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TOM MERRY & CO OF ST JINS
BY
MARTIN CLIFFORD.



LUMLEY-LUMLEY



A.A. D'ARCY



LOWTHER



TOM MERRY.



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By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1.

Too Bad!

LUMLEY!"

"Bai Jove! Where is that boundah Lumlay-Lumlay?"

The dulcet tones of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth form at St. Jim's, echoed along the passage.

But there was no reply.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus for the second time. "Bai Jove, this weally-too bad of Lumlay! I huvwied feahfully ovah tyin' my necktie as to be weady, and now he's keepin' me waitin'!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy removed his eyeglass from his eye, polished it upon the corner of a cambric handkerchief, and replaced it. He was standing at the head of the stairs in the School House at St. Jim's, near the door of Study No. 6. And he was waiting for Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

It did not immediately occur to Arthur Augustus to go and look for Lumley-Lumley. He stood in the passage and called:

"Lumlay! Lumlay!"

And still there was no reply. But there came a shout from Study No. 6, the famous apartment which D'Arcy shared with Blake and Herries and Baby of the Fourth.

"Shut up!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Shut up!" roared Jack Blake, from within the study. "How do you think I am to write a blessed German impot with you standing like a blessed ass in the blessed passage, roaring away like a blessed bull?"

"I wefuse to be compared to a blessed bull, Blake. I——"

"Ring off, then."

"I wefuse to wing off! I am callin' Lumlay!"

"Blow Lumley!"

"I wefuse. I wegard your wemark as wicidulous. I have awwanged to go out with Lumlay-Lumlay this aftahnoon, as you have been ass enough to get yourself detained——"

"Shut up!"

"Wats! Lumlay-Lumlay! Lumlay-Lumlay! Lumlay-Lumlay!" Trilled Arthur Augustus, his voice rising crescendo.

"Go and look for him!" shrieked Blake. "If I come out to you, I'll squash your topper! Go and look for the other idiot!"

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

And Arthur Augustus started along the passage.

Now, although Blake had compared D'Arcy's voice to the roaring of a blessed bull, to use his elegant expression, D'Arcy's tones really bore no

resemblance whatever to those of a bull, blessed or otherwise. The swell of St. Jim's was great on form; his aim was always to cultivate that repose which stamps the caste of Veré de Vere. And so, although he was calling to Lumley-Lumley, his voice did not rise very loudly, and it was not surprising that a fellow shut up in his study down the passage did not hear it.

Arthur Augustus walked along, with his elegant saunter, till he reached the door of the study shared by Lumley-Lumley, Mellish, and Levison, of the Fourth. He tapped at the door, and pushed it open.

His eyeglass gleamed into the study.

"Lumlay-Lumlay, deah boy, I'm waitin' for you."

There was no answer.

"Weally, Lumlay-Lumlay——"

D'Arcy broke off. A strong smell of tobacco greeted him, and he coughed. Through the haze of cigarette smoke he made out two forms.

"You uttah wottahs!" said D'Arcy. "I shall smell of that howwid smoke now! Wow!"

Mellish and Levison grinned at him.

"Have a fag?" asked Mellish.

"No, you wottah! Is Lumlay-Lumlay here?"

"Looks as if he isn't, doesn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah! I am sure he would nevah join in disgustin' pwactices of this sort!" said the swell of St. Jim's.

"Rats!"

"Weally, Mellish——"

"Oh, buzz off, and shut the door after you!"

D'Arcy's eye gleamed through his eyeglass. He was very much inclined to enter the study, and give the cad of the Fourth a licking—which he could easily have done in spite of his elegant ways, although Mellish was the bigger of the two.

But he did not. A tussle with Mellish would have disarranged his attire, and that was a very serious matter. Besides, he could not enter the study without risk of smelling of smoke when he came out.

So he swallowed his wrath—and some of the smoke—and retired from the study, shutting the door after him with unnecessary force.

He paused in the passage.

D'Arcy was a very good-tempered fellow, but he was getting impatient now. He had dressed very carefully to go out with Lumley-Lumley that afternoon. Most of the juniors of the School House were playing cricket. Blake, D'Arcy's special chum, was detained to write out a long imposition. D'Arcy had arranged with Lumley-Lumley to go for a stroll, and D'Arcy never went for a stroll without dressing as if the stroll were to be in Bond Street or Piccadilly.

But he had turned up to time, only to find that Lumley-Lumley wasn't there, and that there was no sign of him.

Had he forgotten the appointment?

D'Arcy's face stiffened at the thought. It was really very kind of him to be taking up Lumley-Lumley in this way.

Lumley-Lumley had always been called the Outsider of St. Jim's. Since he had turned over a new leaf, the best set among the juniors—Tom Merry & Co.—had taken him up very much, and he had certainly appeared to have finished completely with the rascally old way he had had. Mellish and Levison kept up their old customs, but Lumley-Lumley carefully avoided anything of the sort.

In short, the Outsider of St. Jim's seemed resolved to "play the game."

And Arthur Augustus was satisfied with him.

But he was growing dissatisfied now. It was, as he would have said, horrid bad form to keep a fellow waiting at an appointment.

Where was the Outsider?

D'Arcy's face suddenly brightened.

"Bai Jove! I suppose he's still changin' his clothes. I wemembah wemarkin' to him myself that a fellow couldn't weally be too particular in that sort of thing."

And Arthur Augustus ascended to the Fourth Form dormitory.

"Lumlay-Lumlay, deah boy——"

He stopped.

Lumley-Lumley was not in the dormitory.

D'Arcy sniffed.

"Bai Jove! I'll jolly well go without him!" he exclaimed.

And he descended the stairs in ill-humour. It was too bad! It seemed impossible that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley could have had the cheek to forget his appointment with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth.

D'Arcy glanced into the common-room when he came down. He did not expect to see the Outsider there, but he looked in. It was a half-holiday, and most of St. Jim's was out of doors.

Three or four cricket matches were going on, and seniors and juniors were enjoying the splendid weather and the great summer game.

"Lumlay! Are you there? Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy's eyeglass dropped from his eye in his astonishment.

Lumley-Lumley was seated at the window of the junior common-room. He had a paper in his hands—a pink paper—which he seemed to be studying intently.

D'Arcy knew that paper. It was a well-known sporting paper, and it had often been in Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's hands in his unregenerate days. But now——

"Bai Jove!"

Lumley-Lumley looked up swiftly. At the sight of D'Arcy, he thrust the paper under his jacket, and rose awkwardly enough to his feet, flushing red.

"Oh, D'Arcy!" he ejaculated.

D'Arcy advanced into the room.

"Pway don't take the twouble to hide that papah," he said, with crushing sarcasm. "I've seen it already."

"I—I——"

"You seem to have forgotten that you had an appointment with me, Lumlay-Lumlay!"

"I—I guess I forgot," stammered the Outsider. "I—I'm sorry!"

D'Arcy waved his hand majestically.

"It's of no consequence—no consequence at all," he said. "I should not care to take a stwoll undah any cires with a chap who weads sportin' papahs. You seem to have gone back to your old mannahs and customs, Lumlay."

"I—I——"

"Howevah, I suppose it is no bizney of mine," said D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity. "If you do not choose to act decently, I am not your father-confessah, but I weserve the wight to dwop your acquaintance."

And Arthur Augustus turned to the door.

Lumley-Lumley opened his lips to speak, but he said no words. He watched the swell of St. Jim's stride from the room, his nose very high in the air.

The Outsider stood silent, motionless, his face very pale, his breath coming and going quickly.

The paper dropped from under his jacket. It lay unheeded on the floor at

his feet. The Outsider sank into his chair again. A low groan broke from his lips.

"It's all up!" he muttered. "The game's up! Outsider—the Outsider! That's what I shall be again now—the Outsider! And it's not my fault this time—not my fault!"

CHAPTER 2

Hats Off!

"BRAVO, Tom Merry!"

"Well hit!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy heard the shout as he walked down towards the junior cricket ground.

Most of the St. Jim's fellows were there, in the blazing summer sunning themselves in straw hats and panamas lay in the grass, watching the play.

School House was playing New House; and Tom Merry, of the Shell, and Reilly, of the Fourth, were batting for the School House.

Fatty Wynn, of the Fourth, the fat bowling champion of the New House, was bowling against them, and Fatty Wynn's bowling was very hard to beat.

But Tom Merry was beating it just now.

Every ball that Fatty sent down was negotiated with a graceful ease, and the School House fellows cheered every hit made by their junior skipper.

Figgins, of the New House, who was fielding at point, gave Fatty Wynn a shout of encouragement as the field crossed over.

"Go it, Fatty! Don't let him off!"

Fatty Wynn grunted. The exertion and the heat were telling upon the Fourth-former, and the perspiration was pouring down his plump cheeks.

"Go it, Fatty!"

"Play up, Falstaff!"

"Go for the sticks!"

Fatty Wynn bowled again.

The ball was what Fatty would have called a regular twister, this time, and it was a little too much of a twister for even Tom Merry.

It broke in upon the wicket, and the middle stump was out of the ground before Tom Merry knew it was in danger.

Then there was a tremendous roar from the New House.

"Hooray!"

"How's that?"

"Hooray!"

"Out!" grinned Figgins, "Bravo, Fatty!"

And Fatty Wynn grunted contentedly.

"Bai Jove! that was a wippin' ball," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, to Tom Merry, as the captain of the Shell came out with his bat, "I couldn't have done that bettah myself, you know."

Tom Merry laughed—that ringing, merry, pleasant laugh that fellows like to hear.

"Quite right, Gussy," he agreed. "It is even barely possible that you couldn't have done it so well. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"But what are you doing here?" asked Tom Merry. "I understood you were going out with Lumley-Lumley! He said he didn't feel quite up to cricket! Next man in—it's your bat, Macdonald."

"I am not goin' out with Lumley-Lumley," said Arthur Augustus, stiffly that Tom Merry glanced at him in surprise.

"Been trouble?" he asked.

D'Arcy hesitated.

"Not exactly," he said.

"You haven't been quarrelling?" Tom Merry asked. "Lumley has been as good as gold lately, Gussy; and it's not like you to quarrel with a chap for nothing."

"I twust not," said D'Arcy.

"Then what's the matter?" demanded Tom Merry, in his frank way.

"Why aren't you going out with him, as you arranged?"

"You see, I made an appointment, and he forgot to keep it——"

"Oh! You can't find him?"

"Yaas, wathah: I found him."

"Then if you found him, what are you complaining about?"

"I'm not complaining, deah boy."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I mean what's the matter?"

"I'm afraid I have been deceived in Lumlay-Lumlay, that's all."

"In what way?"

"I found him in the common-room, and he was weadin' a papah."

"Well, a chap may read a paper and yet be honest."

"Pway don't be a funny ass, Tom Mewwy. This was not a wespectable papah like the 'Times' or the 'Daily Mail.' It was a wotten sportin' papah, with news about horses, and waces, and other wotten wubbish, and as soon as I came in he put it out of sight."

Tom Merry looked very grave.

"Are you sure of that, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"I hope it doesn't mean that Lumley-Lumley has fallen under the influence of Mellish and Levison and Crooke again," Tom Merry said. "But——"

"He hadn't a word to say."

"I know it looks bad."

"Well, you see, I departed, I twust, with dignity," said Arthur Augustus,

"I cannot associate with a chap who weads wacin' papahs. That is wathah too thick. I have always endeavoured to be select, not to say swaggah, in choosin' my fwiends. I bar chaps who bet on waces."

"Yes, but——"

Tom Merry broke off. Macdonald's wicket was down to Fatty Wynn's fast bowling.

"Man in," said Tom Merry. "Go in, Hancock."

And Hancock went in with a very serious face. He did not expect to live long with the Welsh junior bowling. And he was right—he didn't.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strolled on. He felt very unoccupied. He had stayed out of the cricket that afternoon to go out with Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, as he was not particularly needed in the match.

Now he did not feel wholly inclined to look on. A group of fellows lying in the thick rich grass called and beckoned to him.

D'Arcy halted.

"Here you are," said Kangaroo, otherwise Harry Noble of the Shell.

"Here's room for you, Gussy, sit down."

"Thank you, deah boy; but——"

"Sit down," said Digby of the Fourth. "Here's room, Gussy. Besides, you're obstructing the view. I want to see that New House boulder bowl."

"Weally, Dig——"

"Lie down, Gussy."

"As a mattah of fact, deah boy, I have my best bags on, and a silk topper

is not exactly the sort of headgear to wear for spawlin' in the gwass, y' know."

"Good old Gussy," said Herries. "Just like him to come and watch cricket match in a silk topper and his best bags."

"Weally, Hewwies——"

Whiz!

Crash!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a wild yell as his silk topper was dashed over his eyes from behind. He was dangerously near the pitch, and the ball, deflected from Reilly's bat, had caught his silk hat fair and square.

"Yawwoh!" roared D'Arcy.

The unfortunate topper rolled off his head, and dropped at his feet, amid the swell of St. Jim's swung round in great excitement.

"Bai Jove! The wottahs! Who did that?"

There was no one close to him, and he stared in bewilderment. The rest of the fellows roared. The cricket ball was lying in the grass at D'Arcy's feet, but he was too excited to see it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

Figgins came dashing up, red and grinning.

"Give me the ball, Gussy."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins fielded the ball, and D'Arcy picked up his silk topper. It was considerably burst, and upon the whole the swell of St. Jim's decided not to put it on again.

"Better sit down," grinned Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus sat down, still casting disconsolate glances upon his wrecked topper.

"Where's Lumley?" asked Herries, lazily. "Weren't you going out with him?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Hallo! he's going out, anyway," said Kangaroo. "There he goes."

He nodded in the direction of the school gateway, which could be seen from the cricket field. The Outsider of St. Jim's was walking quickly down to the gates, and a second or two after the Cornstalk had called attention to him, he disappeared.

D'Arcy set his lips a little.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had gone out alone; and the swell of St. Jim's could not help wondering if his going out alone was in connection with his secret and engrossed study of the pink paper. D'Arcy was not a suspicious fellow; few fellows could be less so. But it appeared very clear to him that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider of St. Jim's, was at the old game again.

CHAPTER 3.

Missing!

"UNFINISHED!" was the verdict, when the deepening dusk compelled the House teams to draw stumps and leave off play.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined the Terrible Three as they walked back to the School House, looking very ruddy with exertion, with their bats under their arms.

"Sowwy-I wasn't playin', Tom Mewwy," D'Arcy remarked.

- "It's all right," said Tom Merry, cheerfully. "It hasn't made any difference, you know."
- "Weally, Tom Mewwy——"
- "We've got a few extra runs, I suppose, that's all," Monty Lowther remarked.
- "Weally, Lowthah——"
- "Otherwise, there's no difference," said Manners.
- "Weally, Mannahs——"
- "We'll beat those New House bounders on Saturday, anyway," said Tom Merry. "We owe them a licking."
- D'Arcy nodded.
- "That's why I'm sowwy I wasn't playin'," he remarked. "You see, if I had been playin', I wathah think we should have licked them."
- "Rats!"
- "If you say wats to me, Tom Mewwy——"
- "Many of them," said Tom Merry, politely. "I suppose your playing wouldn't have made the light last longer, would it? The sun wouldn't stand still for you as it did for Joshua, you know."
- "Weally, you ass——"
- "Why didn't you go out with Lumley-Lumley?" asked Tom Merry. "I thought you were booked with him for the afternoon."
- "So I was."
- "You haven't been rowing, have you?"
- "Not exactly. I should considah it beneath my personal dig. to wow with anybody."
- "Oh, rats! Have you been getting on bad terms with Lumley-Lumley, then?"
- "Not at all."
- "Then what's the matter?"
- "Nothin'."
- "Fathead! You didn't go out with him."
- "He pweferred goin' out alone, after all," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a heightened colour. "He forgot all about his appointment with me, and went out alone, aftah I had weminded him of it."
- "Phew!"
- "That was rather rotten," said Monty Lowther. "It isn't like Lumley to do that."
- "I should have imagined not, Lowthah, or I should nevah have shown him any fwiendliness," said Arthur Augustus. "Having been tweated in this way by the wank wottah, howevah, I shall pwceed to dwop him like a hot bwick. I no longah wegard him as a fwiend."
- "I say, I'm sorry for this," said Tom Merry, seriously. "Perhaps Lumley-Lumley can make some explanation."
- "I shall wefuse to listen to it. I wegard him as a wank outsiders, and I shall dwop him out of my list of acquaintances."
- "Where is he now?"
- "I do not know. I take no intewest in his pwceedings. When I found him, to wemind him of our appointment, he was weadin' a wotten sportin' papah."
- "Oh!"
- "I feah that he is fallin' into his old habits. In any case, he has tweated me with gwoss diswespect, and I decline to know him any longah."
- And D'Arcy walked off with his nose very high in the air. The Terrible Three exchanged glances of concern.
- "Hang it all," said Tom Merry, uneasily. "I hope this isn't true about Lumley. Gussy may have jumped to a wrong conclusion."

"Well, it would be very like Gussy."

"Time we got in," said Manners. "We shall miss calling-over if we don't buck up."

"Come on, then."

The Shell fellows hurried in. They were in Big Hall in time for calling-over. Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, called over the names. Tom Merry glanced at the ranks of the Fourth.

He wondered whether Lumley-Lumley was there. He met D'Arcy's glance, and that glance was significant. The Outsider of St. Jim's was not present.

"Lumley-Lumley!"

Mr. Railton's voice rang out clearly.

But no voice replied with the accustomed "Adsum."

The Outsider of St. Jim's had not come in.

"Lumley! Jerrold Lumley-Lumley!"

No reply.

Mr. Railton compressed his lips a little, and marked down Jerrold Lumley-Lumley as absent from calling-over.

The rest of the names were called, and replied to, and the fellows dispersed.

Jack Blake joined Tom Merry at the door.

"Do you know where Lumley is?" he asked.

"No; he went out alone, I hear. And, apparently, he hasn't come in."

"It's odd."

"Yes, rather!"

"I hope it doesn't mean——" Blake paused.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I think not," he said. "I know he's made Gussy suspicious; but I believe Lumley-Lumley is true blue, though I know he's got a rotten record. Give the chap a chance, anyway."

"Yes; I think so, too."

But Jack Blake was looking rather anxious.

He had reason for it. Since the reform of the Outsider of St. Jim's, Blake and his chums in the Fourth had backed him up in a whole-hearted way.

If Lumley-Lumley fell from grace again, it would be a blow to them; and it would show that they had been in the wrong, and that many fellows who had said "I told you so" would be in the right.

And that would not be pleasant for the chums of Study No. 6.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was, therefore, anxiously expected by a good many juniors in the School House at St. Jim's. As for the New House fellows, they did not think about him at all, as the two Houses did not meet after evening calling-over, as a rule. Lumley-Lumley was not back by the time Blake had finished his preparation. Blake went down to the junior common-room, intending to pick a bone, as he expressed it, with Lumley-Lumley. To his surprise he found that the Outsider of St. Jim's was not in.

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake. "There will be a row when he comes in! It's nearly nine o'clock!"

D'Arcy gave a sniff.

"His old twicks, I suppose," he remarked.

"You mean the Green Man in Rylcombe?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake shook his head.

"I don't think so, Gussy. Lumley-Lumley wouldn't be ass enough to go there so openly as this; he's bound to be reported to the Head when he comes in, and he'll have to explain where he's been."

"Yaas, wathah; and he'll get sacked!"

"I hope not."

The swell of St. Jim's sniffed again.

"A fellow who will fail to keep an appointment will do anythin'," he said. "I wegard him as a wank wottah, and I shall wefuse to know him when he weturns."

"Ass!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"I'm anxious about him," said Blake, with a worried look.

Another sniff from Arthur Augustus.

"I decline to be anxious about him," said D'Arcy.

"Oh, rats!"

It was getting close upon bedtime, and Blake had reason to be anxious. That Lumley-Lumley, even if he had taken up his old game again, should stay out like this to go to the Green Man, was incredible. He must have been detained out somehow; and Jack Blake feared an accident of some sort.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, looked into the common-room at half-past nine, which was the bedtime for the Fourth Form.

"Is Lumley-Lumley here?" the captain of St. Jim's asked, with a stern brow.

"No, Kildare."

"He has not come in, Blake?"

"Not that I'm aware of."

"Do you know where he is gone?"

"No."

Kildare looked round.

"Does anybody here know where Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth is gone?"

There was no reply.

"Very well," said Kildare, "he will have to answer for absenting himself in this way. It is time for you youngsters to go to bed."

"I say, Kildare, sure and can't we stay up for Lumley-Lumley?" sang out Reilly of the Fourth.

"No, you can't!"

"Sure, and we're anxious about him, intoirely!"

"Nonsense! Go to bed."

Kildare strode away. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made the first movement towards the door. As he reached it, a figure appeared in the passage.

The swell of St. Jim's started back.

"Lumlay-Lumlay, bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 4.

Lumley-Lumley Declines to Explain.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY stepped into the common-room.

All eyes were fixed upon him at once.

A fellow who had missed evening calling-over, and stayed out till bedtime, was certain to cause some excitement when he returned. The licking that was in store for him, alone, made him an object of interest.

And Lumley-Lumley was not looking the same as usual.

His face was very pale, and he was breathing hard, as if he had come home in a very great hurry.

"I say, D'Arcy," he exclaimed, "have I been missed?"

Arthur Augustus did not reply.

He was looking straight at the Outsider of St. Jim's, but his gaze was

expressionless, as if he were looking through Lumley-Lumley at the passage beyond.

"D'Arcy!"

"Pway let me pass."

Lumley-Lumley stared at him.

"What's the matter with you, D'Arcy?"

D'Arcy waved his hand loftily.

"Pway do not address me," he replied frigidly. "I do not know you."

"Eh!"

"I wefuse to wegard you as a fwiend, or even as an acquaintance. You are not a fellow I know."

"You ass——"

"Weally, you uttah wottah——"

Lumley-Lumley turned away from the swell of St. Jim's.

"Have I been missed, Tom Merry?"

"Yes."

"Of course, at calling-over; but since——"

"Kildare was just asking for you."

"I guess I hurried all I could," said Lumley-Lumley, with a panting breath. "It's cruel bad luck. I guess I'm in for it now."

"Yes, rather. Where have you been?"

Lumley-Lumley coloured.

"Oh, out," he said.

"Of course, you needn't tell me if you don't want to," Tom Merry exclaimed, colouring. "I'm blessed if I want to know your affairs."

"It isn't that," said Lumley-Lumley slowly. "Only—only—— Where is Kildare now?"

"He is here," said a quiet voice.

Lumley-Lumley turned round, and faced the captain of St. Jim's. Kildare eyed him grimly.

"So you've come back," he exclaimed.

"I guess so."

"Where have you been?"

"I—I've been in Rylcombe."

"All the time?"

"Most of the time."

Kildare gave him a sharp look.

"You are to go into the Head's study to report yourself," he said. "I'm to take you there. You other fellows get to your dormitory."

And Kildare walked away with the Outsider of St. Jim's. Lumley-Lumley did not say a word on his way to the Head's study, but there was a very troubled expression upon his face. Kildare knocked at the door, and the Head's voice bade him enter.

"Lumley-Lumley has returned, sir."

"Oh! Bring him in, Kildare."

The Outsider of St. Jim's followed the Sixth-Former into the study, and stood silent under the searching gaze of the Doctor.

Dr. Holmes was silent for some moments, his stern gaze fixed upon the face of the Outsider. He broke the silence at last, with a hard, stern voice:

"So you have returned, Lumley?"

"Yes, sir."

Lumley-Lumley's voice was firm, but quiet and respectful. There was no trace of defiance in it. Time had been when there was always a touch of latent defiance in the Outsider's manner. But he was very much changed of late.

No one could have been more respectful to the Head now, and Dr. Holmes noticed that, and it mollified him a little. His voice was less hard as he went on:

"You missed calling-over, Lumley-Lumley?"

"I am sorry, sir."

"And you have stayed out till after the bedtime of your Form?"

"I guess so, sir. I'm sorry."

"Where have you been?"

"To Rylcombe, sir."

"You have stayed all this time in the village, instead of returning to school, Lumley-Lumley?"

"Nearly all the time, sir."

"What were you doing there?"

Lumley-Lumley was silent.

"Did you hear me speak, Lumley-Lumley?"

"I guess so, sir."

"Answer me, sir!"

"I—I haven't anything to say, sir."

The Doctor's brow darkened.

"I asked you how you have been occupying the time while you have been absent for so many hours from the college, Lumley-Lumley. In the case of ordinary absence, I should simply impose a punishment without asking too many questions. But this is a very different case."

The Outsider's lips quivered a little, but he did not speak.

"You have been absent for so long a time, and you have borne so bad a reputation until quite lately, that I am bound to investigate into this matter," said the Head. "I insist upon knowing how you have been occupying your time."

"I—I—"

The Outsider broke off, finishing his sentence. He stood before the Head with red cheeks and downcast eyes.

The doctor's face hardened again.

"Well, Lumley-Lumley, what have you to say?"

"Nothing, sir."

"You have no explanation to give?"

"No, sir."

"You refuse, then, to explain to me how you have been occupying your time all this while?" the Head exclaimed, his voice rising a little.

Lumley-Lumley was silent.

Dr. Holmes frowned darkly. He was the kindest of men; but this treatment from a junior was enough to rouse the ire of the mildest of schoolmasters. Kildare looked at Lumley-Lumley as if he could scarcely believe his eyes and ears. He was utterly amazed by the obstinacy of the Outsider.

"I am waiting for your answer, Lumley-Lumley."

"I guess I've nothing to say, sir."

"That is, you refuse to reply," said the Head. "I can only conclude, therefore, that your occupation was of a sort that will not bear explaining; that what you have been doing, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, will not bear the light."

"I guess not, sir."

"Then kindly explain. Where have you been, and whom have you seen?"

Lumley-Lumley did not reply.

"I can come to only the one conclusion, then," said the Head. "But you have shown so great an improvement in your character of late, Lumley-Lumley, that I shall give you one more chance. I think it probable that

old bad companions have led you into bad ways again. I shall give you till to-morrow morning, Lumley-Lumley, to make up your mind to explain to me."

"Very well, sir."

"If you do not explain then, I shall flog you in public, in sight of the whole school," said the Head.

Lumley's lip trembled.

"Very well, sir," he said again.

"You may go."

Lumley-Lumley went without a word. Kildare followed him out into the passage. In the passage the St. Jim's captain's hand fell upon the shoulder of the Outsider.

Lumley-Lumley looked up at him.

"You utter young ass," said Kildare. "Why haven't you explained?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

No reply.

"The Head means every word he said; it's a flogging in the morning if you don't do the right thing."

"I can't help it."

"I think you must be dotty," said Kildare angrily. "Go to bed you young duffer."

And Lumley-Lumley went!

CHAPTER 5.

No Followers Allowed.

NO one was asleep in the Fourth-Form dormitory in the School House when Jerrold Lumley-Lumley entered it.

The juniors were far too much excited about the strange occurrence to think of sleep.

They had gone to bed, in obedience to the prefect's orders, but they lay awake, discussing the Outsider, and wondering what was happening in the Head's study.

There was a buzz of voices as the door opened, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley entered in the dark.

"Is that you, Lumley?"

"Bai Jove, is that you, Lumlay, deah boy?"

"I guess so," said the Outsider.

He switched the light on.

The juniors sat up in bed to look at him. They saw that Lumley-Lumley's face was pale, and had a worn expression upon it. He did not look the usual careless, cool Outsider. Something was evidently very much the matter with Lumley-Lumley.

"Where have you been, Lumley?"

"What's happened?"

"What did the Head say?"

Lumley-Lumley sat on the edge of his bed and kicked his boots off.

"You'd better ask him, I guess," he said.

"Can't you tell us?"

"I'm too tired to talk."

"Look here, Lumley——"

"Bai Jove, you know——"

"Oh, let the chap alone," said Jack Blake. "If he doesn't want to talk, let him keep his head shut. It's not business of ours, anyway."

"Rats!" said Mellish. "I don't see why he shouldn't explain."

"Of course," said Levison, the cad of the Fourth, "Lumley-Lumley has been such an exceedingly good boy lately, that it would be quite interesting to hear of his latest exploits."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can mind your own business," said the Outsider coolly. "You'll get nothing out of me."

"Bai Jove!"

"Have you been to the Green Man?"

"Find out!"

"Have you been on the randan?"

"Go and eat coke!"

Kildare looked into the Fourth-Fourth dormitory. There was a heavy frown upon the usually kind and good-natured face of the captain of St. Jim's.

"I'm waiting for you, Lumley," he said coldly.

"Sha'n't be a minute."

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley turned in.

Kildare, giving him an expressive glance, extinguished the light and withdrew, closing the door of the dormitory.

Immediately he was gone, the chorus of inquiries broke out again. The Outsider of St. Jim's did not appear to hear them. He did not reply once, and soon his steady breathing announced that he was asleep.

Then the fire of questions slackened.

"Cheeky beast!" said Levison. "I suppose he's been up to something too rotten even to tell us."

"Yes, rather."

"Of course."

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Perhaps he merely regards it as wotten cuwiosity on your part, Levison, and vewy pwopahly wefuses to gwatify it."

"Why, you were asking him questions yourself just now!" exclaimed Levison.

"I wefuse to argue with you, Levison."

And the swell of St. Jim's turned his head over on his pillow.

The talk died away at last; there was evidently no getting anything out of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

The chums of the Fourth were very much puzzled. Yet they hesitated to believe that the Outsider had been at what Blake called his "old games" again. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley since his reform, had had many relapses, but at last he had seemed to be going straight, and the juniors believed in him. If he had indeed gone wrong again, they knew that they could never again put any trust in him. But it was only fair to give him the benefit of the doubt till the last possible moment.

When the rising bell clanged out in the morning Lumley-Lumley was one of the first to rise. Slacking was not one of his vices, and he frequently went down to the river for a dip before breakfast. He dressed himself to go out, and Jack Blake sat up in bed to look at him.

"Hallo, Lumley!" he exclaimed.

"Hallo!" said the Outsider absently.

"Feel all right after your wild night?" asked Blake, with a grin.

"Oh, rats!"

"Goin' down to the wivah, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, quite forgetting for the moment that he had dropped the acquaintance of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

"Yes," said Lumley-Lumley shortly.

"I'll come with you—or wathah, on second thoughts, I won't," said the swell of St. Jim's. "You acted wottenly yesterday, and I decline to know you."

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Lumlay——"

"Oh, don't bother."

"Bai Jove!"

"Order, Gussy," said Blake, laughing. "Wait a minute for me, Lumley, I'm going down for a swim."

The Outsider coloured.

"I'm sorry——" he began.

"I won't keep you a minute."

"It's not that," said Outsider awkwardly. "I—I'm not going for a swim, you see."

"Oh, I see. Where are you going then?"

"Just for a stroll up the river."

Levison stepped out of bed.

"Wait for me," he remarked, beginning to dress rapidly without the preliminary of washing. "I'm going for a stroll up the river."

"Thank you! I guess I don't want your company," said the Outsider curtly.

Blake chuckled.

"That's straight from the shoulder, anyway," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison scowled.

"I'm going all the same," he said. "I suppose the river bank is free to everybody. Lumley may be a giddy millionaire, but he hasn't bought up the valley of the Ryll, that I know of."

The Outsider gave him an angry look.

"I guess you mean that you want to spy on me?" he exclaimed.

"What is there to spy upon?"

"Oh, some more mysterious expeditions," said Mellish, with a yawn. "Come to think of it, I feel like taking a stroll up the river this morning." And he jumped out of bed. Jack Blake gave the cads of the Fourth a scornful look.

"Don't be rotters," he said. "Whatever Lumley may be up to, it's no business of yours to follow him."

"I suppose we can do as we like," sneered Levison.

"Well, you wouldn't follow me if I were Lumley, that's all."

"Wathah not!"

"I guess they won't follow me," said Lumley-Lumley.

He quitted the dormitory. Levison and Mellish followed immediately, the latter putting on his collar as he went. Lumley-Lumley strode down the passage, and descended the stairs, and passed out into the old quad.

The two juniors walked a dozen paces behind him. Lumley-Lumley turned his head and saw them following him across the quad, and scowled. He reached the gates and passed out into the road, and the cads of the Fourth, grinning, followed on his track.

Lumley-Lumley walked down the lane as far as the stile of Rylcombe Wood, and then halted there. He waited, leaning on the stile, until Levison and Mellish came up.

"You are following me, I guess," he said.

Levison grinned.

"Oh, no, merely taking a stroll in the same direction," he said blandly. And Mellish gave a chuckle.

"Then you can walk on ahead," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Oh, we're in no hurry."

"We'll lean on the stile and have a bit of a rest," Mellish remarked.

Lumley's eyes gleamed.

"You won't!" he said. "You'll go straight back to St. Jim's, or you'll put up your hands, and you can take your choice."

"I suppose you won't quite squash the two of us," said Levison, sarcastically.

"I guess I'll try! Are you going?"

"No."

"Then here goes, you worm."

And Lumley-Lumley pushed back his cuffs, and rushed at the cads of the Fourth, hitting out. Mellish backed away; he never did care for close quarters on any occasion.

Levison put up his hands; but Lumley-Lumley knocked his guard aside in a moment, and gave him an upper cut under the chin that sent him flying.

Splash!

Levison was standing very close to the ditch, and as he reeled back from Lumley-Lumley's blow, he tottered on the edge, and fell in. He disappeared for a moment in a couple of feet of sluggish, slimy water.

He came up strangely transformed. Even Lumley-Lumley could not help grinning at the sight of him. He was a mass of mud and slime, and green ooze and rotting weeds clung all over him.

"Groo!" gasped Levison. "Grooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lumley-Lumley.

"Ow! Owch!"

"Your turn now, Mellish!"

Lumley-Lumley turned to deal with Mellish. But Mellish was speeding off towards the school as fast as his legs could carry him. He had no fancy for joining Levison in the ditch.

"Groo! Ho—hoo!"

"You'd better crawl home and clean yourself, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley, contemptuously. "You'll get worse than that if you follow me any further."

Levison did not reply. He crawled from the ditch as Lumley-Lumley disappeared into the wood. He did not attempt to follow the Outsider; he took his way, gasping and sniffing, back to the school, where a yell of laughter from the juniors in the quad greeted his appearance.

CHAPTER 6.

Arthur Augustus Considers That It Will Not Do!

