
 "Yea, rather!" said Beauclere.
 "Well, then, what about riding over to Thompson after morning lessons and fetching the Mounties to deal with him?" said Frank.
 "No need to say a word about Mr. Slimmey. I can simply tell them I know the man's in the timber, and they can come for him. He's hiding there, of course. They'll be glad to get on his track, and they may even collar him without Mr. Slimmey hearing a word about it."

"I guess it's a cinch," said Bob. "Do it! I'll come with you. The sooner he's in the penitentiary the better."

"Good egg!"
 And Frank Richards' mind was made up by the time the chums arrived at the school.

He had realised, after reflection, that Mr. Slimmey was in danger from the rascally wastrel; and that danger was to be averted, if Frank Richards could help it.

The chums looked at Mr. Slimmey when they entered the school-room. School had not yet begun, but the young man was in the school-room. Somewhat to Frank's surprise, he did not wear the same troubled expression that had been so marked the day before.

"Good-morning, Mr. Slimmey!" said Frank.
 "Good-morning, my boys!"

Frank looked at him. Mr. Slimmey's voice seemed deeper and stronger, he thought, that it had ever seemed before. There was a harder tone in it.

"Which evening shall I come, sir?" asked Frank, referring to the postponed Latin lesson.

"What?"
 "Which evening would suit you, sir?"
 The young man breathed hard for the moment.
 "To what are you referring?" he asked.
 "The Latin lesson, sir."
 "Oh, the—the Latin lesson!"

"Yes, sir," said Frank, in wonder, wondering why that startled look had leaped into Mr. Slimmey's eyes.

At the first glance Mr. Slimmey had seemed quite recovered from his trouble; but evidently he had forgotten the extra lesson he gave Frank once a week.

"I—I will speak to you about it later," said Mr. Slimmey in a halting voice. "At present I am busy."

"Very well, sir."
 The fellows were coming in now, and Frank and his chums went to their places. During first lesson there was a sound of giggling from the junior class.

The younger pupils of the lumber school were finding Mr. Slimmey that morning even more absent-minded than usual. He had even forgotten the names of the pupils whom he knew perfectly well, and seemed in some confusion about the school work.

Miss Meadows glanced at him once or twice with a puzzled expression in her clear, grey eyes.

In the middle of the morning there was a sudden interruption of lessons.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!
 Frank Richards and his chums exchanged quick glances. Horses were galloping up the trail to the log school. They knew who the newcomers must be. There was a jingling of bridles without.
 Miss Meadows, in surprise, looked towards the

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big, open doorway. A tall, athletic man, in a scarlet coat, appeared there. It was a sergeant of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Behind him a trooper appeared, with a rifle under his arm.

"Sergeant Lasalle!" whispered Bob.
 The big sergeant strode in and saluted Miss Meadows courteously.

"Excuse me, ma'am!" he said. "I'm sorry to interrupt!"

"Not at all, if you have business here," said Miss Meadows, in surprise.

"You have a master here of the name of Slimmey, I am told?"

"Yes; he is here."

"May I speak to him?"

"Certainly!" Miss Meadows looked round. "Mr. Slimmey, will you kindly come here? Sergeant Lasalle wants to speak to you."

Mr. Slimmey came over from the class.
 There was a hush of silence in the school-room. Frank Richards and his chums almost held their breath.

Face to Face!

SERGEANT LASALLE looked keenly and grimly at the young man, noting the clean-shaven face, the gold-rimmed glasses perched on the nose, over which the young man's eyes looked at him steadily enough.

The sergeant's hand rested carelessly on his belt within reach of a revolver. The striking resemblance between the man who stood before him and the fugitive from Vancouver could not escape the sergeant's keen eyes.

"What is wanted?" asked Mr. Slimmey.
 "You are wanted, I think!" said Sergeant Lasalle grimly.

"Indeed! I don't quite understand."

"Your name is Slimmey?"

"Paul Slimmey."

"That will be for you to prove. I am looking for Rufus Slimmey, late of Vancouver. If you are not Rufus Slimmey, you are his double. I have your photograph here—or his!"

Miss Meadows intervened.

"You are making a mistake, sergeant. This gentleman is Mr. Paul Slimmey, and I can answer for it. He has been a master in this school for more than a year."

The sergeant pursed his lips.

"Madam, I should accept your assurance without hesitation, but—well, look at this photograph."

Miss Meadows looked startled.

"It is certainly very like Mr. Slimmey, excepting that this man"—she indicated the photograph—"wears a moustache. But I repeat, sergeant, that Mr. Slimmey has lived here for a year or more, and I can answer for it that he has not been in Vancouver."

"The man I am looking for left Vancouver a week ago."

"I can explain," said the young master quietly. "Miss Meadows, I am ashamed to have to make this admission in your presence, and in the presence of the school. Rufus Slimmey is my twin brother."

