

"A DISGRACE TO ST. JIM'S!" GRAND LONG YARN OF TOM MERRY & CO.—WITHIN!



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LUMLEY DEFIES THE CARDSHARPERS! A Dramatic Incident from the Great School Story—Inside.



A DISGRACE TO ST. JIM'S!

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

Already Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the new boy who cannot be sacked from school, has brought disgrace upon himself—but when his shady nocturnal visits to the Green Man Inn threaten to sully the fair name of St. Jim's, Tom Merry & Co. take a hand—with painful results to the "Outsider."

CHAPTER 1 Gussy on Guard!

"Gussy!"

"Gus!"

"D'Arcy!"

It was Jack Blake's voice calling. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, started a little as he heard it, and looked uneasy.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated, under his breath. "Jack Blake!"

"Gussy!"

Blake's voice was growing louder and somewhat impatient. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing close by the wall of the quadrangle, where it bordered the road, in the thickening dusk of the evening. A slanting tree almost leaned on the wall, and in the shadow of the tree the elegant form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was difficult to perceive. But as Blake's footsteps came nearer, D'Arcy drew farther into the shadow of the tree. He evidently did not want to be discovered.

"Gussy!"

D'Arcy made no reply.

Jack Blake came along, and passed within three yards of the swell of St. Jim's. He was muttering aloud wrathfully.

"Where on earth has that duffer got to?" he exclaimed. "Just like Gussy to go off and lose himself now."

D'Arcy was quite silent.

Jack Blake passed on, and his voice, still calling for Gussy, died away in the distance.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy smiled slightly.

"Bai Jove! That was a nawwow escape!" he muttered.

"Gussy!"

He started, and drew back into the shadow again.

It was Tom Merry's voice this time. Tom Merry, captain of the Shell, was also seeking the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! This is gettin' wathah thick," murmured D'Arcy. "They don't give a fellow any peace. Weally—"

"Gussy! Where are you, ass?"

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"Bai Jove!"

"Where are you, chump?"

D'Arcy breathed hard. He was strongly inclined to show himself, for the purpose of calling Tom Merry to account for those opprobrious epithets. But he restrained himself.

"Where are you, fathead?"

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy.

"I know you're about here somewhere," said Tom Merry loudly, halting near the slanting oak. "Manners saw you sneaking along. What are you hiding yourself for?"

No reply.

"Well, of all the chumps!" said Tom Merry.

Manners and Lowther, Tom Merry's chums of the Shell, came out of the gloom and joined him.

"Found him?" asked Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No. He must be about here somewhere."

"What's the duffer's little game?" said Manners. "He knows that the rehearsal begins at eight, and it's eight now. We can't get on with 'As You Like It' without Orlando, and the young ass insisted upon being Orlando, too."

"Just like Gussy!" growled Tom Merry. "I don't know what the game is, but I believe he's keeping out of sight on purpose. Gussy! Fathead! Duffer! Chump!"

"He ought to recognise some of his names, if he can hear them," Lowther remarked.

"Look here, let's hunt for him," said Tom Merry. "If he's in the quad we'll find him. I— Hallo, what's that?"

A gleam in the darkness had caught Tom Merry's eye. It was the gleam of an eyeglass. He dashed round the slanting oak, and his grasp fell upon the swell of St. Jim's.

"Here he is!" he shouted.

"Bai Jove!"

"Come out!"

Tom Merry dragged the swell of St. Jim's from behind the tree. D'Arcy's silk hat knocked on the trunk of the oak and rolled off, and his eyeglass fluttered to the end of its cord. He resisted manfully.

"Pway welease me, Tom Mewwy! I insist—"

"Rats!"

"But my hat—"

"Blow your hat!"

—STARRING THE "OUTSIDER" AND THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Now explain yourself," said Tom Merry. "You know jolly well that the rehearsal begins at eight o'clock."
 "Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed D'Arcy.
 "Then why haven't you turned up in the School House?" demanded Monty Lowther.
 "I had other bisney—"
 Tom Merry simply snorted.
 "Other business, to keep you away from a rehearsal of the Junior Dramatic Society!" he exclaimed.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Oh, bump him!" said Manners. "He wants it."
 "Yes, rather!"
 "Weally, deah boys— Ow! Yaroooh!"
 Bumped D'Arcy was. The Terrible Three were exasperated, as, indeed, were all the youthful dramatists who were waiting for D'Arcy to come to begin. It was no joke to have to leave a rehearsal to hunt through a dark quadrangle for a missing rehearsal.
 "Now, then," said Tom Merry, as the breathless junior was stood upon his feet again. "Now, then, what do you mean?"
 "Ow! You wuffian!"
 "Explain yourself!"
 "You howwid boundahs—"
 "Come on, then."
 D'Arcy jumped back.
 "I can't come. I've got some awfully important bisney to attend to."
 "Bosh!"
 D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye.
 "It's weally important, deah boys. It concerns the honah of the Fourth Form, and of St. Jim's genewally," he said, in a stately way.
 The Terrible Three stared at him.
 "You're going to miss the rehearsal for the honour of St. Jim's," said Monty Lowther, looking puzzled.
 "Weally, Lowthah—"
 "You're hiding behind that tree for the honour of the Fourth Form?" asked Manners.
 "Weally, Mannahs—"
 "Oh, he's off his rocker!" said Tom Merry. "Take a good grip on his ears, and bring him along."
 "I uttahly wufese to be brought along, especially by my yahs," D'Arcy exclaimed. "If you will listen to me a moment, deah boys, I will explain. I'm here waitin' for a chap who's goin' to bweak bounds."
 "Oh!"
 "He's goin' to get ovah that wall, you know," said D'Arcy, lowering his voice cautiously. "He's a chap in my Form, a School House chap, too. I know that he's goin' down to the Gween Man in the lane. I'm goin' to stop him."
 "By Jove!"
 "I intend to wemonstwate with him," said D'Arcy. "I'm goin' to point out to him the ewwah of his ways, and persuade him to give up this wascally intention."
 "And if he won't?"
 "In that case, I shall give him a feahful thwashin'." Tom Merry chuckled.
 "Good old Gussy!"
 "I wogard it as my duty, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, picking up his silk hat, and adjusting it upon his head. "I'm awfully sowwy to have to cut the wehearsal, but you see that this bisney is most important. You fellows buzz off and tell Blake I'm sowwy I can't come."
 "But who's the chap?" asked Lowther.
 "Oh, I can guess!" said Tom Merry quietly. "It's Lumley-Lumley, the new chap—the Outsider. Isn't it so, Gussy?"
 D'Arcy nodded.
 "Suppose we stay here, too?" suggested Manners. "If the demonstrating doesn't have any effect, we can pick Lumley up and bundle him back, neck and crop, you know."
 "Good egg!"
 "Bai Jove! Here he comes!"
 The sound of a low, clear whistle was heard in the gloom of the quadrangle. Someone was whistling, and the sound was drawing near to the spot where the School House juniors stood.
 "That's Lumley!" muttered Manners.
 "What an awful nerve, to be whistling like that here!" muttered Lowther. "Why, any of the prefects might hear him and follow him here, and see him getting out!"
 "Oh, he's got nerve enough for anything!"
 "Quiet, deah boy—"
 "Look here, we'd better—"
 "Pway stand back, and leave me to deal with the wottah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy firmly.
 And the Terrible Three, after a brief hesitation, assented. They drew back into the shadow of thick clusters of ivy on

the wall, and the swell of St. Jim's was left standing alone by the tree to greet the Outsider when he came up.

CHAPTER 2.

No Exit!

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY, the new fellow at St. Jim's, whistled coolly and unconcernedly as he came up to the slanting oak.

He did not seem to care whether he was heard or not. The boy who was always called the Outsider at St. Jim's had nerve enough for anything. Pluck is a great quality, and he had heaps of pluck, there was no denying that.

If he had had a sense of honour along with it he would have been a very different character. But Lumley's training, and perhaps his nature, did not allow that. He had had a hard and curious career when he was of an age when most boys are at school, and he had come to St. Jim's with more experience than falls to most fellows of twenty-five.

The lad who had roughed it among the street arabs of the Bowery, in New York, who had been forced to take care of himself in many strange places, and had learned a hard unscrupulousness in his contact with a hard world, was not the sort of fellow to pull easily with the boys of St. Jim's. And Jerrold Lumley did not seem to care whether he pulled easily with them or not.

He went on his own way, cool, hard and determined, and utterly reckless of others. His intention was to have a good time while he was at St. Jim's, and he did not mean to let anything interfere with that, if he could help it. His father being a millionaire, he always had plenty of money.

The whistle died away as he came up to the slanting oak. A nervous voice muttered in the gloom.

"For goodness' sake shut up, Lumley! Do you want everybody to know what we're going to do?"

Lumley laughed lightly.

"It's all right, Mellish."

"Well, you can't be too careful!" grumbled the cad of the Fourth.

"I guess I know my way about," said Lumley. "It's all right. Look here, you shin up that tree first and show me the way."

"Right you are!"

Mellish stepped towards the tree, and then recoiled with a gasp. In the gloom a figure in silk hat and eyeglass stood before him.

"You uttah wascal!" said a familiar voice.

"D'Arcy!"

"Hallo!" said Lumley-Lumley, with perfect coolness. "Is that you, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, it is I."

"Are you coming out? I suppose you're here on the same job?"

"You uttah wascal!" exclaimed D'Arcy, almost breathless with indignation. "Do you suppose that I would take part in any of your wascally pwoceedings?"

Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"What are you doing here, then?" he asked. "I believe this is the place where the kids break bounds, isn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah! I am here to see you!"

"Oh!"

"I heard what you said to Mellish in the class-room," said D'Arcy severely. "You spoke in my heawin'. I knew you were comin' here at eight o'clock, and I guessed that it was to bweak bounds."

"Well, it could hardly be for any other reason," said Lumley coolly; "but I don't see what you are here for."

"I am goin' to stop you!"

A dangerous gleam came into the Outsider's eyes.

"I guess that won't be so easy," said Lumley. "What business is it of yours, anyway?"

D'Arcy's eyeglass glittered scornfully upon him.
 "I am thinkin' of the honah of the school," he said. "You are goin' to bweak bounds to go down to the Gween Man to gamble. I know that!"

"You've got it wrong," said Mellish hastily. "We're just going for a little stroll, that's all, D'Arcy. We mean no harm whatever."