LUMLEY-LUMLEY made his appearance in class as usual that morning, and did not even look at Mellish or Levison.

He appeared to have forgotten the incident in Rylcombe Lane—perhaps he had other and more important matters to occupy his mind.

The two cads of the Fourth looked at him viciously enough, but did not catch his eye. Lumley-Lumley was very attentive to his lessons, and very quiet and subdued, and he earned more than one word of commendation from little Mr. Lathom that morning.

When the form was dismissed, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined the Out-

sider in the passage. He tapped Lumley-Lumley on the shoulder, and the Outsider looked round.

"I want to speak to you, deah boy," said D'Arcy.

"Go ahead."

"I heath that you are goin' to be flogged."

The Outsider frowned.

"I guess it's all over the school by this time," he said.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Well, it can't be helped."

"It will not do, Lumlay."

Lumley-Lumley stared at him.

"What will not do, D'Arcy?"

"This wotten conduct of yours."

The Outsider flushed.

"Look here, D'Arcy——!"

"Pway don't intewwupt me, Lumlay," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"When I am intewwupted, I lose the thwead of my thoughts, and I have to begin again at the beginnin'."

"Then don't interrupt him, for goodness' sake," said Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake!"

"Would you mind coming to the point, Gussy?" asked Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, politely. "I don't like to hurry you, but life is short, you know."

"Weally, Lumlay!"

"And I guess I've got to report myself for a flogging, too," said the Outsider, with a curious shrug of the shoulders.

"That's what I was comin' to, deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I was about to make the wemark that it will not do. I cannot allow this sort of thing. You used to be an awful wottah, at one time, and we were all down on you——"

"Look here, Gussy——"

"I am only statin' the facts. The suspish has forced itself into my mind that you are wecommencin' your wotten old ways again."

"A lot of things enter your mind, don't they, Gussy?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yaas, wathah; but you haven't answered my question, deah boy," returned Arthur Augustus.

"I guess I can't, Gussy."

There was much sincerity in the Outsider's tone. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at him doubtfully. He did not know what to make of the American. There seemed not the slightest trace of his former swanking manner about him still.

"It's a feahful thing to be flogged, Lumlay."

"I guess it is, but I shall have to stand it."

"Wats—I mean, weally, Lumlay!"

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"Are you wecommencin' your wotten old ways, Lumlay?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"I can't tell you anything, D'Arcy. So long!"

And Lumley-Lumley walked away.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "This is most mystewious. I say, Lumlay, deah boy!"

But Lumley-Lumley apparently did not hear the swell of the School House. He was walking along with his hands in his pockets, deep in thought.

"Oh, this is all wot!" exclaimed D'Arcy impatiently. "It weally will not do. Somethin' must be done. It put's me all in a fluttah to see a fellow

contemplate a floggin' like that!" And Arthur Augustus walking in the opposite direction turned things over in his mind.

"I will see Tom Mewwy about it," he said. "I would have pweferred a fellow in the Fourth; but Blake is such an unweivable beast in a mattah of this kind. Tom Mewwy's the chap!"

A decision arrived at, Arthur Augustus proceeded to act upon it at once. He found Tom Merry alone, in his study in the Shell passage.

"Hallo, Gussy! What's the worry now?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"If you can't make a straightforward statement, get out," said Tom Merry. "I'm busy."

"Weally, you know——"

"What's it about?" demanded the captain of the Shell, picking up a ruler.

"Pway put that muwdewous weapon down, Tom Mewwy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I want your opinion, deah boy."

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom Mewwy. "As if I hadn't given you my opinion of you times out of mind. Scat. I'm busy, I tell you!"

Arthur Augustus fixed his monocle determinedly.

"I'm not goin' from here, Tom Mewwy, until I have your opinion about Lumlay," he said.

"Oh, that's it, is it?"

"Yaas, wathah. Don't you think he's vewy queer lately?"

"I should say so. Let's see, he's been with you a good deal lately, hasn't he?" grinned the captain of the Shell.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Of course, I don't say he's very far gone, Gussy," went on Tom Merry, busily writing. "What's up?"

D'Arcy did not reply for a moment. He was deciding whether he ought to give Tom Merry a severe thrashing. Deciding that a fellow who has been severely thrashed is generally no use immediately afterwards for purposes of advice, Arthur Augustus agreed to a truce.

"I have been thinking, deah boy, that I ought to look aftah Lumlay. What do you think of the idea?"

"Rotten!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Well, you asked me, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah, but don't you think you could be sewious, Tom Mewwy?"

"I'm jolly serious. You'd probably get a thick ear for your trouble I think."

And Tom Merry grinned provokingly at the swell of the School House.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, it's not a laughin' mattah!"

"That all depends whether a chap likes thick ears or not."

"You're a widiculous beast, Tom Mewwy!"

"Get out!"

"I wefuse——"

The ruler missed Arthur Augustus's topper by about a quarter of an inch.

"I will not trouble such an uttah ass for an opinion. I'm sowwy I twoubled you at——"

"You will be!" exclaimed Tom Merry, picking up a heavy book.

But D'Arcy was already walking down the Shell passage, a picture of righteous wrath.

Disappointed in Tom Merry, Arthur Augustus, however, had no idea of giving up. There were others he recollected who would probably give wiser advice than Tom Merry.

"I shall considah it a mattah of stwict dutay to give Tom Mewwy a seveah thwashin', latah," murmured Arthur Augustus. "Weally deah boy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howwible wuffian, Blake——"

"Why don't you look where you're going, ass!" demanded Blake.

Arthur Augustus had found Blake, or rather he had been saved the trouble, Blake having obligingly dashed into the swell of the School House.

"Get out of the way, image!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "I'm in a hurry. Look out!"

"Weally, Blake! My toppah's wuined, and you've disawanged my attiah howwiblay!"

Jack Blake grinned as the swell of the School House picked himself up.

"It'll be all right with a brush up, Gussy," he said, pointing to the topper.

Arthur Augustus gave Blake a look through his monocle which would have been fairer if it had been divided between Tom Merry and Blake.

"Anything the matter?" said Blake innocently.

Arthur Augustus agreed with himself to bury the hatchet.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy. I've been looking for you," he said. "I want to ask your opinion, as a mattah of fact."

Blake grinned.

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake. Tell me what you think of my ideah of takin' care of Lumlay?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Clean off his giddy rocker. You are looking for trouble, aren't you, Gussy?"

"You uttah ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha! I like, that, anyway. But you'd look nice as a giddy father, wouldn't you?"

"You're a feahful wottah, Blake, but as a mattah of fact, Lumlay wants a father——"

"Off his giddy rocker for a cert!" interrupted Blake.

And dodging past the swell of the School House, Blake darted away. Arthur Augustus did not even look in his direction. He walked straight on. With that dignity which only people who are grossly misunderstood can command, he bent his steps in the direction of Figgins's quarters. D'Arcy was angry with himself for not sticking to his original estimate of Blake in a "mattah like this." He was now convinced that Figgins was his man. He met Figgins in the quad. The long-legged junior grinned. He saw at once that Arthur Augustus had something on his mind. Arthur Augustus eyed him critically, but he decided to try Figgins.

"Sorry, Gussy," he said. "But if it's money, I'm stoney!"

Arthur Augustus tried to speak, but words failed him. He stared at Figgins in speechless horror.

"You—you uttah wottah, Figgins!" he gasped. "You—you—— When I have decided what to do in Lumlay's case, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'——"

"Lumley's case! What do you mean, Gussy?" interrupted Figgins.

"Why, suahly you've noticed how stwange he is, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, greatly mollified by Figgins's evident interest. "I pwopose to look aftah him, Figgie——"

"Better leave him alone, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah; but he ought to have a chance, deah boy!"

"That's just it," said Figgins, with a slight twinkle in his eye. "If you ring off, Gussy, he'll have a chance."

"Pway take your coat off, Figgy, deah boy!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Figgins. "Kill Herries instead."

And while Arthur Augustus jumped to one side to escape Towser, Herries's bull-dog, Figgins vanished. Arthur Augustus, having a proverbial dread of Towser's liking for his "twousahs," vanished also. Tom Merry, Blake, and Figgins not showing that sympathy which D'Arcy thought fitting, the swell of the School House decided to go to the fountain-head, Lumley-Lumley.

"After all, he is the pwopah person to tell me what he thinks of the ideah," said Arthur Augustus. "I'll put it Blake's way, and say I think he wants a fathah to look aftah him."

And Arthur Augustus mustered up as paternal an air as he could command as he overtook Lumley-Lumley on his way to his study. The American youth looked a shade annoyed. He could see that Arthur Augustus had been tracking him down.

"Look heah, Lumlay," began D'Arcy, "as I said before, it won't do!"

"What won't do?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"You must have someone to look aftah you, deah boy. To bowwow Blake's word, I insist on bein' a fathah to you——"

"All right, father," interrupted the American junior sharply; "go and eat coke!"

And, shutting his study door behind him, he left Arthur Augustus to think out a proper course in such a case for a fond parent.

CHAPTER 7.

A Surprise for the School.

MR. RAILTON, the Housemaster of the School House, signed to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley as he was crossing the Hall. The Outsider stopped.

"Lumley-Lumley!"

"Yes, sir," said the junior quietly.

"I have a message for you from the Head."

"Very well, sir."

"Have you decided to render the explanation Dr. Holmes requires?"

Lumley-Lumley was silent.

"Have you any answer to give, Lumley-Lumley, other than the one you have already given to Dr. Holmes?"

"I guess not, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Railton quietly. "You are to report yourself for a flogging when the school assembles in Hall."

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley winced a little. But his tone was quite calm and quiet as he replied:

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Railton gave him an abrupt nod, and went back into his study. The School Housemaster was puzzled. In spite of the evidence against him, he did not quite believe that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had returned to the old "rotten" ways that had earned him the title of the Outsider of St. Jim's. But what was he to believe? At all events, it was certain there was but one course open to Dr. Holmes—to administer the promised flogging if the Outsider did not confess.

There were grave faces among the juniors when the school assembled in Hall after lessons.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking quite distressed.

He had assumed the role of a father towards Lumley-Lumley, and he did not like to see the Outsider punished; but unless Lumley would listen to reason, there was evidently no alternative.

The Forms were marshalled in order to the Hall, the prefects in their places, when the Head entered by the door at the upper end.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley stood in his place in the ranks of the Fourth. The Outsider's face was somewhat pale, and there was a deep wrinkle in his forehead, but he was quite calm and cool. Arthur Augustus nudged him as the Head entered.

"Lumlay-Lumlay, deah boy!" he whispered. Lumley-Lumley looked at him. "It isn't too late, you know."

The Outsider shook his head.

There was deep silence in the Hall. Dr. Holmes glanced along the ranks of the school, and then his deep voice broke the silence.

"Lumley-Lumley!"

"Here, sir!"

"Stand forward!"

The Outsider left his place in the Fourth, and with a firm step advanced towards the dais at the upper end of the Hall, where the Doctor stood with the masters. There was a deep breath among the crowded boys. Floggings were seldom—very seldom—administered at St. Jim's, and the occasion was a serious one—serious and painful to the feelings of all.

"Lumley-Lumley," said the Head quietly, "you have broken an important rule of the college, and you have refused to give an explanation. You are sentenced to be flogged."

"Very well, sir."

"If you have any explanation to give now, Lumley-Lumley, even at the last moment, I am willing to hear you," said Dr. Holmes.

"I have nothing to say, sir."

The Head pursed his lips.

"Very well. Taggles!"

Taggles, the porter, stepped forward. There was a grim expression upon the rugged face of the school porter. He really did not look as if he were at all sorry in assisting at a flogging. Taggles's private opinion was that all boys ought to be flogged, if not drowned, and the oftener they were licked, the better it was for them, and for everybody else. It was not an opinion to make him popular among the boys of St. Jim's.

"Yes, sir," he said, readily enough.

"Take Lumley-Lumley up!" commanded Dr. Holmes.

Lumley-Lumley clenched his hands hard for a moment. For that moment the old light gleamed in his eyes, and the old ugly look came about his determined lips; he was the old Outsider once more. So black was his look that Taggles backed away a step in alarm. But it was only for a moment. Then Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was quiet and submissive again; his hands unclosed, and he bowed his head.

"I am ready, sir," he said.

Knock!

Every head turned, in the tense silence, as a knock was heard at the door, and the great door of the School Hall was seen to swing open. Toby the page entered.

Dr. Holmes glanced towards him with a frowning brow. An interruption at that moment was very displeasing to the Head. But the reason of Toby's sudden entrance was seen at once. He had a buff-coloured envelope in his hand. It was a telegram.

"Telegram for you, sir," said Toby. And he brought it to the dais.

"Very well," said the Head.

Dr. Holmes glanced over the message, and an expression of surprise came over his face. He raised his eyes, and fixed them upon Lumley-Lumley.

"Lumley-Lumley!" he said sharply.

"Yes, sir!"

"Do you know anything about this telegram?"

The Outsider looked astonished.

"That—that telegram, sir?" he ejaculated.

"You do not know who sent it?"

"Certainly not, sir! How should I know?" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley, in amazement.

"You did not know that a telegram was coming here relating to yourself?"

"I had no idea of it, sir."

"It is very curious." The Head read the telegram again, and then scanned the features of the Outsider. "I do not quite understand this. Your father, I believe, is not in England, Lumley-Lumley?"

"No, sir; he is in South America."

"H'm!"

The Head paused, and read the telegram for a third time. Then he crumpled it in his hands. Taggles made a movement towards Lumley-Lumley. Dr. Holmes motioned him back.

There was a breathless hush in the Hall. The fellows wondered what it all meant. What was the telegram about? And was not Lumley-Lumley to be punished, after all?

"Lumley-Lumley," said the Head quietly, "I am placed in a difficult position. I do not desire to punish you, yet your silence leaves me no other resource. This telegram throws, perhaps, a different complexion on the matter. Lumley-Lumley, I intend to give you one more chance. Do you assure me, on your word of honour, that while you were absent from the school, you were not engaged in any occupation of a disreputable nature?"

Very clearly and firmly came the Outsider's answer:

"Yes, sir!"

"Very well," said the Head, after quite a long pause. "I will bear in mind, Lumley-Lumley, that your record has been very good for some time past, and I will give you another chance. I accept your assurance, and take your word. You may go!"

Lumley-Lumley almost staggered.

"I—I am not to be flogged, sir?" he exclaimed.

"No."

"Oh, sir!"

"I only hope, Lumley-Lumley, that you have told me the truth," said Dr. Holmes. "You may go. The school is dismissed."

And the Head, still with the telegram in his hand, quitted the Hall. The assembled school broke up. The fellows streamed out in a state of utter amazement. There were few who were not pleased to see Lumley-Lumley dismissed unpunished; but all were amazed. Outside, in the passage, the Outsider of St. Jim's was surrounded by an eager crowd of inquirers.

"What was the telegram, Lumley?" asked Blaké.

Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"I don't know," he answered.

"You don't know?" exclaimed Levison.

"I've said so."

"Nor who sent it?"

"No."

Levison laughed.

"Oh, draw it mild!" he exclaimed.

Lumley-Lumley's eyes gleamed.

"I've said I don't know. If you doubt my word, Levison, you can step into the gym. with me, and back up your opinion with your fists."

Levison thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and turned away with a shrug of the shoulders. He had no desire whatever to step into the gym., and back up his opinion with his fists. That was not Levison's way.

To all the other inquirers Lumley-Lumley returned the same answer. He did not know who sent the telegram, or what was in it. Some of the fellows believed him, and some did not. But whether Lumley-Lumley knew the truth or not, the telegram and its contents seemed likely to remain an impenetrable mystery to the rest of the St. Jim's fellows.

"Weally, you know, I can't make it out myself," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "and so I suppose the west of you fellows will have to give it up! But it is weally vewy mystewious, deah boys!"

And the dear boys agreed that it was.

CHAPTER 8.

The Pink Paper!

"DEAR me!"

Skimpole blinked, and blinked again. Not satisfied with this, he took off his big spectacles and polished them before looking again.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Skimpole, as he saw, beyond all doubt, that it was a sporting newspaper that lay before him on the Fourth Form stairs.

"How very strange!"

And Skimpole blinked again.

"What a shocking discovery! I am afraid some fellow has been guilty of a woeful relapse," he continued, as he read the flaring title. "A sporting-paper at St. Jim's."

Skimpole paused to polish his glasses again. He was at a loss as to how he should proceed.

"The introduction of such literature into the school is very reprehensible," he murmured, still gazing down at the paper. "But, perhaps, it is as well that I found it. I may be able to point out to the owner the error of his ways, while there is yet time."

So saying Skimpole picked up the sporting-paper as if it had been an unclean thing, as indeed it was, considered as a mental stimulus.

Possession established, Skimpole was in another quandary as to what he ought to do. The position would be difficult, to say the least, if a master caught him in his present attitude. But Skimpole was a social reformer before anything. He firmly believed in the tenet "Be ye wise as serpents and as harmless as doves."

Still not quite clear about it, however, Skimpole took refuge in another blink.

"It is my duty to be well informed," he murmured, looking doubtfully at the pink paper. "'All human work is interesting, though it be only bad work,' says Professor Balmcrumpet."

And Skimpole opened the paper.

The first thing he saw shocked him, if the expression of his face went for anything.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "I had no idea it was as bad as this. 'Sporting intelligence'!"

Skimpole closed the paper again.

"Perhaps the name of the owner is written on the outside," he said. "I don't think I should care to read any more."

Scrutinising it closely, he satisfied himself that the owner had not revealed his identity in writing on the outside pages. Skimpole was plainly disappointed. He would dearly have liked to give the owner of the paper a little lecture on morals. He blinked up the Fourth Form stairs to see if anyone was about.

"It must belong to someone up here, though," he murmured. "Perhaps I had better look. If he is a decent fellow, I can save him from disgrace."

But on reaching the Fourth Form passage, Skimpole discovered that all the studies were empty. He walked back to the stairs, thinking things out.

"Perhaps I ought to take it to a prefect."

Instantly it occurred to Skimpole that he would be put through a severe cross-examination if he took it to Kildare. Skimpole did not like cross-examinations, he had to put up with too many of them as it was, when the chums questioned his curious opinions.

No; some other way must be found.

Then he thought of finding the Fourth Form chums, Blake & Co.

"But I should probably get a most awful ragging, if I said I found it on their stairs," said Skimpole. "Dear me, what shall I do with it?"

A mighty brain like Skimpole's could not be expected to arrive at the simple solution of putting the paper in his pocket until such time as he could think out a course of action. Skimpole despised the simple things of life. If a thing could not be worked out in diagrams it held no charm for him. As a competent social reformer he felt that he must forsake all common sensible methods, and devise something peculiarly his own.

"My only hat!"

Skimpole started.

Tom Merry, Monty Lowther and Manners were bounding up the stairs.

Skimpole put the paper behind him hurriedly.

"Hallo, Skimmy!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "What's up?"

"Ah, your sudden entrance rather startled me, you fellows!" said Skimpole, edging up the stairs. "You are boisterous, aren't you?"

Tom Merry grinned.

"Really, Skimmy! I wouldn't have believed it of you!" said Manners.

"What do you mean, Manners, pray!" asked Skimpole, trying to appear at his ease.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We saw you, you know!" said Tom Merry.

Skimpole turned red.

"Surely there is nothing extraordinary in my reading a newspaper, Tom Merry?" he said.

"Nothing at all, Skimmy," said Monty Lowther. "But why do you hold it behind your back?"

"Really, Lowther——"

"You needn't be ashamed of it, Skimmy!" grinned Tom Merry. "It's better than Professor Balmcrumpet's rot, I'll bet!"

"I don't approve of betting, Tom Merry——"

Skimpole blushed when he thought of the paper behind his back. Edging his hand round, in the hope that the Terrible Three would not see him, he tried to get the paper into his trousers pocket. The chums grinned.

"Oh, don't be selfish, Skimmy! You're going to show it to us, aren't you?"

"Of course he is!" said Manners.

"We certainly ought to share in the good news."

"I don't agree with you, Lowther," said Skimpole, still trying to get the paper into his pocket. "There is nothing interesting in it—"

"Nothing about Professor Balmcrumpet?"

"Don't be silly, Lowther—"

Skimpole stopped as he noticed a curious expression pass over Tom Merry's face. The captain of the Shell was looking intently at the paper. He had just bethought himself that Arthur Augustus had said the paper Lumley-Lumley was reading was a pink one.

"My only hat!" he exclaimed, in a half-amusing sort of manner.

Lowther and Manners stared at him.

"Anything the matter, Tommy?"

"I think you ought to show us that paper, Skimmy."

"Really, Tom Merry—"

"Rats! Let us have a look at the giddy paper, ass!"

"Really, Manners—"

"I vote we take it off the fathead," went on Manners.

Skimpole backed another step or two. He was alarmed.

"I must remind you that this is interfering with the liberty of the subject," he said.

"Go hon! Fork out that giddy paper!"

"I must refuse, Tom Merry," said Skimpole.

"Oh, rats to this pottering about! Take it off the ass!"

"Hold hard, Manners!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Why do you refuse, Skimmy?"

Skimpole went pink. His weedy form began to shake.

"My only hat! What's the matter with him?"

Skimpole was too perturbed to take any notice of Lowther. He was cramming the paper into his pocket as if life itself depended on it.

"I must reserve my reason, Tom Merry," he said.

The Terrible Three looked curiously at Skimpole. A suspicion seemed to occur to them. Tom Merry looked at Lowther, and Manners looked from one to the other. But the idea of Skimmy leading a wild life was too ridiculous. They burst into laughter.

"Pray allow me to pass, you fellows; you really ought not to detain me like this, you know."

"What are you doing with a sporting-paper, Skimmy?" said Tom Merry quietly.

Skimpole nearly fell down in his agitation.

"I am not doing with it at all, Tom Merry!" he faltered.

"Then why are you so seedy about it, then?"

Skimpole looked about for means to escape. But there were none. If he fled along the Fourth passage he knew that he could not hope to outrun the Terrible Three, should they choose to follow. Manners making another move towards him, he sat down on the stairs and slipped down almost as far as where the chums were standing.

Monty Lowther and Manners picked him up.

"Pray release me at once, Lowther and Manners!" he said.

"All right! All right!" said Monty Lowther, grinning.

"Blessed if I understand him," said Manners, releasing his hold, too.

"I would explain, Tom Merry," said Skimpole, looking scared. "But I'm afraid of you misunderstanding me. I meant to keep this to myself—"

"No doubt, Skimmy—"

"There you go, Lowther! I was going to say that it is not my paper," said Skimpole excitedly.

"My only hat! And we caught him reading it!"

"Really, Manners——"

"How did you get it, then, Skimmy?"

"I found it on the stairs, here, Tom Merry!"

Monty Lowther whistled.

"Some giddy bounder looking for a chance to get expelled," he remarked.

"Well, let's have a look at it, anyway?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I can't, Tom Merry; it's not fit for you to read," said Skimpole.

The Terrible Three could not believe their ears.

"Well, I like that, after catching you up to your neck in it, anyway, Skimmy!" said Tom Merry.

"You believe I found it here, Tom Merry?"

"Yes, Skimmy. I couldn't believe you had given up old Balmcrumpet for that," said Tom Merry.

"Then I will give the paper to you, Tom Merry."

"Right-ho! I'll return it to you when I've done with it, Skimmy."

"I hope you will do no such thing, Tom Merry," said Skimpole, with a start. "And I hope none of you fellows will mention my name in connection with it."

"Certainly not," said Tom Merry, laughing. "But I don't think anybody's likely to set you going as a giddy sportsman, Skimmy. Nobody would give you credit for leading a wild life."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole blinked at the Terrible Three. Skimpole spent most of his spare time in studying such important questions as Determinism, and evolution, and things of that sort, and felt a lofty contempt for outdoor sports of every kind. It would certainly have required a very big stretch of the imagination to fancy Skimpole as a doggish youth.

"No; I trust that anybody would recognise me as a person of scientific leanings," he remarked. "I should be sorry to be taken for a reader of sporting-papers, or, indeed, newspapers of any sort. I trust you fellows will not read that paper——"

"We shall try to find the owner," said Tom Merry.

"That is what I was going to do. You had better leave it in my hands, perhaps," said Skimpole anxiously. "I desire very much to give the owner of that paper a little lecture on life subject——"

"You would very likely get a thick ear," said Tom Merry.

"Really, Merry——"

"Better leave it to us."

"Upon the whole, I think——"

"It's all serene, Skimmy. We'll find the owner."

"However—— Dear me, how rude of them to walk away while I am talking!" said Skimpole, blinking after the chums of the Shell. "Tom Merry! Lowther!"

But the Terrible Three were gone.

CHAPTER 9.

Guilty!

TOM MERRY paused at his study door, and entered.

Lowther and Manners followed him in.

The Terrible Three were looking very serious. It was no light matter finding a sporting-paper in the school. That some of the seniors read sporting news, and made bets on races, was an open secret. Knox of the Sixth, and Sefton, and one or two more, were addicted to

such things. Mellish and Levison of the Fourth were suspected of it. But the fellow who had been most thoroughly addicted to blackguardism of that sort had been Lumley-Lumley—before his reform. But since—

"Skimmy found this in the Fourth Form passage," Tom Merry remarked slowly.

"It was dropped there by a junior," said Monty Lowther. "Most likely one of the Fourth. I suppose we may as well speak out plainly. That paper belongs to Lumley-Lumley."

"I suppose it does!" Tom Merry said slowly.

"No doubt on the subject," said Manners. "You remember what Gussy said about seeing him reading a pink paper in the common-room."

Tom Merry's face clouded.

"I've been trying to believe in Lumley-Lumley," he said, "but—but this is a little too thick. If this paper is his, it settles the matter."

"Yes, rather."

"But he's entitled to the benefit of the doubt," went on the hero of the Shell. "If he denies that the paper is his, we are bound to take his word."

"I suppose so," said Manners doubtfully.

"Better go and ask him, then," said Lowther. "The sooner we get the matter cleared up, the better; we don't want anybody to see us with that rotten paper in our hands."

"No fear!"

"Come on, then! Lumley-Lumley's in his study."

The Terrible Three were at the Outsider's door a minute later. Tom Merry knocked, and opened the door. Lumley-Lumley was alone in his study. Levison and Mellish shared that study with him, but just now they were not in the room. Tom Merry was glad of it. The Outsider turned a flushed face towards the chums of the Shell as they entered. He had been going through his pockets, as if in search of something he had lost.

"Looking for something?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yes."

"What have you lost?"

"A paper!" said the Outsider, with a troubled look. "I suppose I must have dropped it somewhere, or else that cad Levison has got hold of it. I believe he saw it in my pocket, and the rotter is very spiteful."

Tom Merry held out the pink paper.

"Is that it?" he asked quietly.

Lumley-Lumley gave a start, and stretched out his hand.

"Yes, that's it!" he exclaimed. "Where did you find it?"

"I had it from Skimpole. He picked it up in the passage here."

"Thanks!"

Lumley-Lumley thrust the paper under his jacket. Then he turned a crimson face towards the chums of the Shell. He could read in their looks what they were thinking.

"You know what that paper is?" he asked, in a faltering voice.

"Yes," said Tom Merry quietly. "It's a betting paper."

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley nodded.

"And it is your property?" asked Tom Merry.

"I guess so."

"You admit it?"

"Yes."

"Very well," said Tom Merry quietly. "If it's your property, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, you can keep it. I've got nothing more to say. Come on, you chaps."

The Terrible Three turned quietly to the door again.

"I—I say——" began Lumley-Lumley hastily.

Tom Merry stopped.

"Well?"

"Nothing!" said Lumley-Lumley after a pause.

The chums of the Shell left the study. In the passage they exchanged glances.

"I think it's pretty clear now," said Manners, in a low voice. "He did not even deny that the rotten paper was his. I don't think we need any more evidence."

Tom Merry nodded.

"So I think!" he said.

"It's rotten! I always believed in Lumley-Lumley!"

"So did I! I suppose he was taking us in—he has done so before," said Tom Merry. "I'm done with him, at all events."

"Same here!"

The Terrible Three returned to their study. They were all three feeling somewhat gloomy and depressed. They had had faith in the reform of the Outsider of St. Jim's; and they had been slow to lose their belief in him. And if he had been deceiving them—then his reform had been a pretence, a lie all along, and he had been laughing in his sleeve at them all the time! The thought of that made their cheeks burn.

They settled down to their preparation, but their brows remained clouded. They could not help thinking of the discovery they had made. There was a tap at the door of the study, and the Outsider entered.

Lumley-Lumley was looking very pale and troubled.

The Terrible Three looked at him grimly. The same thought was in all their minds, that the Outsider had come to make some explanation, in his old cunning way, to deceive them again.

"Can I speak to you fellows?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, if you like," he said.

"I'm sorry you saw that paper——"

"I daresay you are!" said Monty Lowther satirically. "You did not mean to be bowled out, I suppose, if you could help it."

Lumley-Lumley coloured.

"I don't mean that," he said; "I mean it's given you a false impression, I'm afraid. You think that I've taken to rotten ways."

"Yes."

Lumley-Lumley winced. The prompt and unhesitating reply of the Terrible Three seemed to cut him like a whip-lash.

"Well, it isn't true!" he exclaimed.

The Shell fellows were silent.

"I know the look of the thing is against me," said Lumley-Lumley awkwardly. "This is some of Levison's doing! He took the paper, I believe, and dropped it in the passage, so that it would be found. I owe this to him!"

"He couldn't have done it if you hadn't had the paper!"

"Well, no. But——"

"What did you have the paper for?"

Lumley-Lumley hesitated.

"I can't very well explain," he said slowly; "but you're doing me an injustice in what you think of me, you fellows."

"We're not children," said Tom Merry quietly; "we can believe plain evidence, that's all. I suppose you've been taking us in; you've done it before, and we gave you a chance by believing in you. That's all!"

"You've no right to say that! I—I——"

Tom Merry's eyes flashed. He rose to his feet. It was not only that he felt a deep and bitter disappointment in the matter, but he was angered by the thought that he had been made a fool of. He had always stood up for the Outsider, through thick and thin, and this was the end of it—the discovery that he had been hoodwinked all the time! He felt as if he could hardly keep his hands off the blackguard of the Fourth.

"No right to say it!" he exclaimed. "Oh, you make me sick! You'd better get out of this study while you're safe."

Lumley-Lumley hesitated.

"I don't want to quarrel with you——" he began.

"Well, you will quarrel with me, if you speak to me again," said Tom Merry contemptuously. "I don't want to have anything to do with you; and, under the circumstances, I regard it as an insult, your coming into my study at all."

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther.

Lumley-Lumley's eyes were glinting. His temper, too, was rising now. Tom Merry pointed to the door.

"That's your way!" he said.

"Look here, hang you——"

"Oh, get out!"

"Buzz off!"

"Hang you! I——"

"You'll get out of this study!" said Tom Merry, coming round the table. "I'm not looking for trouble with you, but I don't want you here! You're not fit to talk to! You've lied to us, many a time, and more than ever since we took to believing in you! Will you go?"

"No, I won't!" shouted Lumley-Lumley savagely. "Liar yourself!"

No more was said. Tom Merry stepped up to the Outsider of St. Jim's, and the next moment the two juniors were in a tight embrace.

CHAPTER 10.

One Friend Left!

"I GUESS it's not so easy!" gasped Lumley-Lumley, as he met Tom Merry's attack coolly enough.

To the leader of the Shell's surprise his attack was not only countered, but he was sent back with a heavy knock on the chin. Lumley-Lumley followed him up.

But Tom Merry was never beaten with one blow. The blow stung him fearfully, for the Outsider had always been a hard hitter even if he could not win fights. In a second, Manners and Lowther had swung the table out of the way and the two combatants closed.

It was seen that Lumley-Lumley had profited by his "good" period. His style of fighting was very much improved. From the first it was seen that he had put it correctly when he said it would not be so easy for Tom Merry.

At the end of five minutes Lumley-Lumley was still to be "put out." Tom Merry was finding the Outsider a hard nut to crack.

Manners and Lowther could not disguise from themselves the fact that the American fought like a fellow who believed he had right on his side; but they thought the facts dead against him, and of course they did not hesitate for a moment to back up their chief.

"I'll shift you out, or I'll know why!" said Tom Merry.

"All serene!" said Lumley-Lumley, facing him as coolly as if it were only a bout with the gloves. "You're in the wrong, Tom Merry——"

"Rats!"

And the fight went on. Tom Merry warming to his work made things hum for the American youth. He believed that it was his duty not to have such a fellow in the study. He could easily have called upon Manners and Lowther to collar the Outsider and drop him outside. But Lumley-Lumley had "checked" him and he was determined to put him out himself. Lumley-Lumley "took his change" as if his face had been made of iron. All Tom Merry's heaviest blows seemed to come alike to him. In return he made the leader of the Shell gasp many a time, and Manners and Lowther could not help but admire the Outsider's stamina. At the end of another five minutes both combatants paused for breath. Both were spent. But Lumley-Lumley stood waiting. He made not the least move to go.

"Oh, get it over, Tommy!" cried Lowther. "We'll be disturbed before long if you don't!"

Tom Merry grinned, almost savagely.

"Out you go!" he exclaimed, getting up to Lumley-Lumley again.

"I guess I'm not going to be ordered about like a dog, Tom Merry——"

"Bah! Don't let me hear you speak my name!"

"All serene. You've got it bad, haven't you?"

"And so have you!" roared Tom Merry, rushing in.

Quick as lightning, Lumley-Lumley avoided the blow, and before Tom Merry knew where he was he felt a stinging blow under the jaw which sent him reeling to the wall. Lumley-Lumley's eyes glittered. He was getting the best of it so far. Tom Merry had once given him an awful thrashing. Perhaps the thought of it rushed through the Outsider's mind? He came for Tom Merry this time. The leader of the Shell was not so done as he thought, however. Hard knocking only served to make Tom Merry fight more determinedly than ever. He was a longer practised athlete than Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. His stamina could not be reduced by a few knocks. Moreover he could stand punishment every bit as well as the Outsider. Lumley-Lumley put in all he had learned. But he found that attacking Tom Merry was not so easy as defending himself. Tom Merry, nerved to his highest tension, gave back more than he received.

Lumley-Lumley felt the hard blows at last. His spirit, bucking up for the short time since he had closed with Tom Merry, felt the strain. His heart was giving way. The hard knocks seemed like the hard words which he had received lately. The power of his resistance was breaking.