"Oh!" said the sergeant, nonplussed. "I heard that a Mr. Slimmey was here, and fancied it might be a relation."

"The relationship is very close," said the



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PEN PALS COUPON
8-10-38

master. "Rufus is my twin brother. We are not friends. He has been a ne'er-do-well all his life. I knew he was in Vancouver. That is all. I am not surprised to hear that he is in trouble. He was in trouble in England once, and disgraced me there, as now he is doing here."

The sergeant's gaze was hard and keen, but the young man met it unflinchingly.

"If this man is your twin brother, sir, that explains the resemblance, of course," said Sergeant Lasalle. "For a moment I certainly thought that you were the man. But if you have been a master in this school for a year—"

"I can answer for that," said Miss Meadows.

"I am sorry for the mistake!" said the sergeant frankly. "It only remains for me to ask Mr. Slimmey whether he has seen or heard anything of his brother in the last few days?"

Frank Richards tensed as he heard the question. But the young master faced it calmly.

"Nothing," he replied. "I do not correspond with my brother. After the shame he brought upon me, in the Old Country I cast him off for ever. If he communicated with me I should not answer him."

"He has been traced to this locality, sir."

"Good heavens! Are you sure?"

"I guess I should not be here otherwise. He was seen near Thompson, and seen again making

in this direction. I guess, sir, that there's no doubt he was making for this quarter to see you."

"Impossible! He knows that I should denounce him at once!" exclaimed the master.

"You would do that?"

"I should not shield a criminal, sir; and I gather, from what you say, that he has committed a crime in Vancouver?"

"He has committed a robbery, and lit out with a thousand dollars of other people's money," said the sergeant quietly. "The man's got to be found, and the money's got to be found. He could scarcely have come into this quarter except to seek help from you."

"He would have been disappointed, then."

"You have not seen him?"

"No."

"Nor heard from him?"

"No."

"Then I need trouble you no longer."

And, with a military salute, the sergeant wheeled and tramped out of the school-room.

Mr. Slimmey went quietly back to his place.

Frank Richards looked at his chums. Mr. Slimmey had lied, but it was not for Frank to betray him, and so he decided to hold his peace.

(Next Week: "THE SCHOOLBOY'S SHOW DOWN.")

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THE ST. WINNY'S FOOTBALLERS WHO TOOK THE FIELD WITH A RAGGING HANGING OVER THEIR HEADS IF THEY WERE LICKED!



The woeful footballers of the slackers' eleven broke into a run and raced for the Benbow. As they ran clods of turf began to whizz after them.

All Clear!

LOOK here, Drake—" Vernon Daubeny of the Shell was waiting for the Fourth to come out of their Form-room after lessons were over on Wednesday morning.

The Shell were out first that morning, and Daubeny had been waiting some minutes, leaning in a graceful attitude on the mizzenmast of the old warship. He detached himself from the mast as a crowd of the Fourth came out, and intercepted Drake and Rodney.

"Well?" said Drake.
 "I've got something to say to you," said Daubeny, "about that notice you put on the board this morning—"

"Go ahead!" said Drake, with a grin.

"I've taken it down—"

"Like your cheek—"

"And chucked it into the river—for the second time!" said Daubeny.

"Well, I dare say all St. Winifred's knows it by heart by this time," said Drake, laughing.

"He, he, he!" came from Tuckey Toodles, who had stopped to hear what the buck of the Shell had to say. "I saw some of the Sixth reading it and grinning over it. He, he, he!"

Daubeny gritted his teeth.

"I want to know what you mean by it, Drake!" he said savagely.

"Exactly what I said. You're playing Highcliffe this afternoon with a team of hopeless duds, and you're going to get licked. There's still time for you to make up a fighting team, if you like. If you don't, and if Highcliffe lick you at footer, you're going to get the ragging of your life."

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The Slackers' Eleven!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

"He, he, he!" chortled Tuckey Toodles. "Yes, you look out, Daub—I'm going for you, you know."

"You fat idiot!" growled Daubeny.

It was not Tuckey Toodles the great man of the Shell was worried about. But Jack Drake's notice, with a long list of the names of the Fourth Formers attached to it, worried him considerably.

Vernon Daubeny did not intend to confess that it worried him, but undoubtedly it did worry him, all the same.

Possibly he hoped to beat Highcliffe with his team of bucks, but he knew enough about football to know that a victory was a very unlikely contingency.

"I suppose you mean that you're goin' to cause trouble because I've dropped you from the eleven," he said.

"It's not only that. You've not put in a single man who can play."

"I think I'm skipper," said Daubeny. "Isn't it a skipper's business to choose his own team?"

Play up or be ragged! That is Jack Drake's method of putting ginger into the slackers' eleven of St. Winifred's!