"Don't tell lies, Mellish!" said Lumley. "I'm not afraid of D'Arcy, if you are! We're going to the Gween Man—right!"

Mellish bit his lip hard.

"And we intend to go, if we choose, and when we choose," went on Lumley. "It's like your cheek to interfere, D'Arcy. Will you kindly get out of the way?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then they jolly well soon shift you! Collar him, Mellish!"

D'Arcy stepped back a pace and pushed back his cuffs. "If you attempt to pass me, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!" he exclaimed. "I should pwefeer to weason with you, but if necessawy, I shall thwash you!"

"Will you get aside?"

"I have already wefused to do so! I——"

"Come on, Mellish!" muttered Lumley.

He rushed straight at the swell of St. Jim's.

Mellish hesitated a moment, and then followed. He was not brave, but two to one seemed safe enough for the cad of the Fourth. Arthur Augustus hit out manfully, but Lumley dodged his blows, and closed with him and bore him backwards.

Back went the swell of St. Jim's, with Lumley's weight upon him, and Mellish's added, and he went with a bump to the ground, with the two juniors sprawling upon him.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Fair play, you know! Ow!"

"Lather him!" said Lumley between his teeth.

"Ow! Don't hit a chap when he's down, you know!" gasped D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! Wescue! Ow!"

Lumley had no scruples about hitting a fellow when he was down. It would have gone very hard with D'Arcy just then; but the Terrible Three were already rushing to the rescue.

Before Lumley had time to strike more than one blow, he was grasped and dragged off the swell of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry swung the Outsider away, and Lumley went with a crash against the wall. He slid down to a sitting position there, blinking stupidly at the chums of the Shell.

Mellish beat a hurried retreat. He did not care to encounter the Terrible Three at close quarters. Tom Merry looked at the Outsider with flashing eyes.

"Don't you know better than to punch a chap when he's down?" he exclaimed. "You utter cad!"

"Oh!"

D'Arcy staggered to his feet.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Where's my hat?"

"Your hat?"

"Yaas, wathah! It's fallen off somewhere!"

"Ha, he, ha!" yelled Lowther. "Lumley's sitting on your hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

It was true. Lumley had fallen fairly upon the topper, and he was still sitting upon it; the topper, needless to say, was crushed almost out of all semblance to a hat.

"You uttah wottah!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "You feahful boundah! Get off my hat!"

Lumley got off it, grinning.

He had had a shock; but he was as hard as nails, and he was himself again almost immediately.

D'Arcy picked up the hat. His face was a study as he looked at it.

"Bai Jove!" he said. "It's wuined!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Lumley. "Why can't you mind your own bisney?"

"You uttah wapsallion!"

"You were going to break bounds to go to the Green Man!" said Tom Merry angrily.

Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, it's my own bisney, I suppose?"

"Nothing of the sort. That's a little mistake of yours. You're not going to be allowed to disgrace the school!"

"I'm going out."

"You're not. D'Arcy tried arguing with you, and it's no good. I'm not going to argue. I tell you plainly that you're not going out!" said Tom Merry firmly.

Lumley gritted his teeth.

"You meddling puppy——"

"Better language, please!" said Tom Merry sharply.

"It's hard enough to keep my hands off you, as it is."

"Well, I am going!"

Lumley moved towards the tree. Tom Merry made a forward movement at the same time. The Outsider made a spring to gain the tree, to climb on the wall.

Tom Merry caught him and swung him back.

"No, you don't!" he said coolly.

Lumley began to struggle furiously.

"Lend a hand!" said Tom Merry.

"What-ho!"

Manners and Lowther grasped the Outsider. He was swung off the ground. Tom Merry and Lowther had a shoulder each, and Manners took his ankles, one in either hand.

Lumley struggled desperately; but he was helpless.

"To the School House!" said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! I wegard this 'as quite the pwopah capah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he followed the Terrible Three and their burden.

"Let me go!" hissed Lumley.

"Rats!"

"I will make you suffer for this!"

"Oh, cheese it!"

The Terrible Three ran their prisoner towards the School House. Mellish had disappeared, but they knew that he was not likely to go out without Lumley. Outside the School House they almost ran into Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully. "Where the dickens have you been? What price that giddy rehearsal?"

"What on earth have you got there?" exclaimed Digby, in amazement.

"The Outsider!" said Tom Merry laconically.

"What are you doing with him?"

"Carrying him in. He was going pub-haunting!"

"The rotter!" said Blake.

The Terrible Three carried Lumley-Lumley into the School House. The hall was not yet lighted, and they ran him in and upstairs without attracting notice. In the Fourth Form passage they paused.

"Stand him up," said Tom Merry.

The Outsider was placed upright on his feet. He was looking a little dazed and extremely dishevelled.

"Now are you going to stay in?" asked Tom Merry.

"No!" yelled Lumley.

"Very well."

Tom Merry opened the door of Lumley's study, and changed the key to the outside of the lock. Then Lumley was pushed in. He stared at Tom Merry.

"What are you going to do?" he demanded.

"I'm going to lock you in."

"Good egg!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Lumley's face was convulsed with rage.

"You—you hound! I'll make you smart for this!"

Tom Merry did not reply. He closed the door and locked it on the outside, and put the key in his pocket. His face looked a little troubled, but very resolute.

"That's the only thing that can be done with him, isn't it?" he said. "There has been a lot of talk lately about St. Jim's fellows being seen at the Green Man. If we don't want a scandal, it will have to be stopped. Lumley doesn't care if he disgraces the school, but——"

"But we care," said Blake. "And he's jolly well going to be stopped!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then that's settled!"

"And now for the giddy rehearsal," said Jack Blake. "It's nearly an hour late. Let's get on."

"Right you are!"

"Master Merry," said Toby, the School House page, appearing in the passage, "Master Kildare wishes to see you in his study."

Tom Merry grunted.

"Wonder what it is now?" he said. "I suppose I must go. You fellows get on with the rehearsal without me. Hang!"

And the hero of the Shell made his way to Kildare's study.

CHAPTER 3.

A Task for Tom Merry!

KILDARE, the head of the Sixth, and the captain of the school, was standing by the table in his study, evidently waiting for Tom Merry.

He nodded to the junior as he entered, and Tom Merry noticed that his usually cheery face was overcast.

"You sent for me, Kildare?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, Merry. Close the door; I want to talk to you."

Tom Merry made a grimace as he closed the door. He felt that there was something of a troublous nature coming—from Kildare's grave manner.

"There's something going on in the junior Forms that wants correcting," said the captain of St. Jim's. "There have been reports for some time that a boy or boys belonging to St. Jim's have been in the habit of frequenting a place between here and Rylcombe—a low den called the Green Man."

Tom Merry coloured.

"Yes, Kildare," he said.

"It seems to me that there is something in it," said Kildare. "As a matter of fact, Mr. Railton has asked me to look into the matter. Mr. Rateliff is quite certain that it is not a New House boy; Mr. Railton feels equally certain that it isn't a School House fellow. But both Monteith and myself have been asked to look into it."

Tom Merry nodded. He felt a certain sense of guilty self-consciousness as he remembered the attempt of Lumley-Lumley to break bounds that evening. He could have given Kildare the name of the culprit easily enough.



"Hullo, what's the row?" asked Tom Merry as the Fourth Formers crowded into the room. "Gerroff! Ow! Gerrooh! Ooch!" The Shell leader made these remarks as Blake pushed the wet and sooty end of the broom into his face. "It's your little present, returned with thanks!" said Blake genially. "Ha, ha, ha!"

But he did not. It would have been sneaking, and a schoolboy's sense of honour held his tongue silent.

"That some junior at this school, and probably in this House, is making a fool of himself, seems pretty certain," went on Kildare. "What do you think?"

"I suppose so."

"You may have some idea as to whom it is?"

Tom Merry was silent.

"Now," said Kildare, "I think that, as head of the juniors in the School House, you might be able to do something in that matter, Merry."

"I!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes. And that's why I've sent for you. There is no reason why, with a little keenness, you shouldn't discover who it is."

"But—"

"I don't expect you to report him to me when you've discovered him, of course," said Kildare quietly. "That's not my meaning at all. I know you are a decent fellow, Merry, and would be down on this sort of thing. You are head of the Shell, and it's your place to keep order in your Form. If you find out who it is that's bringing disgrace upon the school, I think you might be able to deal with the matter."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry. "I see!"

"Well, what do you say, then?"

"I'll do my best."

"Good!"

Tom Merry was very red.

"You—you see, it's pretty awkward," he said slowly.

"A fellow hates to seem to be taking up a high moral position over other fellows. It's so much like the hero of a goody-goody book, you know."

Kildare laughed.

"I know that, Merry; but there is good sometimes in goody-goody books. In this case, you needn't be afraid of looking priggish. You may be able to save the silly fellow from being sacked out of St. Jim's, and perhaps disgraced for life."

"Yes, I know that. I'll do the best I can in the matter, Kildare."

"Then it's settled."

Tom Merry left the captain's study in a thoughtful mood. As for finding out the culprit he knew him already; it

was Lumley-Lumley. But as for curing him of his propensities, that was a different matter.

Tom Merry turned his steps in the direction of the room where the rehearsal of the Junior Dramatic Society was to take place.

As he approached the door he heard the voice of Jack Blake.

"Heat me those irons hot. And look, thou standest within the attic."

"You ass!" said the voice of Digby. "It's arras!"

"Stuff!" said Blake. "Hullo, here's Tom Merry! Let him decide. Do the murderers stand in the attic, or in the arras in 'King John,' Tom Merry?"

"Well, I think it was arras, but you can make it attic, if you like," said Tom Merry. "We were going to do 'As You Like It.'"

"I was going through that while we were waiting for you," said Jack Blake. "What did Kildare want? Licked?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"It's about Lumley-Lumley."

"Oh!" The Junior Dramatic Society were all interested at once, and they forgot Shakespeare for the moment.

"What's he got to say about the Outsider?"

"Nothing."

"You ass!" exclaimed Manners. "You said—"

"There's talk about a St. Jim's fellow pub-haunting at the Green Man in the lane," Tom Merry explained. "The prefects are inquiring into it. They don't know it's Lumley; but we do—see?"

"Yes. You didn't give Lumley away?"

"Of course not. Look here!" said Tom Merry abruptly. "Kildare has asked me to look into it, and settle the matter, if possible, without the masters being dragged into it, or any open scandal, you know. He thinks I may be able to do it, with the help of you fellows, of course, and save a lot of unpleasantness."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Faith, and there's something in that!" said Reilly.