"Oh, do get it over!" said Manners. "I can hear fellows buzzing about in the passage!"

Both combatants gave him a look. Tom Merry was determined to throw Lumley-Lumley out if the Head himself were there. Lumley-Lumley was equally determined that he would be ground to powder first.

"Out you go!" panted the leader of the Shell, as he got Lumley-Lumley in a firm grasp.

But Lumley-Lumley managed to get his arms out, nevertheless, Tom Merry had cause for regret. The Outsider made good use of his fists, and in the next throw Tom Merry was underneath. Lumley-Lumley had hardly the breath to continue when the hero of the Shell leaped up and confronted him like a lion. But he put up his hands. Then Manners and Lowther felt sorry for him. The courage of Lumley-Lumley was a thing to be admired. Tom Merry was now clearly the better man, as his getting up from such a throw in such good form amply testified. But the way Lumley-Lumley defended himself was magnificent. Time after time Tom Merry got through his defence, but the Outsider stood it all.

Losing his patience at last with a fellow who could stand such punishment and not clear out, Tom Merry closed with his adversary again. Then

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley put up a really grand fight. Both fighters heard the scurrying feet outside. The door was thrown open and Jack Blake and Co. looked in just as the two juniors came to grips. Lumley again got the best of the first tussle, Tom Merry coming up against the wall as if Jack Johnson had sent him there. Lumley stared at the way he returned to the charge.

"Oh, stop 'em, for goodness sake!" cried Jack Blake.

"Try it, any of you!" snapped Tom Merry.

And the fight went on.

"It's simply ridiculous, when you fellows can put him out quite easily!" said Blake.

"I guess not——"

Tom Merry squashed the rest of what Lumley-Lumley would have thrown out in defiance. The hero of the Shell had his adversary round the waist in no gentle hold, Lumley-Lumley gasped. He saw at once that the crucial moment had arrived.

"Open the door, Lowther!" shouted Manners.

"Leave it!" panted Tom Merry. "I'll do it myself——"

"Wots, deah boy. Leave Lumlay alone, or I'll give you a seveah thwashin'——"

"Shut up, you ass——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Out you go!" roared Tom Merry as Lumley-Lumley at last was seen to be slowly going towards the door.

For answer, the American youth somehow got his hand free, and the chums of the Shell and Fourth stared when they saw him prizing Tom Merry's chin up. The leader of the Shell almost cried out. The pain was horrible. But with a sudden jerk he managed to slip the hand, and before Lumley-Lumley could make any better use of it, Tom Merry whirled him into the corner by the door.

"Out you go, you rotter!" shouted the furious leader of the Shell.

And opening the door he seized Lumley-Lumley by the collar. But Lumley-Lumley was half on his feet in the moment of respite while Tom Merry opened the door. In the inferior position as he was, he yet made a great fight for it, and at last Tom Merry threw him across the passage outside.

"I'll bet you won't come here again, anyway!" said Tom Merry.

Lumley-Lumley did not rise for a moment. He looked round the circle of faces. None of the juniors could tell what was passing in his mind. One thing was certain, however. Although he had just been more roughly handled than anyone could remember, he did not appear to be taking it spitefully. Least of all did he seem angry with Tom Merry. But no one spoke to him as he lay there. More than one fellow was sorry for him; but what could they do, when they thought of Lumley-Lumley's unenviable record. Tom Merry was not the fellow to thrash a chap like this for nothing.

"It's all a big mistake, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley, looking up.

"Get away from here!" said Tom Merry.

"I guess I'll go," said Lumley-Lumley, rising.

Still no one made any comment.

"I say, Lowther——"

Monty Lowther looked straight at the Outsider. Lumley-Lumley was not slow to understand.

"You don't believe it of me, Blake——"

Jack Blake shrugged his shoulders. The Outsider looked at the others. There was not a face that did not seem to reflect in Tom Merry's favour.

They all clearly thought he had done right in sacking the Outsider. All except one. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, a silent spectator of the scene, moved a little nearer to Lumley-Lumley. Blake threw a warning glance at the Swell of the School House; but D'Arcy had evidently made up his mind on something.

"Not one pal left!" said Lumley-Lumley, bitterly.

And he walked away down the passage.

"Bai Jove——"

"What's the matter, ass!" cried Jack Blake. "Come here!"

For once Arthur Augustus forgot about such things as "dig." He started off at once after Lumley-Lumley.

"Come back, you giddy ass!" said Blake.

"Wats!" retorted Arthur Augustus. "I think Lumlay has been twated too woughlay. I say, Lumlay, old chap——"

Lumley-Lumley half turned his head. He looked at D'Arcy in wonder. He clearly thought some new indignity was being prepared for him. He turned and faced Arthur Augustus, warily.

Arthur Augustus drew himself up in a very dignified manner.

"I am the one fwiend left, Lumlay, deah bty," he said.

CHAPTER 11

D'Arcy Declines.

JACK BLAKE looked up from his preparation as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came into Study No. 6. Digby, who had finished his prep., and was roasting chestnuts, looked up too, with a ruddy face, from the fire. Herries, who was mending a dog's collar, belonging to Towser, his famous bulldog, quitted even that interesting occupation, to look at D'Arcy as he came in. Three deadly stares were fastened upon the swell of St. Jim's and they seemed to disconcert him somewhat. He turned his eyeglass upon the chums of the Fourth in turn.

"Weally, deah boys——" he began.

"It won't do, Gussy!"

"Weally——"

"It won't do!"

"I fail to understand you, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity. "If you are wefewwin' to my necktie, I assure you that it is in the best of taste. I know perfectly well that a necktie, as a wule, should harmonise in colour with a fellow's eyes, but in the wpesent instance, considewin' the stwipes in*the waistcoat I am wearin'——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"We weren't talking about your necktie, fathead."

"I wefuse to be called a fathead. If you were not wefewwin' to my necktie, I suppose it is my waistcoat you are alludin' to in such a gwossly wude mannah. Pewwaps the stwipes are a little too thick——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally——"

"It's not the waistcoat."

"What is it then, you silly asses?"

"Your manners and customs," said Digby, solemnly.

"Weally, Dig——"

"You have been backing up Lumley-Lumley," said Blake, seriously.

"You have been tending him and nursing him——"

"I've been lookin' aftah the poor chap a bit," said D'Arcy. "Tom Mewwy gave him a feahful thwashin'."

"He jolly well deserved it," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"He deserved it, and he got it," said Blake. "I don't mind your helping him to his study, and all that. But it's got to stop there."

"In his study?"

"No ass! I mean you've got to drop him!"

"Dwop him!"

"Yes. It's quite clear now that he's the rotter, just as he used to be, and we can't have you going round with rotters."

"Can't be did!" said Digby.

"Disgrace to the study!" remarked Herries, with a shake of the head.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and regarded the chums of Study No. 6 with considerable indignation.

"I am surprised at you, deah boys," he said. "As a wule, I make it my inaviable custom to be select, not to say swaggah, in the company I choose. I am bound to stick to Lumlay-Lumlay, howevah—"

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Hewwies—"

"Rats!"

"You uttah ass—"

Blake shook a warning forefinger at the swell of St. Jim's.

"It won't do, Gussy," he said decidedly. "We can't allow it. You'll have to drop Lumley-Lumley. He's been taking us all in, and he's a rotter."

"Wats!"

"Why, you ass—"

"Yaas, wats!" said Arthur Augustus, firmly. "I believe in Lumlay-Lumley. I considah that circs. are against him, and I am goin' to stick to him."

"You frabjous ass—"

"I wufuse to be chawactewised as a fwabjous ass! I wegard it as my dutay to stick to a fellow who is down."

"Yes, if he's down by no fault of his own," growled Blake. "But Lumley-Lumley is a rotter, and not fit for a clean chap to speak to."

"I am sowwy I cannot agwee with you, deah boy."

"Look here, Gussy—"

"I feel bound to stick to my posish," said the swell of St. Jim's, firmly. "It would be quite imposs. for a D'Arcy to desert a chap in distwess."

"You ass—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here, Lumley-Lumley has proved clearly enough that he's only been playing a game on us all along," exclaimed Blake, with heat. "It's plain enough to everybody but you."

"I weally don't think so."

"Well, you can take my word for it."

"You are mistaken, deah boy."

"Mistaken!" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Jack Blake jumped up. Herries and Digby jumped up too. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy regarded them through his monocle. He did not seem to be alarmed.

"Now, look here," said Blake, crossing between D'Arcy and the door; "we've got to have this out!"

"Vewy well, deah boy."

"Lumley-Lumley is a rotten, rank outsider——"

"Quite wrong——"

"A chap belonging to this study is not going to talk to him. It's a disgrace to the study, and let's us all down."

"Yes, rather," said Herries.

"Wats!"

"You've got to chuck him, Gussy."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Undah the circs., Blake, deah boy, I am bound to wefuse to do anythin' of the sort," he replied.

Blake snorted.

"You are going to set yourself up against the study, then," he exclaimed.

"I have no othah wesource, as you persist in backin' up against my opinion. It would be much bettah to wely on the opinion of a fellow of tact and judgment."

"And what are you going to do about that rotter?" demanded Blake wrathfully.

"I'm goin' to stick to him," said D'Arcy firmly. "I'm goin' to take him undah my wing, and be a fathah to him, as you suggested yourself."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake, I twust you will not persist in usin' these oppwobwious expressions, and force me to thwash you! I feel bound to look aftah Lumlay-Lumlay. The chap has a vewy bad twainin', and he may be gettin' into twouble again; but I am convinced that he is doin' his best. I am goin' to keep an eye on him. I am goin' to see that he does not leave the coll. without havin' me with him to see that he doesn't get into mischief——"

"My hat!"

"And if he goes without my permish, I shall follow him, and see what he does, and westwain him," said D'Arcy firmly.

"Well, of all the fatheads——"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead!"

"You'll find that he's going to the Green Man again, and putting money on horses!" growled Digby.

"I wathah think not. But if I find out anythin' of the sort, I shall dwop the wottah at once, of course, aftah givin' him a fearful thwashin' for deceivin' me!"

"You'll drop him now," said Jack Blake resolutely.

"Imposs, deah boy."

"Then we'll bump you till you agree."

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy——"

"I decline to agwee, and I should uttably wefuse to be bumped!"

"I tell you——"

"Pway dwop the subject, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, with a wave of the hand. "You are weally beginnin' to bore me, you know, and—— Oh! Ow! Leggo! Yawooh!"

Three pairs of hands descended upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and he was seized and whirled off his feet.

He struggled frantically in the grip of his three chums. But he was powerless.

"Now, then!" exclaimed Blake.

"Ow! Yawooh!"

"Are you going to chuck Lumley-Lumley?"

"Yow! No!"

"Bump him!"

"Yow! Welease me! Gwoooooooh!"

Bump!

"Are you going to chuck the Outsider?"

"Ow! No! Yow!"

Bump! Bump!

"Now, then, Gussy, are you going——"

"No!" roared D'Arcy.

Bump!

"My hat! Of all the obstinate asses!" exclaimed Blake, in disgust. "Now, then, Gussy, we'll give you one more chance, and if you say no, we'll bump you, hard, and sling you out of the study. Are you going to chuck Lumley-Lumley?"

"No!"

Bump!

"Yawwoh!"

"Open the door, Dig!"

The door slung open. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went with a whiz in the passage, and sprawled there on the linoleum, gasping. The door slammed, and the key was turned in the lock.

CHAPTER 12.

Skimpole is Anxious.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY staggered to his feet. He was extremely dishevelled, and he was dusty, and his bones were aching from the bumping. But he did not think of that. He was thinking only of avenging his injuries. He rushed at the study door, and wrenched at the handle. The door was locked, and refused to budge. D'Arcy hammered at the upper panels with his fist.

"Open this door, you uttah wottahs!" he shouted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me in!"

"Rats!"

"You feahful wottahs!"

"You're not coming into this study again till you've chucked Lumley-Lumley," said Blake, through the keyhole. "We won't have you!"

"No fear!" said Digby and Herries together.

"You—you uttah beasts!"

"Oh, go and dust yourself!"

"I ordah you to open this door——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blake, you wottah——"

"Go and eat coke!"

Arthur Augustus hammered furiously on the door. Reilly of the Fourth put his head out of the adjoining study, and yelled.

"Tare an' 'ounds! Stop that row, ye spalpeen!" he roared. "Faith, and how is a boy to do his prep. with you startin' earthquakes in the passage, intoirely?"

"I am sowwy, Weilly——"

"Then chuck it, you ass!"

"Undah the cires. I must decline to chuck it. I am bound to hammah at this door till they open it, as——"

"If you hammer at that door again, I'll jolly well hammer at you!" roared Reilly.

"Weally, you know——"

"Stop it, you silly omadhaun!"

Hammer, hammer, hammer!

Arthur Augustus did not stop it; and Reilly was as good as his word. The boy from Belfast rushed out into the passage, and hurled himself upon the swell of St. Jim's. They clasped one another, and in a moment were whirling round the passage in deadly conflict.

"Ow, you wottah——"

"Arrah, then, you spalpeen——"

"I will thwash you——"

"Sure, I'll pulverise ye——"

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

The Terrible Three came along the passage. They exchanged a grin, and rushed upon the two combatants, and dragged them apart.

"What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry.

"Ow! Lemme get at the boundah!"

"Faith, and let me get a hould on the spalpeen——"

"Chuck it!" said Tom Merry, laughing; and he pushed Reilly into his study. "Now, Gussy, keep your wool on!"

"I wefuse to have my hair alluded to as wool——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you Shell wottahs——"

"But what's the trouble?" asked Manners pacifically.

"Blake and Hewwics and Dig have turned me out of the studay, and locked the door!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Monty Lowther gave a whistle.

"My hat! What's that for?"

"Because I stick to Lumlay-Lumlay!"

Tom Merry looked grave.

"And the rest of the study want you to drop him?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then you'd better do as the study wants, Gussy," said Tom Merry seriously. "It seems to me that Lumley-Lumley is found out, and he can't expect a decent chap to stick to him."

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy——"

"I'm stickin' to him through thick and thin," said Arthur Augustus, "and I'm bound to go into this studay, because I've got some lines to do."

"You can do them in our study, old son," said Manners.

"Oh, vevy well! Thank you vevy much!" D'Arcy tapped at the door of No. 6. "I shall give you fellows a feahful thwashin' to-mowwow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus walked away down the passage to the Shell quarters, breathing very hard through his nose. The Terrible Three went their way. D'Arcy settled down to write his imposition at Tom Merry's table in an extremely indignant frame of mind. Nothing would ever eradicate from Arthur Augustus's noble mind the idea that he should be considered the head of the study, and to be forcibly ejected because he declined to take orders from the others was like receiving insult added to injury. He frowned majestically over his lines as he wrote them out.

He finished them at last, and rose to his feet.

"Bai Jove, I think I will return to No. 6, and see if those fellows are inclined to listen to weason!" he murmured.

"Ahem! Is that you, D'Arcy?"

Skimpole of the Shell blinked into the study. Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass and glanced at the genius of St. Jim's.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I came here to see Tom Merry," Skimpole explained. "I handed him a paper that I found in the Fourth Form passage this evening, and he has not returned it to me——"

"Oh, you found the papah, did you?" said Arthur Augustus grimly.

Skimpole blinked at him.

"Yes, I found it," he said. "Tom Merry said that he would return it to the owner if he found him, and——"

"Pwobably he has done so."

"As a matter of fact," said Skimpole confidentially—"as a matter of fact, you know, I am somewhat uneasy about the matter. I have reflected upon it, remembering Professor Balmcrumpet's remark that a true Determinist should always mind the business of other people as well as his own. I fear, D'Arcy, that someone at St. Jim's is leading a rotten life, from the discovery of that paper—a wicked life, D'Arcy."

"Oh, wats!"

"I am determined, from a sense of duty, to discover the owner of that paper, and remonstrate with him," said Skimpole. "I shall point out to him that he is bound to come to a bad end if he leads a wicked life!"

"Weally, Skimmay——"

"Is it you, D'Arcy?"

D'Arcy jumped.

"What?"

Skimpole pointed a bony forefinger at him.

"Are you leading a wicked and depraved life?" he demanded magisterially.

"Bai Jove!"

"If you are, I beg to remonstrate with you—I implore you, before it is too late, to renounce——"

"You uttah ass!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Really, my dear D'Arcy——"

"The papah was not mine, you fwightful ass, and I'm not leadin' a depraved life, or anythin' of the sort, you fwabjous fathead!"

"Oh, very well, I accept your assurance!" said Skimpole. "I—— Oh!"

Skimpole staggered into the study as he received a slap on the shoulder from behind. The Terrible Three walked in cheerfully, and Monty Lowther laid a paper bag on the table. Skimpole blinked at them through his big spectacles, and rubbed his shoulder.

"Really, you fellows——"

"It's all right, Skimmy," said Monty Lowther blandly. "I've just seen Figgins, and we've been having a trial who can stand the hardest knock. I hit him as hard as that, and he never turned a hair."

"Bai Jove! Really Lowther——"

"Don't be alarmed, Skimmy," said Monty Lowther. "Now stand here and put your head against the door-post——"

"Ahem! Really——"

"I will strike you as hard as I can upon the nose," continued Lowther, sparring up to the astonished Skimpole; "that will bang the back of your head upon the door-post. You will make a mental note of your sensations, which will be invaluable for a report to a scientific journal——"

"Oh, really——"

"Now keep your head still——"

"My dear Lowther——"

"Now, don't move, and I shall just catch you—— Where are you going, Skimmy?"

But Skimpole did not stop to explain. He dodged out of the open doorway, and dashed down the passage—in his hurry even forgetting to inquire of the Terrible Three whether they were leading a wicked and depraved life.

CHAPTER 13.

A Punching Competition.

"H A, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter as Tom Merry slammed the door after the fleeing genius of the Shell. Skimpole was gone, and whenever Skimpole was gone, it raised the spirits of his Form-fellows. Skimpole was a good-tempered and harmless fellow, and nobody disliked him. But he was a terrific bore.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "The uttah ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have finished my impot, deah boys," said the swell of St. Jim's; "I am vevy much obliged to you, and I will leave your studay now——"

"Oh, stay and have some cake," said Monty Lowther; "we've brought in a plum cake for supper."

"Thank you vevy much, deah boy."

The door opened.

"Thanks, so will we," said Jack Blake cheerfully, as he came in, apparently not noticing the dagger-like glance that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy threw in his direction. "That cake looks nice! I thought we should find Gussy here, too!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Aren't you going to do your impot to-night, Gussy?" asked Dig, blandly.

"I have done it, you wottahs!"

"Oh, good!" said Blake, with his mouth full of cake; but whether he referred to the fact of D'Arcy's impot being done, or to the quality of the cake, was not clear.

"I wegard you——"

"Jolly good cake!" said Herries.

"Glad you like it," said Lowther. "I was just speaking about a wheeze of Figgins's. He says he can stand as hard a whack as a chap can give him."

"I'll try him to-morrow," said Blake.

"Only you must let him give you one back!" explained Lowther.

"Oh! Ahem! I'll think about it! Gimme some more cake."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass scornfully upon Blake.

"I twust you would not back out fwom a competition with a New House boundah, Blake," he exclaimed.

Blake chuckled.

"Oh, we'll let you represent the School House, on an occasion like that," he said.

"I should be quite willin'——"

Monty Lowther shook his head.

"Couldn't be done," he said. "Gussy is too delicate——"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"You couldn't do it, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. He passed

his hand over his chest, feeling for the bladder full of red ink that he had placed there, in preparation for this little jape on the swell of the School House. "I'm afraid you would be hurt, and we should have to explain to your sorrowing parents——"

"You uttah ass! I am quite willin' to pprove it by twyin' conclusions with you," D'Arcy exclaimed excitedly. "If you like to stand up to a whack fwom me, I will stand up to a whack fwom you, you gwinnin' ass!" Monty Lowther shook his head.

"Oh, go it," said Blake. "Only Lowther gets the first whack!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm afraid of hurting Gussy," Monty Lowther explained seriously. "It would be horrible to inflict any damage on the one and only, and——" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eye gleamed behind his monocle.

"Wats! I could certainly stand as hard a blow on the chest as you could, Lowthah!"

"Brag, my son!" said Lowther, grinning.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Well, get about it, you fathead!"

"Weally, Blake! That wemark is unwawwantable! I shall administah a sound thwash——"

Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners and Blake shook their heads sadly.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy knew only too well what they meant by it.

"I—wefuse to be considered dottay——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As a matter of fact, Gussy, you know as well as I do that your biceps are too weak."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are a beastly wottah, Lowthah!" almost shouted the Swell of the School House.

"But you haven't any biceps, my son," persisted Lowther, with a grin.

Arthur Augustus tried to reply. But for once he was unable. Words failed him. He was too full. He glared at Lowther as if he contemplated that youth's instant destruction.

"I wepeat, Lowthah——" he began.

"Yes. But do something, ass!" said Manners.

"I will, bai Jove!" said D'Arcy.

And without more ado he proceeded to take off his coat.

"Say your prayers, Lowther," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Be merciful as you are strong, won't you, Gussy?" said Lowther, noting Arthur Augustus's elaborate preparations. "I'm only a——"

"Garrulous idiot, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, helping him out.

"Yes, but——"

"I wefuse to let you back out of it now, Lowthah!"

"Idiot! I was going to say that being the challenged party, I have the right to choose which particular part of me you shall hit."

The chums grinned. D'Arcy looked up in surprise.

"I think you are perfectly widiculous, deah boy," said D'Arcy, fixing Lowther with the coldest of stares through his monocle.

"Oh, I don't know. You might hit him below the belt, Gussy."

"Weally, Manners——"

"Or you might slip, old son," said Tom Merry, "through overtaxing your strength——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"For goodness' sake get ready, Gussy!" said Blake. "You're like an

old woman. Don't jaw so much. Lowthah will die of old age before you're ready if you don't buck up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If I were not gettin' weady, Blake," went on D'Arcy threateningly, as he rolled up his sleeves, "I'd——"

"Get ready?" suggested Lowther. "Have you a bit of chalk, Tom Merry. I might as well be marking the spot for the lunatic."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyes flashed. He was dangerously near the point of getting angry. But he kept his temper, as Lowther took the chalk which Tom Merry handed to him.

"I'll make a nice big mark, Gussy," said Lowther provokingly. "It'll be safer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway are you weady, Lowthah?"

"Can you see the spot, Gussy?" asked Lowther, pointing to the huge cross he had marked on his chest.

"Of course I can, Lowthah. What a widiculous question. I'm goin' to sock you into the middle of next week, deah boy."

"Hold me up, Tom Merry," said Lowther, making a comical pretence of fainting away.

"What wot, Lowthah! Pway pwepare yourself!"

"Just here, remember, Gussy," said Lowther folding his arms below the chalk mark. "No tricks, you know. But he can't give much of a blow, chaps," continued the joker of the Shell, turning to Tom Merry, Blake, and Manners.

"Wats!"

"Hadn't you better have a drink of Bovril first, Gussy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm goin' to stwike, Lowthah——"

"I told you he wanted to cry off, kids," laughed Lowther.

Arthur Augustus was speechless with indignation for a moment. Then his wrath poured over Lowther, so to speak.

"No, no, you wastah, Lewthah!" he exclaimed. "You know I do not mean any such thing."

And doubling his fist he made a wild drive at Lowther.

Monty Lowther was on the alert. He had no difficulty in dodging the blow.

"All right! All right!" he cried. "But don't take a chap unaware like that. I'm ready! Hold the lunatic off, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry and Manners seized the Swell of the School House.

"Only to place you in posish, Gussy," said they, by way of explanation. D'Arcy was mollified for the moment.

He made up his mind to give Lowther a blow that would more than stop his japing. Lowther grinned and placed himself in position, hugging the ladder under his coat so that it was exactly under the chalk mark.

There was a slight protruberance, but D'Arcy was too excited to notice

He was fearfully angry with Lowther, and he rolled his shirt sleeves higher still.

"Good-bye, Lowther," said Manners mournfully.

"Farewell," answered Lowther. "You're sure you can see the mark, Gussy? I don't want to suffer any more than is necessary."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall punch you on the nose, Lowthah, in another minute!"

"That's something like it, Gussy," said Blake approvingly. "Buck up, Lowther!"

"Righto!"

As he spoke Monty Lowther loosened the button of his jacket. Nothing but his folded arms supported the bladder in position.

Tom Merry and Manners were bursting with suppressed laughter.

Blake thought they looked strange, but he said nothing.

"Weady, Lowthah?"

"Yes."

D'Arcy's fist shot back to his shoulder.

"On the chalk mark, mind!" yelled Lowther.

"There you are, deah boy!"

As he spoke, D'Arcy's fist went out like a piston-rod.

"Ow! Splosh! Squelch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther flung his jacket open at what shilling shocker writers call the psychological moment. Arthur Augustus's fist burst the bladder as if it had been tissue paper, and a "fiery" stream poured over him.

"You unspeakable wottah, Lowthah!" he yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ain't he nice, kids!" laughed the joker.

D'Arcy was indeed a sight. Red ink oozed from him, so to speak. His face was striped like the American flag. His shirt front had become striped print. His elegant trousers had a new "line" in the pattern.

"It's an all red week!" grinned Manners. "Glad to see you support British manufacture, Gussy. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo! Goosh! Ow!" roared D'Arcy, trying to wipe the stuff off his person.

"And your biceps are all right after all, Guss," said Lowther consolingly.

"You howwid wuffian!" shouted D'Arcy, making another swipe at Lowther.

Lowther, by the skin of his teeth, as the saying is, just managed to evade the angry swell of the School House. But Gussy did not mean to be done so easily. He rushed at Lowther again, and the joker, seeing nothing else for it, bolted through the open study door.

Down the passage he ran, D'Arcy hot on his wake, breathing wild fury, and streaming red ink. A yell of laughter followed them from Tom Merry's study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop, you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake wiped his eyes.

"Oh, Gussy will be the death of me, I know!" he gasped. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther and Arthur Augustus disappeared down the passage. The jape being over, and the cake finished, Blake and Herries and Digby departed. Ten minutes later, Monty Lowther came in, a little breathless, and grinning. He looked cautiously round the study before he came in.

"I dodged him on the boxroom stairs," Monty Lowther explained. "I believe he's searching the boxroom in the dark for me now."

And the chums of the Shell yelled again.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 14.

No Exit.

JACK BLAKE and Herries and Digby had gone down to the junior common-room. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined them there about ten minutes later. The swell of St. Jim's was looking very dusty, and very breathless, and there were signs of the red ink all over him, though he had

done his best to clean himself. The chums of the Fourth grinned as they saw

"Slain him?" asked Blake.

"Weally Blake—"

"Oh, he's killed him!" said Digby. "I can see the signs of the blood on his trousers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, Gussy! What have you done with the body?"

"Weally, you uttah asses—"

"Chimney's a good place," said Herries. "I remember reading in a newspaper once about a body being hidden in a chimney. Do you want any help with the thing, Gussy?"

"Weally Hewwies—"

"Better go and clean the blood off before the police get on the scent," said Blake.

"You uttah ass! You know perfectly well that it is not blood—"

"If it should be seen. I don't see how you could escape being hung," said Blake solemnly, "and if you were hung, Gussy, think how it would soil your necktie!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Of course, if you object to the strain, you might have gas," said Digby, following up Blake's lead.

"You uttah chump, Digby! Pway may I ask if you have got ovah your ridiculous follay, Blake. I wish to entah the studay to change my attiah

"I've no doubt you do," said Blake. "But it can't be did—"

"Not much!" said Herries and Digby. "Not till you chuck Lumley-Lumley, anyway."

"Besides," said Blake, "hadn't you better bury Lowther, now you've killed him?"

Arthur Augustus looked unutterable things at Jack Blake.

Blake, Herries, and Digby grinned.

"Weally, Blake!" began D'Arcy again, "isn't it time you behaved like a grown up and wesponsible person. It is uttahnya widiculous to keep a fellow out of his studay, when he is in a condition like this!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy held out his hand, and surveyed his dilapidated condition.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, this is more than a joke—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally!"

"If you hadn't been in such a hurry to go to Tom Merry and Co.'s place this wouldn't have happened," said Blake. "By this time you would, of course, have given in about Lumley-Lumley, and all would have been well

"You uttah wottah, Blake, to suggest that a D'Arcy would evah go back on a fwiend—"

"I did not say that, Gussy!"

"It comes to the same thing, deah boy!"

Blake shrugged his shoulders. There was no raillery in his tone now. Herries, and Digby, too, looked serious enough. The mention of the Outer had done it.

"Yes, it does come to the same thing, Gussy," retorted Blake. "Give him and it will be all right—"

"I wefuse! I wefuse, uttahnya!"

"That ends it, then," said Blake, turning away. "Come on, kids!"

He walked away leaving Gussy tattered and forlorn, and Herries and Digby followed him.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's indignation would not allow him to speak. That he, the accepted leader of Study number six, should be treated thus! Contumely to a D'Arcy! He started in pursuit of Jack Blake. The D'Arcy fist should come down heavy upon him!

But Arthur Augustus had delayed too long. When he arrived outside the study door, it was locked and closed. The fact that it was Arthur Augustus's second experience of this sort of thing did not make it any easier for him to bear. He rushed to the door and hammered on it.

"Open the door, you wotten wastahs!" he cried.

"Rats!"

"Open it, I say!"

"Yes, we hear you, little yellow bird!" came Blake's voice. "But we've put your clean trousers outside. Go away, there's a good boy!"

"What!"

D'Arcy's monocle was jammed in his eye in an instant. He had fondly hoped a further humiliation was impossible. But there they were on the floor. The chums had put a complete change for him outside the study door. The act in itself was a good one, D'Arcy knew. But changed times bring changed minds. At another time Arthur Augustus would have found it in his heart to forgive Blake, Herries, and Digby. But not now. They had had the unpardonable audacity to put a portion of his immaculate dress outside the "home" so to put it, just like they might have thrown out a tramp's rags.

"You unspeakable——"

"Give up the Outsider!"

"I wefuse! I uttahly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

"Then you can go and change your bags in the dormer. Ta, ta!"

D'Arcy looked angrily at the door of his study for a moment. Then he picked up his things.

"Yaas, wathah," he murmured. "I'd dwess anywhere before I'd consent to go back on a fwiend. Wathah!"

And having wrestled with himself and won, Arthur Augustus retired to the Fourth Form dorm., holding his things at arm's-length so that they might escape red-ink, but looking like a conquering hero, nevertheless, if the majestic carriage of his head had any suggestion in it. Arrived in the dormer, the swell of the School House looked at his watch. It was hardly worth changing for such a short time. Arthur Augustus resolved on a luxurious wash and then bed. Returning from the bath-rooms ten minutes later, he took a book from his locker and read. Presently the chums came crowding up. Arthur Augustus took not the slightest notice of Jack Blake and Co. He sat on the edge of his bed as if he had been a statue.

There was the usual merriment of the hour, to be sure, but a hush fell on dormer as Jerrold Lumley-Lumley entered it. He smiled, but no one said a word to him.

"Good-night, Gussy!" he said, as he passed D'Arcy.

"Ah, that you, Lumlay deah boy? Good-night!"

Blake, Herries and Digby scowled. They had hardly expected Arthur Augustus to keep matters up. They thought that it was only a joke. Gussy had "cottoned" to a foolish idea which he would think better of when they came to bed. But D'Arcy did not look the least bit like what they had expected.

"You're a fool, Gussy!" said Jack Blake, as he turned in.

Arthur Augustus coloured for a moment. But he collected himself with great control.

"For the sake of argument, I'll even go so far as to admit the probability, Blake," he said. "But I hope I shall nevah go back on a fwiend."

There were murmurs from some parts of the dormer, but Arthur Augustus heeded them not, and Kildare having given them their conje a minute or two later all agreed to let the matter of the Outsider stand over till morning, and only the sound of deep breathing awoke the echoes of the fine old room. As soon as he was convinced that all were asleep, Arthur Augustus slipped out of bed and turned the key in the lock, taking the key back to bed with him.

"That's all wight," he murmured, as he laid his head down on the pillow.

But sleep was not for Arthur Augustus yet. Just as he was dropping off he heard a slight noise over near the door. In an instant D'Arcy was out of bed. He crept swiftly to the door. In the dim light he saw a figure. Whoever it was, was striving hard to turn the handle of the dormer door. D'Arcy watched him. There was no chance of the fellow getting out. As Arthur Augustus already suspected it was Lumley-Lumley, the good-natured swell of the School House thought he would give the Outsider a chance to get back to bed before he spoke to him. The fellow was down on his luck, D'Arcy reflected. He had given his word to the Head that he was not on any dishonourable business the other night. No doubt Lumley-Lumley wanted to get out now for the same purpose. The thought made D'Arcy peer more anxiously through the gloom. Lumley-Lumley was dressed! He meant to leave the college then, if he could. Arthur Augustus was looking round for other means to get out. His eye lighted on the windows.

"All serene!" D'Arcy heard him murmur.

And in a moment he was climbing on to one of the sills, after he had gently opened the window. Arthur Augustus had one thing only to do. He did it. As Lumley was in the act of dragging his leg up, the swell of the School House grabbed him round both shins.

"It won't do, weally, Lumlay!" he whispered. "You must come down, deah boy!"

"Oh, do let me go, D'Arcy!" pleaded the Outsider, recognising his captor.

"Imposs., deah boy! I cannot possiblay connive at bweakin' bounds Lumlay—"

"I'm not bent on any rotten tricks, really, Gussy—"

"Bai Jove— But it cannot be done, weally, Lumlay. Bweakin' bounds is bweakin' bounds. You must go back to bed, weally!"

D'Arcy's voice was entreating rather than otherwise. Lumley was silent. "And you'll give me your word, won't you, deah boy?" went on Arthur Augustus. "I weally cannot let you bweak bounds, Lumlay, whatever it is. Give me your word, old chap, that you won't make anothah attempt to get out of here to-night."

There was a brief silence. Then Lumley-Lumley felt a hand take his in the dark.

"Done, Gussy!" he said. "I give my word!"

"Honah bwight?"

"Yes!"

"Vewy well, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus released the Outsider of St. Jim's. He returned quietly to his bed. He did not even listen to learn if Jerrold Lumley-Lumley did the same.

"Gussy, you ass!" It was a voice from Blake's bed. Blake had been awakened. "Do you think he will keep his word?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ass!"