"It's a skipper's business to win matches, too," retorted Drake. "There's still time for you to do the right thing."

"Which means playing you?" sneered Daubeny. "Which means making at least six or seven changes," answered Drake calmly. "I will suggest a few players, if you like. Myself—"

"Of course!" sneered the Shell fellow.

"And Rodney, Estcourt, Sawyer major, and Rawlings—"

"And the whole shabby gang of outsiders—what?"

"Shabby or not, they can play footer, and your crowd can't, and you know it."

"Well, I'm not doin' anythin' of the kind."

"That's for you to settle, as junior captain. But you're expected to win the match: at least, to put up a good game," said Drake. "We shall be there watching. If you play up and lose through no fault of your own, you're all right. If you slack—as usual—and get disgracefully licked—as usual—you're going to get a thumping

good ragging to teach you better. It's the only way."

"The only way!" assented Rodney, with a grin. Daubeny clenched his hands.

"Well, I'm not goin' to make any changes in the team," he said. "And I'm not goin' to have a shindy after the match, Drake."

"One or the other, I think," answered Drake. "You've gathered up enough lickings for St. Winny's. The record last season was enough to make a St. Winny's fellow ashamed to look anyone in the face. This term it's going to be different."

"There's one thing you've forgotten," said Daubeny.

"What's that?"
"Egan and Torrence and I have a collection of your IO U's," said Daubeny viciously. "You owe ten quid among us. How would you like your IO U's pinned up on the notice-board alongside your precious notice, for all St. Winny's to read, with the word 'welsher' added?"

"Phew!"
"That's what I had to say," said Daubeny. "You'd better think it over before you put up your dashed notice again, Drake!"

To Daubeny's surprise Drake burst into a laugh. "Not at all," he answered. "You see, I happen to have the money, and I was coming along to your study to-day to ask for my IO U's."

Daubeny started.
"You've got the tin?"
"Every penny. You see, I've sold my bike and many other things," smiled Drake. "I've sent Gentleman Smith a money order for his five pounds, and I've got the rest for you and your pals. Feeling pleased?"

Vernon Daubeny did not look pleased. The money was little enough to the wealthiest fellow at St. Winifred's, and the debt had given him a hold over Drake—once his pal, but now his coming rival for the leadership of the Lower School.

"We'll come along now and settle," said Drake, laughing. "I was a silly ass to play cards in your study, Daub; but a fellow must expect to pay for being a silly ass, and I'm ready to pay. Trot on, old chap."

Without a word, Daubeny turned and strode away, and Drake and Rodney followed him to his study.

Torrence and Egan were there, evidently waiting for news, and they looked surprised as Drake and Rodney came in with the chief of the bucks.

"Trot out the merry documents," said Drake, with a smile, as he threw a little bundle of currency notes on the table.

"Oh!" said Egan. "You're paying up!"

"That's it."
Daubeny's face was dark and grim, but there was no help for it. The three bucks handed over the IO U's as the money was counted out, and the Fourth Formers left the study smiling. After they were gone the trio exchanged glances.

"Not so much under your thumb as you thought, Daub!" remarked Torrence.

"This dishes us!" said Egan. "I—I say, what about putting Drake in the eleven, after all?"

Daubeny compressed his lips.
"Rot! Is a footer skipper goin' to be threatened by a player he's left out of the eleven? A pretty state of affairs."

Egan shrugged his shoulders.
"It's no good riding the high horse, Daub. I'm with you in keeping those shabby outsiders out; but it's no good pretending we've got a winning team—we haven't. If Highcliffe walk over us

easily, lots of fellows will be ready to back up Drake over this."

"We've got to beat Highcliffe, then."

"Oh, we'll try, of course."
"Look here, you fellows have got to play up!" growled Daubeny. "After all, we have had a rotten record. I can see that Drake's goin' to make capital out of this, and have a bid for the captaincy. We've got to keep the footer in our hands; and, dash it all, we've got to show that we can win sometimes. None of your slackin' in this match, Torrence."

"Oh, rot!"
"And none of your foul in', Egan!"
Egan flushed.

"Who fouls?" he demanded angrily.
"You do! You got a penalty against us last time! Kickin' a fellow you don't like is all very well, but not in the penalty area and fairly under the nose of the referee. We've all got to be jolly careful this time; if we make too rotten a show it may even come to a new election, with Drake up against me for the captain's job."

"That wouldn't be a bad thing for St. Winny's, anyhow!" retorted Egan. "If the fellows had any sense they'd jump at the chance!"

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Daubeny.

"Same to you!"
"Chuck it!" murmured Torrence, coming between the two friends as they glared at one another. "No rows in this study! Keep all that for Drake!"