"Let's have Lumley here, and give him a trial," said Kangaroo, otherwise Harry Noble, "and if he's guilty, punish him according to law."

"Eh? There isn't any law on the subject that I know of." Kangaroo sniffed.

"Well, I suppose we can make one, can't we?" he asked.

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

"It's all right," said Blake. "We can form ourselves into a jury, and try Lumley-Lumley. We can warn him of his error, and inflict a light punishment to start with, and perhaps it will be a warning to him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good egg!"

There was a tap at the door of the junior club-room, and Mellish of the Fourth put his head in timidly. He blinked in a very uncertain way at Tom Merry & Co.

"I say, I want to go into my study," he said. "And Lumley's just told me through the keyhole that he's locked in, and you've got the key. I want to do my prep."

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "We're coming!"

"If you give me the key——"

"Rats!"

The juniors left the room. The rehearsal was quite off for that evening. Mellish looked uneasy as they crowded upstairs with him. He did not want Tom Merry & Co. to accompany him to Study No. 8, but he had no choice in the matter.

There was a sound of hurried footsteps from the study. Lumley-Lumley was evidently pacing to and fro, like a wild animal in its den. Tom Merry unlocked the door and flung it open.

The Outsider stopped his pacing, and turned a fierce glance upon the juniors.

"So you've come to let me out!" he exclaimed savagely.

"Not at all. We've come to let ourselves in," said Tom Merry, entering the study.

Lumley made a threatening gesture.

"Get out of my study!" he exclaimed.

"Rubbish!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wubbish, deah boy!"

"Look here!"

"Lock the door, Lowther!"

"Right-ho!"

Nine juniors had crowded into the study with Mellish. As the study was one of the smallest in the Fourth Form passage, and was shared only by two juniors, as a rule, it was something of a squeeze. But they didn't mind that. They stood up against the door and the wall.

Lumley-Lumley looked at them savagely, but without

alarm. He believed that a ragging was about to ensue, but he was not afraid. With all his faults he had a nerve of iron.

"Now, Lumley——" began Tom Merry. "Kildare, our respected skipper, has asked us to look into a certain matter of pub-haunting. He doesn't know that I know the guilty party; but I know him, or, rather, them. You and Mellish."

"If you think——" began Mellish.

"I don't think," said Tom Merry, "I know."

"But——"

"You were going to the Green Man when we stopped you this evening. You have been there before."

"And we'll go again, and as often as we like," said Lumley, through his teeth.

Tom Merry took no notice of that remark.

"We know what you go there for," he said.

"It's to gamble on cards with Joliffe, and Crake, and Banks, and the other blackguards there, and incidentally to disgrace yourselves and your school. It's got to stop!"

"Who's going to stop it?"

"We are!" said Tom Merry quietly. "If it goes on you'll both be expelled from St. Jim's in the long run, and it's as much for your sakes, as for anything else, that we're going to interfere."

"You are going to sneak to the prefects?" asked Lumley, with a bitter sneer.

Tom Merry flushed crimson.

"We're not going to sneak to anybody," he said. "We're going to handle the matter off our own bat. You won't be allowed to go to the Green Man."

"How are you going to prevent it?"

"By keeping an eye on you. When you try to break bounds again, you'll be stopped, and licked—licked thoroughly, and worse every time till you're cured."

"That's plain English!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Lumley set his teeth hard.

"Do you want an answer from me?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, here it is. I shall go to the Green Man and see Joliffe and Banks and the rest just when I choose, and as often as I choose. That's plain English, too!"

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"So that's your answer, Lumley?"

"That's my answer!"

"Well, you've heard our decision. If you won't mend your ways, you'll be ragged out of them. If you go to the Green Man, and we hear of it, we'll fetch you out, if we have to walk into the place and drag you out by main force."

"Bah!"

"I mean it. Don't be a fool, Lumley!" said Tom Merry, in a quieter tone. "What do you want to go there for? You call it seeing life? Why, those fellows only want to swindle you! Do you think they'll even give you a run for your money? They'd cheat you all along the line if you were winning. If you did win anything, it would be only something given you to lead you to blow more money there."

Lumley nodded.

"I know that's the game," he said. "I guess I've got my eye teeth out!"

"And, knowing that, you go among them?"

"They're catching a Tartar in me," said Lumley coolly. "I've skinned sharps in New York who would have laughed at these fellows. Do you think Joliffe & Co. can pull the wool over my eyes? Do you think they can get hold of my money? My dear chap, I'm going down to the Green Man to skin them, not to be skinned!"

"It makes no difference," said Tom Merry, "if you go to cheat or to be cheated—in fact, it's worse the way you put it."

"Oh, don't preach to me!"

"In a word, do you intend to stop it?"

"No; I guess not."

"Then we're up against it all the time, and whenever we catch you, you'll be made to smart. We mean business."

"So do I."

"Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I suggest that the pwsent meetin' wesolves itself into a Vigilance Committee to keep an eye on this wascal!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And ewevy time he is caught playin' the giddy goat, we'll make an example of him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Unanimously adopted," said Tom Merry. "You hear, Lumley?"

"Yes; I hear."

"What have you got to say, then?"

"Get out of my study," said Lumley.

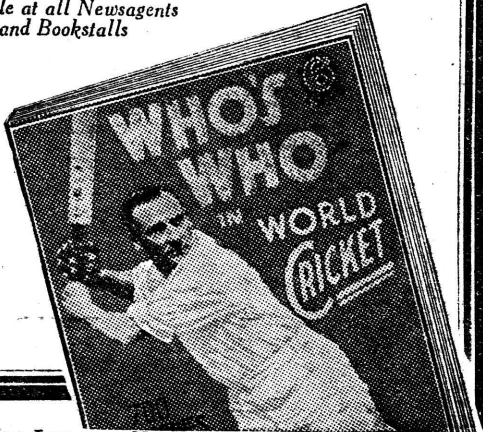
The juniors looked at one another. They were strongly

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inclined to collar Master Lumley-Lumley there and then, and give him such a ragging as he had never had before. But Tom Merry restrained that very natural desire, and made the others a sign to follow him from the study.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, with a deep breath, as soon as they were outside. "I don't think I evah met a chap who made my tempah wise so much."

"Same here."

Tom Merry breathed hard through his nose.

"Well, we've given him warning," he said. "If he keeps on disgracing the school and the House, he'll get it—in the neck! That's all!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

CHAPTER 4.

Skimpole's Scheme!

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY burst into a scornful laugh as the door closed behind the juniors.

Mellish did not look like laughing, and he did not feel like it, either. He was looking troubled and scared. The contemptuous derision of the Outsider did not reassure him.

"You must be an ass, Lumley," he said. "What did you talk to Tom Merry like that for? You know you can't back up against him."

The Outsider shrugged his shoulders disdainfully.

"That's just what I'm going to do!" he exclaimed.

"But—"

"I came to this school to have a good time," said Lumley coolly. "My governor bounced the Head into signing an agreement to keep me here for three years, and Dr. Holmes can't get rid of me if he wants to. I'm safe. Do you think I'm going to be fooled out of having my own way by a parcel of kids, when I don't care a rap for the Head himself?"

"But—"

"I can look after myself," said Lumley; "I'm going to do it. As for being ordered about by Tom Merry, if that made any difference to me, it would only make me more determined. Bah! I'm going to the Green Man to-night just the same."

Mellish started.

"To-night?"

"I guess so."

"Phew! After lights out, do you mean?"

"Yes."

Mellish looked very uneasy.

"I suppose it could be done," he said. "But some of the fellows may remain awake in the Fourth Form dormitory."

"Not likely. But if they do—"

"You'll give it up if they do?"

"Stuff! If they do, I shall go, all the same!"

Mellish gave a hopeless shrug of the shoulders.

"Oh, I suppose you'll have your way!" he exclaimed.

"I guess so," said Lumley coolly.

The two juniors did their preparation, and then went downstairs. It was near bed-time for the juniors. The Junior Common-room was pretty full. Many curious glances were cast at Jerrold Lumley.

That some St. Jim's junior was suspected of the delinquency known as pub-haunting was well known, and that the delinquent was Lumley-Lumley was no secret.

The Outsider consequently attracted a great deal of attention.

He remained perfectly cool under it.

Tom Merry & Co. did not speak to him. They had said all they had to say, and there was nothing more to be done, unless the Outsider disregarded their warning. Then it would be a time for action.

The Fourth Form and the Shell went up to bed at the usual time. And as they separated in the upper passage Tom Merry gave Blake a tap on the shoulder.

"I shouldn't wonder if Lumley bolted to-night, Blake," he said, in a low voice. "It's not worth while keeping awake to watch, of course, but if you should miss him, let us know."

Blake nodded.

"He's hardly likely to have the nerve to go out this very night," he said.

"I believe he has nerve enough for anything."

"Well, that's right enough."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Pewwaps Blake had better stay awake and watch."

"Catch me!" said Blake.

"Well, Digby might—"

"No fear!" said that individual.

"Well, Hewwies, then!"

"Rats!" said Herries.

"Faith, and why can't ye stay awake yourself?" asked Reilly.

"I regard that question as wiculous. I am sleepay,"

said D'Arcy. "I shall go to sleep, of course. But I weally think somebody ought to keep an eye on Lumley!"

"Well, of all the asses—"

"If anythin' happens through no eye bein' kept on Lumley, I wash my hands of the whole mattah!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"Well, good-night!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

The Shell fellows went off to their dormitories. Skimpole of the Shell had been listening to the talk, and he remained standing in the passage with a very thoughtful expression upon his face. Monty Lowther jogged his arm, and Skimpole started. Skimpole, the genius of the Lower School, frequently went off into brown studies, and some of the fags had suggested that he really needed the attention of a flapper, like the scientific gentleman in the city of Laputa, to awaken his attention to the outer world by frequent flaps on the ears.

"Wake up, Skimmy!" said Lowther pleasantly. "You're not in bed yet!"

Skimpole started.

"I was thinking, Lowther."

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"It seems that Lumley-Lumley is likely to break bounds to-night, and the fellows want to make sure that he doesn't," Skimpole remarked.

"Exactly."

"I have thought of an idea. Suppose something were

THE CONDUCTOR'S TIMETABLE.



Old Man (to bus conductor

who is reading the GEM):

"What time does this bus

start?"