"Weally, you know——"

"Br-r-r-r! Go to sleep!"

"I am convinced that Lumlay-Lumlay will keep his word, deah boy."

"Oh, rats!"

And Blake settled down to sleep again. But Arthur Augustus was right. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley did keep his word, and he did not make another attempt to leave the dormitory that night.

CHAPTER 15.

Tactless.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY was looking a little harassed in the morning. As a rule, the Outsider of St. Jim's faced anything that could happen to him with the same front of cool and steady indifference. It seemed impossible, as a rule, to break through Lumley-Lumley's icy coolness.

But it was pretty plain that it was broken through at last.

Perhaps the physical suffering he experienced after the fight with Tom Merry in the Shell study, contributed. That, added to the trouble that was on his mind. At all events, the Outsider was not looking himself at all when he turned out of bed at the clang of the rising bell in the morning.

Very few of the Fourth-Formers spoke to him. The Fourth—the School house portion of the Form, at all events—were accustomed to taking their lead from Blake and Co. And Jack Blake cut the Outsider.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the one friend left, the only fellow in the dormitory who cared to appear friendly to the Outsider. And he was evidently in trouble with his own chums about it.

D'Arcy made it a point to talk to Lumley-Lumley while they were dressing. Blake and Co. maintained a grim silence.

But Lumley-Lumley's replies to D'Arcy's remarks were very absent, and after a time the fact dawned upon the swell of St. Jim's that Lumley was not listening to him. He finished tying his necktie, and jammed his monocle into his eyes, and turned a rather indignant look upon the junior.

"Weally, Lumlay-Lumlay, that is too bad!" he exclaimed. "I asked you if you considahed my new waistcoat a success, and you said yaas, and then I asked you if you prewed the othah one, and you said you had not noticed either. I wegard you as a careles boundah, not to pay attention upon an important subject."

"Eh?"

"You are not listenin' to me, Lumlay——"

"Yes, I am," said Lumley-Lumley. "What did you say?"

"Weally, Lumlay——"

"I'm finished," said the Outsider. "I guess I'll go down now."

"Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "I am not weady yet, but pway don't wait for me."

And Lumley-Lumley did not.

When Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came down, ten minutes later, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was walking in the quad. by himself, his hands thrust deep into his pockets and a wrinkle on his brow. D'Arcy did not go towards him. But Levison and Mellish of the Fourth came over to the Outsider and nodded to him familiarly.

"Feeling a bit down?" asked Levison.

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

"I guess so," he said abruptly.

"Tom Merry gave you a jolly good thumping, I must say," Mellish remarked.

"Oh, shut up."

"You couldn't expect to tackle him with your fists," said Levison, with a grin. "You shouldn't have tried. There are other ways."

"I owe it all to you, you cad!" said the Outsider, with a glint in his eyes.

Levison assumed a look of surprise.

"I don't see how you make that out," he remarked.

"You put the paper in the passage where it was found."

"Oh, what rot!"

"You know you did, I guess. I'll thank you not to speak to me again, Levison."

Levison sneered.

"There are precious few chaps in the Fourth who will take the trouble to speak to you now, I fancy," he said.

"If there wasn't one I wouldn't talk to you. Let me alone."

"I'm willing to be your friend!"

"Well, it takes two to make a bargain," said the Outsider grimly, "and I'm not willing, you see. If you don't leave me alone, I shall hit out, so you'd better clear."

And Levison, with a very unpleasant expression upon his face, cleared. Skimpole of the Shell had come out of the School House, and he was blinking round as if in search of somebody. As soon as he saw Levison he hurried towards him. Mellish sauntered away, leaving Levison to meet the genius of the Shell alone. Skimpole poked Levison in the ribs with his bony knuckles, in the objectionable way he had, and blinked at him benevolently through his big glasses.

"My dear Levison——"

"Oh, keep your bony paws off me," said Levison ungraciously. "What do you want?"

"Really, Levison——"

"Buzz off and don't bother."

"My dear Levison, I am alarmed about you," said Skimpole. "I discovered a very wicked paper in the Fourth-Form passage last evening, and it convinces me that somebody at St. Jim's is leading a wicked and reckless life."

"Fathead!"

"I feel it to be my duty to find the individual and remonstrate with him, and point out to him the error of his ways," Skimpole explained. "Is it you, Levison?"

"Eh?"

"Are you leading a wicked and reckless life?" demanded Skimpole, pointing his bony forefinger accusingly at the cad of the Fourth.

"You ass!" howled Levison. "Shut up!"

"If you are leading a wicked and reckless—yow! Yoop!"

Levison's fist came upon Skimpole's nose with a crash, and the philanthropist of St. Jim's sat down heavily in the quadrangle. His spectacles slid down his nose, and he groped for them wildly.

"D-d-dear me!" gasped Skimpole, in amazement. "I wonder what Levison did that for! I don't think I said anything to offend him—not intentionally, I am sure, at all events. I cannot help regarding this as almost rude of Levison. Ow!"

And Skimpole set his spectacles straight and scrambled up and blinked round in search of Levison. But Levison was gone.

CHAPTER 16

An Old Acquaintance.

DURING morning lessons that day the fellows who took any interest in the looks and proceedings of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley could see that the Outsider of St. Jim's had by no means lost his worried look. His inattention in class brought down upon him the vials of Mr. Lathom's wrath. Little Mr. Lathom was, as a rule, a most good-tempered master, but Lumley-Lumley's carelessness exasperated even him. Lumley-Lumley was the richer by two hundred lines when the Fourth were dismissed at noon.

But the Outsider did not seem to care. He evidently did not give the imposition a thought as he left the form-room.

Arthur Augustus was looking after him thoughtfully through his monocle, when Jack Blake put his arm through that of the elegant junior.

"Come on, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"You're coming down to practice, you know."

"Undah the circs——"

"Bless you, we don't bear malice for your little games last night," said Digby blandly. "It's all serene, Gussy!"

"Everything is forgiven," said Blake generously.

D'Arcy stared at him.

"Weally, Blake, I was undah the impression that it was I who had everythin' to forgive!" he exclaimed.

"Your mistake," said Blake cheerfully. "Come down to the nets and forget all about it."

"Oh, vewy well, deah boy. I had wesolved to wegard you no longah as a fwieend, but——"

"Exactly! Come on."

And Arthur Augustus, who never bore malice, went. But he did not forget his friend, and when the juniors came off the field and came back towards the School House for dinner, D'Arcy looked round for the outcast of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy ejaculated.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was standing in the gateway of the school, in conversation with a fellow who was a stranger to Arthur Augustus. The Outsider was talking in low and earnest tones, and the other fellow was listening with an impatient expression upon his face. D'Arcy looked at the stranger curiously. He was a young fellow of about twenty, with a rather handsome face, and dressed in clothes of an extremely "sporting" cut, with a black bowler hat set a little sideways upon his head. His face was rather handsome, in a reckless, devil-may-care way.

Arthur Augustus paused for a moment to reflect. He had resolved to take Lumley-Lumley under his wing, and to look after him like a father. Under those circumstances, it was evidently his duty to look into the matter of the Outsider's friendships. The sporting-looking young man was not exactly the kind of friend D'Arcy would have chosen for an adopted son, so to speak.

"Lumlay-Lumlay, deah boy——"

The Outsider started and turned his head.

Arthur Augustus raised his silk-hat very courteously to the stranger, who stared at him far from courteously in return.

"Pway intwouce your friend," said D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity.

Lumley-Lumley reddened.

"An old friend of mine," he said, rather awkwardly. "Chap I knew in—
in New York before I came to England."

"Bai Jove!"

"His name is—is Lilburn—Kit Lilburn," the Outsider went on. "This
is my—my friend D'Arcy, Lilburn."

Lilburn nodded carelessly.

Arthur Augustus raised his topper again, and bowed very gracefully.

"I am vewy pleased to meet Mr. Lilburn," he remarked.

"Lilburn's just going," Lumley-Lumley went on.

The other shook his head.

"Not at all," he said. "I'm in no hurry. I've come to pay you a visit,
Jerry, old man. I'm going to have a look round your quarters here."

Lumley-Lumley turned crimson.

"Kit—"

"I guess you'll make an old friend welcome!"

"You can come in if you like, you know that," said the Outsider
abruptly. "But—"

"All serene, then. I guess I'll come in."

And Lilburn came in.

It was easy enough to see from Lumley-Lumley's manner that he wished
his old acquaintance from New York anywhere but at St. Jim's. But he
did his best to keep a mask of indifference upon his face.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave the Outsider a curious look.

That Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had lately fallen under some bad influence
was the general opinion of the fellows who knew him, and D'Arcy could not
help wondering whether this fast-looking fellow, with his clothes of a
sporting cut, had anything to do with it.

Lilburn strolled easily across the quadrangle with a perfectly cool and
self-possessed air.

He looked very much out of place in the old quad. Many of the fellows
looked at him, and Kildare of the Sixth stopped to speak to Lumley-Lumley.

Lilburn looked coolly at the captain of St. Jim's. He did not seem to
be in the least awed by the head of the Sixth.

"Is that a friend of yours, Lumley?" asked Kildare.

The Outsider coloured awkwardly.

"I guess so," he said.

"Oh!" said Kildare.

And he walked on without further remark.

"Great man doesn't seem to approve of your friends, Jerry," said
Lilburn coolly. "Whom may he happen to be?"

"That's Kildare."

"I guess I'm as wise as ever."

"He's captain of the school."

"Oh, is he?" said Lilburn carelessly. "Great man—eh?"

"He's head prefect."

Lilburn paused to light a cigarette. Lumley-Lumley looked at him in
amazement and dismay.

"Hang it, Lilburn, you can't do that here!" he exclaimed.

"Why not?"

"Fellows are not allowed to smoke here."

Lilburn laughed.

"But I'm not a fellow. I'm a distinguished visitor," he said.

"Look here, Kit—"

Lilburn blew out a cloud of smoke.

"Oh, don't rot!" he said. "I'm going to do as I like. This isn't a very warm welcome for an old friend."

Lumley-Lumley gritted his teeth.

"I suppose the relations and friends of other fellows here smoke when they come to the school?" said Lilburn.

"Yes; but——"

"Well, there's no harm in a cigarette."

"It may do me harm to be seen with you, under the circumstances. I'm in pretty bad odour among some of the fellows now, owing to—to circumstances."

Lilburn shrugged his shoulders.

"Why do you stand it? There's freedom outside the school walls, if not inside them," he said.

"Oh, shut up!"

Lilburn laughed.

"You are getting very polite," he said. "Do you want me to go?"

"Yes."

The young man laughed again. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, came out of the house, and started at the sight of the sporting young man. He came directly up to Lumley-Lumley. His keen, sharp glance travelled over Mr. Lilburn, from his pointed tan boots to his rakish hat, and his glance expressed the strongest disapproval. Even the cool and impudent fellow from New York felt a little uneasy under the Housemaster's searching glance, and shifted from one foot to the other.

"Is this a friend of yours, Lumley-Lumley?" he asked, as Kildare had asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, judging by appearance, he is not the kind of friend to do you any good," said Mr. Railton.

"If you please, sir——"

"Have you permission to bring your friend here?"

"I have not asked it."

"You should have done so. Boys are not allowed to bring anybody they please into the school."

"Very well, sir."

"If you wish to see Lumley-Lumley," said Mr. Railton, addressing Lilburn, "you must first call upon the Head and see him, and obtain his permission. Until you do that, I must ask you to drop this boy's acquaintance, at least within the walls of St. Jim's."

Lilburn coloured with anger. An angry retort was upon his lips, but Jerrold Lumley-Lumley seized him by the arm and dragged him away.

"Get out now, Kit," he muttered. "You can see you must go. You oughtn't to have come in here. I told you so."

Lilburn looked sullen.

"I guess——" he began.

"Look here, Kit, you must go."

"I guess I'll go when I please!"

"I'll see you—this evening," muttered Lumley-Lumley.

"You said that yesterday."

"I tell you I was prevented from coming."

Lilburn sneered.

"Well, don't be prevented again," he said. "You can have me either as a friend or a foe, Lumley; take your choice about it."

And Mr. Lilburn, lighting a fresh cigarette, strolled out of the gates of St. Jim's, and walked easily down the road. Lumley-Lumley walked back to the School House with a very clouded face.

CHAPTER 17.

Wally Makes a Discovery.

"MELLISH, my dear fellow!" Skimpole, of the Shell, dug his bony forefinger into Mellish's ribs, in the way that all the School House fellows found so objectionable. Mellish grunted.

"Ow! What do you want, you ass!"

"Really, Mellish——"

"Oh, buzz off, fathead!"

Skimpole blinked at him through his big spectacles. There was benevolence mingled with determination in Skimpole's face.

"My dear Mellish, I want to ask you a most important question."

"Well, ass, what is it?"

"Are you leading a reckless and wicked life?"

Mellish stared blankly at the genius of the Shell. Skimpole asked strange questions sometimes, and made strange statements, but he had never surprised the cad of the Fourth so much as now.

"Eh?" said Mellish, hardly knowing whether to believe his ears or not.

Skimpole pointed a bony forefinger at him accusingly.

"Are you leading a wicked and reckless life?" he demanded.

"M-my hat!" ejaculated Mellish.

"Somebody at St. Jim's is leading a wicked and reckless life," said Skimpole. "I know that by the paper I found in the passage yesterday. I have turned the matter over in my mind, and I have come to the conclusion that it is most likely yourself, Mellish."

"You utter ass!"

"You see, you are the meanest and most dishonest fellow in the Lower School! I am sure you do not mind my speaking plainly, Mellish."

"Eh?"

"Therefore, I think it is most probable that you are leading a wicked and reckless life," said Skimpole severely.

"Oh, great Scott!"

"My dear friend, I implore you to pause while there is yet time," said Skimpole. "Hear me implore you——"

"You silly fathead!" roared Mellish. "What do you mean?"

"I implore you——"

"You howling idiot!" roared Mellish. "I don't know anything about any rotten paper you've found, and you're off your silly rocker."

Skimpole blinked at him.

"Dear me, is it possible I have made a mistake?" he ejaculated. "Are you not leading a wicked and reckless life, Mellish?"

"You—you shrieking fathead!"

"Ahem! I am sure I beg your pardon, Mellish, if I have misjudged you," said Skimpole, looking puzzled. "But as you are the most dishonest person in the Fourth Form—— Ow!"

Skimpole staggered back as Mellish thumped him on the chest, with considerable force, and he staggered against a tree and gasped for breath. By the time he had recovered his breath, Mellish was gone.

"Dear me!" gasped Skimpole. "This is extraordinary! Every fellow I take the most disinterested and friendly interest in seems to be annoyed by it. It is most extraordinary! I wonder who the wicked and reckless person is? I should so like to save him from the downward path! To think that a St. Jim's fellow is going on the easy path that slopes the way to crime——"

"What are you babbling about?" asked a disagreeable voice.

It was Knox, the prefect. Skimpole blinked at him, and backed away a little. Juniors never liked to get too near to Knox, the prefect.

Knox was a bully, and extremely bad-tempered. He was looking worse-tempered than usual just now, having just intercepted with his head—unintentionally, of course—a footer that Jack Blake was punting across the quad.

"My dear Knox, I did not know you were listening," said Skimpole. "I was pondering over the unfortunate circumstances of a St. Jim's fellow going to the dogs, through reading wicked sporting papers, and my own inability to save him, owing to my being totally unaware of his identity."

Knox stared at him in astonishment.

Sporting papers were a favourite reading of Knox's own, and the prefect was more than suspected of having bets on horses, through the medium of the sporting gentlemen who foregathered at the Green Man in Rylcombe.

"What are you getting at, you silly young ass?" he asked.

"My dear Knox," said Skimpole, in surprise, "I am not getting at anything. I picked up a copy of a sporting paper in the Fourth Form passage yesterday, and I am very much alarmed for the unhappy and foolish youth who is undoubtedly leading a wicked and reckless life."

"Oh!"

"Of course, it may not be a junior," said Skimpole, blinking at Knox. "Now I come to think of it, I have heard the fellows say that you are addicted to habits that would not meet with the approval of the Head if he knew of them."

The Sixth Former stared at him.

"My dear, dear Knox——"

"What!"

"My dear, dear fellow, are you leading a wicked and reckless life? If so, I beg and implore you to give it up while there is yet time. I entreat you——"

"You young ass!" roared Knox.

"My dear, dear Knox——"

Whack!

Knox's open hand caught Skimpole on the side of the head, and he went flying under the trees, to collapse in a heap of dead leaves at quite a distance.

Knox walked towards the House with a scowling brow.

But there was a thoughtful expression in his face. Knox, the prefect, used his position as a prefect chiefly to pay off scores against juniors whom he disliked; and there were many whom he disliked in the Fourth Form.

Mellish was in the doorway as he entered, and Knox tapped him on the shoulder. Mellish looked at him in some alarm. He got on better with Knox than the other fellows did, by reason of the fact that he sometimes conveyed private information to the prefect. But when Knox was in a bad temper, even the sneak of the School House was not safe.

"Come into my study, Mellish," said Knox.

"I—I——"

"Follow me!"

Mellish followed the prefect into his study uneasily enough. Knox closed the door, and then fixed his eyes upon the cad of the Fourth.

"I have just heard something from Skimpole," he said, "something about fellows in the Fourth Form having a sporting paper."

"Oh, that ass!" said Mellish.

"Was it yours, Mellish?"

"No!" said Mellish promptly.

"Do you know whose it was?"

Mellish was silent.

"I've thought sometimes," said Knox slowly, and with his eyes fixed upon Mellish, "that those young scoundrels in Study No. 6, in the Fourth, were a little too good to be true. What do you think, Mellish?"

"They're a set of rotters!" said Mellish.

"If they were getting up to anything of the sort, they ought to be shown up," said the prefect. "I shouldn't wonder."

"I shouldn't either, Knox."

"Well, if anything came to your knowledge, Mellish, it would be your duty to report it to a prefect," said Knox. "Of course, I should not mention the source of my information, if I found out that those young rascals were breaking the rules."

Mellish grinned.

"I understand," he said.

"Good enough!"

"I don't believe Blake and the rest are any too good; but they're jolly deep," said Mellish bitterly. "But if I could bowl them out in anything, I jolly well would, you can be sure of that, Knox!"

The prefect nodded, and Mellish quitted the study. Knox threw himself into his armchair, and the next moment leaped up with a wild yell.

"Yaroooh!"

The prefect danced on the carpet for a minute. Something sharp had been in the seat of the chair, and Knox had sat upon it. The prefect groped behind him and brought away a bent pin. He glared at it in fury.

It was evidently a jape of some junior, who had scores to pay off against the bully of the Sixth. Knox glared at the pin for some seconds, and then dashed from the study, in a wild desire to find the individual who had placed it there.

The door slammed behind him; and then the table-cover was raised, and a chubby, cheeky face peered out from under the table.

It belonged to Wally D'Arcy—D'Arcy minor of the Third Form, the younger brother of the great Arthur Augustus.

Wally was looking a little scared; but he was grinning. He emerged from under the table, and listened for Knox's footsteps in the passage.

"My only aunt Jane!" he murmured. "That was a narrow shave! The ass took it for granted that the chap who put the pin there had gone out of the study—and I'd only just time to nip under the table. My only aunt!"

Knox's footsteps had died away down the passage. Wally opened the door softly, and slipped out, and scudded away down the passage as if he were on the cinder-path.

He hurried to the junior common-room. The Third-form foregathered, as a rule, in their own form-room, leaving the junior common-room to the Fourth and the Shell. But Wally was looking for Blake and Co. just now.

Jack Blake was in the common-room, playing chess with D'Arcy, and Herries and Digby were looking on.

Wally came up panting.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the cheerful fag.

"Wally! You want a clean collah—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus."

"Weally, Wally—"

"I've got something to tell you chaps," said Wally, lowering his voice.

"I've just been in Knox's study—"

"You had no wight there, Wallay—"

"Oh, cheese it, Gussy! I went there to put a pin in his chair—"

"A dangewous twick, you young ass—"

"And he came in just as I had done it, and I had just time to nip under the table," said Wally, "and then Knox and Mellish had a jaw."

"Oh!"

"Weally, Wally; it was vevy w'ong to listen—"

"I didn't listen, ass," said Wally, hotly. "But I suppose I couldn't help hearing, as I was under the table. I wasn't coming out for Knox to lick me—no fear! Knox was telling Mellish that sporting papers, or something, have been found in the Fourth-form passage, and he wouldn't be surprisid if you chaps were up to something of the sort."

"Bai Jove!"

"Mellish is going to watch you, and see if he can find out anything to tell Knox," said Wally. "I thought I'd warn you."

Blake looked aghast.

"Well, I always knew Knox was a cad, and Mellish a rotten sneak," he said; "but I never thought either of them was quite so rotten as this."

"Wathah not."

"Thanks awfully, Wally—we'll be on the look-out for the rotters," said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, all serene," said Wally, and he walked away. The chums of the Fourth looked at one another. The chess was forgotten.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, at last. "This is uttably wotten, you know. I think we ought to go to Knox and tell him he's an insultin' blackguard."

"The cad!" said Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

The other three glared at him. They were feeling sore and indignant, and not at all inclined to laugh over the matter.

"Blessed if I can see the joke, anyway," said Digby, peevishly.

"You will when I explain, my son," said Blake blandly. And he explained in a whisper, and then Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined in a yell of laughter that rang through the common-room.

CHAPTER 18.

Sporting Papers!

"**C**OME up to the study, you chaps. I'm going to get rid of those rotten papers!"

Mellish started.

The words were spoken by Jack Blake, in a whisper, which reached the ears of the cad of the Fourth, as he sat by the fire in the junior common-room. After what had passed between him and Knox, the words could not fail to strike Mellish's ear curiously. He looked round quickly.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. And the chums of the Fourth ascended to Study No. 6 in the Fourth-form passage. Blake closed the study door when they were inside, and Herries and Digby chuckled softly.

"Hush!" said Blake, holding up his hand. "The rotter's outside the door!"

A slight creaking sound was heard. It was the sound of a coat rubbing against the door.

Blake, Herries and Digby grinned.

"Keep it up!" whispered Blake. "We're in earnest confab, you know."

The scraping on the door sounded again, while Blake and his friends kept up a loudly whispered conversation.

"Get 'em out, kids!" said Blake, aloud.

At the same time he indicated by picking up an old newspaper that he wanted as many of them as he could get. Herries and Digby bustled round and between them they soon had a nice pile of old "Daily Mails." Jack Blake made a great commotion in making them up into a bundle.

Mellish, on the other side of the door, was rubbing his hands.

"Best to get rid of the things, kids!" said Blake, with a wink at Herries and Digby. "They'd cause no end of trouble if it got out!"

"Yes, I think so, too, Jack," said Digby. "D'you think anyone suspects?"

"No!" said Blake.

"Thank goodness!" said Herries.

"That's all right!" said Blake, giving the bundle of papers a slap. "I shan't be sorry, kids, to see the last of 'em!"

Herries and Digby murmured their approval.

"Well, I suppose the sooner they're got rid of the better!" went on Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

The chums of the Fourth grinned as they heard the sound of feet retreating from the door. They were very faint, but the chums heard them distinctly enough.

"The sneaking cad!" said Blake. "But we'll cure him, never mind!"

"Shall we all go together?" asked Herries.

"Better not," said Blake. "He'll be afraid to follow us if we all three go."

"Good! All serene!" agreed Digby and Herries.

"You can follow after and see more fun," grinned Blake.

"Ripping! So long!"

"Ta-ta!" said Blake.

And he went out with the bundle of papers.

As he expected, Mellish was watching. The cad of the Fourth came walking along the Fourth-form passage just as Blake emerged from Study No. 6. He grinned as he caught sight of the bundle of papers. Blake got up a very good blush.

"I suppose you'll deny it, now, Blake?" said Mellish.

Jack Blake did not reply. But Mellish deliberately put himself in Blake's way.

"Get out!" said Blake.

"Rats! Those are sporting papers you're taking away——"

"You ass!"

"Oh, that's all right, Blake," grinned Mellish. "But I've caught you, you see at last!"

Jack Blake glancing out of the corner of his eye saw that Study No. 6 door was just slightly open. He laughed softly to himself.

"You won't laugh long now," went on Mellish.

"You're a bounder, Mellish!" said Blake. "As if a chap can't get rid of a bundle of old newspapers without you dodging round."

Mellish grinned. He was swallowing the bait whole, as Jack Blake intended him to. To his mind there wasn't the least doubt that Jack Blake was carrying a parcel of sporting papers.

"It's all right, Blake," he retorted. "You can't have me——"

"Get out of the way, you ass!" laughed Blake. "I wouldn't take the trouble!"

"Deny that they're not what I say, anyway!" said Mellish.

"I tell you they are only old papers—old "Daily Mails," said Blake.

"Likely, isn't it?" grinned Mellish.

"Well, get out of the giddy road, anyhow!" said Blake.

"I'll do that right enough," said Mellish. "I'm going to follow you and see what you do with those sporting papers——"

"All serene," said Jack Blake. "You'd better not let any of our fellows see you; they'll bump you if they do see you, you know."

And he walked past Mellish towards the quad.

"Oh, I'll risk it, Blake," said Mellish, tauntingly.

"You ass!"

And with this parting benediction, Blake went out into the quad. Mellish followed him right across it. He did not see Herries and Digby waiting till he had gained the fields beyond. They were hiding in the School House doorway and they were laughing hysterically.

"Look here, you fathead!" said Blake, playing Mellish up for all he was worth. "What do you want following me for, anyway?"

Mellish sneered.

"How innocent you are, Blake," he grinned. "Can't you guess?"

"Blessed if I care anyway!" said Blake.

And he went on, carrying the bundle on his shoulder. He meant to take the bundle of papers to a pond in a field just beyond the top of the Fourth-form footer ground. There was no one about and it suited him very well, as the genial grin on his frank face testified.

Glancing round, Blake caught sight of Herries and Digby in the distance. "Look here, Mellish," he said, suddenly banging the bundle down on the grass. "I've had enough of this following business; if you don't go back now, I'm going to punch your head——"

"Oh, indeed, are you?" said Mellish, backing a little.

"I am!" said Blake, grimly, and he made a dive at Mellish.

The cad of the Fourth eluded him, but Blake followed him up. The rough and ready member of Study No. 6 knew that Mellish would not go back at any price. The more Blake tried to stop him coming the more he would be determined to come on and see where Blake put the sporting papers. Blake grinned.

"It's no use, Blake!" said Mellish. "You know jolly well that you have no right to have sporting papers in your possession——"

The sentence ended abruptly as Blake's hand missed Mellish's collar by about half an inch.

In the moment of turning, Mellish in his turn saw Herries and Digby approaching. He was clearly alarmed. Blake laughed and made another grab at him as they chased about the field.

"Now, Dig," he yelled, "collar the cad if he comes your way!"

"I'll watch it!" snapped Mellish.

And he did.

Herries and Digby raced up, but Mellish managed to put a safe distance between him and them.

"I'm following you, you rotters!" he shouted. "You needn't try to shake me off!"

Blake, Herries and Digby laughed.

"Oh, isn't he a lovely jay!" grinned Blake.

Shouldering the bundle he went on.

Mellish followed religiously, always maintaining a safe distance.

Arrived at the pond, Blake played his next card. If Mellish was curious, he must be prepared to wait. The three plotters sat down on the edge of the pond.

Mellish saw what their game was at once, and the chums laughed aloud as they saw him scowling. But he sat tight.

"Very good," grinned Blake. "We'll have a nice little jaw."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

And he and Herries and Digby commenced to talk as if such a person as Mellish did not exist, much less was watching for them to destroy "forbidden" literature only half a field away. They grinned hugely as they saw him walking about impatiently.

"It's all right," he shouted, "you might as well do it now; I'm waiting here, whatever you do. I'm seeing what you do with those papers, never fear."

"Not much," said Herries. "My hat, wouldn't it be a lark if I had Towser here?"

"Spoil everything!" Blake declared. "You haven't let him out this afternoon, Herries?"

"What the dickens do you want your rotten bulldog for?" said Digby.

"To collar that cad, of course!" said Herries. "We could throw him in the pond after the papers, then—"

"But that's what we don't want," said Blake. "When that rotten cad over there has waited long enough to put him in a temper I'm going to heave the bundle in the pond."

"Then why not now?"

"Because I want the cad to think we're afraid to do it with him looking on."

"Yes, let's sit tight," suggested Digby.

"That's it, Dig," said Blake. "When I give the word, you and Herries get up and make a dash for the cad. Don't chase him too hard. Make it look as if you can't catch him, and leave the rest to me. Now, sit as if we were ashamed of ourselves."

There was a chuckle as Blake rose to his feet with a scowling face. Mellish stood prepared for flight. Blake moved forward a little. Mellish moved round so as to always have a good view of the pond even if he had to run for it. Herries and Digby pretended to be protesting with Blake that he ought to throw the bundle in and have done.

"I'm not going, anyway!" shouted Mellish.

"Now, after him, kids," said Blake in a low voice.

All three turned back as if he had forgotten that he must keep anyone from seeing the bundle of papers. Mellish grinned. Round and round Herries and Digby chased him. But, to orders, they never caught him, though they could have done it any minute.

"Oh, blow the cad!" shouted Blake. "Come back, you fellows!"

"Just a minute, Jack; we'll have him," replied Digby.

"I don't think!" panted Mellish.

"Oh, hang the rotter!" shouted Blake. "Here goes!"

And snatching up the bundle of papers he hurled them into the pond. Herries and Digby gave up the chase of Mellish at once.

"Come on!" Blake shouted.

Mellish grinned as they turned back to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 19.

An Important Investigation.

"WHO the dickens is that?"

It was ten minutes after Jack Blake had thrown the bundle into the pond, and Mellish was knocking at Knox's door. He entered, in response to the prefect's politely expressed curiosity.

"Hallo!" said Knox, not in the least pleased. "What's up with you?" "I thought I'd better come and tell you, that's all, Knox, really!" began Mellish.

"Tell me what?" snapped Knox.

"Well, I'm going to tell you if you'll give me a chance," whined Mellish.

"There's some dodging going on, that's all."

Knox's face became interested.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Blake of the Fourth, if you please, Knox."

Knox looked pleased.

"They've been chucking some papers into the pond at the top of the Fourth-Form footer ground," went on the cad of the Fourth.

"Well, you little ass, what of it!" snapped Knox, turning to his desk again. "There's nothing in that. Where's that stick——"

"But they're sporting papers, Knox," snapped Mellish, in alarm.

"Oh, are they," said Knox, apparently delighted with the turn affairs were taking.

Knox knew that Mellish and such fellows as Levison were suspected of an intimate knowledge with sporting papers. Such a report from such a source as Mellish's observation was in his opinion worthy of notice. Knox himself was known to take such papers himself, and he reflected that if he could bring other culprits to light, and subsequent judgment, it would probably do away with further suspicions in his case.

"Did you see them, Mellish?" he asked.

"Rather!" said Mellish, with a grin.

And he proceeded to relate to Knox the whole proceedings from his coming upon Blake in the Fourth-Form passage. The part where he had listened at the door of Study No. 6 he studiously avoided. Knox listened patiently enough till he had finished.

"Wait here, Mellish, till I come back," he said. "I suppose I must see Kildare about this first," he muttered, as he went out.

Mellish was disappointed at being left in Knox's study at first, but when he heard Knox mention going to Kildare's he was glad to remain where he was.

Kildare looked up in surprise when Knox entered his study. He did not often receive a visit from the bullying prefect. He did not care about one when he received one, as it is to be feared his face now plainly showed.

"You've heard about sporting papers being found up and down the school, I suppose, Kildare?" began Knox, taking a seat without being invited.

Kildare nodded. He was very busy, and he wished Knox far away.

"Well, I thought I had better come and see you about it first," went on Knox. "I'm afraid that Blake of the Fourth is one of the worst——"

"Why the worst?" asked Kildare, in surprise. "I have never known him do anything of the kind. Do you mean to say he has taken to rotten ways?"

"Looks like it," said Knox. "He's been seen throwing a bundle of newspapers into that pond at the top of the Fourth-Form footer ground."

"Where did you get your information from, Knox?"

"Mellish of the Fourth saw them!"

"Them?" asked Kildare.

"Yes, there are three of them—Blake, Herries, and Digby!"

"Impossible!" said Kildare.

Knox shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, I know they're good boys, Kildare," he said, in a sneering tone. "But what about the facts. I tell you Mellish saw them."

"Nonsense! It's some cock-and-bull yarn that young beggar has picked up," said Kildare.

"Oh, all right!" said Knox. "But I think you ought to move with me in the matter."

Kildare shook his head.

"I don't agree with you, Knox. I wouldn't place any reliance in a story of Mellish's. He's not a nice junior, by any means, at the best of times."

"As you will, Kildare. But I'm going on with it. I only thought it proper to mention the thing to you first."

"It's very good of you," said the captain of St. Jim's.

Knox bit his lip. But he suppressed the hot reply that rose to his lips. He knew how Kildare regarded his present action. But he was not going to miss a chance of injuring Blake if he could help it. Knox did not like any of the juniors in Study No. 6.

Quitting Kildare's study without another word, he went straight to Mr. Railton, the housemaster of the School House.

"Well, Knox?" said Mr. Railton.

"There is a case here which I think ought to be investigated at once, sir," said Knox. "It concerns sporting papers."

Mr. Railton started.

"I came to you because Kildare does not think anything of it, sir," went on Knox.

Mr. Railton looked steadily at the prefect.

"I don't quite understand you, Knox," he said. "Please explain."

"I have learned from a junior, sir, that Blake has a number of sporting papers in his possession—Blake of the Fourth."

Mr. Railton knitted his brows.

"Do you mean that a junior has told you so, Knox?"

"Yes, sir."

"I should not think it advisable for a prefect to encourage tale-bearers," said Mr. Railton.

Knox bit his lip. It seemed as if his reception by the School House master was to be no more cordial than his reception by Kildare.

"I do not encourage tale-bearers," he said. "This junior brought me the information from a sense of duty, I believe, and certainly without any encouragement from me. Having gained the information, I thought it my duty to take notice of it."

Mr. Railton nodded.

"That is so, Knox."

"Kildare declines to take the matter up, sir."

"Why so?"

"He declines to think that there is anything in it. As a matter of fact, sir," Knox added spitefully, "Blake of the Fourth is rather a favourite of his."

Mr. Railton frowned.