Daubeny, with a grunt, stamped out of the study. The great chief of the bucks of St. Winifred's was disturbed in his mind. Perhaps he saw before him the looming shadow of downfall.

The Highcliffe Match!

JACK DRAKE'S face was very bright as he walked along the deck of the Benbow with Rodney.

"I'm glad that's off my mind!" he remarked.
"You'll miss your jigger, and your camera and other things."

"That doesn't matter. Out of debt, out of danger, you know. Now all's clear."

And Drake went in to dinner with his chum in great spirits.

There had been a good deal of change in the rather wayward junior since his friendship with Dick Rodney. The "cut" from the bucks of St. Winifred's had wounded him at first, but he had almost forgotten that now. Indeed, he wondered a little how he could have been friendly with Daubeny & Co. so long, for he had never really been deceived as to Daub's character.

After dinner there was a buzz of talk among the St. Winifred's juniors. The notice that had been put on the board by Jack Drake had vanished, but it was not forgotten. It was not likely that any fellow in the Fourth or the Shell would miss the football match that afternoon. It was of unusual interest, in view of what might follow it.

All eyes were on Daubeny & Co. when they walked across the gangway to the shore.

The knotty eleven seemed well satisfied with themselves; possibly some of them did not take Jack Drake's threat very seriously.

Daubeny took it seriously enough, but he did not allow his lofty features to indicate the thoughts in his mind.

As a matter of fact, Daubeny was not pleased

with his team, and he had been urging upon them the necessity of playing the game of their lives—not on account of Drake's menace, of course, but to show the school generally that they knew how to uphold the colours of St. Winifred's.

That was too new a line for Daub to take, however, for it to have much effect on his men.

Chetwynd of the Fourth confided to Dudley that he wasn't going to make "dashed hard work" of a game of football, and Dudley fully agreed with him. Egan was looking quite sulky; Daub's lectures had not pleased him. Torrence had even suggested retiring from the eleven, and letting Daub fill his place as he chose, but his offer was refused. Daubeny was determined to play the team as he had selected it.

Quite a little army of juniors followed the chosen champions to Little Side.

At a short distance from the gleaming Chadway lay the playing fields of the school on the river. It was a cold, sunny afternoon, and ideal for football. The Highcliffians had not yet arrived, but their motor-coach was expected every moment as the St. Winifred's juniors thronged round the field and behind the goals.

Jack Drake came along with Dick Rodney and Tuckey Toodles, and the juniors who had signed the manifesto followed them in a crowd—Estcourt, Sawyer major, Conway, Furdy, Rawlings, Hooke, and the rest. Vernon Daubeny glanced at the compact array and scowled.

"By gad, we're getting an audience to-day!" remarked Egan. "Blessed if I think there's a junior left on the ship!"

"Confound them!" muttered Daubeny.

"They seem to think it's going to be interesting!" grinned Egan. "There's some of the seniors watching from the ship."

Daubeny glanced towards the river. On the poop of the old Benbow could be seen Lovelace and Armitage of the Sixth, gazing shorewards, and smiles could be detected on their faces. Tomlinson and Wake and Hammersley of the Fifth were leaning on the rail, and staring at the football ground and grinning. Evidently the seniors were interested, no doubt owing to Jack Drake's manifesto.

Poole of the Fifth, who was referee, was grinning, too, as he came on the ground.

And round the field the swarms of juniors were grinning, as if it were a comedy they had come there to see.

Daubeny & Co. were glad when the Highcliffe coach came hooting down the road.

The Highcliffe team looked fit and well enough. Frank Courtenay, the junior skipper of Highcliffe, shook hands with Daubeny in a rather formal way. Daubeny was not the fellow Courtenay could feel very friendly towards.

Highcliffe were not long in their dressing-room, and they came very lightly into the field, where the bucks of St. Winifred's were loafing.

"They look a good lot!" said Dick Rodney to Drake, watching the men in yellow and black with interest. They certainly looked a better team than the players in green and white.

Drake nodded.

"Yes, they're a fine side!" he said.

"Which is Courtenay?"

"The chap with the fair hair. Chap he's talking to is De Courcy; they call him the Caterpillar. Smithson is the goalie—that squatty chap. Hallo, Daub's going to kick off!"

The kick-off fell to St. Winifred's. All eyes were on the field as the leather rolled.

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The game started fast. Almost from the whistle Courtenay of Highcliffe had the ball, and he brought it up the field. It was clear that Highcliffe had put a good deal of time and practice into training. The home halves were left standing, and the backs put up only the feeblest defence against the rapid attack.

Chilcot, in goal, was quickly busy. The Shell goalkeeper was unusually active, too. It was a dangerous shot that came in, but Chilcot fisted it out. It met the head of the Caterpillar, however, and came back like a pip from an orange. Chilcot wasn't equal to that. The ball shot past his ear and lodged in the net.