Conductor (pointing to GEM):

"At the end of this chapter!"

Half-a-crown has been

awarded to W. Loman,

Westover, Drayton, Taunton,

Somerset.

arranged against the door of the Fourth Form dormitory, to fall down with a crash as soon as the door opened?"

"I expect the wrong person would open the door."

"That, of course, could not be guarded against. Mistakes will occur in the best regulated scientific inventions," said Skimpole, blinking at Lowther through his big spectacles.

"Tom Merry, what do you think of the scheme?"

"What scheme?"

"I was thinking of leaning, say, a broom against the Fourth Form dorm door, so that it would fall down with a crash as soon as the door was opened from within. Then Lumley would automatically give the alarm as soon as he tried to leave the dormitory."

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry.

"Lowther suggests that it might fall on the wrong person."

"That wouldn't matter."

"Well, no," said Lowther. "I didn't look at it in that light. I really don't see that it would matter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Very well," said Skimpole. "I will leave it till after lights-out, in case a prefect should see it, which might cause awkward inquiry."

"Ha, ha, ha! I should."

"Get into bed, you young scamps!" said Kildare, looking into the dormitory.

"Half a tick, Kildare!"

And the Shell were soon in bed and the lights out in the dormitory. When the footsteps of the captain of St. Jim's had died away Skimpole sat up in bed.

"I think I will carry out my idea now," he remarked.

"I can get the passage broom from the cupboard under the stairs, you know. It is a very large and heavy broom, and will make a great noise if it falls suddenly. I take a great interest in this matter, because I feel that it is our duty to keep Lumley from acting in this foolish way. He is very reckless."

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole crept out of bed, and left the dormitory quietly. To obtain the big broom at the end of the passage, and to stand it with the head resting on the door of the Fourth Form dormitory did not occupy Skimpole long. Then, perfectly satisfied with himself, the genius of the Shell returned to his own dormitory.

"Well?" said several sleepy voices.

"It is all right," said Skimpole. "Lumley cannot get out of the Fourth Form dormitory without giving the alarm. It is all right."

And the Shell chuckled, and settled down to sleep.

CHAPTER 5.

A Shock for the Shell!

LIGHTS were out in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House

The Fourth Formers, quite unconscious of the device of Skimpole for alarming them if the door were opened, were all in bed, and some of them were already sleeping the sleep of the just. But some did not sleep—Arthur Augustus, in particular, was in a sleepless mood. He closed his eyes, and resolutely kept them closed, and then opened them again and blinked into the darkness, and finally called to Blake:

"Blake, deah boy—"

There was a grunt from Blake's bed.

"Blake! I can't go to sleep!"

"Go to Jericho, then!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Go to sleep!"

"I am suffewin' f'wom insomniiah!"

"You suffer quietly," said Blake; "I'm sleepy!"

After a little reflection Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped out of bed. The only thing to do was to fetch his book from the study and an electric lamp, and read it till he felt more inclined to sleep. He drew on his trousers, moved towards the door, and opened it.

As he did so something swooped down upon him in the darkness, and he received a heavy blow, and reeled back and sat down violently. There was a crash beside him, and the voice of the swell of St. Jim's rang through the dormitory from end to end.

"Ow! Yow! Help! Burglahs! Wescue!"

Jack Blake sprang up in bed, and heard indistinctly a crash and a yell.

His first thought was that Lumley had tried to bolt, and that someone had collared him.

"Help!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Hallo! Is that you, Gussy?"

"Yow! Wescue! Yah!"

Blake bundled out of bed. Digby and Herries were turning out, too, and Reilly and several more.

Digby struck a match and lighted a candle. The flickering light showed D'Arcy sprawling on the floor in pyjamas and trousers. The broom lying there was sufficient evidence that D'Arcy had not been felled by a burglar, but by that article leaning against the door.

"My only hat!" gasped Blake. "What game are you up to, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Lumley's in bed!" exclaimed Herries.

"Faith, and it's not Lumley."

Jerrold Lumley did not move. Several of the fellows were awake now and demanding to know what was the matter.

Blake dragged D'Arcy to his feet.

"What on earth are you up to?" he demanded. "Where did you get that broom?"

D'Arcy rubbed his head.

"Eh?"

"Where did you get that broom?"

"On the nappah, deah boy!" said D'Arcy ruefully.

"I mean, where did it come from, you ass?"

"I really don't know. I opened the door of the dorm, and I immediately felt a feahful blow—"

"What did you open the door for?" growled Digby.

"I was suffewin' f'wom insomniiah, and I was goin' down to the study to fetch my book," said D'Arcy.

"Against the rules to read in bed," said Blake. "Serves you right!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's a giddy trick of some of the Shell fellows," grunted Blake, looking at the broom. "It was shoved there to fall in when the door was opened. As we've been woke up, I think we may as well take the broom back to the Shell."

"Shouldn't wonder if somebody else has been woke up, too," said Kerruish, listening at the door. "Gussy's made enough row."

"Weally, Kewwuish—"

"I can't hear anybody coming," said Digby. "Let's get along to the Shell dorm, and return them their present with thanks. May as well mop it in water first."

"Good!"

Jack Blake filled a basin with water, and, on second thoughts, added a saucer full of soot from the chimney. He mixed it up with the broom, and soaked up most of the sooty water into the bristles of that article.

Then, after a cautious look down the passage, he led the way to the Shell dormitory. Digby followed, carrying the candle, and half the Fourth Form brought up the rear.

Blake opened the door of the Shell sleeping quarters quietly. The candle glimmered in, and showed the juniors asleep in the row of white beds.

Blake chuckled softly.

"Come in, you fellows!" he said.

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"Yaas, wathah!"

The Fourth Formers crowded into the room. Tom Merry awoke, and two or three other fellows at the same time.

"Hallo! What's the row? Gerroff! Ow! Ooch! Gerrooh! Yah!"

He made those remarks as Blake pushed the sooty end of the broom into his face. The Fourth Formers gave a yell of laughter at the aspect of the Shell leader after a few seconds of that treatment.

"It's your little present, returned with thanks," said Blake genially. "Here's some for Lowther, too."

"Gerroff!" roared Lowther. "Gerroff—yow—yaroo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Manners—"

Manners made a desperate attempt to escape by rolling out of bed. But his foot caught in the bedclothes, and he bumped on the floor, and then the sooty broom caught him, and mopped all over his head and neck.

Manners roared.

"Here, get up!" roared Kangaroo. "Kick them out! Go for 'em!"

"Buck up, you fellows!"

"Groooh!" roared Kangaroo, as the broom caught him under the chin as he rushed forward. "Geroooh! Hoo! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as funniah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Shell fellows were turning out in force now, and it was time to retreat. Tom Merry had hold of the broom, and was trying to drag it away. Blake let go, and the Fourth Formers trooped out of the dormitory, chuckling.

They hurried back to their own quarters, leaving four members of the Shell foaming and the rest laughing. The Shell fellows who had not been sooted regarded it in the light of a joke, and they showed little sympathy for the Terrible Three and Kangaroo.

Skimpole sat up in his bed and blinked at the sooty faces of the quartette in great astonishment.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed. "What has happened? What an extraordinary time for you to choose to make up as nigger minstrels!"

"You ass!" roared Tom Merry. "They brought your broom back!"

"My broom!"

"Yes, you fathead!"

"And to judge by the bump on Gussy's noble brow, it did fall upon the wrong person," grinned Clifton Dane.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bless me—"

"You chump! You frabjous ass!"

"Really, Merry, it was an excellent plan, although it seems to have worked out somewhat unpleasantly. I— Oh!"

Tom Merry had seized the broom and jabbed the sooty end under Skimpole's chin. The genius of the Shell gasped and snorted.

"Ow! Groo! Yow! Snoo!"

"There's some of it for you," said Tom Merry. "You won't be so beastly clever next time!"

"Geroooh! Oh!"

"Let's get along and smash up the Fourth," exclaimed Gore.

"Not just now," growled Lowther. "We'll smash up the Fourth to-morrow."

And the Terrible Three and Kangaroo, and Skimpole, too, felt it more imperative to get rid of the soot than to smash up the Fourth; and they were soon splashing away merrily at the washstand, while the rest of the Form chuckled to themselves.

CHAPTER 6.

A Startling Discovery!

BAI Jove! I wegard that as a weally wippin' victory, you know!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark as the victorious Fourth Formers crowded into their own dormitory again. Blake grinned as he turned the key in the lock.

"We don't want the Shellfish to follow us in," he remarked. "We've licked 'em—and 'nuff's as good as a feast."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It will be some time before they lean old brooms up against our door again," said Digby, with a chuckle.

"Yaas, wathah! By the way, I have a feahful bump on my head, you know."

"Never mind! Lucky there was nothing in it to be damaged."

"Weally, Digbay—"

"They're not coming," said Blake, listening at the door. "I suppose they've had enough. Well, we've taken the Shell down this time."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "My only chapeau, it's half-past ten!" exclaimed Herries, as the school clock rang out. "We shall all be as sleepy as anything in the morning, after Gussy keeping us up like this!"

"Weally, Hewwies—" "I'm going to bed."
 "Same here," said Blake. "Good-night! You still asleep, Lumley?"

There was no reply from Lumley's bed. Jack Blake glanced towards it. It had occurred to him that Lumley might have taken advantage of the absence of the juniors to slip out of the dormitory. But the form of a sleeper showed under the bedclothes.

He looked at Mellish's bed. There, too, he could trace the outlines of an occupant. But it seemed curious that

"I! Weally, Blake—" "I'm sorry, Lumley. It was Gussy's fault. You can punch his head if you like," said Blake.

There was no reply from Lumley. He had not uttered a sound. Several of the juniors stared towards his bed in surprise. It seemed incredible that a boy could go on sleeping after such a crashing clump from a boot. D'Arcy, who was standing near the bed, stared at it more amazedly than the others. He could see what the others did not observe—that the boot had made a deep dent in the form in the bed, and that the dent remained, with the boot resting in it.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.
 "What o' earth's the matter?"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "What is it, Gussy?" exclaimed Blake.
 "Bai Jove! There's somethin' wong with Lumley!"
 "Something wrong!"
 "Yaas, wathah!" D'Arcy picked up the boot, and



"Oh!" roared Knox, leaping out into the middle of the lane with Towser clinging to the seat of his trousers! "Help! Murder!" "Ha, ha, ha!" The juniors could not restrain a yell of laughter at the ridiculous figure the prefect cut. "Call him off!" shrieked Knox. "Yow! Yah!"

they should have slept through the disturbance. Some of the fellows had done so, certainly; but neither Lumley nor Mellish was a heavy sleeper.