"You have no right to insinuate accusations of favouritism against Kildare," he said coldly. "But I will certainly look into this matter, Knox."

"Very well, sir."

"Where are these sporting papers supposed to be?"

"Blake and Herries and Digby were seen to throw them in a bundle into the pond near the junior footer ground, sir."

Mr. Railton started.

"Into the pond, Knox."

"Yes, sir."

"Who saw them?"

"The junior who reported the matter to me, sir. Shall I mention his name?"

"It does not matter," said Mr. Railton. "It is singular that Blake should throw a bundle of newspapers into the pond if they were of an innocent character."

"Very singular indeed, I think, sir."

"Has Blake made any explanation?"

"I have not seen Blake about it."

"You are certain of your facts, Knox—that Blake was seen to throw the bundle into the pond?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; I will come with you to look into the matter."

And Mr. Railton quitted the study with Knox upon that most important investigation.

CHAPTER 20.

Knox's Catch.

IT was very dark in the quadrangle, and Knox brought a bicycle lantern with him, as he started with Mr. Railton to make that investigation in the pond. The School House master was frowning slightly as he walked beside the cad of the Sixth. He had a feeling that the whole matter would most likely turn out to be some hoax of the juniors, and the the quest would be futile and ridiculous. Yet under the circumstances he could hardly refuse to act upon the report of a prefect. There was little doubt that some of the fellows in the School House were given to reckless ways, which were likely to get them into trouble if not checked, and the possession of sporting papers by a junior was certainly a serious offence.

The matter had to be looked into, but Mr. Railton was looking into it entirely without keenness.

From the window of Study No. 6 Blake and Herries and Digby saw the light of Knox's lantern gleaming across the quad. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley saw it, too, from his study window and wondered.

Blake uttered an ejaculation.

"There goes Knox!"

"Who's that with him?" asked Herries.

"Mr. Railton!"

"Phew!"

"They're making for the pond," said Digby, with a grave look. "No doubt about that. Knox has heard about those giddy papers, and the utter ass has dragged Mr. Railton into the matter."

Blake grinned.

"Well, it can't be helped now," he remarked.

"I wonder what Railton will say?" said Digby, a little uneasily.

"Something rude to Knox, most likely," said Blake, with a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyway, he can't say anything to us. A chap has a right to pitch an old bundle of newspapers in a pond if he likes, and, of course, how were we to foresee that people would go investigating into it?"

"Ha ha, ha!"

Quite unconscious of the mirth upon the subject in Study No. 6, Knox and the Housemaster proceeded upon their way.

They reached the pond, glimmering among its rushes and reeds in the rays of the lantern carried by the prefect.

Mr. Railton glanced over the surface of glimmering water.

"The bundle of papers is in there, Knox?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"It will not be an easy matter to get it out."

"I will do my best, sir."

Knox placed the lantern on the ground. He fetched a rake with a long handle from the gardener's shed, and began to drag the pond for the bundle.

The pond was shallow, and Mellish had reported to Knox that the bundle had fallen near the bank. In a few minutes the prefect felt something.

He uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"I think I've got it, sir."

Mr. Railton had been watching him in grim silence.

He did not like Knox, and he did not like the quest he was engaged upon, and he did not like the cold wind that was blowing about his legs. He was a martyr to a sense of duty. But he looked a little interested as Knox spoke.

"Indeed!" he said.

"Well, land it as quickly as you can, for goodness' sake."

Knox dragged at the bundle.

The teeth of the rake had caught in the string that tied it up, and the bundle came slowly but surely ashore.

Knox's eyes glittered with triumph as the muddy bundle was dragged through shallow mud to firm ground, and lay there glimmering in the lantern light.

Knox had had no doubts about the correctness of Mellish's information; but he was very glad to see this substantial proof of Mellish's truth. Mr. Railton was staggered. He did not believe the charge against Blake—he would not believe that without the strongest proof. But it looked as if the prefect had discovered strong proof. Mr. Railton glanced at the bundle curiously.

"I suppose that is it?" he remarked.

"Certainly, sir!"

"Well, bring it in, and we will open it indoors."

"V-v-very well, sir!"

Knox did not relish the task of carrying the muddy, dripping bundle; but it was certain that Mr. Railton would not do it, so the prefect had no choice in the matter. He dragged the bundle along in the grass with the rake for a little while, and shook most of the mud off it, and then he picked it up by the string and carried it.

Mr. Railton walked directly back to the school. Knox followed him in, with the muddy bundle in his hand.

By this time, fortunately, the bundle had ceased to drip. Knox carried it into the School House, and a good many fellows glanced at him curiously, and asked questions.

"What have you got there Knox?"

"Been laying night-lines?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare looked out of his study and started at the sight of the muddy bundle. Knox met his eyes with a sneering grin.

"It has been found, you see," he said.

Kildare laughed.

"You don't know yet what's in it," he replied.

"Sporting papers."

"Perhaps!" said the St. Jim's captain, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I'll believe that when I see it."

"Oh, rats!" Knox called to Levison of the Fourth. "Levison go and tell Blake and Herries and Digby that they are wanted in Mr. Railton's study immediately."

"Righto!" said Levison.

Knox followed Mr. Railton into his study with the muddy bundle. The Housemaster had determined that the bundle should be opened in the presence of the accused juniors. That was only fair play.

Levison took the message to Study No. 6. He announced it in his usual kind and good-natured way.

"You chaps are wanted in Railton's study at once," he said. "Looks like being a row."

Blake laughed.

"Good!" he replied. "I dare say there will be a row—but I don't think we shall get caught in the storm. Come on, you chaps!"

Herries and Digby looked as serious as they might. Levison grinned. He did not know what Jack Blake and Co. were wanted for, but any chance of their being punished was acceptable.

Jack Blake led the way, and Herries and Digby followed.

"Don't be downhearted," said Levison, with a grin. "I've no doubt you'll be able to clear yourselves. You can't blame me for obeying Knox, you know—"

"We wouldn't think of blaming you for anything, Levison," said Blake, with emphasis.

"And you might get a thick ear now, if you're not polite," said Digby.

Levison laughed. But he misjudged the temper of Blake and his friends. Before he could do anything Blake had seized him and sent him whirling across the Fourth Form passage.

"Catch him, Dig!" he cried.

"Rather!" said Digby.

And in his turn he hustled Levison into the arms of Herries, who promptly sent him spinning back to Blake. Levison tried to make a fight of it, but it was no use. He was knocked about like a football. He began to shout with a view to attracting attention, no doubt.

"We'll soon stow that for you, you cad!" said Blake.

With one powerful drive he knocked Levison sprawling on the floor of the passage.

Levison sprang up again. But Blake and Co. were ready for him.

"That'll teach you not to sneer at people, Levison," said Herries.

"I'll be even with you, you rotters, for this!" shouted Levison, rubbing his face.

"Rats!" grinned Blake.

And without more ado they went to Mr. Railton's study. They were surprised to find Knox in the passage outside Mr. Railton's door.

"Where the deuce have you young rotters been?" he demanded, as Jack Blake and Co. grinned at the sight of the bundle of newspapers. "Didn't Levison deliver my message?"

"Of course he did," said Blake. "That's why we're here."

Knox coloured. It was evident that Blake meant they had not come to see Knox for the mere pleasure of the thing. The prefect was about to rush at Blake when Mr. Railton put his head out of his study.

"Pray, why are you wasting time in this absurd fashion, Knox?" he asked.

"Come in at once! All of you! The sooner this mystery is cleared up the better!"

Knox would have replied, but Mr. Railton cut him short with a stern gesture, and all entered the House-master's study.

CHAPTER 21.

Not Nice for Knox.

WHAT is this I hear, Blake?"

"I am sure I don't know, sir," answered Blake respectfully.

Mr. Railton looked keenly at Jack Blake. But Blake stood the scrutiny well. He did not look like a lad who was equivocating. His face was perfectly honest and open.

"These papers, of course!" said Mr. Railton. "I hear you are given to reading sporting papers——"

"Who says so, sir?" asked Blake stoutly.

"I do," said Knox. "Shall I untie the papers, sir?" continued the prefect.

"Pray do so, Knox. You deny the accusation, Blake?"

"I do, sir."

"Very good. We shall see. And you, Herries and Digby?"

Herries and Digby both denied reading sporting papers. Mr. Railton adopted a non-committal attitude. Knox was busy and muddy with the papers. Jack Blake had made a good job of it when he tied them up and the bad-tempered prefect was far from enjoying himself. After five minutes, Mr. Railton showed signs of impatience. Apparently Knox had made little headway.

"What a bungler you are, Knox," he said. "Surely it is not so difficult to untie a few simple knots——"

"They are very securely tied, sir," said Knox, colouring.

"Pray get a knife then, and cut the string!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby were hard put to it not to laugh outright. But they did not dare do it, all the same. Mr. Railton was not in a mood to be trifled with. Knox felt for his knife. He had evidently left it somewhere. Asking permission to fetch one, he left the study.

Mr. Railton fretting at the delay began to cross-question the juniors.

"You threw those papers into the pond at the top of the junior football field, Blake?"

"Yes, sir."

"May I ask why you did it?"

"Certainly sir. For a little amusement."

Mr. Railton opened his eyes.

"Amusement!"

"Yes, sir. We were being watched——"

"As was very necessary I assure you, sir," said Knox re-entering. "They were watched because these papers are known to be sporting papers."

"They are not sporting papers sir," said Blake stoutly.

Knox smiled confidently as he cut the string about the bundle of papers.

"You say you did this thing for amusement, Blake?" said Mr. Railton.

"I give you my word we did it for a lark, sir."

Knox started as he heard Blake's words. Hurriedly he lifted up one of the papers. He did not seem in a hurry to show it to Mr. Railton, however. Herries and Digby were martyrs to suppressed laughter. They saw that the prefect had found his mistake already.

Mr. Railton, intent in questioning the juniors, seemed to forget the prefect.

"You said you did it because you were watched, Blake, also?" he said.

"Yes, sir. We were watched, and we did it to punish the sneak who watched us."

"Is this so, Herries and Digby?"

"Yes, sir—"

"May I suggest that they are hoodwinking you, sir—"

"Certainly not, Knox," almost thundered Mr. Railton. "I am here to judge of that. You will have the goodness to tell me whom your informant is. It is only fair to Blake, Herries, and Digby, that he should confront them—"

"But surely, my word, sir—" began Knox, fumbling with the bundle.

"Enough!" said Mr. Railton.

And he touched the bell.

Trotter, the page, answered it.

"Mellish," said Knox limply in answer to a look from Mr. Railton.

"Tell Master Mellish to come here at once, Trotter!" said Mr. Railton.

"And we'll take a look at the papers in the meantime, Knox," he continued as the page retired.

This was what Knox had dreaded. Knowing how completely he had been spoofed he was now most anxious that Mr. Railton should not see the papers.

"Had we not better wait till Mellish comes sir?" he said.

"What do you mean, Knox. I made a request. Have the goodness to obey."

Knox, realising that the game was up, took up one of the papers and handed it to Mr. Railton. "I am sorry, sir," began the prefect.

"Sorry, Knox—"

Then Mr. Railton's eye caught the headline on the wet limp paper he held in his hand.

"The Daily Mail! This is not a sporting paper. What nonsense is this, Knox?"

Knox was silent. He had no reply.

Jack Blake, and Co. grinned. They could not help it, and Mr. Railton did not reprimand them.

"They have done it on purpose to annoy me—and you, sir?" faltered Knox.

"Rubbish, Knox!" snapped the Housemaster.

And he turned to Jack Blake & Co:

"Tell me all about it, Blake," he said simply.

Blake explained at some length, and Knox's face went red and white by turns as the narration proceeded. Mr. Railton, for his part, ignored the prefect, and he listened quietly until Blake had finished. Once a smile crossed his face, but he instantly suppressed it.

"I suggest that we fished up the wrong bundle, sir!" burst out Knox, as Blake finished.

The idea appeared to strike Mr. Railton as worthy of attention. He looked sternly at Jack Blake & Co. But he was apparently satisfied with what he read in their faces.

"That is the only bundle of papers we threw into the pond, sir," said Blake.

"Mellish will tell you, sir, that he saw the sporting papers," urged Knox.

"I told him repeatedly that they were old 'Daily Mails,' sir."

"I don't think much of Mellish, and, in any case," said Mr. Railton, with much conviction, "you have been hoaxed, Knox, and it seems to me you richly deserve it."

Knox bit his lip. He was livid with temper. His heart set on getting Blake & Co. a rich hiding, he was very sore at the prospect of them slipping through his hands.

"I do not think so, sir!" he burst out hotly. "They are deceiving you, I am sure——"

"Knox!"

"Hear me, sir, please——"

"Not another word!"

"But——"

"Silence, sir! Boys, you may go. Remain where you are, Knox. I have something to say to you!"

Jack Blake & Co. lost no time in quitting Mr. Railton's study. At the best of times it was not a desirable place from their point of view, and the additional charm of Knox's presence lent nothing to their comfort.

"You are misjudging me, sir," said Knox, as the door closed after the juniors.

"I do not think so, Knox, and permit me to say that I can quite understand Kildare not joining you in this matter, now——"

"But hear——"

"I will not allow you to interrupt me, sir!" said Mr. Railton. "Your privileges are subject to my discretion——"

"I am a prefect——"

"Really, Knox, I had hoped to spare you any need to remind me, for surely you have not acted like one on this occasion," said Mr. Railton mildly. "You have wasted my time, to prosecute what I am bound to regard as a personal animus against a harmless junior. Don't interrupt me, sir! You will listen, and I insist on the exercise of a little more discretion in future. It is a prefect's duty, above all things, not to listen to idle stories——"

"You will be sorry, sir——" began Knox penitently.

"Leave the room, sir, or indeed I shall!" thundered Mr. Railton. "I should not like to forget that you are a prefect!"

Knox moved towards the door as indolently as he dared, and a savage expression came into his eyes as the door closed between him and the angry Housemaster.

CHAPTER 22.

Mellish's Reward.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY looked into Study No. 6.

The chums of the Fourth were busy finishing their preparation, and they did not look up.

They knew that it was the Outsider of St. Jim's who was looking in, and they did not choose to see him.

A deep flush overspread Lumley-Lumley's face.

But he did not recede.

He stepped into the study, and came towards the table. The three juniors went steadily on with their work.

"I want to speak to you, chaps," said the Outsider, in a low voice.

"Then Jack Blake looked up.

"Hallo!" he said.

Lumley-Lumley's flush deepened.

"Can I speak to you?" he said.

Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, there's no law against it, that I know of," he said. "We don't want to speak to you. You know that."

"You know it jolly well," remarked Digby.

"I think we've made it plain enough," Herries observed.

Lumley-Lumley bit his lip. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not in the study; the Outsider's one friend was absent. But he went on.

"I only want to say that I'm sorry about what's just happened."

Blake stared.

"About what?" he asked.

"I hear from Levison that you fellows have got into a row with Knox and Mr. Railton over some sporting papers, or something of the sort——"

Blake grinned.

"It's Knox who's got into the row," he said. "The papers weren't sporting papers at all; and Levison has got the yarn wrong."

"He said you were called into Mr. Railton's study——"

"So we were," said Digby. "But it was a jape on Knox, that's all. We've never had any rotten sporting papers here, and we haven't been in a row."

"I guess I'm glad of that," said Lumley-Lumley, looking relieved. "I shouldn't like you to get into a row on my account."

"Thank you!" said Blake sarcastically.

"I—I thought that Levison might have taken some papers from my study, and put them here, or something of the sort," Lumley-Lumley explained, "that's all. He put a paper out in the passage for the fellows to find, and it's caused trouble."

"It's your having the paper that's caused trouble," said Blake. "If you didn't have the rotten things in your study, Levison couldn't play tricks with them."

"I know; but——"

"You've only got yourself to thank," said Digby; "and we've got ourselves to thank for being taken in by you. Blessed if I know how we came to believe in you at all."

"I did not take you in."

"Oh, you know what I mean. You made it clear that you were giving up that rotten, blackguardly business altogether; and now you own up coolly that you have sporting papers in your study, as a matter of course."

"Not exactly that. It's a curious position——"

"Yes, jolly curious."

"What I mean is, I haven't been doing as you supposed. I haven't laid a bet on a horse, or taken any interest in racing, since the time I gave Tom Merry my word that I was going to chuck it."

"And you read sporting papers merely from a philosophical sort of interest, I suppose?" Digby suggested.

"I can't very well explain——"

"No; I expect you can't!"

"But it's not as you suppose. I——"

Blake yawned.

"Would you mind leaving us to get our prep. done, Lumley?" he asked. "It will save you from making up whoppers, too."

"Hear, hear!" said Herries.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's face became scarlet.

"Look hére——" he began hotly.

"Oh, give us a rest!"

"Yes, rather!" said Digby. "Let the matter drop. You know that we don't believe you; what's the good of piling it on?"

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley clenched his hands hard.

"Well, if you don't believe me, it's no good talking," he remarked. "I didn't come here to have a row. I only wanted to say I was sorry I'd got you into a row—and it seems that I was mistaken. That's all."

And he left the study.

Blake sniffed.

"Blessed if I can stand that chap!" he remarked. "How can he pile on the whoppers like that, and with such a serious face, too!"

"Sheer cheek!" said Herries.

And the chums of the Fourth went on with their preparation, and forgot Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

The Outsider of St. Jim's returned slowly to his own study.

His step was heavy, and his face was frowning and gloomy.

Both Levison and Mellish were in the study when he entered it, and they grinned at the sight of the Outsider. They shared the study with him, and since his reform they had done their best to make it as uncomfortable for him as they could—and they succeeded pretty well.

Lumley-Lumley took no notice of their looks. The Outsider, who was generally quite ready to take offence, seemed to have become strangely subdued lately. He sat down at the table with his books to do his preparation.

A few minutes later the door was kicked open, and D'Arcy minor of the Third put his head in.

"Mellish here?" he asked.

"Yes; what do you want?"

"Nothing!" said Wally cheerfully. "Knox gave me a message for you, that's all. You're to go to his study."

And the fag vanished.

Mellish rose to his feet, with a satisfied grin. He knew nothing of the discovery in the pond, or of the scene in Mr. Railton's study. He had been doing his preparation while Knox was making his valuable catch of old

"Daily Mails."

"Trouble?" asked Levison.

Mellish shook his head.

"No fear! I expect I shall get something from Knox."

He made no further explanation, but left the study, and went away in cheerful spirits towards the Sixth Form passage. He had no doubt that Knox had discovered and proved the guilt of Jack Blake & Co., and he expected some reward from the prefect for his valuable services.

He tapped at Knox's door, and entered.

"You sent for me, Knox?"

"Yes!" said Knox, between his teeth.

Mellish started back.

The prefect's face was white with rage, and he had a cane in his hand. Mellish would gladly have backed out of the study as he caught sight of Knox's face; but with a quick movement the prefect interposed between him and the door.

"No, you don't!" he remarked.

Mellish backed away round the table.

"Wh-wh-what's the matter?" he stammered.

Knox ground his teeth.

"You know well enough, you young cad!"

"I—I don't!" stammered Mellish. "I—I—didn't you find the papers in the pond? I'll swear they were there. I saw Blake chuck them in, honour bright!"

"You young hound!" roared Knox. "This was all a game between you and Blake to make me look a fool to Railton."

"I—I——"

"I found the papers, you young sweep——"

"Well, if you found them, what's the matter?"

"I found them—a bundle of old "Daily Mails.""

Mellish staggered.

"What!"

"And you knew it all the time!" yelled Knox.

"I—I didn't! I—I thought they were sporting papers. From what Blake said, they must have been sporting papers!" gasped Mellish. "Or else he knew that I was listening, and he was taking me in! Perhaps—perhaps you fished up the wrong bundle, Knox? I—I'll go and look, if you like. I—I—— Oh! Oh! Ow! Yow! Yoop!"

Knox's grasp was upon the sneak of the Fourth.

He swung Mellish round, and the cane rose and fell rapidly; with all the force of the prefect's right arm.

It lashed and stung over Mellish's shoulders, and on his back, and round his legs, and the cad of the Fourth yelled and squirmed and hopped madly with pain.

"Ow—ow—ow! Yow! Leggo! Stop! Ow!"

Lash, lash, lash.

"Yaroo! Ooooh! Ow! Yah!"

Lash, lash!

"Ow! Help!"

"There!" panted Knox, flinging the yelling, squirming sneak of the Fourth away from him. "There! You won't come to me with lies again!"

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"Get out of my study!"

"Yarooooooop!"

Knox opened the door, and bundled the wretched junior into the passage. He kicked him till he picked himself up and ran. Then he slammed the study door, feeling somewhat solaced. Mellish had had his reward!

CHAPTER 23.

D'Arcy is Ready to Oblige—But——

"D'ARCY, old man!"

"Yes, deah boy!"

"I guess I want to ask you a favour."

"Anythin' you like, Lumlay, old son."

Arthur Augustus stopped politely in the passage. There was a hesitation in Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's manner, and a flush in his cheeks, which showed that he had something to ask of D'Arcy that was out of the common, and that he felt doubtful how his request would be received.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was quite keen enough to see it, even without the aid of his eyeglass, and he tried to put the Outsider at his ease.

"Go ahead, deah boy," he said, tapping the hesitating junior on the arm in quite a fatherly manner. "I'm waitin'."

"You're the only chap in the School House—or in the whole school—who's at all decent to me now," said Lumley-Lumley, with a trace of bitterness in his voice.

"Yaas, it's wotten," said D'Arcy. "The fellows are asses, you know. They won't listen to what I tell them."

The Outsider smiled faintly.

"I suppose that's it," he said.

"I have explained to Blake, and to Tom Mewwy, and to the othah chaps, that in a mattah like this they should yield to the opinion of a fellow of fact and judgment," said the swell of St. Jim's. "But they don't see it. They're asses, you know—but a fellow has to be patient with them. What?"

"I guess——"

"Go ahead, deah boy!"

"I guess it's something big I'm going to ask."

"That's all wight."

"You're a jolly decent chap, Gussy. I guess I sha'n't forget this," said the Outsider gratefully. "But you'd better hear what I want."

"Vewy well."

"I'm hard up."

"Bai Jove!"

"I want you to lend me some money."

"Bai Jove!"

"Well?" said Lumley-Lumley, pausing.

D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass carefully in his eye, and looked carefully at the Outsider of St. Jim's. Lumley-Lumley's flush deepened under his searching gaze.

"When a fwiend asks me to lend him some tin, of course, all that I have is quite at his disposal," said Arthur Augustus slowly. "But this is a peculiah case. You are the son of a gidly millionaire, Lumley?"

"Yes."

"Your governah is wollin' in money?"

"I guess so."

"He sends you heaps of it?"

"As a rule—yes."

"My governah is wathah decent in that way," said D'Arcy. "I can genewally depend on him to shell out a fivah when I want one vewy bad. But he has been gwoin' wathah close with the fivahs since Lloyd-George brought in that supah-tax bizness. It was wathah inconsiderate of Mr. Lloyd-George—appawntly he has not considahed the mattah from a school-boy's point of view."

"I guess not," grinned Lumley-Lumley. "But——"

"As a mattah of fact, I should be vewy pleased to oblige you, deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's. "You have come to the wight person."

"Good! I want——"

"But would you mind tellin' me what you want the money for, deah boy?"

The Outsider was silent, and he compressed his lips a little. It was pretty clear that he minded.

"Pway don't think me inquisitive in any way," said Arthur Augustus.

"As a wule, I am vewy careful to display no undue cuwiosity wegardin' the affairs of my fwiends. But this is a weally exceptional case, deah boy. I have a gweat feah that you are gettin' into mischief of some sort. Undah the peculiah circs. of the case, don't you think that you had bettah tell me what you want the cash for?"

"Look here, Gussy——"

"Of course, I don't feel the slightest personal cuwiosity," D'Arcy hastened to explain. "I am speakin' entirely for your good."

"Yes, yes; but——"

"Now, what is it for, deah boy?"

"It's for something important."

"Yaas. But what?"

"I guess I can't vewy well explain——"

"Weally, Lumlay-Lumlay——"

"The question is, whether you'll lend me the tin or not," said Lumley-Lumley. "That's all I have to say, Gussy."

"Weally, you know——"

"I want five pounds—in a hurry."

"A fivah?"

"Exactly."

"And you are stonay?"

"I guess so."

D'Arcy was silent.

As Lumley-Lumley was his friend—as he had proclaimed plainly enough to all St. Jim's—Arthur Augustus was not at all unwilling to lend him money. But he was very uneasy. The Outsider of St. Jim's was generally only too well supplied with ready cash. His father, the millionaire head of the firm of Lumley's, Limited, was only too liberal with him in the matter of pocket-money.

If Lumley-Lumley was hard up, where had his money gone? How had he contrived to expend a larger allowance than any other fellow at St. Jim's had? Besides, although his father was abroad, Mr. Lumley's lawyers had instructions to send Jerrold money when he asked for it, in addition to his allowance, and the margin was a very wide one. But it was clear that the Outsider must have exhausted this source of supply, as he had to turn to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for aid.

What did it mean?

In spite of himself, Arthur Augustus could not help a chilling doubt creeping into his mind that perhaps his chums were right, and he was wrong, and that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had fallen into his evil old habits again—of betting on races and playing cards with the cads at the Green Man.

How else was his state of "hard-up" to be explained?

The troubled look intensified upon the aristocratic face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he took off his monocle and polished it, and replaced it in his right eye, and stared at the Outsider of St. Jim's.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley waited in silence. He seemed to be waiting as patiently as he could for the swell of the School House to make up his mind; but he had nothing to say by way of explanation.

There was a long silence; and it was the Outsider who broke it at last, with the single monosyllabic question:

"Well?"

D'Arcy hesitated.

"Can you lend me five pounds?"

Arthur Augustus was silent.

The Outsider's lips took on an ironical curve, and he turned away.

"Very well; never mind," he said curtly. "I dare say I shall be able to raise it somewhere else."

D'Arcy made a quick movement towards him.

"Hold on, deah boy!"

The Outsider paused.

"Well?"

"You don't want to tell me what you want it for?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Well—I can't. That's all."

"Very well," said the swell of St. Jim's quietly. "I do not wish to push a fwiendly intewest to the point of inquisitiveness, deah boy. I will lend you the cash without askin' questions."

Lumley-Lumley's face cleared.

"Thanks!" he exclaimed.

"Not at all, deah boy!"

"Five quid!" said the Outsider eagerly. "You don't know how useful this will be to me, Gussy!"

"I twust it will, Lumley."

"Hand it over, then."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus stopped suddenly. There was one little thing he hadn't thought of, and it occurred to him now, and he paused in dismay.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked the Outsider quickly.

"I—I forgot—"

"Forgot what?"

"I—I should be vevy pleased indeed to lend you the fivah, deah boy, but—"

"But what?"

"But I am stonay, too."

CHAPTER 24.

D'Arcy Does His Best.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY stared blankly at the swell of St. Jim's for a moment.

"Stony?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You ass!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

"What on earth did you want to make so much bother about it for, then, if you could lend me the money?" the Outsider exclaimed angrily.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy drew himself up a little.

"Weally, Lumley—"

"Oh, rats!"

The Outsider turned away angrily.

"Lumlay, deah boy!"

The Outsider did not seem to hear. He walked away with his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets, and his brows gathered in a gloomy line.

"Lumley!"

No reply. D'Arcy looked a little offended as the Outsider disappeared. But the frown soon vanished from the kind face of the swell of the Fourth.

"Aftah all, it must have been wathah exaspewatin' to the chap, to be catechised, and not to get the money aftah all," he muttered. "Upon the whole, I will ovahlook his decidedly wude mannahs."

Arthur Augustus walked away thoughtfully. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley wanted the money, and he had evidently depended upon the swell of St. Jim's for it. Arthur Augustus had failed him. What would he do now?

"I shall have to waise the money somehow?" murmured D'Arcy.

"Hallo! Thinking out great things for the next number of the Weekly?" asked Jack Blake, coming along and bestowing a very hearty slap upon D'Arcy's shoulder.

The swell of St. Jim's staggered.

"Ow! You ass!"

"Deep in a geometrical problem, I suppose?" said Digby.

"Certainly not. I am wowwied for money."

Blake whistled.

"Has the governor been playing it low down again?" he asked. "His lordship growing stingy in his old age?"

"Weally, Blake, that is not a wespectful way to speak of my patah," said D'Arcy, in a very stately manner.

"How is a chap to speak respectfully of a pater who doesn't ladle out the fivers?" demanded Blake. "You are our last resource when we're hard up, and if you go stony, what's to happen? Your governor must see things in a reasonable light, or we shall have to send him a round robin."

"Pway don't be a silly ass, Blake. I am hard up, as a mattah of fact. Can you lend me five pounds?"

Blake grinned.

"Pounds of what?" he asked. "Paper?"

"No, you ass."

"Ink?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Or cinders?"

"Pway don't wot! Can you lend me five pounds, Dig?"

"Yes. Avordupois pounds of candles, or marbles, or waste-paper," said Digby cheerfully. "Not the other kind of pounds."

"I mean soveveigns, of course."

"Oh, quids!" said Blake.

"No," said D'Arcy; "soveveigns! I object to the term quids. I wegard it as vulgah."

"Quids or soveveigns, it's all the same," said Blake. "I could lend you fivepence, if that's any good."

"And I could add a bob to it," said Digby generously.

"Pway don't talk out of your silly necks, deah boys. Can you lend me five pounds, or not?"

"Not!" said Blake and Digby together.

"Vewy well! I shall have to seek assistance elsewhere," said D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity.

"But what do you want it for?" asked Blake curiously.

"To lend to Lumley-Lumley."

"My hat! Has he gone stony on his hosses?"

"He has not been bettin' on horses, deah boy. He has given me his word."

"Not worth very much, I think," said Blake, with a yawn.

"I twust you do not doubt the word of a fwiend of mine, Blake."

"Yes, rather—if that friend's the Outsider," said Blake cheerfully. "If it's to lend to Lumley-Lumley, I withdraw my offer of the fivepence. You can't have it."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass, deah boy!"

And D'Arcy walked away. Blake and Digby exchanged a look.

"So Lumley's stony!" said Blake. "I should think it ought to be clear even to Gussy that he has been on the razzle again. He's the richest fellow at St. Jim's, and always has plenty of money. He must have been blueing it right and left to get stony."

"Yes, rather," said Digby.

"He won't have a penny of mine—let alone five pounds—or fivepence!" said Blake, with considerable emphasis. And Digby heartily concurred.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked in the quadrangle for the Terrible Three. He found Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther in a group, chatting, and he bore down upon them with a somewhat troubled expression upon his face. D'Arcy lent money often enough to the Terrible Three, and he had no hesitation about asking for a loan; but he doubted whether they would be able to raise five pounds, or whether they would lend him anything when they knew that it was for Lumley-Lumley.

Tom Merry had a letter in his hand, addressed to him in the handwriting

of his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. D'Arcy saw a postal order sticking out of the envelope, and his face brightened. Tom Merry was evidently in funds.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "Wherefore that worried brow? Somebody been sitting on your Sunday topper?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Laundress spoiled some of the collars?" asked Monty Lowther sympathetically.

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowther. I want you chaps to lend me five pounds."

"Phew!"

"If you could waise the money, I should take it as a gweat obligation," said Arthur Augustus, "and I need not say that I should wipay it with the vewy next fivah I get fwom my governah."

"What on earth do you want five quids for?" demanded Lowther.

"Soveweigns, deah boy."

"Quids!"

"Soveweigns!"

"Sovereigns or quids, what on earth do you want such a sum of money for?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Buying a new bike?"

"Certainly not; and I could not purchase a bicycle for five pounds, anyway."

"Then what's the trouble?"

"There isn't any trouble."

"Well, I can raise two quid," said Tom Merry. "My old governess has just come down jolly handsome, and I've got two postal orders here for a pound each. You can have them both, Gussy, if you want them. We are going to have a little celebration, but we'll put it off till you get a remittance from your pater."

"Certainly!" said Manners and Lowther together, very cordially.

"You are vewy kind," said D'Arcy. "Undah the circs., I think I ought, pewwaps, to tell you what I want the money for. It is for my fwiend Lumley-Lumley."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Terrible Three together.

"I have pwomised to lend him five soveweigns——"

Tom Merry put the postal orders in his pocket.

"So the Outsider's hard up?" he asked.

"Yaas, appawently."

"He can't have any of my quids," said Tom Merry abruptly. "If he's hard up—a chap who's rolling in money—the only explanation is that he has been gambling. His old tricks again, as we know perfectly well. I'd lend you the last penny in the locker, Gussy; but I don't put down a single boblet to pay gambling debts for the cad of the school."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther.

D'Arcy coloured.

"Lumley-Lumley has given me his word——" he began.

"Blow his word!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Let him drop, Gussy. He's no good!" said Monty Lowther.

"I do not wequire your advice about dwoppin' my fwiends, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus, with great dignity, "and I wefuse to hear my fwiend spoken of dispawagingly. Good-afthnoon." And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked away with his aristocratic nose very high in the air.

Tom Merry looked a little troubled.

"I don't like saying 'No' to Gussy!" he remarked. "But it would be

too bad to let him be plundered by that cad! If Lumley-Lumley has run through all his own money, and started spending other people's, he wants stopping."

And Manners and Lowther agreed.

D'Arcy walked away to Kildare's study, and asked for, and obtained, a pass out of gates to go down to the village. At the village post-office he sent a wire to Eastwood House:

"Dear Father,—Fiver urgently required.—ARTHUR."

Then he walked back to St. Jim's, feeling a little easier in his mind. As a rule, the noble earl responded generously enough to the urgent needs of his hopeful son in the Fourth Form of St. Jim's.

"The governah cannot fail to undahstand," murmured D'Arcy.

Arrived at St. Jim's, he looked for Lumley-Lumley, to report progress to him. Arthur Augustus was determined that Lumley-Lumley should see that he meant to be the one friend. He sought the Outsider in his study. He was not there. But Mellish and Levison were.

"He's not here, D'Arcy. And what's more, we don't want him!" said Levison, with lofty scorn. "We're particular, you know."

Arthur Augustus ignored them. He could quite understand that Lumley-Lumley would prefer to risk the cold shoulder from decent fellows rather than put up with the interested friendship of cads like Mellish and Levison.

"I weally must find him, you know," muttered D'Arcy, as he hurried away; and, descending to the passage that looked out over the quad on the ground floor, he got it in the neck, like the old lady who persisted in admiring the sight of London from the middle of the road.