There was a buzz.

"Goal!"

"Goal!" said Jack Drake, in deep disgust. "Goal in the first five minutes, and the ball nearly touched the howling ass! He could have stopped it with his eyelashes!"

"What a frightful dud!" said Rodney.

"That ass keep goal!" growled Sawyer. "He couldn't keep white rabbits!"

"Chilcot, go home!" roared two score of voices.

Chilcot's face was red and sulky as he slung out the ball. Courtenay & Co. smiled as they walked back.

Vernon Daubeny stopped to speak to his goalkeeper. His face was flushed and his eyes glittering. Nagging a player in the progress of a game was really not a good method of getting the best out of him; but, apparently, it was the best Daubeny knew.

"You idiot!" he said.

Chilcot stared at him.

"What's biting you Daub?" he grunted.

"Do you call that keepin' goal?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Are you goin' to let them pile up a couple of dozen?" hissed Daubeny. "It looks like it, at this rate!"

"Who let them through?" inquired Chilcot. "If the half-backs and backs stand about star-gazing, what's a chap to do?"

Daubeny gave him a savage look, and walked after his men. Chilcot shrugged his shoulders, and grinned. He had given Daub as good as he gave, and that was a solace. Keeping the ball out of goal was a lesser consideration.

St. Winifred's kicked off again, with their ears tingling from the remarks they heard on all sides. The St. Winifred's crowd expressed their opinion freely, especially the crowd standing round Jack Drake and Rodney. It wasn't very encouraging to their champions, perhaps; but they could not help that. If Daubeny put a "dud" in goal he was entitled to know what they thought of the dud, and they let him know.

At that moment, if a referendum had been taken of the St. Winifred's juniors, there would certainly have been a majority for giving Daubeny of the Shell the "sack." Unfortunately, it was too late for that, and the disgusted onlookers took it out in catcalls.

Six—Nil!

"PLAY up!"

"Good man!"

The unexpected had happened.

Perhaps a little invigorated by the catcalls, the men in green and white had been playing up, and for ten minutes or more Highcliffe had been kept on the defensive. And when De Courcy came

through with the ball, Seeley, at centre-half, more by luck than anything else, robbed him and passed it forward. It went to Vernon Daubeny, who, with really creditable swiftness and decision, raced it up the field.

It was a great chance, and the St. Winny's crowd, ceasing to catcall, gave Daubeny a roar of encouragement. There was no doubt that Daubeny could play footer if he chose to take the trouble.

Daub's rush carried him through the Highcliffe defence, and if the other forwards had backed him up a goal might have materialised. But support was sadly lacking.

Truro and Upham, the wingers, were lagging behind. Egan and Torrence, the insides, made little effort to back up their leader. Daubeny was left on his own.

Even so, the great Daub did unexpectedly well. There was no one to whom to pass the ball; but, with splendid ball control, he ran it through the halves and round the back who opposed him, and came with a rush up to the enemy's goal. There was a roar:

"Good old Daub!"

"Bravo!" roared Jack Drake, quite forgetting that he was on fighting terms with Daubeny of the Shell. "Good man!"

"Shoot! Shoot!" yelled Sawyer major.

"It's a giddy one-man game!" said Dick Rodney. "If any of those chumps knew how to play footer—"

"Go it, Daub!"

"Now's your chance!"

"Shoot!"

Daubeny did his best. He drove the ball in, and Smithson, the goalie, punched it out, right to a Highcliffe back.

Perhaps the back was a little slow. For Daubeny quickly closed in on him and robbed him of the ball. But he had no time for a good shot; he kicked wildly, and miskicked altogether. Smithson came out to the ball, collared it quickly, and drove it high up the field.

Daubeny was on his back as the ball sailed.

The play went away to midfield, and Daubeny staggered up and followed it, gasping. He had done well, as the loud cheers from the St. Winny's crowd testified; but football was not a one-man game. His big effort only showed up more clearly the incapacity of the men he had chosen, and mingled with the cheers for Daubeny were less-complimentary remarks to his followers.

"Wake up, Torrence!"

"Seeley, go home!"

"Get off the field, Egan; you may get hurt! I say, Egan's blubbing; his toe's been trodden on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Egan scowled savagely. He was not "blubbing" or anything like it; that was a playful exaggeration. But there was no doubt that he threw away chances in the field because he would not risk the smallest damage. And, as Sawyer major indignantly remarked, if a fellow's funky, perhaps the poor beast couldn't help it, but there was no need for him to make an exhibition of it on the football field.

"Daub's a good man, if he likes," Dick Rodney remarked to Drake. "He's out of condition, though; he's got bellows to mend already."

"But what a team!" said Drake.