"They're playing possum," said Digby.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Well, let 'em," said Blake, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I don't care what they do, so long as they keep in the dorm."

And he tumbled into bed.
 Arthur Augustus was putting his slippers on. Blake noticed what he was doing, and called out to him.

"What's that for, Gussy?"
 "I'm goin' down to the study to fetch my book, deah boy."

"You're not," said Blake decisively.
 "Weally, Blake—" "Put out the candle!" said Blake.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."
 Blake snorted.
 "Then I'll jolly soon put it out."

He groped for his boot, picked it up, and, sitting up in bed, took a deadly aim at the candle. The boot whizzed through the air.

It missed the candlestick by an inch, passed it, and fell upon Jerrold Lumley's bed with a heavy clump.
 "Phew!" gasped Blake. "Look what you've done now, Gussy!"

showed the deep dent in the middle of the supposed sleeper.
 "Eithah Lumley is made of indiawubbah, or he isn't there."
 Blake gave a yell.

"Isn't there!"
 "Wathah not!"

D'Arcy threw back the bedclothes. Bolsters and pillows were revealed, cunningly arranged to imitate the form of a sleeper; but Jerrold Lumley was not there. The Outsider of St. Jim's was gone.

Jack Blake rolled out of bed and lost his footing and rolled on the floor. He jumped up, and stared at the Outsider's bed.

There was no doubt that Lumley-Lumley was gone.
 The things had been arranged in the bed to resemble the form of a sleeper, and they had deceived the juniors. And probably the Fourth Form would have gone quietly to bed thinking that Lumley was there, had not the accident of the boot revealed the trick.

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake. "The awful bounder! He's taken us in!"

"Bai Jove!"
 "He must have done this in the dark while we were gone to the Shell dormitory!" exclaimed Blake, in amazement. "Then he slipped out before we came back. If I hadn't chucked that boot we should never have known."

"Wathah not!"
 "What about Mellish?" exclaimed Digby. "Is he gone, too?"

Blake ran to Mellish's bed and dragged off the clothes, as the quickest way of ascertaining whether Mellish was really there. A bundle of bolsters and other things were revealed, but Mellish was gone.

"I thought so," said Digby. "He's gone with Lumley."

"Both of them."
 "Birds of a feather," said Blake, with a sniff. "Well, they've gone, and they've been gone some time. Too late to stop them."

"But not too late to go after them."
 "Just so," agreed Blake. "We told Lumley what to expect. If he's gone to the Green Man we're going to follow him there."

"Of course, he may be gone somewhere else."
 "We can easily settle about that," said Herries eagerly.

"How?" asked Blake.
 "Towser will track them down."
 "Track your grandmother!"
 "If you're looking for a thick ear, Blake—"

"Pway don't begin to wow now!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is a time for action, deah boys. There's no reason why Hewwies shouldn't take his bulldog if he likes, so long as he keeps the beast away from othah fellow's twousahs."

"I'll get him out at once," said Herries, bundling into his clothes. "I suppose it's settled that we're going after Lumley and Mellish?"

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "I'll meet you fellows at the slanting oak, and I'll bring Towser with me. If you're going to take Tom Merry, you may as well go and call him while I get Towser."
 "You fellows buck up!" said Blake. "And I'll call Tom Merry."

And Blake, with his boots roughly laced, and fastening his collar as he ran, hurried along the passage to the Shell dormitory.

He threw open the door and ran in, in his excitement forgetful of the late raid. There was a light in the dormitory, and the Terrible Three and Kangaroo and Skimpole were towelling themselves after a long and arduous wash.

They stared at Blake as he dashed in.
 "Jumping kangaroos!" exclaimed the Cornstalk. "If that bounder hasn't come back again!"

"Collar him!"
 "Here, hold on!" exclaimed Blake hurriedly. "I— Oh!"

They had collared him in a twinkling. He was jerked towards the basin of sooty water in which Tom Merry had just washed his head.

He struggled desperately.
 "You asses!" he shouted. "Stop! I tell you—"

"Duck him!"
 "I—I— Oh, groogh!"
 Splash!

Blake's head went fairly into the flowing bowl, and the sooty water splashed round over the floor and the legs of the juniors. But they did not mind that.

"Give him another!" exclaimed Lowther.
 "In he goes!"

Splash!
 "Yaroo! Groogh!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake was left sitting on the floor, with sooty water running down all over him. The chums of the Shell grinned at him.

"How do you like it?" demanded Tom Merry. "Does it seem as funny now as it did a little while ago, Blakey?"
 "Yow—ow—ow!"

"Some of it's gone in his mouth," said Lowther sympathetically. "These Fourth Form kids never can learn to keep their mouths shut."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You chumps!" roared Blake. "I came to call you!"

"What for?" asked Tom Merry.
 "Lumley's gone!"
 "Oh!"

"He sneaked out with Mellish while we were here, and we've only just discovered it," explained Blake. "You wanted me to call you, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm so sorry! Ha, ha, ha! It was a mistake!"
 "You utter idiots—"

"Well, how were we to know what you came for?" demanded Tom Merry, with tears of merriment running down his cheeks. "You didn't say, and we're not giddy

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thought readers. You haven't had it as bad as we have, anyway."

Blake seized a towel, and began to mop his head dry. It was Bernard Glyn's towel, but Glyn was fortunately asleep. By this time Digby and D'Arcy, fully dressed, were looking in at the door.

"Buck up, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Hewwies has gone for his feahful beast, and we're quite weady."

"Blessed if I see what Blake wanted to stop and wash his head for now," said Digby. "Must say he might have chosen a better time."

"You chump!" said Blake.
 "We're ready now," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We'll be dressed in a minute."

"Buck up, for goodness' sake!"
 It did not take the Terrible Three long to dress. Kangaroo, who was coming with them, was ready as quickly.

The light was extinguished, and the juniors went quietly from the dormitory, and stole down the back staircase.

A window had been left unfastened by Herries, who was already out. One by one the chums of the School House dropped to the ground, and Tom Merry, the last, closed the window.

Then the juniors made their way through the gloom towards the slanting oak by the school wall. A dark form stood there awaiting them.

"Is that you, Herries?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes," came the voice of Herries.

"Up you go, Tom Merry!" said Blake.

"Right-ho!"
 Tom Merry was first over the wall, and he dropped into the road. Digby followed.

"Someone will have to help me up with Towser," said Herries.

"Bai Jove!"
 "Oh, he won't bite—not unless you look at him, or he gets startled, anyway. Take hold of him firmly with both hands—"

"Weally, Hewwies—"
 "I hope you're not afraid of a quiet, good-tempered dog, Gussy."

"Certainly not; but I wefuse to touch that howwible beast!"

"You take him, Blake."

"No fear!"

"Lend me a hand with Towser, Lowther."

"Catch me!"

"You're not afraid, are you, Manners?"

"Not a bit."

"Then help me—"
 "Some other time," said Manners, and he shinned up the tree and was gone.

Herries snorted.
 "Look here, somebody's got to help me with Towser!" he exclaimed.

"Shove him up on the wall yourself," said Blake, from the top.

"Well, he might misunderstand, and fall."

"Oh, dry up!"
 As Herries had no alternative, he lifted up Towser and put him on the slanting oak. The bulldog, fortunately, did not misunderstand, and he scrambled along to the top of the wall. His master followed him, and Towser was persuaded to jump down into the road. The fall did not seem to please him, for he gave a low, whirring growl that made the juniors scuttle back in a hurry.

"Oh, rot!" grunted Herries. "I never saw such a nervous lot of duffers! I— Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "He's not biting me," said Herries. "He's only just nipped my trousers for fun. Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Towser! Towsey! Hoo—groo—shoo! Leggo, you fiendish brute! Chuck it, old doggie! Leggo, you rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Herries persuaded the bulldog to let go. Towser may have intended to nip the garment just for fun, but Herries had certainly had a scratch, too. The juniors laughed.

CHAPTER 7.

At the Green Man.

"BLESSED if I half like this!"
 It was Mellish who made that remark.
 Lumley-Lumley and his companion had stopped in the lane, in sight of the lights of the Green Man. It was Mellish who had stopped first, irresolutely. He had been hanging back, and walking more and more

slowly for some time, but Lumley-Lumley had pretended not to notice it. He preferred not to go alone to the public-house, and Mellish was his only possible companion.

"Come on!" said Lumley shortly.

"I don't half like it."

Lumley looked at him, with a sneer.

"What don't you like?" he asked. "You've been here before, and haven't made any bones about it. What's the trouble now?"

"You know what Tom Merry said."

"Well?"

"The masters have got to know of it, and they've set the prefects on the track," said Mellish uneasily. "They may come nosing round here. Then there's Blake and his lot. Suppose they miss us from the dorm?"

"They're not likely to."

"But if they do?"

"Well, they can't sneak to the masters."

"Well, they might follow us."

Lumley laughed derisively.

"Rubbish! As if they'd leave their beds to bother us. Besides, if they were caught out of bounds they'd be dropped on as heavy as we should."

"I know; but—"

"Hang it, come on, and don't be a fool! We can get a quiet game in the Green Man, and a good supper, and get back to the school with our pockets lined."

"More likely with them empty!" grumbled Mellish.

"Haven't I won, so far?"

"Yes, that's all very well, but Tom Merry—"

"Hang Tom Merry and his rot!" exclaimed Lumley. "And you can take my word for it that I'm going to be the winning horse!"

Mellish hesitated, but the Outsider caught him by the arm and hurried him on. They did not enter the place at the front, where a glare of light and the sound of a loud chorus showed that some of the denizens of the Green Man were "keeping it up." Lumley drew his companion into a dark path beside the inn, leading into the garden. Here a wooden veranda gave access to a room that was lighted, and in which, through the curtains at the window, several men could be seen seated at a table.

Lumley and Mellish trod lightly up the steps of the veranda.

The window formed the upper part of a door, glass above and wood below. Lumley tapped on the glass.

There were three men at the table, and they all looked round.

One was a powerfully built fellow with a black beard. That was Joliffe, the landlord of the Green Man. Another was a short, dark man with a red face. He was Banks, the bookmaker. The third was a youth in a check suit and big shirt studs of rolled gold—one of the "bucks" of Rylcombe, and in other moments a shopman in the establishment of Mr. Yards, the draper, of Rylcombe. But Mr. Poots was a great dandy in leisure moments, and accustomed to "keeping it up with the boys" in the most fashionable manner.