Arthur Augustus did not hear a swift footstep behind him, and before he could quite realise it he was bumped into from behind.

"Weally——"

But D'Arcy managed to avert a complete spill by falling on his hands, and, after gathering his fallen topper, he looked up wrathfully, to see Lumley-Lumley standing before him.

"Hallo, Gussy! That you?"

Arthur Augustus was speechless for a moment. Lumley-Lumley would have nodded and passed on; but the swell of the School House had found his man, and the way he fixed his monocle told the Outsider that he was expected to stay and listen to something important.

"Undah the cires I will excuse you, deah boy," began Arthur Augustus, with great dignity. "I, of course, wecognise your peculiar posish, Lumley, and make allowances——"

"That's real good of you, D'Arcy; but do you mind letting me off now? I must get that fiver somehow!"

"There is no need, deah boy. I have sent the telegwam," said D'Arcy. Lumley-Lumley's face brightened.

CHAPTER 25.

No Fivers!

"YOU don't mean to say you have wired home for it, D'Arcy?"

"Pwecisely, deah boy!"

"That's real good of you, Gussy!"

"Not at all, deah boy. When I pwomised to lend you the tin, I did not know I was stony, Lumlay! I wiahed to the governah, after—as the safest wesource, deah boy."

Lumley-Lumley, after his keen fashion, guessed that D'Arcy had been to some of his friends about it first. There was a softer look in his eyes as he saw D'Arcy's goodness as it really was. Arthur Augustus was proving a friend indeed!

"Shake!" said the Outsider impulsively.

Arthur Augustus shook, but he winced at Lumley's grip.

"You feahful wuffian, Lumley. You've cwushed my bestly fingahs fwightfully. If you were not despewately in need of a little tin, I'd give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"But straight, I do want that oof badly, D'Arcy," said Lumley-Lumley anxiously.

"Pway have the goodness to call it tin, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, frotting his crushed fingers. "I have been lookin' for you ewewyweah, deah boy, to tell you that your twoubles are now ovah."

"You don't mean to say you've got it, Gussy?"

"Pway have a little patience, Lumley. I said I had sent the telegwam to the govannah. That is all for the pwesent."

"But he's sure to send the oo-tin, isn't he, Gussy?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yaas, wathah! The govannah would nevah wefuse my urgent wequest, Lumlay."

"Gee! I'm in the soup if he does!"

An expression of horror overspread D'Arcy's face. He barred slang at any time.

"How soon do you think you will get the reply, Gussy?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"I came to ask you to wait here with me for it, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"That's me!"

"It is half an hour since I sent the telegwam, so the answah cannot be long in awwivin', now."

"I'm in a deuce of a hurry, Gussy," said Lumley-Lumley. "I have to go out shortly, whether I get the tin or not. I do hope the good old govannah buzzes—"

Arthur Augustus looked severely at the Outsider.

"I should object to such an expression bein' applied to my fathah, Lumlay," he said. "Pway have the goodness not to wepeat it! The govannah will wespond per weturn, I am sure. We can see the boy when he comes with the weply fwom heah."

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I wish he was here though, Gussy."

"Weally, Lumley—"

"No, I am not ungrateful, D'Arcy," said the Outsider quickly. "But you know—"

"Yaas, wathah! But it's all sewene, deah boy. We sha'n't have long to wait, you know."

"Right-ho!"

And they waited.

Arthur Augustus would have liked to know what use Lumley proposed to make of the money. He had no real doubt of the Outsider, but he could not help feeling a little uneasy. To say the least, Lumley-Lumley was very excited as they watched the quad. for signs of a telegraph-boy. Twenty minutes passed, in which they discussed everything from prefects to footer form, but no telegraph-boy put in an appearance.

"Whatevah you are goin' to do, Lumlay?" said D'Arcy all at once, "I twust, deah boy, you will not forget our conversations. Don't let anythin' put you back on the old game, deah boy——"

"Not much, D'Arcy!"

There was something so firm in Lumley-Lumley's tone that Arthur Augustus felt satisfied.

"Not much!" repeated the Outsider. "That's a deal, Gussy. I'm meat right through, though things seem what they are not, as Tom Merry will yet find out."

"Yaas, wathah! It is hard lines on both you chaps," murmured Arthur Augustus.

But still the wished-for telegram did not come. Lumley-Lumley could not help showing some signs of impatience. D'Arcy made all allowances, but he was hardly prepared for the Outsider's next remark.

"Your governor's not likely to be rocked, is he, Gussy?" he asked.

"Wocked, deah boy?"

"Yes; my governor once had a stiff rocking. A company gang almost peeled him to the skin, and I thought as these times are a bit nutty for the peers, you know——"

Even Lumley-Lumley "dried up" as he marked the expression of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic countenance.

"I fail to undehstand—uttahly, Lumley!" he said, rather stiffly. "My patah—wocked?"

"Yes!" grinned Lumley. "They seem to be taking all the peers' money off them now, your pater might not have a fiver left——"

"Excuse me, deah boy," said D'Arcy, fixing his monocle with rigid dignity. "But I feel constwained to chawactewise your wemark as wubbish, weally!"

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "All the better for me; but I wish that wire-boy would buck up!"

Arthur Augustus's offence at the idea of a D'Arcy not having a fiver left in the family locker was speedily dissolved in solicitude for his friend. He looked anxiously across the quad. Lumley took out his watch.

"Gee!" he cried. "But I shall have to hop it——"

"Weally, Lumley——"

"Sorry, Gussy, really. But I must go!"

There was a curious tone in the Outsider's voice. It had a strange ring of something like fear in it, and D'Arcy was touched. He laid his hand on Lumley's arm.

"Weally, Lumley, you must wait for the tin now, deah boy," he said.

"I can't, really, Gussy! Tell you what, though. I have to go up to my study, first. I'll come down here again, afterwards."

"You will have time, Lumley?"

"I guess I'll come back if I have time, Gussy."

"Vewy well, then, Lumley," said Arthur Augustus, releasing him.

And the swell of the School House resumed his watch at the window as the Outsider rushed away. Ten minutes passed, but Lumley-Lumley did not return. Arthur Augustus waited confidently for the advent of the telegraph-boy. Just as he was on the point of considering the advisability of going in search of Lumley-Lumley, Arthur Augustus spied that junior himself hurrying towards the gates. D'Arcy could not believe his eyes at first, but a second glance was sufficient.

He hurried down into the quad.

"Lumley!" he called out.

No answer.

"Lumley!" shouted Arthur Augustus again.

The Outsider half turned and waved his hand.

"Sorry, Gussy, but I must go——"

"Wait anothah minute or two, deah boy——"

"Couldn't, really——"

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy's exclamation was occasioned by the entrance of the much-desired telegraph-boy through the gates. Lumley did not see the lad as his back was turned to him. The boy knew St. Jim's well, and was making for the School House.

"Lumley!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Master D'Arcy! Here you are!" said the telegraph-boy, running up to D'Arcy.

"Lumley!" repeated the swell of the Fourth, tearing open the telegram.

"Lumley, deah boy!"

But the Outsider was heading for the gates, all heedless. He seemed to have forgotten D'Arcy's existence.

The telegraph-boy grinned.

"Run after him, sir."

"Bai Jove! What a good ideah!"

And Arthur Augustus ran to the gates at top speed.

"It's all wight, Lumley, deah boy!" he shouted again. "Here is the telegwam, deah boy!"

Lumley-Lumley stopped at that. The anxious expression died out of his face, as he saw the swell of the Fourth racing towards him, and trying to read the telegram as he did so.

"Got it, Gussie?" asked the Outsider eagerly. "Gee! What luck!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

"What's up?"

"I'm sowwy, Lumley deah boy, weally——" began D'Arcy apologetically.

"Why? What the deuce——"

"I weally had no ideah, Lumley!" protested Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, do hand it over, Gussie!" said Lumley. "I assure you I am not rushing it like this for nothing. Buck up, really!"

"I know you are not, deah boy; but weally——"

A look of annoyance came into Lumley's eyes.

"I say, Gussie, make it cash!" he almost implored.

"Yaas, wathah! I would if I——"

"What! You mean to say you ran after me to tell me your——"

"Here is the beastly telegwam, deah boy. Pway wead it for yourself," said Arthur Augustus.

Lumley-Lumley took the telegram quickly.

"Sorry—no fiver to spare—father," he read. "You ass! As if I hadn't lost enough time already. You do take the biscuit, Gussie——"

"Weally, Lumley——"

"Rats!"

"Come back, Lumley! You are not fit, deah boy, to go anywheah while you are like that!"

"More rats!"

And Lumley-Lumley was gone, leaving Arthur Augustus staring after him in bewilderment.

"Bai Jove! I forgot to give the telegwagh messengah a gwatuitay!"

The diminutive representative of a government department, which bestows all conceivable conveniences on a trusting public, was loitering very slowly towards the gates, however, and Arthur Augustus did not lack for an opportunity.

"This is all the work of that wretched Chancellor of the Exchequer, bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy, reading his father's telegram again; and when he reached the School House, he had not quite regained that repose which stamps the cast of Vere de Vere.

CHAPTER 26.

D'Arcy is Indignant!

"I WEGARD it as wotten!"

Arthur Augustus made that statement as he came into Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

Blake looked up from his work with a yawn.

"Hallo, Gussy! What's rotten now?" he inquired.

"I have had a telegwam from my patah."

"Well, it's a free country," said Digby. "Paters have a right to send telegrams when they like."

Jack Blake nodded solemnly.

"Yes; it's no good kicking against anything of that sort, Gussy," he said.

"These paters are all the same; they will do these things, you know."

"Oh, wats!"

"You haven't brought your pater up carefully," said Blake, with a shake of the head. "If you had looked after him when he was a little boy——"

"Pway don't talk out of your hat, Blake. I weagrd——"

"If you had watched over him tenderly in his earliest years," persisted Blake, "he wouldn't do these things in his old age."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass! Look at that telegwam!"

And Arthur Augustus tossed the telegram upon the study table.

Blake and Digby looked at it. Herries, who was sitting in the armchair mending a dog's collar, the property of Towser, left that important occupation for a moment to glance at the wire that had raised the indignation of the swell of St. Jim's.

The chums of the Fourth read the telegram, and burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and regarded them with great indignation.

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Good old governor!"

"I wegard it as wotten!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is no weason at all, that I can see, for wibald laughtah on this subject," said the swell of the Fourth stiffly. "I wegard it as wude! My governah ought to know bettah than to do these things."

"If you had cared for him in his tender youth——" began Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, pway don't begin that silly wot again!" said the swell of St. Jim's peevishly. "I wegard you as asses. I considah that this is playin' it wathah low down. And it is all the fault of that wretched Chancellah of the Exchequer!"

Blake stared.

"Whose fault?" he asked.

"That boundah Lloyd George," said D'Arcy. "My governah has been much closer with the fivahs since that wotten supah-tax was put on incomes, and now that the House of Lords is pwactically abolished, I suppose peers will have to be vewy economical. I wegard it as wotten!"

"It's hard cheese!" said Blake sympathetically. "Of course, if Lloyd George knew that he was cutting down your allowance of fancy waistcoats and silk-hats, he'd pause in time, before he brought the country to utter ruin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon the whole I regard it as my duty to send him a telegwam, before he goes too fah," said D'Arcy firmly.

"Go it!"

"Very likely it might make him resign," said Blake. "Point out to him that you have no confidence whatever in him."

"Bai Jove, I will!"

"And that the country will go straight on the road to ruin, at top speed, if you have to go without any of your regulation number of fancy waistcoats."

"Weally, Blake——"

"And that if you have to reduce your supply of silk-hats, there's no telling what will become of the British Empire——"

"You uttah ass——"

"Explain that the future of England may be hidden in a silk-hat, or bound up in a fancy waistcoat——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to continue this widiculous discuss," said D'Arcy. "I shall certainly send him a telegwam—— Bai Jove!"

"What's the mattah now?"

"I forgot that I am bwoke, and cannot pay for a telegwam," said D'Arcy. "But for that, I should certainly tell the Chancellah of the Exchequah what I think of his weckless conduct."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Meanwhile, how am I to waise some cash?" said D'Arcy—"that is the important point. I have been pwevented fwom helpin' a fwiend by lack of money."

"Horrid!"

"I wefuse to ask you fellows for any help——"

"It would be all the same if you did, if you mean to give it to Lumley-Lumley," said Blake cheerfully.

"Weally, Blake——"

"But it is rather rotten of Gussy's governor," said Digby. "I should have borrowed some of that fiver, if the noble duke had sent it. Send your governor a telegram, Gussy, and point out to him that he has disappointed us."

"I wefuse to do anything of the sort."

And Arthur Augustus walked haughtily out of Study No. 6, leaving the chums of the Fourth howling with laughter.

Arthur Augustus waited for Lumley-Lumley to return.

But it was a long time before the Outsider of St. Jim's came back to the school. When he did appear at last, D'Arcy was waiting for him on the school steps.

The Outsider's figure loomed up in the dusk.

D'Arcy made a movement towards him.

"Lumlay, deah boy! Just in time to get in for callin'-ovah! I'm so sowwy about that telegwam!"

Lumley-Lumley nodded and passed into the House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy started as he saw that the Outsider's face was very pale.

"Bai Jove, Lumlay! Is there anythin' the mattah?"

"Yes," muttered Lumley-Lumley.

"What is it, deah boy?"

"Oh, nothing."

"But—I say——"

Lumley-Lumley did not listen. He strode on into the House, and the swell of St. Jim's was left standing in the doorway, with a very troubled expression upon his face.

CHAPTER 27.
The Wrong Man.

"YOW!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that exclamation quite suddenly. He had received a sudden slap upon the back, which sent him staggering upon the steps of the School House, and he made a wild plunge downwards.

With a terrific jump, he managed to clear the steps, and landed in the quadrangle on his feet; and then he swung back towards the doorway in a rage, to find Kangaroo of the Shell staring at him in astonishment.

"You uttah ass!" roared D'Arcy.

"My hat!"

"You feahful chump!"

"What did you do that for?" asked Kangaroo innocently.

"Eh?"

"What did you do that jump for?"

"You fwightful ass! You knocked me ovah."

"I was just greeting you——"

"Weally, Kangaroo——"

"Sorry if I startled you," said the Cornstalk blandly, as D'Arcy came up the steps again "I was going to—what are you pushing back your cuffs for?"

"You fwightful ass! I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'. You have thrown me into quite a fluttah."

"But I only wanted to tell you about neglecting your duties to your adopted son," said Kangaroo, in an injured tone.

Arthur Augustus dropped his hands.

"What do you mean, Kangaroo?"

"You've allowed Lumley-Lumley to go out of your sight," said Kangaroo severely. "I understood that you were keeping an eye on him."

"Yaas, but——"

"Well, don't let it happen again," said Kangaroo, and the Cornstalk junior turned away with a grave shake of the head, and was gone before D'Arcy recovered from his amazement.

Arthur Augustus went slowly up to his study. Upon consideration he decided that Kangaroo had been "wotten."

At the same time, the Cornstalk's remark had put new ideas into his head. If he was going to look after Lumley-Lumley, and save him from falling into bad hands, it would be necessary to keep a strict eye upon him. He had, indeed, allowed Lumley-Lumley to depart from St. Jim's unwatched, and the swell of the Fourth felt his conscience prick him for having been so careless. He had prevented the Outsider from going out at night; but what was the use of that, if the fellow were allowed to go out alone by day, and escape the eye of his guardian angel?

Arthur Augustus determined that it should not occur again.

He had made up his mind to look after Lumley-Lumley, and to take the Outsider under his wing, so to speak; and he meant to do it, however unpleasant the task might be to himself—and to the Outsider of St. Jim's.

The moon, coming up over the old clock tower, cast a glimmering light into the window of Study No. 6, as D'Arcy went in. The gas was not yet alight.

Arthur Augustus threw a glance from the study window into the quadrangle.

The old trees stood out in masses of black against the white glimmer of the moon, and the buildings rose dark and clear to the view.

The swell of St. Jim's thrust his hands deeply into his pockets, thinking, as he stood at the window, of the problem of the Outsider of St. Jim's, which he had set himself to solve.

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus suddenly, and he stepped closer to the window of Study No. 6.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked out of the study window.

It was moonlight, and for an instant, the swell of the School House thought he saw someone moving about in the quad. below.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured again.

The inevitable monocle dropped from his eye.

There could be no mistake this time. There was someone stirring in the quad.

Instantly, the thought of the Outsider occurred to Arthur Augustus. Who else would want to move about in that mysterious fashion at night?"

Surprise for the moment took away Arthur Augustus's initiative.

"Yaas, I'm not mistaken," he said. "The boundah is goin' to bweak bounds."

He could plainly see the mysterious figure making for the elms in the quad. Gaining their shade the figure moved in a way that left no doubt to D'Arcy's mind. They were the very movements of the Outsider.

"To say it was pwob would be widiculous," murmured Arthur Augustus.

"It's perfectly certain."

And as he reflected his natural presence of mind re-asserted itself.

"It must be stopped, of course," he said hurriedly, snatching up his hat.

"What an ass I am, bai Jove, to stand stawin' like this!"

And he hurried downstairs.

In another moment Arthur Augustus stood in the quad., resolved to watch the figure at all events. It had not yet reached the end of the row of elms.

To seek the cover of these lordly shades was the work of a moment for Arthur Augustus.

It was well, for the figure turned on the moment as if to retrace its steps. Even in that simple action D'Arcy found further likeness to the Outsider.

"Ewevy movement is exact. It must be him," he murmured.

Then he followed at a distance as the fellow went ahead once more. D'Arcy, despite his certainty that it was Lumley-Lumley, was resolved to be very cautious.

It would hardly do to make another mistake, and he knew that his Form-master often took a stroll in the quad. of an evening.

Arthur Augustus dodged from tree to tree, at twice the speed of the unknown.

Doubts were struggling in his mind meanwhile. Was it possible, that Lumley-Lumley was breaking out again?

D'Arcy's natural good nature prompted him to head off the midnight wanderer and attempt further argument by way of reform. Caution occurred to him as the wiser course.

He was glad he did so.

"Bai Jove!"

The figure had stopped once more, and D'Arcy had only just time to conceal

himself. Peering cautiously from behind the great elm, Arthur Augustus concluded the fellow was thinking it over whether to cross the belt of moonlit quad, just beyond the trees.

"How stwange!" muttered D'Arcy, as the figure took something from its coat pocket and consulted it. "It looks as of the wottah has received special instructions, fwom his stwange ways. Gweat Scott!"

The fellow at the end of the elms began to hum a song. He did not hum loudly, but the circumstances brought another doubt to Arthur Augustus's mind.

Lumley-Lumley was hardly likely to sing at such a moment.

"Not undah any pwovocation, bai Jove!" muttered D'Arcy, watching the figure intently.

But the swell of the Schol House found fresh ground for conjecture as the figure all at once strode out boldly into the moonlight.

Arthur Augustus followed in hot pursuit. The song, though only softly hummed, might be a signal.

"Yaas, wathah—"

If Lumley-Lumley had stopped in the middle of the moonlight patch to whistle and dance 'Yankee Doodle,' Arthur Augustus would not now have thought it strange.

He was too excited. His excitement was rising every moment.

But his duty was never far from his thoughts, however wild.

"Bweakin' bounds is bweakin' bounds, bai Jove!" he murmured. "And beastlay bad form, to say the least. Wotten!"

The last exclamation was occasioned by Arthur Augustus reflecting that when he crossed that belt of moonlight the fellow might turn and see him.

Still, forward he must go at all costs. He had no time to waste in making a long detour.

"Not poss, deah boy," he muttered. "The wottah would escape in the meantime."

Then a bright idea occurred to Arthur Augustus.

Whipping off his boots he took them in his hand and ran at top speed across the bright patch and gained the shadow of the school wall. Seeing nothing as he gained the comparative darkness he thought he had lost the fellow, and in his disappointment he let one of the boots drop.

"Oh, dash—"

Even as the exclamation escaped him he rediscovered the mysterious figure. It was approaching the slanting oak that leaned towards the school wall.

The fellow had heard the boot drop. He was peering through the darkness to try and discover what the noise was. Not finding it, of course, he turned toward the slanting oak again.

Now was D'Arcy's time to act!

There could be no doubt as to the mysterious one's intentions. Arthur Augustus was convinced that it was Lumley-Lumley about to scale the wall by means of the slanting oak.

"How beastly pwovokin' to have only one boot on," said Arthur Augustus, quite audibly in his excitement.

The mysterious figure heard him and turned again. He walked forward towards where Arthur Augustus trusted to the darkness to conceal him.

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy stopped and put on his boots, giving a slight grunt as he did so.

"Dear me," said the figure, coming back to the oak.

It was evident that he had heard the grunt. The voice carried to Arthur Augustus, and he was convinced more than ever that it was Lumley-Lumley's.

He rushed forward. D'Arcy's feet made sufficient patter to give the stranger some slight warning.

The figure was close to the oak.

"You wottah!" said Arthur Augustus.

And he tackled the fellow Rugby fashion as he reached the foot of the tree.

"Oh!" gasped the fellow, as if the wind had been knocked out of him.

"You ruffian— You—ow!— Let me go—"

"Wats!"

"Re—lease me!"

"A wetchted wottah bweakin' bounds? Not much!"

And Arthur Augustus brought his prisoner heavily to the ground.

"Oh! Oh! Oh, dear!"

"It's useless to argue with me, you boundah!" cried D'Arcy, excitedly.

"I know what you are up to, deah boy. I'm afraid you've lost, wathah!"

Whether the fellow wanted to argue or not does not matter much. But it was certain that he did not mean to be mauled without a fight for it. If D'Arcy had not been so excited he would probably have heard a pair of spectacles rattle to the ground.

But Arthur Augustus never for a moment forgot his duty. At all costs he was determined to overpower his man, and drag him back to the School House.

He was determined to bring the Outsider back from the ways of the transgressor.

"It's all up, Lumley, deah boy!" he panted.

"Lumley—"

"Yaas, wathah—"

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, deah boy! Alive and kickin', bai Jove!"

"What—what! D'Arcy! How dare you?"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus recognised the unmistakable accents of little Mr. Lathom, the Fourth Form-master. Then the thought of subterfuge on the part of the Outsider occurred to him.

"It's a twick, bai Jove!" he exclaimed.

"D'Arcy! How dare you, sir!"

"Bai Jove—"

Arthur Augustus's grasp released itself mechanically. There could be no doubt about the owner of the voice this time. He had been pummelling Mr. Lathom—Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth! His own Form-master! It was little Mr. Lathom, taking his evening stroll in the moonlit quad., whom the swell of St. Jim's had pounced upon!

CHAPTER 28.

Mr. Latham is Angry.

"B A-A-A-A-I Jove!"

Arthur Augustus staggered back in the dim moonlight. He had made a little mistake.

It was really not a very great mistake—anybody might have mistaken anybody for anybody else in the dim and uncertain shadows of the old quadrangle of St. Jim's.

And Arthur Augustus's mind had been full of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley and the mysterious manners and customs he had developed of late.

So it was really not surprising at all that he had made this slight mis-

take; indeed, the swell of St. Jim's could not really blame himself for it at all.

But it was pretty clear that Mr. Lathom blamed him. The master of the Fourth was one of the best-tempered of little men, but the temper of a seraph might have been seriously ruffled by such an attack.

"D'Arcy!"

"Ya-a-s, sir!"

"How dare you?" shrieked Mr. Lathom.

"Oh, sir!"

"You—you extraordinary boy!" panted the Fourth Form-master. "Are you—are you insane?"

"I—I hope not, sir."

"What do you mean by it? How dare you seize me, and set upon me in this manner?" shrieked the master of the Fourth.

"You—you see, sir——"

"D'Arcy, this insolence—this wretched impertinence——"

D'Arcy drew himself up.

"I twust, sir," he said, with a great deal of dignity, "that you do not suspect me of bein' delibewately impertinent to a Form-mastah, sir! I should wegard such a pwoceedin' as bein' in the worst of bad form. I did not know it was you, sir."

Mr. Lathom calmed down a little.

"Do you mean you mistook me for someone else?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, sir!"

"It is very extraordinary that a master cannot take a walk in the quadrangle, D'Arcy, without being assaulted by a foolish junior in mistake for someone else," said Mr. Lathom. "However, I am willing to believe your statement."

"Thank you, sir. I am vewy sowwy, sir."

"Very well. You mistook me for Lumley-Lumley of my Form, I presume," said Mr. Lathom, peering at D'Arcy in the dim light.

"Lumley-Lumley, sir."

"Yes; I recall that you uttered that name when you seized hold of me."

"D-d-did I sir?"

"You did!"

"Weally, sir——"

"You said also something about a—about someone breaking bounds."

"Oh!" said D'Arcy.

"Upon reflection," said Mr. Lathom, "it appears to me—that you mistook me for Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth Form, and supposed that I—he—was going to break bounds."

"Do you think so, sir?" stammered D'Arcy.

"I judge so from your words."

"Weally, sir——"

"Was it the case, D'Arcy?"

"Was—was wh-what the case, sir?" asked Arthur Augustus, stammering. He realised that in his keenness to look after Lumley-Lumley's interests, he had succeeded thoroughly in giving the Outsider away to his Farm-master.

"You know what I mean, D'Arcy!"

"D-d-do I, sir?"

"You do!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, his voice rising again. "I am no stranger, D'Arcy, to the talk there has been lately on the subject of Lumley-Lumley. Had you any reason to suppose that he was breaking bounds now?"

"I—I—I——"

"That he has broken bounds lately, and has been unable to furnish any explanation of doing so, I am well aware. Has he now gone out without permission?"

"I—I——"

"I gather from your stammering, D'Arcy, that such is the case, and that you are perfectly well aware of it," said Mr. Lathom sternly.

Arthur Augustus was silent. Whether Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had gone out again the swell of the Fourth did not know; but he was not likely to state his suspicions on the subject to Mr. Lathom. His object was to befriend the Outsider, not to get him into fresh trouble; though it looked as if the latter was what he had succeeded in doing.

"Well, D'Arcy?"

"I—I have nothin' to say, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Lathom. "Come with me."

"Wh-what for, sir?"

"Because I order you to."

"Oh! Vewy well, sir."

There was no arguing with that. Arthur Augustus followed the master of the Fourth into the School House. He was looking very red and confused, and many glances were cast upon him as he entered at the heels of the Form-master.

"In trouble again?" murmured Blake, as he passed.

"I have been doin' my dutay," said D'Arcy loftily.

"Yes," growled Blake; "you're always doing something of the sort, ain't you?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Come!" snapped Mr. Lathom, turning his head.

"Yaas, sir."

Mr. Lathom looked into the junior common-room. There were a good many juniors present of the Shell and the Fourth, but Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was not among them. Mr. Lathom glanced up and down the room, and all eyes were turned upon him.

"Is Lumley-Lumley here?" asked Mr. Lathom.

"No, sir," answered Tom Merry.

"Do you know where he is, Merry?"

"I have not seen him since calling-over, sir."

"Thank you."

Mr. Lathom turned from the room, and signing to D'Arcy to follow him again, ascended the stairs to the Fourth Form passage. The master of the Fourth was evidently determined to probe the matter to the very end.

He knocked at Lumley-Lumley's door, and opened it. Mellish and Levison were in the room, seated at the table at work. The big armchair was before the fire, and the top of a head showed slightly over the back; but Mr. Lathom, who was shortsighted, did not notice it. He only noticed that only two juniors were visible in the study.

"Levison!" he said sharply.

Levison rose to his feet in surprise. He tried to think of which of his delinquencies might have come to his Form-master's ears to bring about this visit to his study. Without knowing what it was, he was at a loss for a lie.

"Yes, sir," he said meekly.

"Do you know where Lumley-Lumley is?"

Levison started, and grinned a little.

"Lumley-Lumley, sir! Oh, yes!"

"Where is he?"

"In the armchair, sir."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom.

The form of the Outsider rose into view beyond the armchair. He looked at Mr. Lathom over the top of the chair in amazement. Mr. Lathom looked at him.

"Do you want me, sir?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

Mr. Lathom frowned.

"No, Lumley-Lumley, I do not want you. I merely wanted to know where you were," he said. "I had reason to suppose that you had broken bounds. D'Arcy!"

"Yaaaaas, sir," stammered D'Arcy.

"I think you are a stupid boy," said Mr. Lathom.

"Weally, sir——"

"You will take five hundred lines!"

"Oh, sir!"

"And if you are guilty of such stupidity again, I shall cane you!"

And little Mr. Lathom strode from the study, very angry and very much annoyed. Levison and Mellish broke into a chuckle. Lumley-Lumley looked at Arthur Augustus in astonished inquiry. But the swell of St. Jim's did not explain. He did not feel quite up to it just then. He followed Mr. Lathom without a word.

CHAPTER 29.

Looking for Lumley.

"BEDTIME, you kids," said Darrel of the Sixth, looking into the junior common-room in the School House.

Tom Merry rose and yawned.

"Thanks, Darrel, old man," he said. "I should never have thought of it. I'll excuse you to-night if you're in a hurry."

Darrel laughed.

"Buzz off!" he said, and quitted the room. "I shall look into the dormitory in ten minutes."

"Thanks, vevy much, deah boy," said D'Arcy.

And the Fourth and the Shell marched upstairs. Monty Lowther tapped Arthur Augustus on the arm.

"Where's your protege?" he asked.

The swell of St. Jim's screwed his monocle into his eye, and stared at Lowther.

"My what?" he inquired.

"Your protege," said Lowther pleasantly. "That's French, you know——"

"I know it's French, you ass!"

"It means a person you protect or take care of——"

"I am perfectly well aware of that, you ass!"

"Well, where is he?"

"If you are alludin' to Lumlay-Lumlay——"

"Exactly. Where is he?"

"I pwesume——" D'Arcy had been going to say that he presumed that Lumlay-Lumlay was with the rest of the Form; but as he glanced round, he saw that the Outsider was not there.

"He's escaped," said Lowther solemnly.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"After him!" said Manners.

"I pwesume that he is in his studay," said D'Arcy.

"Bet you he isn't."

"Wats!"

"Well, look!" said Lowther.

"I jolly well will, you silly ass," said Arthur Augustus.

And he hurried back towards the stairs. The Shell fellows went on towards their dormitory, and Monty Lowther grinned softly. Tom Merry and Manners stared at him.

"Where's the joke?" demanded Tom Merry.

"In the Fourth-Form dorm."

"Eh?"

"Gussy's gone hunting for Lumley-Lumley," yawned Lowther. "I told him that the Outsider wasn't in his study, but he would go and look."

"Well, isn't he there?" asked Manners.

"No," said Lowther.

"Do you know where he is?"

"Yes; I caught sight of him in the Fourth-Form dorm," explained Lowther. "He came up before the others."

The Terrible Three roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! Poor old Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus, quite ignorant of the fact that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had really preceded the rest of the Form to the dormitory, hurried downstairs to look for him. He wondered whether Lumley-Lumley had ventured to break bounds—at a moment, too, when discovery was certain. D'Arcy was feeling very anxious about the junior in whom he took such a fatherly interest.

"Lumley, deah boy!" he exclaimed, as he opened the door of the Outsider's study in the Fourth-Form passage.

There was no reply. The study was dark and empty. D'Arcy struck a match and looked round. There was no one in the room.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face fell.

"Bai Jove!" he muttered.

He quitted the study and hesitated, thinking it out in the passage. Where was the Outsider of St. Jim's?

D'Arcy went down the lower stairs, and looked in the Hobby Club room, and in several other places, and found him not. Knox, the prefect, caught sight of him in the passage.

"What are you doing downstairs now, D'Arcy?" he demanded.

"Lookin' for somebody," said D'Arcy.

"Well, go to bed; and take fifty lines for being down after half-past nine," said Knox.

"Weally, Knox——"

"Cut off!"

"But I'm lookin'——"

"Cut off!" roared the prefect.

"Undah the cires——"

Knox came angrily towards him, and D'Arcy thought he had better go. He ran up the stairs. In the dormitory passage he paused.

"I wondah where the boundah is," he muttered. "Weally, he is givin' me a dweadful lot of twouble. But I must stick to him."

Darrel came along the passage. He frowned at the sight of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Go into the dormitory at once, D'Arcy!" he exclaimed. "You ought to have been in bed by this time."

"Weally, Dawwell——"

"At once, I say."

"Oh, vewy well," said D'Arcy resignedly.

And he went reluctantly into the dormitory. A general grin greeted him. Most of the Fourth were in bed, and they looked out of their beds to grin at the swell of St. Jim's.

"I can't find Lumlay-Lumlay, Blake," said D'Arcy.

"Can't find whom?"

"Lumlay-Lumlay, deah boy."

"You ass!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Look in his bed."

"What!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

He looked at the Outsider's bed. There was the Outsider, snugly tucked in, and apparently going to sleep. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared at him in amazement and annoyance.

"Weally, Lumlay, this is too bad!" he exclaimed.

Lumley-Lumley opened his eyes.

"Did you speak to me, D'Arcy?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah. I say, it's too bad."

"What's too bad?" asked Lumley-Lumley, in astonishment.

"Givin' me all this twouble for nothin'!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly.

"I have been lookin' for you ewewywhere."

"Lookin' for me!" ejaculated Lumley-Lumley.

"Yaas, wathah."

"What on earth have you been looking for me for?" demanded Lumley-Lumley. "And if you were looking for me, why didn't you look here? I've been here all the time."

"You—have—been—here—all—the—time!"

"Yes, of course."

"Did you come up before the west of the Form?" asked D'Arcy dazedly.

"I guess so."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake, there is nothin' to cackle at. That wottah Lowthah has been wottin' again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard it as——"

"If you don't want a licking, D'Arcy, you had better get to bed," said Darrel's voice at the door. The prefect was looking impatiently into the dormitory.

"Sowwy, Dawwel, but you see——"

"Yes, I sec. Go to bed."

"I am weady to explain!"

"Go to bed."

"But, weally——"

Darrel came towards the swell of the Fourth. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dodged round his bed.

"It's all right, Dawwel, I'm just goin' to turn in."

"You'd better," said the prefect grimly. "I give you one minute."

And that one minute had to be enough for D'Arcy. He did not fold up his clothes so carefully as usual that night. Darrel turned out the light and retired. In the darkness of the dormitory a voice was heard proceeding from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's bed. It stated plaintively that it was weally too bad. And the Fourth-Formers chuckled.