"Uncertainly!" said Rodney, laughing. "Egan's the worst, but the rest are much of a muchness. Daub must be a silly ass to play a dud crowd like that, whether they're his pals or not. He's got no chance."

"Not a ghost of one!"

Daubeny certainly had bellows to mend, and he did not put in another, great effort. But he managed to keep his men together somehow, and keep out the Highcliffians till the whistle went for the interval. Much to the surprise of the visitors, after their first easy goal, they did not score again in the first half; and it was a surprise to the St. Winny's crowd, too.

But the omens were gloomy for the second half. Daub's team had been run almost to a standstill, and how they would last through the second "forty-five" was a mystery.

They looked fagged enough when they lined up again, and Poole of the Fifth blew the whistle.

Daubeny was in better trim than the rest, but he felt tired. Probably the whole team would have taken things very easily but for the "manifesto" of Jack Drake. So much public attention had been drawn to their loafing through games that for very shame's sake they had to play up a little. For ten minutes or so in the second half they held Highcliffe.

Then the collapse came.

From a quick rush of the visitors the home defence melted away like butter in the sun, and the Highcliffe forwards came sailing through. And when a shot was sent in, Chilcot missed it by feet.

"If there's a worst player in that crowd it's the goalie!" Rodney remarked. "But the others are nearly as rotten!"

"Goals are cheap to-day," grunted Sawyer major—"as cheap as duck's eggs in the summer, by gum!"

"Play up, you loafers!" yelled Tuckey Toodles.

"Go home, Chilcot!"

Five minutes after the restart the Highcliffians were round the home goal again. The change of ends had brought the wind against them, but it made no difference or little. The home players were nearly spent, and the visitors walked through them. The ball landed in the net again, Chilcot this time missing it only by inches.

"Three up!" said Tuckey Toodles.

"What's the odds against three dozen?"

Some of the St. Winny's fellows walked off the ground, disgusted. Some of them howled, and there was a chorus that rose and fell:

"Go home, Chilcot!"

In the distance, along the side of the Benbow, grinning seniors could be seen. The Fifth and Sixth were unusually interested in junior football.

"Four up," said Drake at last, breathing hard, "and St. Winny's haven't broken their duck!"

DETECTIVE KERR INVESTIGATES.

Solution:

KERR: Though everybody was able to give some account of his visit to the Tower, only one junior had his facts wrong. That was Trimble. Trimble had obviously gone to the trouble of memorising the date of the murder of the princes—1483—but he had mixed up the order in which visitors are invariably conducted over the Tower—first through the White Tower, then the Bloody Tower, and finally to the Wakefield Tower, to see the Crown Jewels. All the others, even Mellish, had this right. Trimble was thunder-struck when I told him his bluff was called, but, under pressure, he owned up to Linton, thus getting the ban placed on the whole party lifted.

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"Five!" said Rodney, a few minutes later.

It was getting near the finish now. Ten minutes remained to go, and the Highcliffians were grinning irrepressibly. They had found St. Winifred's easy stuff before, but never so easy as this.

Even Daubeny, self-satisfied as he was, had a sickly look. He realised that he had ridden the high horse not wisely but too well on this occasion.

Even one or two capable men would have saved him from this woeful exhibition, and his tardy resource of nagging and bullying his men was quite ineffective—indeed, Egan openly sulked after receiving a savage "jawing" before two or three grinning Highcliffians, and for a time he loafed with his hands in his pockets and let the game go by.

"And they call that football!" said Sawyer major, almost weeping.

"Look at 'em grinning on the Benbow!" said Toodles.

"There go Highcliffe again!"

"Back up, you slackers!" roared Sawyer major, shaking his fist at the faltering defenders. "Put your beef into it! You're not playing marbles!"

Highcliffe came sailing on, and the home defenders were left standing. Egan, waking up for once, tackled the Caterpillar, who was sailing on to goal. De Courcy lightly shouldered him off, and went sailing on, and Egan, his face flushed and full of rage, made a spring at him and tripped him up.

The astounded Caterpillar lost his balance and fell. There was a screech from the whistle. All Highcliffe were yelling:

"Foul! Penalty!"

"Oh, the fool! The rotter!" gasped Jack Drake. "He's done that before—I've seen him! Right in the penalty area, too. It's a penalty kick."

HARRY WHARTON & CO. —SLAVES!

Sold into slavery by a scoundrelly slave-trader, what hope have Harry Wharton & Co. of regaining their freedom? Never before have the Greyfriars chums been faced with such a desperate situation!



"THE SCHOOLBOY SLAVES!"

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Courtenay ran up to his chum and helped the Caterpillar to his feet.

"You fool, Egan!" hissed Daubeny. "Didn't I warn you—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Egan loafed back.

"It's a penalty!" said Rodney.

Frank Courtenay took the kick and sent the ball into the net. And again there was a chorus:

"Go home, Chilcot!"