There were cards and glasses on the table, and several little piles of money, and a haze of tobacco smoke in the air.

Joliffe rose and opened the door.

He grinned a welcome to the boys.

"Come in, young gentlemen!" he said. "Welcome!"

"'Eevenin'!" said Mr. Banks, without rising.

"Good-evenin'!" said Mr. Poots, who, as a buck, was bound to drop his final g's. "How do you do?"

Lumley-Lumley nodded to the party.

"Sorry I couldn't come earlier," he said. "I was prevented."

Mr. Joliffe winked.

"The master's eye, eh?" he remarked.

"Oh, no; some interfering cads whom I will make sit up for it, too," said Lumley. "But never mind that; we're here now."

"Good!"

"Have a taste of somethin' to warm you, Master Lumley?" said Mr. Banks, indicating a glass and a bottle on the table.

The Outsider shook his head.

"No, thanks!"

"But you always do," objected the bookmaker.

"Not this evening."

"Why not?"

"I'm going to keep my head clear to play," said Lumley pleasantly. "I'm going to skin you all, you know, right down to your socks."

There was a shout of laughter.

"He, he, he!"

"Funny young gent, ain't he?" said Mr. Joliffe. "Though I shouldn't wonder if he spoke the plain truth, gentlemen, for he has won all along the line, so far."

(Continued on the next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Half-a-crown is awarded to the sender of every joke that appears in this column.

GETTING THE RIGHT TURNIP

"We're having stew for dinner," said the scoutmaster to the tenderfoot, "and I want you to run and fetch me a turnip from Farmer Jones' field. He won't mind."

"Do you want a fairly big one?" asked the tenderfoot.

"About the size of your head," replied the scoutmaster.

Fifteen minutes elapsed, and then Farmer Jones came rushing into the camp.

"One of your lads has gone mad!" he cried. "He's pulling up all my turnips and trying his hat on them!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Lea, 8, Tuke Avenue, Turg Hall, York.

LATE AGAIN!

Bill: "When were you born, Alf?"

Alf (a tardy individual): "Second of April, Bill."

Bill: "Late again!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Bailey, 3, Tugela Street, Catford, London, S.E.6.

UNEXPECTED!

A village grocer was busily interviewing applicants for the job of messenger-boy. To each one he put very searching questions, so as to make sure that the boy he chose would take an interest in his work.

"Well, my boy," he said to one bright-looking youth, "what would you do with a thousand pounds?"

The lad scratched his head thoughtfully.

"I don't know, sir," he answered. "I didn't expect so much for a start."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Vaughan-Baker, Tregarth, Vesey Road, Wylde Green, Birmingham.

WHAT'S IN A NICKNAME?

Tim: "Why do you call your cousin 'Postscript'?"

Tom: "Because her name is Adeline Moore!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Hay, Lynn, 3, Park Rise, Harrow Weald, Middlesex.

HE WAS ONE!

Dissatisfied Player: "Look here, there are two players you've picked for Saturday's match who are not good enough to be in the side."

Captain: "Oh, indeed! And who is the other one?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Burrows, 14, Cecil Street, Derby.

FOLLOWING ADVICE!

Jones arrived at the office on Monday morning covered with bandages.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Smith. "What's happened?"

"I've been taking the doctor's advice," groaned Jones.

"Well, what about it?"

"He told me to go for a tramp every morning, but the first one I tackled was once a boxer."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Higginson, 37, Derby Road, Uttoxeter.

QUITE SAFE!

Hotel Guest: "I say, waiter, I left my boots outside the door last night and they have not been touched."

Waiter: "Make yer mind aisy, sorr; ye cud lave yer good watch outside an' no wan wud touch it!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Hughes, Sunnyside, Twigworth Fields, near Glos.

"I guess so," said Lumley.
 "Luck may change," said Mr. Poots, with a shake of the head.

"It may," agreed Mr. Joliffe. "Well, if you won't have anythin' to drink, Master Lumley, sit down and take a hand."

"I guess I will."

Mellish did not go to the table. After what Lumley had told him he was curious to watch the game, but he did not feel inclined to risk his small possessions in it.

Lumley-Lumley was the most peculiar person that had ever been plucked in the Green Man's little parlour, and the process was certain to be interesting.

"Aren't you going to play, Mellish?" asked Mr. Banks.

The junior shook his head.

"No; I'll watch."

"Oh, play!" said Lumley.

"I haven't the tin," said Mellish. "I'm no good in a game with you chaps. You don't want to play for coppers."

"Ha, ha, ha!" said Mr. Banks. "That's true."

"Quite true, by Jove!" said Mr. Poots, rattling a few shillings and a bunch of keys in his trousers pocket.

"Stuff!" said Lumley. "I'll stand you some tin to play with."

"But—"

"You needn't pay if you don't win."

"Oh, all right!"

Lumley carelessly tossed three pounds on the table for Mellish. Mr. Banks and Mr. Joliffe involuntarily looked at one another. A fellow who could throw money about like that ought to be a gold-mine to them. Mr. Poots opened his pale blue eyes wide. Mr. Poots was a "pigeon," as Lumley was supposed to be, but he had not yet found it out. He had been plucked pretty bare by the hawks of the Green Man, and every week he left a considerable portion of his salary in the hands of Mr. Joliffe. But he had the consolation of knowing that he was "seeing life," as he called it, when he reeled home to bed with liquor in his foolish head, and next to nothing in his pockets.

Mr. Poots was quite ignorant of the fact that he was cheated as regularly as clockwork, and that Lumley was brought into the card party for the express purpose of being cheated, too. But a natural feeling of greed seized upon him at the sight of Lumley's money. He felt that he could do with some of that.

"I see you've come well heeled, Mr. Lumley," said Mr. Joliffe, in a tone he tried to render casual and pleasant.

Lumley nodded.

"Yes, I shall want some cash. Can you change some notes for me?"

"Yes, certainly!"

Lumley laid four five-pound notes on the table. Mr. Joliffe exchanged another quick glance with Mr. Banks. That glance said, as plainly as possible, that this would be ten pounds each for them—very good pay for an hour's play in an evening.

"I'll get 'em changed," said Mr. Joliffe.

He left the room, and came back from the bar with a handful of silver. Lumley counted it coolly, and left it in a pile on the table before him. Young as he was, he was curiously old in experience. He knew how the sight of that little pile of money would lead the hawks on, and make them keen to play, even if luck were going against them.

"What's the game?" asked Mr. Poots.

"Poker!" said Lumley.

Mr. Joliffe exchanged a glance of satisfaction with his confederate. Poker was the game he would have chosen himself. Lumley-Lumley had played poker at the Green Man before, in a way that gave the hawks the impression that he was a mere bungler at the game.

Never for a moment did it cross the mind of Mr. Joliffe, or that of Mr. Banks, that the cute youth from New York was "playing them," as he would have expressed it, and cheerfully leading them on to their downfall.

Mr. Joliffe shuffled the cards, with one eye on Lumley's pile of money.

CHAPTER 8.

A Wild Gamble.

LUMLEY-LUMLEY cut, and Mr. Joliffe dealt. The Outsider glanced at his hand, and changed three cards. Whether his hand had been improved or not by the draw, his face did not show. It was quite expressionless.

The game went round, shillings being added to the pool, and then half-crowns, and finally ten-shilling notes. No limit had been fixed, and the game of poker, unlimited, is about one of the wildest gambles known.

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Lumley was the first to drop a pound into the pool, and then Mr. Poots drew out. The shop assistant could not have raised a whole pound to save his life. He had put in his last ten shillings, and had done that with the consciousness that there would be a painful explanation with his landlady during the remainder of the week. Mr. Poots, with a disgusted expression, threw down his cards, but he rattled the bunch of keys in his trousers pockets to show that it was not for lack of funds that he did so.

Mellish was the next to pass.

The three pounds Lumley-Lumley had given him were in the pool, and he did not choose to put in his own money; and, as a matter of fact, he had no paper money.

The game remained between Lumley-Lumley and the two swindlers.

Mr. Joliffe gave Mr. Banks a peculiar glance, and that gentleman promptly "passed." As the loot was to be divided afterwards between the two rogues, it did not matter to them which was allowed to win the pool.

Lumley-Lumley cheerfully increased the amount to two pounds.

Mr. Joliffe covered it, and called for a show of cards.

Lumley showed a small pair.

Mr. Joliffe had three of a kind, and, of course, took the pool.

He grinned cheerfully.

"I thought you were bluffing," he remarked.

"Did you?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes, I thought so."

"A bold bluff," said Mr. Banks. "A big bluff. That young gentleman has got nerve enough for a whole regiment."

"He has," assented Mr. Joliffe.

Lumley shrugged his shoulders. His pile of money had been considerably diminished. He drew several banknotes from a leather purse, and laid them on the table beside the coins.

The swindlers' eyes almost started from their heads at the sight. They had known that Jerrold was the son of a millionaire, but they had never dreamed that he was so lavishly supplied with money.

"I wish we were all millionaires," said Mr. Banks, with a laugh.

"Yes, it has its advantages," said Lumley. "I need a big capital to skin fellows like you, for instance, and that's where it comes in."

Mr. Joliffe and Mr. Banks laughed uproariously, as if Lumley-Lumley had said a good thing. The cards were collected and given to Lumley to deal.

The Outsider of St. Jim's shuffled them carelessly.

Mellish watched him.

He had seen Lumley-Lumley perform tricks with cards that had made his eyes grow round with wonder.

He knew that Lumley was a past-master of the art of shuffling the cards to suit himself, and of replacing the pack after the cut exactly as it had been before it was cut. These were some of the things he had picked up in the Bowery in New York in his earlier days.

That Lumley-Lumley meant to "play it low down" on the sharpers of the Green Man, Mellish was certain; and it occurred to him now, too, that that absurd bluff on Lumley's part had been purposely designed for the purpose of leading the rascals on.

He had given them the impression that he was utterly reckless, and would back up poor cards with big sums, and that impression was to be their undoing.

Mellish watched with all his eyes, so to speak; but for the life of him he could detect nothing suspicious in the way Lumley shuffled the cards.