CHAPTER 30.

Lumley-Lumley the Second I

TOM MERRY and Co. chuckled as they went to bed. The thought of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy searching the house for the fellow who was already in the dormitory appealed to them as funny. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, saw lights out in the Shell dormitory, and he looked suspiciously at the Terrible Three. When they were very merry the captain of St. Jim's knew that there was generally some mischief in the wind.

"None of your little games after lights out, you kids," said Kildare. "I shall keep an eye on this dormitory."

"Oh, Kildare!"

"Good-night, you young rascals."

"Good-night, old son!"

Kildare shut the door. Monty Lowther sat up in the darkness and chuckled again.

"Do you want to go to sleep, Tommy?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"Well, you can't! Do you, Manners?"

"Yes," said Manners.

"Well, you can't, either. I've got a wheeze."

"Keep it till morning," yawned Tom Merry. "Besides, I'm fed up on your wheezes. Good-night."

"Rats! Wake up."

Snore!

"Tom Merry, you ass!"

Snore!

Bump!

"Yow!" roared Tom Merry, starting up in bed as a pillow descended upon him. "What's that? Ow! You silly ass, Lowther!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove, I'll——"

"You'll listen to me, or you'll get the bolster next," said Monty Lowther.

"I tell you it's a wheeze, you chump."

Tom Merry sat up in bed resignedly.

"Oh, all serene!" he exclaimed. "What is it?"

"I think that it's time Gussy gave up this new dodge of his of playing heavy father," said Lowther.

"Well, so do we all, but he won't."

"Then we'll jape him till he docs," said Lowther. "He's watching Lumley-Lumley around like a giddy cat watching a mouse."

"Yes, it's funny."

"We can make it funnier," said Lowther. "I'm going to jape his lordship, and you fellows are going to help me. I hear that the other night Lumley tried to scoot out of the window, and Gussy held on to his trousers and kept him in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther stepped out of bed and lighted a candle-end. Tom Merry and Manners sat up in bed and watched him curiously, and so did several more of the Shell. Lowther stooped beside his bed and dragged a long dark object out from underneath it.

"What on earth's that?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in amazement.

"It's a dead body."

"Eh?"

"Well, it's going to be," amended Monty Lowther. "At present it's a

suit of Lumley-Lumley's old clothes, stuffed with rags and old exercise papers and things. He gave the old duds to Taggles, you know, and I borrowed them."

"But what—?"

"Look at it," said Monty Lowther cheerfully.

He set the stuffed clothes up beside the bed, supporting the queer figure with his hand. The clothes had been stuffed out with great skill, and bore a close resemblance to a human figure. The head was composed of a closely-wrapped bundle of cloth, but it was quite good enough to pass muster in the dark.

"My hat!" ejaculated Kangaroo. "What on earth are you going to do with that?"

"I'm going to stick it up at the window at the end of the Fourth-Form passage."

"What on earth for?"

"And then warn Gussy to be on the look out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther pinned a cricket cap on the cloth head of the figure. He pulled the peak well down over the featureless face.

"Looks pretty natural, doesn't it?" he said, with some pride.

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lend a hand, you chaps."

Tom Merry and Manners turned out of bed. They donned trousers and slippers, and lifted the dummy between them.

Monty Lowther blew out the candle and opened the door of the dormitory.

All was silent outside.

Kildare had gone back to his study, and the light in the dormitory passage was turned half down.

In the dim glimmer of light, the chums of the Shell, treading softly and cautiously, carried the figure along the passage.

At the end of the passage was a window, outside of which the ivy clustered thickly. Some of the more venturesome of the juniors had sometimes climbed out of that window, and descended to the quad by clinging to the ivy. It was a venturesome thing to do, especially after dark; but Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had been known to do it.

"Halt!" whispered Lowther. "Don't make a row."

"Who's making a row?" said Manners.

"Well, don't then."

Monty Lowther cautiously opened the window. Outside it was quite dark, only a glimmer of starlight appearing in the sky.

The Terrible Three hoisted up the figure to the window-sill, arranged it there, with all the appearance of a junior just climbing out. Monty Lowther unwound a strong cord, and fastened one end to the window, and the other round the neck of the figure.

"What on earth's that for?" whispered Manners.

Lowther chuckled.

"In case Gussy knocks it out of the window. We don't want it to be left out in the quad, to be found in the morning, you know—we couldn't go out and gather it up. If anything happens to it, we can pull it in afterwards."

"Good!"

At the end of the passage it was almost dark; the gas-jet was far away, near the door of the Fourth Form dormitory. In the dim shadows the figure looked remarkably lifelike. The clothes were of an unusually striking

pattern for a St. Jim's junior—Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's taste in attire was a little florid. Anybody would have recognised the figure at once as that of the Outsider.

The chums of the Shell grinned as they looked at it. If Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were brought upon the spot, there was no doubt that he would believe that it was his protege, escaping once more from his fatherly eye.

"Oh, good!" murmured Manners.

"Come on," said Lowther.

And the chums of the Shell retreated along the passage.

"We shall have to wait a bit, till the Fourth are asleep," whispered Monty Lowther. "Then one of us can sneak into their dorm. and wake Gussy. One of you fellows had better do it; he might suspect me of pulling his leg—he's suspicious of me, for some reason."

"Manners can do it" said Lowther. "Merely whisper to Gussy that he'd better buzz along to the passage window if he wants to do his duty. That will be enough—you mustn't tell any stories. Ten to one Gussy won't think of looking in Lumley's bed; he's bound to buzz along to catch the Outsider before he can get clear."

"What-ho!" murmured the juniors.

Monty Lowther listened at the Fourth Form door.

"I can't hear any voices," he whispered; "they're asleep, I think. Better give them another ten minutes, perhaps."

"Hark!" muttered Manners.

It was a sound of a footstep on the lower stairs.

The Terrible Three listened in alarm. Someone was coming upstairs. They remembered Kildare's promise to keep an eye on their dormitory. He might be coming up to do so; or he might have asked another prefect to give them a look in, if he was busy.

"Keep low," muttered Tom Merry. "If we're caught out of the dorm—"

A figure appeared at the head of the stairs in the dim light. Dim as it was, the Shell fellows recognised Knox, the prefect.

"It's Knox!" muttered Manners.

Knox, the prefect, came into the passage. The Terrible Three scudded softly back to their dormitory. At the door they paused, and looked anxiously back along the passage. Would Knox see the figure at the dim window? If he did—

There was a sudden exclamation from the prefect.

Monty Lowther grunted angrily.

"He's seen it!"

"The game's up!"

"A good jape spoiled!" growled Lowther. "Better cut!"

The Terrible Three darted into the dormitory. From the other end of the passage there was another exclamation, in surprised and angry tones, from Knox, the prefect.

"Lumley-Lumley! Get down from that window at once!"

CHAPTER 31.

Not Dead Yet!

"LUMLEY-LUMLEY, do you hear me?"

Knox was astounded. He knew that the Outsider of St. Jim's was the coolest fellow in the School House, but he had never expected anything of this sort.

The Outsider's figure was plainly visible at the window to the eyes of the angry prefect; but he did not move as Knox called out.

"Lumley-Lumley!"

Still no reply. Knox gritted his teeth, and started towards the figure at the window.

Still it did not move. Was the Outsider numbed with terror at being discovered, or was this sheer impertinence? Knox raised his hand, and brought it down with a sounding smack upon the motionless form in the open window.

"Now then—— Oh!"

Knox uttered a cry of horror.

The figure could not have been holding on, for Knox's smack sent it whirling out of the open window. It had never even occurred to Knox that Lumley-Lumley would lodge himself in the window-frame without a hold upon the window. The sudden fall of the Outsider took him completely by surprise.

"Good heavens!"

Knox made a wild clutch at the boots as they disappeared over the window-sill; but it was too late!

They flashed from view; and Knox was left staring out into the blackness of the night. The figure at the window had vanished. As a matter of fact, it was hanging by the neck upon the rope Monty Lowther had fastened to it. But the weight of the figure dragged the rope down taut, and it was buried from view in the thick ivy under the window.

The figure had vanished.

Knox, with a face as white as chalk, and his breath coming and going in painful gasps, leaned out of the window, and tried to penetrate the thick blackness below.

He could see nothing, but here and there the glimpse of the edge of an ivy-leaf, fluttering in the night breeze.

Well the prefect knew that no one could fall from that window, upon the hard flags beneath, and live. Yet, with a faint hope in his heart, he leaned from the window and called to Lumley-Lumley, and listened anxiously for an answer.

"Lumley! Lumley! Lumley!"

His cautious cry echoed in the quadrangle. Nothing replied, save the faint murmur of the ivy in the wind.

"Lumley!"

Terrible silence.

Knox drew his head back from the window, with the sweat of agony upon his brow. What a fool he had been to strike the boy, in such a dangerous position. Yet who would have thought that he would have fallen?

There was something amazing about it—why had he been lodged in the open window, like that, without holding on? Yet it was certain enough—with his own eyes Knox had seen him pitch out and disappear into the darkness.

The prefect's heart was beating like a hammer with horror and fear. What was he to do now?

Lumley-Lumley must be dead! Should he say nothing—or had he been seen there? Kildare had asked him to give the Shell dormitory a look-in, and knew that he had come upstairs. Would he be suspected, if he said nothing about this frightful happening?

Knox wondered—but he felt that he could never keep it up, if he held his tongue. When the body was discovered, he would give it away, he felt—and perhaps someone had seen him and might betray him! And perhaps Lumley-Lumley might not be quite dead—he might live long enough to denounce Knox—Knox might be suspected of murdering him! The prefect,

in an agony of fear and remorse, felt that he must make the terrible truth known at once.

He hurried downstairs to Kildare's study. Kildare was there with Darrel and Rushden of the Sixth. The three seniors started to their feet at the sight of Knox's ghastly face, as he rushed into the study.

"Good heavens! What has happened?" exclaimed Kildare.

"Lumley-Lumley!" gasped Knox.

"That troublesome fellow again!" Kildare exclaimed. "What has he done now?"

"He has fallen from the window."

"What!"

"The window at the end of the dormitory passage," panted Knox.

Kildare turned pale.

"Good heavens! Fallen! Then he must be——"

"Killed!" gasped Knox, almost hysterically. "I know! But it wasn't my fault! I'll swear I never touched him—at all events, I hardly touched him! I——"

Kildare's brow grew very stern. He grasped Knox by the shoulder, and shook him into something like coherence.

"Now tell me what has happened," he said, in a stern tone.

Knox panted for breath.

"Lumley-Lumley—he was climbing out of the passage window to get down the ivy, you know, and—and I called to him, and he wouldn't get back—and I ran up to collar him. I—I was afraid he would hurt himself, you know. I tried to drag him in, but he struggled, and fell out of the window."

"Let's go and see at once," said Darrel, in a low voice.

Kildare nodded; and the three seniors rushed out of the study, and in a few seconds were out of the School House. They reached the spot under the window at the end of the dormitory passage, where, if the junior had fallen, his body should have been.

It was very dark, but they struck matches all together, and searched the ground for the body of Lumley-Lumley.

It was not there.

Kildare looked up at the wall. He caught the glimmer of the window high above, and under it the masses of thick, dark ivy. Could the body have caught there? It was impossible; its own weight would drag it down. Besides, if Lumley-Lumley was holding on there he was not dead, and he would cry out for help.

"Lumley!" shouted Kildare.

There was no reply, save the echo of his own voice.

Knox came panting up.

"Have you found it?" he gasped.

"No," said Kildare curtly.

"No!" repeated Knox, in amazement. "But it must be there! How can't have fallen very far away from the wall. Is there any—any blood?"

"No!"

"Get a lantern, Rushy," said Kildare shortly.

"Right-ho!"

"He must be there," breathed Knox. "I tell you I saw him fall. I tried to save him, but I couldn't. The instant I touched him he fell out."

"You said in my study that he struggled with you," said Kildare, in a curt tone.

"Ye-es—yes, so he did; but just for a second or two. I—I was so startled, I hardly knew——"

"It looks to me like a trick," said Darrel quietly. "Lumley-Lumley is not the sort of fellow to tumble out of the window like a baby."

"I think so, too," said Kildare. "Knox has been made a fool of."

"I tell you——" shrieked Knox.

"Well, we shall soon see."

Rushden returned with a lighted bicycle-lantern. Kildare took it, and searched carefully for some distance round under the window. Knox followed the light with haggard eyes. To his stupefaction, no sign was discovered of a body. If Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had fallen out of the window, he had disappeared since.

"I—I can't understand it," muttered Knox.

"You have been taken in."

"But I—I saw him!"

"Let's go up to the dorm. passage," said Rushden. "We may be able to find out something there."

"Good! Come on!"

The four seniors re-entered the house, and ascended to the passage upon which the junior dormitories opened. The window at the end was still open, and the breeze came coldly in, with a sound of faintly rustling ivy.

Kildare looked out of the window, and examined the window-sill. His cool head and sharp eyes discovered what Knox had overlooked.

"There is a rope here," he said.

Knox started.

"A rope!"

"Yes; look."

"I did not see it."

"Perhaps the young rascal slid down the rope, and bunked, and left Knox to think that he had broken his neck?" suggested Rushden.

Knox caught the rope in his hands, and pulled.

"There is a weight on the rope!" he exclaimed. "My hat! The young villain has been hanging on it all the time, and making fools of us!"

"Making a fool of you, you mean," said Kildare grimly.

"There's certainly a weight on the rope," said Darrel, testing it. "Can young Lumley be hanging on it all the time?"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Kildare. "It would be like his cheek, anyhow. Pull in the rope, and we'll see."

Knox and Darrel pulled on the rope. The heavy object at the end came ploughing its way up through the creaking, rustling ivy.

A cricket cap came into view.

Knox gave a hoarse cry.

"Oh, Heaven! The rope is round his neck—he's hanged himself!"

And the rope slid from the prefect's nerveless hands, and the object disappeared again into the darkness.

CHAPTER 32.

Quite Innocent.

DARREL had kept a grip upon the rope, however, and the body did not slide down very far.

Darrel and Rushden pulled upon it again, while Knox stood aside, trembling in every limb.

The cricket-cap came into view again, and Darrel reached out with his hand to grasp the body.

He uttered a cry of surprise.

"What's the matter now" asked Kildare, flashing the lantern light on the object that had come into view.

Darrel laughed.

"Nothing," he said. "Only it's a dummy."

"A—a what?" gasped Knox.

"A dummy!"

"Oh!"

Kildare smiled grimly.

"I said it was a trick," he remarked. "Drag the thing in, and let us have a look at it."

The dummy was dragged in at the window, and thrown upon the floor. Seen at close quarters, Monty Lowther's wonderful handiwork was very easily seen to be a dummy. The three seniors began to chuckle, and Knox's face was black with rage. The relief Knox felt at finding that he had not killed Lumley-Lumley, was quite swallowed up by his fury at being made a fool of in this way.

"A—a dummy!" he gasped. "The young hound! It's a jape, of course."

"Of course it is," said Kildare coldly. "And so this is the thing that you told us struggled with you at the window."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Rusden.

Knox was livid with rage.

"It's a trick," he said hoarsely. "I'll make that young scoundrel suffer for this! And the enraged prefect turned towards the door of the Fourth Form dormitory.

"Hold on," said Kildare. "You don't know who played the trick."

"It was Lumley-Lumley, of course."

"I don't see how you can tell."

"Who else could it be?" demanded Knox savagely.

"I don't know! But I think it very unlikely that Lumley-Lumley would make up a dummy resembling himself," said Kildare.

"He has stuffed up a suit of old clothes on purpose to take me in," said Knox.

"Oh, rot! He couldn't know you were coming by."

"Look here," roared Knox, "do you mean to say that you're going to defend the young scoundrel who played a trick like that?"

"You'd better moderate your voice in talking to me, or you'll find yourself in trouble, Knox," said Kildare quietly. "I shall look into this matter, but I shall not allow you to jump on Lumley-Lumley without proof."

"I don't see how we're to get proof——"

"Then you'll let him alone."

"Look here, Kildare——"

"Oh, shut up!"

Kildare led the way to the Fourth Form dormitory, and Knox followed, trembling with rage. Kildare opened the dormitory door, and switched on the light.

There were exclamations from the Fourth Formers as the light glared on. Several of the Form were still awake, and several more woke up in the light. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up in bed, and groped for his eyeglass under the pillow.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "What's the little game, you know?"

"Hallo! Giving us a midnight call, Kildare, old man?" asked Jack Blake, with sleepy cheerfulness. "You might have left Knox out. His face will make me dream."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Is anybody out of the dormitory, Blake?" asked Kildare, sharply.

"Yes."

"Oh! Who is?"

"All the House, excepting the Fourth Form," answered Blake, innocently. There was a soft chuckle from some of the beds.

Kildare frowned.

"Don't be cheeky, Blake."

"Certainly not, great chief. But you asked me——"

"Silence!"

Kildare looked at the beds one after another.

But every bed had its occupant, and all the occupants were sitting up now, looking on in interest at the investigation. Knox gritted his teeth.

"He has sneaked back to the dormitory, of course," he exclaimed.

"It doesn't look like it to me," said Kildare.

"Ask him, then."

"Well, it's not fair to ask a kid to condemn himself," said Kildare.

"That's not the game. Still, you can question him if you like."

Knox strode towards Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's bed.

"Have you been out of the dormitory since lights out, Lumley-Lumley?" he demanded.

Lumley-Lumley looked surprised.

"I guess not," he replied.

"Answer me plainly, yes or no."

"No!"

"I believe he is lying," said Knox savagely. "You cannot trust his word. He has the worst character of any boy in the School House."

"You forget yourself, Knox," answered the Outsider of St. Jim's coolly.

There was a roar of laughter from the juniors. Lumley-Lumley's reply had a double meaning, and they fully appreciated the humour of it.

Knox clenched his fist and moved quickly towards the Outsider; but Kildare, as quickly, interposed.

"Let him alone!" he said curtly.

"Do you think I'm going to be cheeked——"

"You shouldn't have spoken as you did," said Kildare. "You have no right to pick upon Lumley-Lumley in this way. Were any of you fellows awake when I came in."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Then you could tell whether Lumley-Lumley had been out of his bed or not."

"Yaas, I certainly could, if I liked."

"Has he left the dormitory, then?" demanded Knox.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had extracted his monocle from under his pillow. He now proceeded to screw it into his eye, as he sat up in bed; and having done that, he regarded Knox with cool contempt.

"I wefuse to reply!" he said calmly.

"What!"

"I decline to entah into any discuss with you on the subject, Knox," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with great dignity. "Lumley-Lumley has assured you that he has not left the dorm., I wefuse to entah into any conversation at all with a fellow who doubts the word of a friend of mine."

"Good old Gussy!" grinned Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Then it is a fact that Lumley-Lumley has not left the dormitory?" asked Kildare.

"Yaas, wathah; but——"

"I was awake, too," said Blake. "Nobody has been out, Kildare. Knox is off-side. He generally is."

"Yaas, wathah."

"You see, Knox——" began Kildare.

"I don't see!" retorted Knox. "They are lying and backing one another up in their rotten lies, of course."

"You have no right to say anything of the sort, and the sooner you get out of this dormitory the better," said Kildare sharply. "You can go and question the Shell, if you like."

"Yaas, pway get out, deah boy. Your wotten manners 'wowwy me.'"

The seniors left the dormitory, leaving the Fourth Formers chuckling. They did not know what all the trouble was about, but they knew that Knox had had a defeat, at all events, and they were greatly pleased thereby.

Kildare and his companions looked into the Shell dormitory.

A row of juniors, in a row of white beds, had their eyes closed, and were breathing regularly and peacefully, as if they had never thought of such a thing as a jape in their lives, and were all busily engaged in dreaming over schemes how to be good little boys on the morrow.

The prefects looked at them suspiciously; they knew the juniors too well to take much notice of appearance. But there was no evidence at all to go upon, and even Knox felt that he could not begin on the Shell. They left the dormitory again, and then were gone. A considerable number of the closed eyes opened, and the sound of a chuckle was audible in the Shell dormitory.

"I rather think Knox has had it in the neck this time!" murmured Monty Lowther, in a tone of dreamy enjoyment.

And Tom Merry and Manners murmured softly:

"What-ho!"

CHAPTER 33.

Knocks for Knox.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY started and awoke.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured, sleepily.

It was more than an hour since the visit of the prefects to the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House, and the Fourth Formers were deep in slumber.

What had awakened him the swell of St. Jim's could not for the moment tell. But he opened his eyes and stared into the gloom of the dormitory.

"Bai Jove! What was that?"

Dab! Something soft dabbed gently upon the nose of the swell of St. Jim's, and he started up in bed.

"You uttah wottah!" he murmured. "What——"

"Wake up!"

"Who's that?"

"I am the ghost of St. Jim's came a whispering voice. "I——"

"You uttah, ass!"

"Awake! Avaunt—I mean arise," said the ghost. "Neglectful parent, look after your son! Do thy duty!"

"I mean that is Lowthah's voice——"

There was a subdued chuckle, and three dim figures flitted towards the door of the dormitory.

"I wegard you chaps as uttah asses!" said D'Arcy, peering through the darkness. "If you are wefewwin' to Lumlay-Lumlay, he is in bed, and I stwongly object to your flippant wemarks on the subject."

Another soft chuckle.

Arthur Augustus settled his head on the pillow again. But again the soft voice came whispering from the direction of the door.

"Neglectful parent——"

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed D'Arcy, exasperated, "get out of this dorm. at once, or I shall awise and give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Hallo!" came a drowsy voice from Blake's bed. "Who's that jawing?"

"I wefuse to have my wemarks chawactewised as jawin'!"

"That you, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah! And——"

"Why don't you shut up, and let chaps go to sleep in the middle of the night?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake!"

"Cheese it, you ass! Don't talk in your sleep."

"I wasn't talkin' in my sleep!"

"Well, don't talk in your wake, then!" growled Blake.

"I wegard you——"

"Br-r-r-r! Shut up!"

And Jack Blake snored to give emphasis to his request for silence. From the dim figures at the door came another distinct chuckle.

"Do thy duty!"

"You fwightful asses!" shouted D'Arcy, rolling out of bed in great excitement. "Just you wait till I collah you, and I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!"

He struck a match, and lighted a candle-end. The dormitory door closed softly; the Shell humorists were gone. Arthur Augustus made a few steps towards the door, and then paused. He could not very well pursue the Terrible Three along the passage in his pyjamas. He breathed wrath as he turned back towards his bed.

"If those uttah wottahs come back here, I will thwash them!" he exclaimed.

Jack Blake grunted.

"Oh, go to sleep!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus turned in again. But he did not go to sleep. No sooner had he blown out the candle, than the door of the dormitory opened softly. A whispering voice was heard in the silence, along with a cautious footstep.

"Gussy! Gussy! Art thou looking after thy little boy?"

"You feahful ass——"

"Hast thou soothed him to sleep, and persuaded him not to go out and play cards with naughty men at the Green Man?"

D'Arcy leaped out of bed.

"You wottah! I'll——"

The door closed again softly as D'Arcy rushed towards it. This time the swell of St. Jim's did not go back to bed. He guessed that the practical joker would return, and he took the bolster from his bed, and stationed himself just inside the door, ready to swipe at the intruder when he should return.

He waited. But not a sound broke the stillness save the sleepers in the

dormer. Arthur Augustus began to wish he had not left his comfortable bed. He was on the point of turning in, when a faint sound caught his ear.

"Bai Jove! Here they are, after all!" he murmured, as the sound came rapidly nearer.

And he took a firmer grip of the bolster.

The neglectful parent meant to adminster a lesson to Monty Lowther. He chuckled with satisfaction as the footsteps came nearer and nearer. Then he noticed for the first time that if the "ghosts" meant to carry the thing off well, they were certainly making a great deal of noise. There was no attempt to hide the sound of those footsteps, apparently.

"Bai Jove, what silly asses they are!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "They must expect to be caught this time. Lowthah must surely know a fellow must be waitin' in ambush. Bai Jove!"

The dormer passage rang with the sound of approaching footsteps. They thudded on the passage as if their owner had a set purpose and meant to go through with it, but Arthur Augustus's mind was too full of Lowther to notice the fact.

"I'll give the boundah a weal doin'. Yaas, wathah!" murmured D'Arcy.

And as the footsteps of the "ghost" sounded just outside the dormer door, D'Arcy nipped out and bashed the "ghost" for all he was worth.

Swinging the heavy bolster he brought it down on the ghost's head with a sounding bump.

"Ow! Ow! What the——"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" cried the excited swell of the Fourth. "Take that—and that—and that——"

D'Arcy, swinging the bolster like a club, knocked the ghost sprawling in the passage. Arthur Augustus, flushed with triumph, lavished his blows un stintingly. The ghost spluttered, howled, made threats; but it was all one to Arthur Augustus. He pelted the fellow for all he was worth.

"You blithering jay!" roared the ghost. "I'm Knox! What the deuce do you mean——"

"I'm a neglectful pawent, deah boy!" cried Arthur Augustus gaily.

"Come in, you giddy ass!" called out Blake, from his bed. "Can't you hear it's Knox!"

"Wats! Yaas, wathah! I'm doin' the knocks, deah boy!"

And, indeed, Arthur Augustus was. But it could not be expected to last, of course. Knox, his temper already in no good condition, through past events, began to struggle wildly on the floor, and as Jack Blake & Co. tumbled out of bed, and rushed to drag D'Arcy off, he managed to get on to his feet again, and charged D'Arcy over.

"Chuck it, you stupid young ass!" roared Knox. "What d'you mean?"

"What do you mean, deah boy, playin' the giddy ghost when a fellow's sleepin' peacefully. You deserve all you have got, deah boy. Yaas, wathah! Come on, deah boys! I don't believe it is Knox, you know. It's a giddy blind——"

"I'll soon show you, then——"

"Quick! Lights!" shouted Jack Blake; and before Knox could hurt Arthur Augustus, he was surrounded by a host of juniors, some of them carrying lighted candle-ends.

"Bai Jove——"

"What d'you mean by this?" raved Knox.

"Wealy, you know, I'm vewy sowwy, Knox. But, weally, I thought I was wepellin' the ghost——"

"What the deuce are you talking about?" shouted Knox, walking over to the swell of the School House. "For two pins I'd——"

"Hold hard, Knox!" said Jack Blake. "There was someone here a moment ago. I heard Gussy say something about it——"

"Bosh!" snapped Knox. "It's a get-up to put me off looking for Lumley-Lumley——"

"Lumley!"

"Yes," sneered the prefect. "This young ass was pelting me while Lumley-Lumley gets out!"

Arthur Augustus drew himself up to his full height.

"You have pwesumed to doubt my word before, Knox," he said, with great dignity. "I have nothin' more to say to you——"

"Here, here!" echoed the juniors.

"I'll make you speak, then, D'Arcy!" said Knox; and making a dart at Arthur Augustus, he seized him roughly by the collar of his sleeping-suit.

"Pway welease me at once, you wuffian! Ow! Ow!"

Knox shook the swell of the School House. But only for a moment. They thought Arthur Augustus a lunatic to go ghost-chasing, but they were not going to see him "walked over."

In an instant, obeying Jack Blake's nod, they threw themselves between Knox and Arthur Augustus. Knox stared at them as if he could not believe his eyes.

"Tell me where Lumley-Lumley is," he roared, "or it'll be worse for you!"

The chums of the Fourth looked at Blake expectantly.

"We don't know anything about Lumley-Lumley," said Blake.

"Rats! You don't expect me to believe that!" snapped Knox. "I'll see for myself, anyway!"

"We never for a moment thought of stopping you," said Blake. "There's Lumley's bed. Looks as if he's there all right, if you ask me anything."

"We'll see!" said Knox, striding to the bed.

The juniors followed him, Arthur Augustus surveying operations from his own bed.

"He's there, all right, unless he went out with Gussy's ghost," Knox, said Digby.

"Weally, Dig——"

Knox's disappointment was evident as he stood at Lumley-Lumley's bedside. One glance was enough to assure anyone that it was filled as usual.

The juniors began to grin. But Knox was determined to pursue his quest to the end. He swung the clothes back.

All laughter ceased in a moment.

Knox grinned triumphantly as he disclosed pillows and bolsters arranged to lay like a figure in bed, but no Lumley-Lumley,

"Not there, you see. Gone!"

"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 34.

Fairly Caught.

LUMLEY-LUMLEY was gone!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy groped for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye, and stared at the empty bed in blank amazement.

The cunning arrangement of pillows and bolsters and folded clothes had looked exactly like a sleeper's form; but the imposture was revealed now. And for some moments the swell of St. Jim's could scarcely believe his eyes as he stared at the empty bed.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "Geat Scott!"

The Fourth-Formers stared at the bed, and the remarks they made were by no means favourable to the absent junior. Knox's lips curved in a cruel smile. He had caught the delinquent out at last, and he was satisfied.

"He's gone," said Jack Blake, rubbing his eyes. "No doubt about that!"

"Faith, and ye're right," said Reilly. "The bounder is out on the tiles again! Didn't you know it, Gussy?"

"Weally—weally, I am surprised at such a question. Of course I did not know it."

"Well, he's gone," said Herries. "There will be a row now, and serve him right. I should think this would be enough even for you, Gussy."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, it's no good talking to Gussy!" said Digby crossly. "I suppose you still believe in that howling Outsider, fathead?"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Does anyone here know when Lumley-Lumley left the dormitory?" asked Knox, looking round. "He was here when I came before."

"I don't know," said Blake. "I didn't know he was gone at all, until you turned the bed down."

"Bai Jove, I hadn't the slightest suspish!"

"You tried to keep me out of the dormitory, D'Arcy," said Knox, with an unpleasant smile. "I think you will have to explain that."

"I have already explained that I thought you were a pwactical jokch from the Shell dormitowy, Knox."

"I'm afraid that is a little too steep."

"I wefuse to discuss the mattah with a fellow who does not take my word," said Arthur Augustus, loftily. "I have nothin' more to say to you, Knox."

The prefect glanced round the dormitory again. He went to the window and examined it. The eyes of all the juniors were upon him.

"The window is unfastened," said Knox. "Lumley-Lumley has gone out this way, and climbed down the ivy, I suppose."

"Bai Jove!"

"He will find a little surprise waiting for him when he comes back to the school," said the prefect. "Get back to bed, you boys!"

The juniors turned in again, and Knox extinguished the light and left the dormitory. There was a buzz in the room after he had gone. The juniors were not thinking of sleep again just-yet.

"The Outsider's clean bowled out at last," Blake remarked. "I'm sorry for the chap—he showed signs of improving, at one time. But I think this makes it pretty clear that he was taking us all in—clear enough for Gussy, I should think."

"Wats!"

Jack Blake sat up in bed.

"You fathead!" he exclaimed.

"I wefuse to be called a fathead!"

"Do you mean to say that you still believe in Lumley-Lumley after this?" roared Blake, exasperated.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, of all the silly asses——"

"I am convinced that Lumley-Lumley will be able to explain," said the swell of St. Jim's obstinately. "I do not intend to desert a friend because appearances are against him, Blake. I think it vewy pwob. that he is simply gone to jape some chap in one of the othah dormitowies."

"Ass! Why should he make up his bed like that? That was to take us in, in case anybody woke up."

"Wats! I dare say Lumley-Lumley awwanged that in case a pwelect came in."

"Well, it hasn't done him much good, if he did," said Blake, with a grunt. "He's bowled out now, and serve him right. I suppose he will be expelled."

"And a jolly good thing, too," said Levison.

"Hear, hear!" chimed in Mellish.

"Oh, go to sleep, you wottahs," said D'Arcy. "I am quite sure that Lumley-Lumley is quite innocent in the matter, though I admit that he has been vewy weckless. I shall speak to him vewy plainly for this."

"Ass!" said Blake.

And he settled down to sleep again.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not sleep. He was feeling very anxious about his friend. He clung to the belief that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was only absent from the dormitory on some reckless jape. But as the time passed on, and midnight chimed out from the clock tower, the swell of St. Jim's had to give up that theory. It was pretty clear now, even to Arthur Augustus, that the Outsider of St. Jim's had left the school.

D'Arcy felt a chill of dismay as he realised it.

Where was Lumley-Lumley gone?

Where could he be gone, if not to his old haunts—the haunts which he had solemnly promised the juniors never to visit again—which he had declared that he had given up for ever?

Was it possible that the other fellows were right, and that the Outsider was deceiving him, and playing upon his credulous friendship?

D'Arcy drove the suspicion from his mind. Without clear proof he would believe nothing against his friend; and he required stronger proof than the other fellows. The rest of the Fourth had long ago made up their minds upon the subject of Lumley-Lumley.

While Arthur Augustus lay sleepless in the Fourth-Form dormitory Kildare also was wide awake. Knox had gone to bed—the St. Jim's captain had told him to leave the matter in his hands, and Knox was content to do so. He did not want to spoil his night's rest. Kildare had left the School House, and was pacing up and down in the gloom below the windows of the Fourth-Form dormitory.

He was waiting for the Outsider to return.

Knox had reported the matter immediately to Kildare, and the captain of St. Jim's had determined to wait up for the Outsider. Lumley-Lumley had reached the end of his tether: If he had really broken bounds at night he would be expelled from St. Jim's, and that would be an end of the trouble he had caused.

Kildare had a long time to wait. Half-past twelve chimed out, and the captain of St. Jim's was still pacing to and fro.

Suddenly he started.

From the darkness of the quadrangle came a sound of a soft footstep, and a dim figure loomed up in the gloom, hurrying towards the house.

Kildare did not need telling whom it was. He stepped in the way of the shadowy junior, who recoiled with a startled cry.

"Lumley-Lumley!"

The Outsider gasped.

"Kildare!"

"Yes," said the captain of St. Jim's sternly. "So you are caught."

The Outsider caught his breath. His eyes gleamed in the darkness, and his face was very pale.

"I guess so," he said at last.

"Where have you been?"

"Out," said Lumley briefly.

"To Rylcombe?"

"I guess so."

"Very well. You need not trouble to climb up the ivy; you can follow me into the house," said the Sixth-Former coldly.

"Very well, Kildare."

Lumley-Lumley followed Kildare into the silent, slumbering School House. The captain of St. Jim's closed and secured the door, and pointed to the dim staircase.

"You can go up to bed now, Lumley-Lumley. This matter will be reported.

to the Head in the morning, and you will be called upon to give an account of your conduct."