"Six up!" said Jack Drake. "What a game!"

The sixth goal was the last. As Estcourt remarked, it was enough and to spare. The whistle rang out for the last time, and the players came off.

"And now," said Drake, "as soon as Highcliffe are gone—"

"Then for the ragging!"

"You bet!"

Jack Drake & Co. were ready, and their numbers had been reinforced now. Almost every fellow on the field was ready to aid them in dealing with the "duds" who had disgraced the school colours. And Highcliffe were not long in going. Egan's deliberate foul had led to strained relations. Frank Courtenay politely, but firmly, declined all hospitality; and as soon as the visitors had changed they returned directly to their motor-coach. Two or three of the bucks' eleven had already sought to make their way to the Benbow, but the aspect of the crowd was too menacing, and they cut back to the pavilion. Eleven exceedingly exhausted and unhappy champions skulked in the dressing-room, fully conscious that the storm was to burst as soon as the Highcliffe coach rolled away.

Mobbed!

"HAVE them out!" Highcliffe were gone, and a mob of juniors roared outside the timber building. And the knuts of St. Winny's looked at one another with scared faces.

Daubeny was the only one who showed any firmness, and even he was deeply troubled.

"There's goin' to be a row!" said Torrence. "That ruffian Drake is goin' to keep his word."

"Our friends will stand by us!" said Egan.

"Doesn't sound as if they will," said Chilcot. "Listen to them! I fancy we could count our friends on the fingers of one hand at present."

Vernon Daubeny muttered an oath.

"Well, what are we going to do, Daub?" asked Chetwynd. "I suppose we're not sticking in here all the evening, are we?"

"Hang them! Hang you! What sort of a game did you put up?" said Daubeny bitterly.

"I may lose the captaincy over this."

"You put us in the team," said Egan sourly. "Perhaps we'd have done better with a decent skipper, too!"

"You loafin' rotter—"

"Better language, please. We're not going to be slanged by you, Daub."

"What's the good of slanging," said Chetwynd. "That dashed crowd is howling for our blood. What are we going to do?"

"Go and eat coke!" snapped Daubeny.

"Have them out!" came a roar from outside. "Funks! Show your noses!"

Daubeny set his lips.

"There's Lovelace coming!" said Torrence, glancing from the window. "Not before he's wanted, by gad!"

Lovelace of the Sixth strode on to the field.

MORE "FOOTER-STAMPS" FOR YOUR PILE!

Read all about this Great Offer on page 2.



RULES: 500 Footballs will be awarded in the October contest to the readers declaring and sending in the largest number of "goals" scored with "Footer-Stamps." The Editor may extend or amend the prize list in case of too many ties, and no reader may win more than one prize in "Footer-Stamps."

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(N.B.—"Footer-Stamps" may also be collected from the following papers: "Magnet," "Modern Boy," "Sports Budget," "Boy's Cinema," "Detective Weekly," "Triumph," "Wild West Weekly," "Thriller," and "Champion.")

OVERSEAS READERS! You pals who are far away—you're in this great scheme also, and special awards will be given for the best scores from overseas readers. There will be a special closing date for you as well, of course!

The yells of the angry juniors died away as the captain of St. Winifred's came among them, smiling.

"Now then, not so much row!" said Lovelace.

"What's going on here?"

"We're after Daub!" yelled Sawyer major.

"We're going to scalp him!"

"Yes, rather! Have him out!"

Lovelace laughed.

"You're going to do nothing of the sort," he said. "Quiet now! Daubeny, come out of that, and get back to the ship at once!"

"All right, Lovelace."

Daubeny & Co. came out, with their coats and mufflers hastily thrown on.

In the presence of the captain of the school it was not possible to lay hands upon the delinquents, but the looks they received were very eloquent.

"Cut it!" said Lovelace.

Daubeny & Co. started for the ship. Lovelace followed them slowly.

There were howls again now, and clods of turf began to whiz at the bucks.

Egan broke into a run, and the rest of the woeful footballers followed his example. They raced for the Benbow.

It was rather an imprudent move, for the great and lofty captain of St. Winifred's could not deign to run after them to keep them company. By running they lost Lovelace's protection.

"Now's the time!" exclaimed Drake.

"Give them socks!"

"Now then, quiet, I tell you!" roared Lovelace from the rear.

But Jack Drake & Co. turned a deaf ear for once to the captain of the school.

They rushed to close quarters, and as they rushed, Daubeny & Co. fairly fled.

Old Cootie, the porter, was standing by the gate at the end of the gangway, and his eyes bulged as he watched the remarkable scene. Old Cootie

was hastily shoved aside as Daubeny & Co. came with a breathless rush up to the gangway, with the enraged juniors whooping behind.

"Put it on!" gasped Daubeny.