Lumley gave them to Mr. Banks to cut, and then brought the two halves together with a snap. Mellish knew, but he could not see, that the cards were replaced just as they had been before; it was done so cunningly that it was impossible to see it.

Lumley dealt the cards.

Mellish watched the faces of the Green Man swindlers. They involuntarily brightened, and Mellish knew that they had good cards.

Lumley-Lumley laid down the pack.

He drew only one card to his hand, and then laid the five cards face downwards on the table beside his money.

Mr. Banks started the ball rolling with a shilling. Mr. Poots came in with another shilling. Mr. Poots had very few shillings left, but he still clung desperately to the hope of annexing some of the St. Jim's fellow's notes.

Mellish put a shilling in as well, and then came Mr. Joliffe with a shilling, and then came Lumley-Lumley with half-a-crown.

Mr. Joliffe smiled brightly.

(Continued on page 14.)



Let the Editor be your pal! Write to him to-day, addressing your letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, CHUMS! As I have told you before, Martin Clifford, the popular author of our St. Jim's stories, is equally "at home" with every type of story. Once again he proves this with his latest yarn of the St. Jim's chums—for next Wednesday you will get a school story that is different, in which horse-racing is a prominent feature of the theme. The title is:

"THE ST. JIM'S JOCKEYS!"

While retaining all the interest and charm of school life at St. Jim's, the yarn yet holds all the thrills of a gripping story of horse-racing. The star characters in it—the St. Jim's jockeys—are Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, whose reputation as a horseman is well known, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider of the school.

There is keen rivalry between Captain Cleveland, Gussy's cousin, and a Major Holbrook as to who owns the better horse, and the great test is to come when both their horses are to race against each other in a local point-to-point steeplechase meeting. But a lot happens ere the race is run—developments that involve the chums of St. Jim's—particularly Gussy and Lumley—in a great deal of exciting adventure. This is a magnificent story that is full of colour and interest, and I am sure you will vote it a winner.

"GHOST RIVER RANCH!"

Mr. E. S. Brooks provides us with more thrills than usual in the next nerve-tugging instalment of his great serial. The highlight of these chapters is when the Black Riders start a gasoline lorry, with a bomb in the driver's cabin, charging straight at the ranch-house in which the St. Frank's juniors and the Double Z cowboys are besieged! It is a dramatic and perilous situation. Read what transpires in next week's gripping instalment.

The new feature that I hinted at last week is to start next Wednesday. Mr. Brooks has always taken a great interest in what his readers like in the way of stories, and busy author though he is, he extends an invitation to all readers to write to him on any topic connected with St. Frank's or with his serials. He will answer all letters in his chat, which will appear in our pages every week. His first chat is in next week's GEM. Read what this popular author has to say to you, chums.

THE TEST MATCHES.

The clack of cricket bat meeting ball sounded good to me on my way to the office the other morning. It was a cheerful reminder—if I needed one—that King Willow now holds full sway, and that we are started on a new cricket season that promises to be one of outstanding interest.

We are all pleased to welcome the Australian tourists who are with us again after a lapse of four years. Once more they

are fit and ready to uphold the honour of Australia against England's chosen elevens in the coming Test Matches.

Both countries are keen cricketing nations, and their rivalry in the Tests goes back to 1877, when the first Test Match was played between them in Australia. Since then 129 matches have been played, of which Australia has won 51; England has the same number of victories, while 27 matches have been left drawn. So this year's series of Tests should be all the keener as each country has a like number of wins.

England holds the coveted "Ashes" at the present time, for our four victories "down under" in the 1932-3 series are still fresh in the memory. But no doubt the Australian team will be all out to repeat their performance of 1930, in England, when they recovered the Ashes in the last Test Match of the series by winning at the Oval. May the best of luck attend the efforts of both teams, and may the Ashes go to the better side—which my English readers hope will be England!

THE ORIGIN OF THE ASHES!

It is not generally known how the term Ashes originated, so perhaps it would be as well to explain the story for the benefit of readers. It started as a joke in the season 1882, after Australia had defeated England in a Test Match at the Oval by the narrow margin of seven runs! This notice appeared in a sporting paper the following day:

"In affectionate remembrance of English cricket, which died at the Oval on August 29th, 1882. Deeply lamented by a large circle of sorrowing friends and acquaintances. R.I.P. N.B.—The body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia."

The following winter when England had her revenge against the "Aussies" in Australia, the stumps at the final Test were burned, and the ashes, contained in an urn, were presented to the late Lord Darnley. To-day that urn is a treasured exhibit at Lord's Cricket Ground. It doesn't go to the winners of a series of Tests. There is no trophy for the victors.

A RACE AGAINST TIME!

Big Ben, whose deep booming chimes are so familiar to us all over the radio, has recently "figured" in a novel race—or rather, was the "unconscious participant" in it. Big Ben's rival was a young lady who stated that she could race across Westminster Bridge before the famous clock had finished chiming the hour of noon. The distance is 1,160 feet, and as Big Ben takes 46 seconds to strike twelve, the young lady had to get across in 45 seconds or less. Big Ben was well beaten, for its rival won the race by six seconds.

While I'm on the subject of Big Ben, do you know the secret of its keeping

such good time? If the clock is losing, it is regulated by the placing of a halfpenny or a penny, according to the time it is losing, in a tray half-way up the pendulum. The addition of this small weight has the required corrective effect. If Big Ben starts to gain, then the coin is removed.

GOOD DOG!

If you should go to see the film "Nell Gwyn," which is now being produced at the British and Dominion Studios, in it you will see featured a very clever dog—a fox terrier called "Lady." Lady is fifteen years old, and there is not another dog in England to equal her for intelligence and tricks. Among her many amazing accomplishments, she can play the piano, waltz on her hind legs, sing any note required, and sneeze, smile, or cough! Lady will also fetch any article in the house that is required by her master, and when it comes to tracking—well, she's got a bloodhound beaten to a frazzle! For wherever Lady's master happens to be she can find her way to him with uncanny accuracy.

THE WORLD'S OLDEST MAN!

Do you remember Zaro Agha, the Turk who claims to be the oldest man in the world? He came to England some time ago. He is reputed to be 156 years old. Well, Zaro, it is now claimed by two Afghans, is not the world's oldest man. Apparently, both Zaro's challengers are older than he is. One of them, Ramzan Khan, gives his age as 170 years old, while the other, Haju Gul, states his to be 180! Believe it or not!

AMAZING SHOWERS.

A short time ago a shower of fish fell in heavy rain at Port Clinton, Ohio, but it is by no means the first time such a thing has happened. Showers of fish have fallen in many parts of the world at different times, and the usual explanation is that the fish get whipped up from the water by a terrific gale, and carried through the air, to fall with the first shower of rain. But more amazing showers than fish have been recorded. For instance, in 1921, in North London, it rained frogs! In France it has rained toads, while in Sweden red worms are reported to have fallen during a snow-storm! But the kind of shower we would all like to see happen again—and be where it happened—is the one that occurred near Worcester many years ago. Periwinkles and crabs fell from the sky in thousands!

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

A letter that was posted for a one-mile journey has travelled 10,000 miles before it was delivered! This is how it happened. The letter was posted in Grimsby on February 2nd, but in its transit to the addressee in the same town, it got lodged in a newspaper going out to a private of the 1st Lincolns in Hong Kong. On receiving it, the private returned the letter, and it eventually reached its destination on April 14th.

THE HORSE FOR HARD WORK.

After many years of hard work you would think that a horse would welcome a comfortable retirement, but not so Honest Tom, the coal hauler of Tredegar, Mon. The quiet life of a farm did not suit Tom when he was retired as too old. He wanted to get back to his old work, so he set out on his own. It was a journey of ten miles back to Tredegar, and Tom had only travelled part of the route once before; yet he found his way back quite safely!

THE EDITOR.

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A DISGRACE TO ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 12.)

He never dreamed but that it was a repetition of the previous performance; that Lumley was trying to bluff the players out by putting up big money.

The round went again, and Lumley again raised the stakes, this time to five shillings. It now cost five shillings to stay in at all, and Mr. Poots promptly dropped out. His last shilling was in the pot, and his last hope was gone.

He rose from the table.
"I think I'll be getting along now," he remarked.

Lumley looked at him with a sneering smile.

"Won't you stay for another round or two?" he asked.

"No. Good-night!"

And Mr. Poots went, with a careless nod from Banks and Joliffe. They did not care very much for Mr. Poots at that moment. They had a much more valuable pigeon in hand, who demanded their whole attention.

Lumley raised the stakes again, putting in ten shillings. Joliffe and Banks cheerfully followed suit. Mellish passed out.

Lumley's next bet was a pound.
At this figure the game went on for some time, pound after pound being dropped into the pot, till quite a considerable sum was collected there.

By this time Mr. Banks and Mr. Joliffe could hardly conceal the greed that flamed in their eyes.

Lumley-Lumley was throwing money into the pool as if it were water, and they were perfectly convinced that his hand was an average one, if not a poor one, and that he was recklessly bluffing. And their own hands were very, very good.

Mr. Joliffe had four of a kind—four kings—a hand almost invincible at poker. Mr. Banks had a royal flush—five spades, running from seven to jack.

Mr. Banks' hand would beat Mr. Joliffe's, strong as the latter's was. A royal flush is the top hand at poker, and Mr. Banks' hand, being "jack up," could only be beaten by another royal flush, ending in a higher card—queen, king, or ace. There were, therefore, only three possible hands to beat Mr. Banks, out of all the cards that could be found in a pack of cards, and he was justified in regarding the pot as his for a certainty.

Lumley-Lumley dropped two pound notes at once into the pool.

The conspirators exchanged glances.

Their game, of course, was to lead Lumley on to put up all his money, and then to show their cards and rake it all in.

But it was unnecessary for both of them to be putting up money at the same time, and the money they had in common might be necessary, too, to prolong the game, and extract more wealth from Lumley-Lumley.

They had both kept in long enough to keep up appearances, and to avoid looking as if they were in collusion.

Now it was for the one with the weaker hand to drop out, and leave it to the other to skin Lumley-Lumley.

The two rascals had a set of signs for the purpose, and when Mr. Banks blew his nose twice, it conveyed the information to his partner that he had a royal flush, and when he turned his signet-ring

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No. 13. Vol. 1 (New Series).

SILVER SKITTLES OUT SAINTS

FIGHT FOR RUNS AT ROOKWOOD

Eric Kildare's Running Commentary

Journeying to Rookwood, Tom Merry & Co. are up against old rivals in Jimmy Silver & Co. Silver extends Merry a warm welcome, at the same time warning him to expect fireworks!