The Outsider shivered slightly.

"Very well," he said quietly.

He went up the stairs. Kildare saw him into the dormitory, and then went to his own room. As the Outsider closed the dormitory door behind him, a voice came from D'Arcy's bed.

"Is that you, Lumley-Lumley?"

"I guess so."

"You have bwoken bounds?"

"Yes."

"Knox found your bed was empty, deah boy, and——"

"I know," said Lumley-Lumley, with strange quietness. "Kildare was waiting for me under the windows outside. I'm caught this time."

"I must say that you cannot be surprised at it, Lumley-Lumley. What did you do this wotten, weckless thing for?"

Lumley-Lumley gave a hard laugh.

"Because I'm a fool, I guess," he replied. "I shall have to pay the penalty now. Well, I can stand it, I suppose."

"It will be a very sewious mattah," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I twust you will be able to convince the Head that you have been up to no harm, deah boy."

"I guess that will be hard." The Outsider paused as he was taking his boots off. "The fellows all know I was out, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"What do they think?"

"They think you are a wottah."

"And what do you think, D'Arcy?"

"I think you are an ass."

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"Does that mean that you believe in me still, Gussy?" he asked, in a soft voice.

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"In spite of all?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"You're a good sort, Gussy," said the Outsider huskily—"a jolly good sort. Good-night!"

And Lumley-Lumley went to bed.

CHAPTER 35.

No Chance for the Outsider.

THE Fourth-Formers cast somewhat peculiar glances upon Jerrold Lumley-Lumley when they turned out of bed on the following morning.

The general impression was that the Outsider had "done it" now,

He had escaped a flogging once before in a way that had not been explained; but he could not possibly escape this time.

He could not explain his absence from St. Jim's until half an hour after midnight when the juniors were all supposed to be in bed and asleep.

It was a serious matter to break bounds after dark, and to stay out to such an hour made the matter all the worse. It could hardly be supposed that Lumley-Lumley had done it with innocent motives. The only possible conclusion was that he had joined once more his old associates, and that he had spent the night at the Green Man, with his choice friends, gambling and probably drinking. He had been known to do that in the past, and he had been pardoned once—but the pardon could not be given a second time. If the Outsider was guilty this time he was doomed, so far as St. Jim's was concerned.

All the fellows knew it, and they felt that Lumley-Lumley had reached the end of his tether at St. Jim's.

For that reason they were more kind towards him that morning than they had been of late. Everyone, or nearly everyone, believed that he had been a blackguard; but it was useless to be down upon a fellow who was going to be expelled. It was bad enough to be sacked from the school.

Arthur Augustus still persisted in his views. But he found no one else to agree with him, and even D'Arcy, in face of the Outsider's silence, hardly knew what to say. For, even to his only friend, the Outsider had no explanation to give. He would not say where he had been, or what he had done. He simply said that he had nothing to say.

"But you will be called before the Head*as soon as you go down," the swell of St. Jim's urged.

"I guess I know that," replied Lumley-Lumley shortly,

"You will have to explain."

"I can't explain."

"What will you say, deah boy?"

"The same that I've said to you."

"That you've nothing to tell?"

"I guess so."

"It will mean the sack."

The Outsider shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess it can't be helped," he said.

And the subject was dropped.

The boys had not been down long before the news was all over the School House, and from the School House the news spread to the New House.

The whole school buzzed with it.

A junior had broken bounds at night and had been caught coming back at half-past twelve—caught in the very act by the captain of the school!

It was enough to excite St. Jim's. It came as a shock to the Terrible Three when they learned the details of the discovery.

Monty Lowther gave a low whistle when Blake and D'Arcy told them what had happened and they realised what it meant.

"He will be sacked," said Tom Merry.

"My fault, I'm afraid," said Lowther, looking very serious. "If I hadn't come into the dorm, Knox mightn't have spotted him perhaps."
 "Oh, he was coming, anyway," said Blake. "It was just an accident, Gussy biffing him with the bolster. He was going to look in Lumley-Lumley's bed anyway; he seemed to suspect the Outsider specially, for some reason."

"Yaas, wathah."

Monty Lowther grinned faintly.

"I know the reason," he replied.

"You didn't give him away, surely?" exclaimed Blake.

"Not intentionally, of course." Monty Lowther told the story of the dummy at the window. "I suppose it was that made Knox so awfully keen on Lumley-Lumley. I'm sorry if I've helped to get him found out. But it's his own fault really. If he hadn't been out of the dorm, after hours, he couldn't have been caught."

"Quite so," said Manners. "I don't see that you're to blame in any way. You certainly couldn't foresee that he was at his old games at that special moment."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"He may be able to get out of it yet," Tom Merry remarked thoughtfully; "Lumley-Lumley has a wonderful gift for wriggling out of scrapes."

Blake shook his head.

"He won't get out of this, I think," he said. "He's fairly caught at last, and the Head can't do anything but sack him."

"It's wotten!" said D'Arcy.

"Oh, it serves him right."

"I am sure he is quite stwaight!

"Rats!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"More rats!"

And the juniors walked away, leaving Arthur Augustus bristling with indignation. Arthur Augustus was certainly playing the character of the faithful friend to perfection; but the juniors were getting, as Blake expressed it, "fed up" with it.

Lumley-Lumley sat very quietly at breakfast, and he looked neither to the right nor to the left. It was easy enough to see by his looks what he was feeling like. He knew that he was finished with St. Jim's, and he was taking it with fortitude.

"The utter ass, to throw up everything like this," Kangaroo remarked to Tom Merry, glancing across from the Shell table at the Outsider, during breakfast. "He had every chance, and now he has chucked everything up."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I suppose he was bound to break out again at last," he said.

"I am enlightened now as to the person who is leading a wicked and reckless life in this House," said Skimpole sadly. "It is Lumley-Lumley, my friends."

"Go hon!"

"This is not a laughing matter, Lowther. I am very concerned for Lumley-Lumley. This outbreak on his part is undoubtedly the effect of the combined influence of his heredity and his environment——"

"Did you know that in time, Skimpole?"

"My dear Lowther, every Determinist knows that——"

"Then why didn't you warn him to take something for it, in time?" demanded Lowther. "If he had taken some medicine for his heredity, or had his environment operated on, he might have been all right."

"My dear Lowther, you do not understand——"

"I think you have neglected your duty, Skimpole," said Monty Lowther, with a solemn shake of the head. "I am shocked at you!"

"But, my dear fellow, heredity——"

"Skimpole!" said Mr. Linton, from the head of the table. "What nonsense are you talking?"

"I'm not talking nonsense, sir," he said, "I am talking determinism, sir, and trying to explain to Lowther that the influence of hereditat and enviroiny—I mean environment and heredity——"

"Silence! Take fifty lines for talking nonsense."

Skimpole stared.

"Oh, sir! I——"

"Take a hundred lines, Skimpole," said Mr. Linton, severely.

"Oh, dear!" murmured the genius of the Shell, and he relapsed into silence at last. Monty Lowther gave him a most sympathetic look.

"Never mind, Skimmy," he murmured. "It's Linton's heredity and environment that makes him do these things, you know."

"Really, Lowther——"

"When a Form-master is enviroined by a silly duffer who talks fat-headed bosh, what is he to do?" argued Lowther.

"Take fifty lines for chattering, Lowther."

"Oh, certainly, sir," said Lowther.

And there was no more chattering at the Shell table.

At the Fourth-Form table, the fellows were very silent. Although Lumley-Lumley's popularity was all gone, the fellows could not help feeling a little sorry for a fellow who had made a "muck" of everything, and was going to be sacked.

After breakfast, when Mr. Latham rose from the table, he made a sign to the Outsider of St. Jim's.

"You are to go into the Head's study immediately after prayers, Lumley-Lumley," he said.

Lumley-Lumley compressed his lips.

"Very well, sir," he said quietly.

"The Fourth will go into the Big Hall, instead of their Form-room, after prayers," added Mr. Latham to the juniors.

"Yes, sir."

The juniors knew what that meant. It was to be an assembly of the school, and for one reason—to witness an expulsion!

CHAPTER 36-

Condemned!

DR. HOLMES wore a troubled look as he sat in his study.

The good old Doctor had just come from the school chapel, where he had conducted morning prayers.

He was waiting now for Lumley-Lumley.

There was a tap at the door, and Mr. Railton came in. The master of the School House was looking grave.

"You wished me to be here, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, Mr. Railton."

"This is a most painful matter, sir," the House-master said abruptly. "I am very much surprised at Lumley-Lumley breaking out again in this way. He certainly seemed to me to have parted with all his old habits, and to have settled down into a very decent lad."

The Doctor nodded.

"I had the same impression, Mr. Railton. But—"

Mr. Railton wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"There can be no mistake," he said. "From Kildare's story, Knox reported to him that Lumley-Lumley's bed in the Fourth Form dormitory was empty, and he waited for the boy to return, and caught him as he came back at half-past twelve."

"That is the case."

"I am afraid that there is no room left for doubt, sir," Mr. Railton said, with a clouded brow. "I am very much pained and disappointed."

Tap!

"Come in," said the Head quietly.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley entered the study.

His bearing was very quiet and subdued. There was courage and firmness in it, but no trace of bravado. Whether he had recommenced his old reckless ways or not, he was certainly not quite the old Outsider. There was no reckless, no cynical indifference, in his manner. His bearing was firm, but perfectly quiet and respectful.

"Mr. Latham told me to come here, sir," he said.

"Quite so. Kildare has made his report to me, Lumley-Lumley."

"Yes, sir."

"You left your bed in the Fourth Form dormitory last night, making up pillows and bolsters in the bed to look like a sleeper?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you left the School House, and the precincts of the school?"

"Yes, sir."

"You remained absent, without the knowledge or permission of any master, until the late hour of half-past twelve?"

"Yes, sir."

"You do not deny it?"

"I guess not, sir. It's all true," said the Outsider, simply.

Mr. Railton gave him a very keen look. The Outsider met it calmly, without flinching.

"Where did you go, Lumley-Lumley?" the Head questioned.

The junior hesitated.

"I demand to know all," said Dr. Holmes, frowning. "Surely you can see that this is not a time for trifling, boy."

"I went to Rylcombe, sir."

"For what purpose?"

"To—to see someone."

"Who was it?"

"A—a—someone I know."

"His name?"

Lumley-Lumley was silent.

"Did you go to the Green Man public-house?"

"I did not enter it, sir."

"Then you went near it?"

"I guess so, sir."

"To meet this person you speak of?"

"Yes, sir."

"He was in the Green Man public-house?"

"Well, yes, sir."

"Now, Lumley-Lumley, you know the penalty of your action?" said the Head quietly. "The penalty is expulsion from the school. But I wish to give you every chance to explain, every chance to make your conduct look a little less black than it does at present. Tell me the whole truth. A few days ago you stayed out without permission and missed calling-over, and came in at a very late hour?"

"Yes, sir."

"When I was about to punish you, I received a telegram," pursued the Head. "This telegram was unsigned, but it stated that you had stayed out to render a service to the sender, and that you did not deserve to be punished."

Lumley-Lumley was silent.

"Whether I did right in taking any notice of this telegram, I can hardly determine even now," said the Head gravely. "But I have known boys to be guilty of quixotic freaks, and to be more ashamed to own up to good actions than to bad ones. My experience of boys led me to believe that in that case you might have acted from a good motive, and perhaps done a good action, which some mistaken sentiment of schoolboy honour prevented you from explaining. I have known such things. For that reason, rather than run the risk of inflicting an undeserved punishment, I pardoned you."

"You were very kind, sir," said Lumley-Lumley, in a low voice.

"I intended to be just," said Dr. Holmes. "The result of my kindness appears to be that you have now been guilty of an unpardonable outrage upon the rules of the school. You cannot expect me to pardon you on trust a second time, and especially in such a serious matter as breaking bounds at night."

"I do not expect it, sir."

"My duty to the other boys would render it impossible," said the Head. "Yet, I wish to give you every chance. You met a certain person last night—was it the same person for whom you missed calling-over one evening, and who sent me that peculiar telegram?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who is he?"

"Someone I—I've known for a long time, sir," muttered Lumley-Lumley. "I knew him in New York when my father and I lived there—in the days before Lumleys, Limited, made their pile, sir."

"But why should you meet him at such strange hours?"

The junior did not answer.

"And how have you been occupied?"

No reply.

The Head's brow grew very stern.

"I can only suppose, Lumley, that you have revived the old wicked habits that you were once before convicted of, and pardoned for," he said. "That you have gambled, and smoked, and drunk with low acquaintances."

"I have not done so, sir."

"If your excursion was of an innocent nature, why cannot you give me the full particulars?"

"I—I can't sir!"

"Can you assure me that you have not played cards, or smoked, or looked at a racing-paper on these occasions, Lumley-Lumley?"

The Outsider's face was very troubled. He did not reply.

"Have you been concerned in laying bets on a horse, Lumley?"

No answer.

"You cannot reply?" asked the Head, with a rising voice.

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"I have nothing to say, sir."

The Doctor rose to his feet.

"I will not continue this scene," he exclaimed sharply. "Your guilt is clear, and it remains only to mete out the punishment. Mr. Railton, will you kindly take this boy to the hall, there to await my coming?"

"Certainly, sir!" said the Housemaster.

He dropped his hand upon the Outsider's shoulder, and led him from the study. In the passage, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley looked him in the face.

"You need not hold me, sir," he said, in a low, tense voice; "I shall not run away."

"Very well, Lumley; I will take your word."

"Thank you, sir."

And the Outsider of St. Jim's followed the School Housemaster down the passage. Toby, the School House page, came towards him.

"There's a young gent asking to see you, Master Lumley," he said.

The Outsider started, and coloured red.

"I—I can't see anybody," he exclaimed hastily. "Tell him to go away—to go away at once, Toby. At once, do you hear?"

"Yes, sir," said Toby, in surprise. "But——"

"Lumley-Lumley cannot see anyone now," said Mr. Railton. "Take his message at once."

"Yes, sir."

"Follow me, Lumley-Lumley!"

And Mr. Railton led the way into Big Hall, where the whole school was already assembled. A murmur greeted the entrance of the Outsider, at the heels of the Housemaster. The big oaken door shut heavily.

CHAPTER 37.

The Witness.

ALL eyes in the great hall of St. Jim's were turned upon Jerrôld Lumley-Lumley as he came in.

Lumley-Lumley walked up the hall with a firm step.

As he passed the place where the Fourth Form stood in order, the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was heard.

"Buck up, Lumlay, deah boy."

The Outsider nodded, and passed on.

Dr. Holmes was already in the hall, having entered by the upper door. Lumley-Lumley stepped upon the raised dais.

His face was very pale, but quite calm.

Never had the Outsider of St. Jim's, famous as he was for his nerve, shown so much quiet courage as at that moment.

"The beggar's got pluck, anyway," muttered Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Silence!" called out a prefect.

There was a deep silence in hall as the culprit stood before the Head, with the eyes of all St. Jim's upon both of them.

Dr. Holmes fixed his glance upon the Outsider. He seemed a little puzzled by the boy's attitude. Guilty looks and dismay he could have understood; and he could have understood an assumption of reckless bravado. But Lumley-Lumley's manner did not show either. He was calm and quiet and respectful, and it crossed the mind of the Doctor that this was not the

bearing of a guilty boy. And yet, if the Outsider had an explanation he could give, why did he not give it?

"Lumley-Lumley"—the Head's deep voice was heard in every corner of the hall—"you are called up here before all your schoolfellows to be asked, for the last time, if you have any adequate explanation to give of your conduct, and if not, to be expelled from this school with ignominy."

Lumley-Lumley's face became a shade paler, but he did not speak.

"Have you anything to say, Lumley-Lumley?" said the Head, after a long pause.

"Nothing, sir."

"Very well! Lumley-Lumley, on more than one previous occasion you have acted in a disgraceful manner. You have been pardoned more than once. You have shown signs of amendment which, I believe, amounted to nothing more than hypocrisy. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, you are expelled from the school—"

The Head paused. The great door of the hall had swung open, and a stranger had entered.

In spite of the solemnity of the moment, many heads were turned to see who it was. The new-comer was unknown to most of the fellows, but to Tom Merry and some of the others he was known.

He was the young man who had visited Lumley-Lumley at St. Jim's once, and whose visit had caused the Outsider such evident uneasiness.

"Lilburn!" muttered Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton frowned. He guessed that this was the visitor whom Toby had announced to Lumley-Lumley on the way to Hall. Mr. Railton was exceedingly annoyed by his entering the hall at such a moment.

He made a gesture to the new-comer.

"You have no right here!" he exclaimed. "Pray leave at once!"

Lilburn looked at him coolly. There was a cigarette between his lips, and his reckless bearing did not please anybody there. At a sign from the House-master, the prefects would have thrown him out of the hall.

"I guess I've got business here, sir," said Lilburn.

"You can have no business here!" said Dr. Holmes sharply. "Leave at once! I do not know you, and it is sheer insolence to force your way in here!"

Lilburn shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess I've come here to pull you out of this scrape, Jerry."

"I can't let you go through it, Jerry, my buck. I'm not so bad as that!"

"Shut up! Shut up!"

"Silence, Lumley-Lumley!" said the Head sternly. Then he fixed his eyes upon the new-comer. "Do you know this young man, Lumley?"

"Yes, sir."

"He does not look like a creditable acquaintance for any boy here," said

the Head, with a disparaging glance at Lilburn's flashy clothes and flashier necktie and jewellery, and at the cigarette that was still held between his lips. "I am not surprised, Lumley, at your fall, if this is the kind of friend you have made!"

Lilburn grinned. Hard words did not seem to trouble him very much.

"Pile it on!" he ejaculated. "I guess I can stand it."

"Silence, sir!"

"Get out, Lilburn!" said the Outsider.

Lilburn shook his head.

"I guess I've come here to pull you out of this scrape, Jerry."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the Head sternly. "Do you mean to say that you know anything of the offences for which I have expelled Lumley-Lumley from this school?"

The new-comer nodded.

"I guess so," he replied.

"Who are you?" asked the Head.

"I guess I'm sailing under the name of Kit Lilburn," replied the youth, seemingly in no wise abashed by the Doctor's stern looks. "I hail from the other side."

"Do you mean that you are an American?"

"You've hit it."

"Is this—this person the person you have mentioned to me, Lumley-Lumley?" asked Dr. Holmes, in a freezing voice.

"Yes, sir," said Lumley-Lumley.

"What is he doing here?"

"I've said my say," remarked Lilburn. "I've just got a sight of the cards from the page kid, and I know the whole lay-out."

"I do not understand you."

"You're going to fire Lumley, sir, so I understand it?"

"I am going to expel him from this school," said the Head frigidly. "I fail to see how it can concern you in any way."

"I guess it does."

"If you have anything to say on the subject, Mr. Lilburn, say it at once," said Dr. Holmes.

"Ain't he just clean business from the word 'Go'?" said Mr. Lilburn, in tones of great admiration.

There was a faint chuckle in the crowded hall, and the Head of St. Jim's appeared about to choke.

"I know the whole game, and I ain't letting Jerry down," said Mr. Lilburn, with refreshing coolness. "I guess you've found out about his breaking bounds, and so on, and you're going to fire him because of that?"

"Undoubtedly!"

"Well, let up, then! He ain't to blame."

"Shut up, Lilburn!" muttered Lumley-Lumley again. "You fool! Don't you see that you mustn't speak?"

"If he has anything to say that will throw a better light on your conduct, Lumley-Lumley, you had better let him speak," said the Head.

"That's hoss-sense," said Lilburn approvingly. "This is where you take a reef in your jawing tackle, Jerry."

"Lilburn——"

"I guess it's my say-so, now. Lumley tamed out of the school to meet me, sir," said Lilburn. "He ain't to blame."

The Head's brow was very stern.

"If he came to meet a person of your apparent character, Mr. Lilburn, the case against him is only the worse," he said.

"But he couldn't help it, you see, sir."

"What?"

"He had to come," explained Mr. Lilburn.

"What do you mean? I suppose you had no power to force him to come out from the school to see you?" exclaimed the Head, in astonishment.

"That's where you miss your guess, sir," said Lilburn coolly. "I called the tune, and he had to dance."

"Do you mean that you held some power over him, and that you were villain enough to exercise it to his ruin?" exclaimed the Head, with angry scorn.

"Exactly!" said Lilburn.

There was a murmur from the hall.

"And what disgraceful secret is it that gives you this power over a boy whom you have brought to his destruction?" said the Head.

Lilburn chuckled softly.

"I guess I'll explain that now——"

"For the last time, silence!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Do you know what you're risking? You needn't think of me. I can stand it."

"I guess I'm going ahead."

"I am listening to you, sir," said the Head coldly.

And the whole school listened breathlessly for what Lilburn had to say.

CHAPTER 38.

Cleared!

LILBURN removed the stump of the cigarette from his teeth, yellowed with tobacco-smoke. He put a fresh one into his mouth, but did not light it. Even the cool, reckless blackguard refrained from that with the Head's stern eyes upon him.

"I guess Lumley knew me in New York," he remarked. "That was before his father made his millions."

"Lumley has already told me that," said the Head.

"I knew he was here," went on the new-comer easily, "and when I found myself in London I came down here to look him up. You see, the Lumleys had progressed in the world, and I hadn't! I was broke to the wide, and I kinder guessed that the son of a millionaire wouldn't forget his old friend. I'd stood by you in some tough corners over the water, hadn't I, Lumley?"

"Yes," muttered Lumley.

"So you see, although Lumley didn't like the look of me, he stuck to me hard and fast," explained Lilburn. "I found that he had changed a heap since I used to know him in the Bowery."

"For the better, I hope," said the Head.

"I guess you would think so," assented Lilburn. "I reckon I thought him turned soft. But he stood by an old friend, and I think I've spent more of his money in the last few weeks than he's spent himself in whole dog's ages."

"That is nothing to boast of, sir."

"I'm not boasting of it. I'm stating a fact. Lumley-Lumley has plenty of money from his popper, and I didn't see why I shouldn't rope in some of it for the sake of old times. He was willing to shell out, but he didn't want to get mixed up with me. But I had the rottenest luck. I never played poker without losing, and never backed a horse that didn't come in ninth or tenth. I ran through Jerry's money as fast as I ran through my own, and Jerry went stony—didn't you, Jerry?"

"Shut up!" muttered Lumley-Lumley.

"I should certainly not blame a boy for standing by an old friend, even if he had selected so unfortunate a friend," said the Head. "But this does not excuse——"

"Then, you see, sir, I got Jerry to give me some of his advice about the form of the critters," Lilburn explained. "He's told me there was a lot of trouble with some of the fellows here about his having a sporting paper. He was looking over it for me, to give me a chance, and he's never laid a shilling—not a red cent.—on a horse himself. Have you, Jerry?"

"No!"

"I should be glad to believe that," said the Head.

"Jerry wanted me to vamoose," said Lilburn coolly. "But I couldn't go. I hadn't the tin. I couldn't raise even the money to follow his tips. It had to be raised somehow. I got him to raise it last night."

"And in what manner?" said the Head sternly.

"We went to Lewes together, and pawned all Jerry's trinkets," said Lilburn. "A tidy sum they raised, too, with diamond sleeve-links, and a gold watch, and——"

"Do you mean to say that you induced this foolish boy to part with his personal belongings in this way, to raise money for your rascally gambling, sir?"

Lilburn nodded.

"Just that!" he assented coldly. "But Jerry couldn't help himself."

"Because of some hold you have over him?"

"Exactly! He knew that the police were looking for me, because of a little trouble I got into in London, and he couldn't say a word about me to anybody, you see, in case I was nabbed."

"Good heavens!"

Lumley-Lumley turned a white face to the Head.

"I couldn't help it, sir. I couldn't betray him. He's been a reckless rotter, I know, but his father was my father's friend a long time ago, and this chap did me a good many good turns when I was poor. I couldn't desert him. I wanted to help him get enough money to escape, sir. He told me that he wasn't to blame in the matter that the police were after him for. It was a case of mistaken identity."

"That's what I told him, sir," said Lilburn, with a chuckle. "But the time has come to own up now, I guess."

The Head's expression softened.

"Then you have had the courage to risk arrest by the police, in order to save Lumley-Lumley from the trouble you were the cause of his getting into?" he exclaimed.

"I guess not. I'm in no danger."

"What!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley, dumbfounded.

"I guess I was playing you for a sucker, Jerry," said Lilburn, with a somewhat shame-faced look for the first time. "You see, I piled that on, because you had turned so goody-goody, and had made up your mind to have nothing to do with me. I knew that if you reckoned an old chum was in danger you would stick to him like glue. That was why I worked up that yarn about the police."

Lumley-Lumley gasped.

"Then it wasn't true?"

"Not a bit."

"You lied to me?"

"Yep."

Lumley-Lumley pressed his hand to his forehead for a moment. He seemed to be dazed and almost petrified by the discovery.

"Lumley-Lumley," said the Head, and his voice was very gentle, "is that correct? Did you refuse to explain because you believed that this man was in danger, and you were afraid of bringing risk to him?"

"Yes, sir," said Lumley-Lumley, in a low voice.

"I guess I couldn't do anything else, Jerry," said Lilburn. "You had taken the goody-goody tack, and——"

"Silence, sir!" said the Head sternly. "You have behaved disgracefully! You have deceived and robbed this boy!"

"I never lied to him till he told me he would have nothing more to do with me," said Lilburn suddenly.

"A very proper thing for him to tell you, I think. Then you have run no risk by coming here and making this explanation?"

Lilburn grinned.

"I guess I shouldn't have come if the risk had been lying round loose," he remarked. "I'm off to-day now I've raised some tin, and I don't suppose I shall see Jerry again. I thought I'd do him a good turn before I left, that's all. It would have been low-down to leave him here to pay the piper when I could explain. I guess I'm through now. Ta-ta!"

He turned away.

Lumley-Lumley stood silent.

Lilburn held out his hand to him.

"I'm going, Jerry," he said. "I sha'n't trouble you again, old chap. You've stood by me like a real white man, and I sha'n't forget it; you won't see me again. Give me your fist before I go."

Lumley-Lumley shook hands with him silently, but he did not speak.

Lilburn swaggered down the hall and passed out at the great door, and it closed behind him.

He was gone.

There was a dead silence in the hall for some moments. The crowded fellows all wondered what the Head was going to say. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley stood silent, with a very white face. He was waiting to hear his doom.

"Lumley-Lumley," said the Head at last, and his voice was very soft, "this is a very strange story, and I understand your strange conduct at last. You acted as you did to help an old friend who deceived you into supposing that he was in danger."

"Yes, sir."

"You did wrong," said Dr. Holmes. "You had no right to meet such a man, old friend or not; and you had no right to help a fugitive from justice, as you believed him to be. But these faults are not the kind of faults that I should punish most heavily, Lumley-Lumley. I shall pardon you."

There was a buzz in the hall.

"Oh, sir!" muttered Lumley-Lumley.

"You must give me your word," said the Head, "that you will not see that man again, at all events, without my knowledge."

"Willingly, sir."

"I pardon you, Lumley-Lumley; I think you have acted as you have done from a mistaken generosity and an overstrained sense of friendship," said the Head. "You may go."

"Thank you, sir."

A voice rang from the crowded hall.

"Weally, you fellows, what did I say? Didn't I say all along that old Lumlay-Lumlay was twue blue?"

"So you did, Gussy!" exclaimed Jack Blake, thumping the swell of St. Jim's upon the back. "And you were right. You have stuck to him through thick and thin. You were right all the time, Gussy!"

"I believe I genewally am wight, Blake, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus modestly. "En mattahs of this kind you can't do bettah than follow the pinion of a fellow of tact and judgment, you know."

The Head had passed out by the upper door. Lumley-Lumley, confused and hardly realising his good fortune, stood looking dazed. There was a rush of the juniors to congratulate him.

"Bwavo, Lumlay-Lumlay!"

"Hooray!"

"Bravo!"

Tom Merry seized one of the Outsider's hands, and Jack Blake seized the other. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy clapped him on the back. All the Fourth and the Shell seemed to want to shake hands with him at once, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was nearly swept off his feet by the rush.

"Now then, clear the hall!" called out Kildare. "Into the Form-rooms for morning lessons."

"Hooray!"

"Clear out, you youngsters!"

"Shouldah-high, deah boys!" shouted the swell of St. Jim's.

"Hooray!"

And Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was hoisted upon the shoulders of Tom Merry and Figgins and carried in triumph from the hall.

CHAPTER 39.

All Serene.

FATTY WYNN had worn a thoughtful expression all through morning lessons. It was evident that the fat Fourth-Former was thinking something out. As the juniors came out into the passage after morning school, Fatty Wynn delivered himself of the result of his deep reflections.

"Figgins, old man!"

"Hallo!" said Figgins.

"We shall have to make it up to him somehow."

"Make what up—to whom?"

"It!" said Fatty Wynn. "To Lumley-Lumley."

"Oh!" said Figgins thoughtfully.

Kerr nodded.

"It's only right," he said. "We've all been down on him, and he's had a rotten time lately, to say nothing of nearly getting expelled. And it turns out that he's been playing the giddy Don Quixote instead of being what we thought he was."

"Wathah think I told you fellows so all along," chimed in the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"So you did," said Jack Blake cordially. "I say, you ought to make a special note of this, you chaps; Gussy has been right for once."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Quite right," said Tom Merry, joining the group. "But how were we to know? Who would have suspected Lumley-Lumley of playing the giddy Quixote in this way."

"He was a silly ass to stick to such a chap," said Monty Lowther. "But you can't blame a fellow for standing by an old chum."

"Wathah not! The weal twouble was that he nevah consulted me sufficiently. Of course, I should have seen ththrough the mattah at once, and should have warned Lumlay-Lumlay that the wottah was takin' him in."

"Well, we're bound to do something to make it up to the Outsider," said Fatty Wynn, sticking to his idea.

"I'm quite with you there," said Tom Merry heartily. "But what can we do, Wynn, old man? We've told him we're sorry."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I should think it's pretty obvious what we're to do," said Fatty Wynn.

"Pway explain, deah boy."

"Well, we could stand him a feed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at myself," said Fatty Wynn warmly. "If you've done a chap wrong it's only decent to make it up to him. And how can you make it up to him better than standing him a really good, first-class feed?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if you don't like the idea——" began Fatty Wynn huffily.

"But I do," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I think it's ripping. We'll have a big feed in the Hobby Club-room, and all Lumley-Lumley's friends shall be there, and we'll show the whole school what we think of him."

"Ripping!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys."

"My idea," said Fatty Wynn, "is to pool all the available cash and stand something really stunning. I'm willing to collect the subscriptions."

"Oh, good!"

"I'll begin now," said Fatty Wynn. "Nothing like striking the iron while it's hot. No time like the present, you know."

"Yaas, wathah, and it's a vewy fortunate time as far as I'm concerned," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, feeling in his pocket.

"I thought you were stony," said Blake.

"So I was, deah boy. But my governah has appawntly thought bettal of it, and he has sent me a fivah by post this mornin'. I suppose he meant that wotten wigh as a sort of warnin' not to be extwavagant. Not that there is any danger of my bein' extwavagant, of course. But you know these 'patahs."

"What-ho!" said Blake sympathetically. "And as the pater has dubbed up the dibs, I suppose you'll let the Chancellor of the Exchequer off now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Dub up!" said Fatty Wynn.

And the juniors dubbed up most generously.

Fatty Wynn's face was beaming as he took his way to the tuckshop. Fatty Wynn was a shopper of great skill, and he could obtain great value for a small sum, and he had now a large sum to dispose of. Needless to say, his purchases were on a scale to delight the eyes and the hearts of the juniors.

The idea of standing a big feed to Lumley-Lumley caught on very much. Most of the juniors in both houses joined in it heartily. New House and School House pulled together like one man in the matter.

After school there was a crowded reception in the Hobby Room. That room, extensive as it was, was crammed. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was captured by the Terrible Three as he came out of the Form-room and marched off.

"What's up?" demanded Lumley-Lumley.

"Feed!" explained Tom Merry. "We're going to celebrate."

"But look here——"

"You don't bear any malice, surely," said Tom Merry. "As for the little row we had, it's nothing, you know. You can punch my head, if you like."

"And mine," said Monty Lowther.

The Outsider laughed.

"I don't want to punch your head," he said. "If you admit that you were hasty in judging me so roughly——"

"We do!"

"Well, then, it's all over and done with," said Lumley-Lumley. "I know you had plenty of reason for not trusting me, though I hope that you'll give me a chance another time, if anything should crop up."

"You may be sure of that," said Tom Merry.

"But—but I don't want any fuss—"

"Oh, this isn't a fuss!" said Tom Merry. "It's a feed. And you're the best of honour, and you've got to come."

And they marched Lumley-Lumley into the Hobby Club room.

A loud cheer from the crowd of juniors there greeted the appearance of the Outsider with the Terrible Three.

"Here he is!"

"Hooray!"

"Bravo, Lumley-Lumley!"

The Outsider coloured with pleasure. This was a little better than what he had been used to of late.

"Here's your place," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was placed in the chair of honour. More boys were arriving every moment. The scene was most enthusiastic. And the feed—it was quite a record in the annals of St. Jim's!

Petty Wynn had done his duty well.

Lumley-Lumley's face was very cheerful. To be restored to the confidence of the school and the friendship of the fellows he liked was all that he needed, and for him the clouds had at last rolled away.

Wally, of the Third, jumped up in his place at the table, and held up a glass of foaming ginger-beer.

"Gentlemen——"

"Hear, hear!" roared the fags.

"Shut up!" shouted the Shell and the Fourth.

"Gentlemen——"

"Hooray!"

"I propose the health of our respected and esteemed friend Lumley-Lumley, of the Fourth," said Wally, unheeding. "May his shadow never grow whiskers, and may he always have a D'Arcy to stand up for him when he gets himself into a scrape!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the toast—and the ginger-beer—were drunk with enthusiasm. Lumley-Lumley rose to reply, and there was a suspicion of moisture upon his eyes.

"Thanks very much, all of you chaps!" he said. "It's jolly being set right with the school again, and I'm only sorry there was ever any trouble."

But I think I'd go through it all again for the sake of proving what splendid chap Gussy is to stick to a fellow, when he was down, through the and this!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, weally, you know——" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, covered with confusion.

"Here's to Gussy!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Hocray!"

And that celebration was kept up by Tom Merry and his chums till the grew terrific, and the prefects came in and turned them out.

THE END.



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