"Oh crumbs!"

With a wild trampling of feet, the knotty footballers swept along the gangway to the lower deck of the Benbow. Fear is said to lend wings, and certainly that seemed to be the case now. Jack Drake & Co. were only entering on the gangway when Daubeny & Co. swarmed off it to the deck of the old warship.

"After them!" roared Sawyer major.

On the ship the hapless bucks were scattering wildly for shelter. The avengers came on with a yell. But the rush stopped and the yell died down as an awful figure in cap and gown stepped in front of the mob.

"Boys! What—what—"

It was the Head!

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Tuckey Toodles.

"What is the meaning of this unseemly rush?" asked the Head sternly.

"Er—were we rushing, sir?" said Sawyer major, finding the Head's eye upon him.

"Don't be ridiculous, boy! You were creating an uproar! You were behaving like boys from the Second Form! If there is any more commotion, I shall have to consider suspending football until you learn to return from the field in an orderly manner! Now go to your studies!"

Suddenly transformed from lions into lambs, the juniors of St. Winny's melted meekly away under the glance of the Head.

It was a respite for Daubeny & Co.

But it was only a respite, as Vernon Daubeny well knew as he turned the key in the door of his study, and waited, palpitating, for what was to happen next.

(Next Week: "DAUB'S WAY OUT.")

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THE TOFF'S ENEMY!

(Continued from page 22.)

"That you arranged for your friend, Mr. Lodgey, to call while I was here, and to hood-wink me," said the colonel.

"Uncle, I—I—"

"Perhaps it was not difficult," said the colonel, his voice like the lash of a whip. "I am a plain old soldier, unused to trickery. I feared, Gerald, that you were a rascal, but I did not know that you were so unscrupulous as you have proved yourself."

"I—I deny it!" muttered Croke thickly.

"If you deny, Gerald, that the whole affair was a rascally comedy, designed to deceive me as to your cousin's conduct, the matter shall be investigated rigorously. The headmaster of this school shall be asked to take the matter up, and institute a close inquiry as to which of you was on familiar terms with that scoundrel at Rylcombe. Your friends shall be questioned as to what they know, and not a stone shall be left unturned to establish the truth. Are you prepared to face such an inquiry?"

Croke's knees failed him, and he sank into a chair, shaking. Well he knew what the result of such an inquiry must be—the disclosure of his many shady secrets, enough to cause him to be expelled from the school a dozen times over.

The colonel did not need an answer from the wretched, nerveless plotter.

"You have nothing to say, Gerald?"

"I—I—I—" Gerald's voice was dry and husky. "I—I wasn't so much to blame, uncle. It was Lodgey's idea from the start. He hated Talbot, and—and he led me into it. I—I—I never meant—"

"That will do," broke in Colonel Lyndon. "You have said enough. I am not your father, Gerald, and you are not answerable to me. But relieve me of the sight of you! Go!"

Croke staggered from the room.

A compassionate glance from Talbot followed him. In that moment of shame and humiliation and misery, the Toff could feel for the wretched plotter whose schemes had fallen to pieces about his ears.

"Reginald!" The colonel's voice was softened. "I left you in anger, my boy. It seems that I have been deceived. I do not excuse myself. I should have trusted you better. I see that now. I wronged you, and I ask your forgiveness."

Talbot could not speak; but he grasped the brown hand that was held out to him.

Tom Merry met his chum eagerly as he came into the Common-room.

The colonel's car had rolled away from the gates of St. Jim's.

"All serene?" asked Tom.

"Right as rain, old fellow! I—I can't say how glad I am. It was rotten to part bad friends with my uncle when he was leaving to-morrow."

"But how did your uncle know?" asked Tom. Talbot laughed merrily.

"It was Levison minor."

"Levison minor?" ejaculated Tom.

"Yes. The cheeky little beggar went to the camp—"

"So that's where he was when he missed call-over!"

"Yes. And the colonel's begged him off with Railton. Selby won't give him the licking he's got in store," said Talbot. "The cheek of it—to trot over to the camp and ask to see the C.O. I But I'm jolly glad he did. And it was ripping of my uncle to come over at once."

"I'm jolly glad!" said Tom.

Talbot hurried away in search of Levison minor. He found him on his way to the Third Form dormitory.

"Not licked?" asked Talbot.

Frank grinned cheerfully.

"No. Railton spoke to Selby, and I'm let off with a caution. I—I say, you're not waxy about my chipping in?"

Talbot laughed.

"I'm jolly glad you chipped in, as it turns out," he said. "You're a plucky little beggar, and you've done me a good turn. And if I can ever do you one, kid, you've only got to say so."

"Stick to Ernie," whispered Levison minor.

"Through thick and thin," said Talbot quietly.

(Next Week: "TO SAVE HIS BROTHER.")

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