Merry wins the toss, and elects to bat. Quite right, too, on a perfect wicket. Jimmy Silver himself goes on to bowl. Rumour has it that Silver can make the ball turn on any sort of pitch. He'll have to exert his skill to-day. Merry snicks the first delivery away for four. Blake is getting among the runs, too. Hallo! The first over was a flash of sunshine. A perfect delivery from Silver—Merry plays a fraction too far forward, and Lovell flings himself in to bring off a great catch!

St. Jim's are finding Silver unplayable. D'Arcy, Lowther, are soon out, now Figgins—Figgins a victim to a swerver which I should not have liked to meet myself! Silver can bowl! Herries and Digby are making a stand—Digby is out—Fatty Wynn stonewalls stolidly, but Herries falls in attempting an on-drive. St. Jim's all out—56!

St. Jim's are fortunate to have a bowler of Fatty Wynn's calibre to rely on. Silver and Dodd open for Rookwood. Dodd is a hitter—he drives Fatty for four, and then for six. Wait—Dodd takes a risk with a ball from the Falstaff, and plays on to his wicket! Mornington bats stylishly, but runs risks all the time. Wickets are falling fairly fast, but not fast enough for St. Jim's, and Rookwood reach 75.

A low-scoring game this. Merry plays stolidly in St. Jim's second venture, but he loses Blake and Herries early on. Noble backs him up well—but he falls to a brilliant catch by Rawson. Figgins proves the partner Merry needs—together they are making runs fast—a cheer greets the hundred. But a minor collapse has set in, and St. Jim's last wicket falls at 123—Merry carrying his bat for 64.

Set 105 to win, Rookwood are finding Fatty Wynn their chief stumbling block. Silver bats steadily, but Dodd goes at 43, and Lovell does not stay long. Mornington joins Silver, and gives a smashing exhibition—fours seem to pour off his fast-swinging bat. Mornington is in form. Silver succumbs to Wynn, out at 75. Raby bats steadily, and the hopes of the side centre on Mornington. But he is caught in two minds by Wynn and clean bowled! Rookwood are all out for 99.

Thanks mainly to Fatty Wynn, a great victory for St. Jim's!

George Kerr is an adept at anticipating where a batsman is likely to hit the ball. This is called "scotching" the batsman!

Monty Lowther is quick to make a joke, and equally quick at taking a catch in the slips—which isn't such a joke to the batsman!

Robert Digby shines at square leg. Unlike some fellows, who are more like square legs in round holes!



LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

HERBERT SKIMPOLE SPEAKING

My dear friends, I am very pleased to be able to talk to you personally. It is a miracle of these rushing times that makes it possible. Things are going ahead so fast nowadays that soon we shall be able to project our thoughts, or, possibly, our inner selves, and if you look at these matters scientifically there is no limit to what may be done.

Merry has impressed on me the necessity for simple language in addressing you, and I am therefore taking great care to eschew my customary phraseology, which is, I admit, highly technical. There is an excellent reason for this, however, and one which I should like you all to realise fully. While other fellows spend their time playing football and cricket—both splendid games, no doubt—I prefer to delve into the mysteries of Applied Psychology of the Fourth Dimensional Theory, and of the elementary principles of Metaphysics. I have a large collection of valuable tomes dealing with these and kindred subjects.

"The Potato from Infancy to Maturity," by Professor Balmcrumpet; "How to Glow All Over Like a Glow Worm," by Professor Loosetop; and "Some Aspects of Life in a Duckpond," as seen by Professor Tadpole, are among my favourite works.

I did myself recently sally forth to the football field in order to test a theory I had formed regarding the force in foot-pounds produced by the application of a foot to a football. I regret that my appearance excited so much ribaldry that the scientific value of my experiment was lost. I placed the ball on the ground, and took a run at it. Some practical joker, however, had, unknown to me, pressed the ball deep down in a pool of thick mud, and when I kicked it, it stuck tightly in the mud, with the result that I trod in the mud myself, and slipped over on top of the ball—a sorry end to what might have been a valuable contribution to science!

If any of my listeners would care for some elementary instruction in my latest study, "The Feet of the Common Caterpillar: Are They All Alike?"—I shall be only too pleased to be of assistance. It is a most fascinating study, as the caterpillar has over a hundred feet, you know.

Harry Noble is a cricketer born and bred, like most "Aussies." He likes fielding close in at "silly point." It is the batsman who usually looks silly, though!

Dr. Holmes, the headmaster of St. Jim's, is writing a volume on Philology. A "few words" from the Head are quite enough for us!

Fatty Wynn denies the report that when he stepped into a racing shell, he went clean through the bottom!

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Week Ending May 12th, 1934.

Flying Squad Reports

KNOX "NETTLED"

Flying Squad left St. Jim's after classes to purchase cricket gear in Wayland. Later than expected in returning—certain to miss call-over. Knox, bully and prefect, sighted ahead. Scattering, Squad crept up under cover of hedges till level with Knox. At word of command, Squad closed in on prefect. Knox's jacket wrapped over his face, preventing recognition of assailants. Disdaining to rifle Knox's pockets, Flying Squad shook him upside-down till key of masters' and prefects' gate fell out! Leaving Knox in ditch among nettles, Squad took off swiftly and circled St. Jim's to masters' gate. Key enabled them to regain hangars unnoticed. Knox regained this hangar later—much later—in homicidal fury!

RIVALS RAID GUSSY'S "TOPPERS"

A. A. D'Arcy stated intention of replenishing his stock of "toppers." Wear and tear had reduced him to a mere half-dozen! Blake and chums offered to help. D'Arcy preferred to carry hat-boxes from shop to ensure due care—Blake & Co. lending aid. In Rylcombe Lane, Blake & Co. beset by squadron of Grammarians. Saints dropped hat-boxes to engage enemy fighters. Grammarians captured hat boxes and made off—leaving D'Arcy speechless! Report to Chief Air-Marshall Merry produced laughter—then serious attention. Prestige of Flying Squad at stake. Squad in battle formation flew to Rylcombe Grammar School. Seizing opportune moment, Squad raided School House, grabbed hat boxes from Gordon Gay's study, and took off instantly! Merry and Blake fought gallant rearguard action with Grammarian warplanes as Squad got into the air. Gay & Co. left foaming—but Gussy's "toppans" safe and sound!

ST. JIM'S NEWS REEL

Fatty Wynn's bowling is well known at St. Jim's, and he is frequently in demand at the First XI nets. It is a change for Fatty to be able to "bowl out" prefects!

George Herries is a first-class man "behind the stumps." He stands right up to the latest bowling—a courage similar to that of his bulldog, Towser.

Jack Blake bats as befits a fellow from the Champion County! He is a good opening partner—and is very often still there at the finish!

A. A. D'Arcy is a batsman of polish and elegance. If he occasionally gets a "duck," he more frequently helps to cook his opponent's goose!

Harry Manners is a thoughtful cricketer who studies tactics. There is no doubt that if he could bring all his schemes to fruition, he could rout the Australian Test cricketers single-handed!

MONTY LOWTHER CALLING



Hallo, everybody! Remember, the cocker spaniel fellow is often "crestfallen." On the other hand, don't let things cow you; take the bull by the horns! Next, please!

"Where is the best place to get a close haircut?" asks a reader. Wormwood Scrubbs or Dartmoor can be recommended!

As the mountaineer said as he slipped over the precipice: "This is rather letting myself down!"

Did you hear about Skimpole's aunt? The dear innocent old lady telephoned Skimpole from Wayland, and was so pleased with the operator's politeness that she put sixpence in the box for herself!

"Have you seen my black-faced antelope?" said the keeper of the menagerie to Jack Blake. "No. Whom did your black-faced antelope elope with?" asked Blake.

George Gore claims that he has always had a wonderful ear for music. At the age of two he used to play on the linoleum!

A reader inquires the best way to remedy his uncle's baldness. We suggest you get him to read a hair-raising story, old chap! And, by the way, we know a man with such fine muscular development that he can stop a train with his right arm. Oh, yes. He's an engine driver!

Gerald Crooke says he would like to take up gambling as a profession. May we remind Crooke that the only food gamblers get is food for reflection?

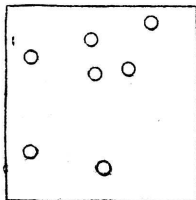
As the film director, rehearsing the death-bed scene, said:

"For Heaven's sake, put more life into your dying!"

Mr. Selby asked young Gibson: "Where is the home of the swallow?" Gibson hesitated, then replied:

"The home of the swallow is in the stomach, sir!" Yes, he got his! Chin-chin till next Wed!

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER



Here are seven St. Jim's fags scuttling across the quad, and Knox with a cane is hot on their trail! Supposing Knox were a magician, and could throw up three straight walls suddenly across the quad, can you discover how to place them so that each fag is shut in in a separate section of the quad? Just draw three straight lines across the quad in any direction.

Solution of Last Week's Puzzle

Move the cricketers in the following order: 2, 4, 6, 5, 3, 1 (repeat these moves in the same order twice more), 2, 4, 6. This calls for twenty-one moves—the fewest possible.

round on his fat finger it also informed Mr. Joliffe that the royal flush was jack high.

Whereupon Mr. Joliffe knew that his four hand was weaker than Mr. Banks' hand, and at the next round he promptly passed.

The game was now between Lumley and the bookmaker.

Mr. Banks' object was to lead Lumley on and on, making him pile up more and more money before the cards were shown.

Never was a scheme more easily carried out.

Lumley fell into the trap with his eyes open.

Not only did he meet every bet of Mr. Banks, but he went better every time, and the game soon cost the large sum of five pounds to "come in."

Then Mr. Banks exchanged a look with Joliffe.

Joliffe's glance said "keep on."

Lumley's money on the table was exhausted now, with the exception of a single five-pound note. He dropped that into the pool, and looked at Mr. Banks. The latter expected him to call for a show of cards, but he did not.

Mr. Banks opened a leather case, took out a five-pound note, and added it to the pool.

Lumley, in his turn, opened a pocket-book, and selected several crisp and rustling banknotes.

The two confederates watched him as if fascinated, while he dropped four ten-pound notes in succession into the pool.

"Forty pounds!" he said, without a tremor in his voice.

CHAPTER 9.

"Skinned" by a Schoolboy!

THERE was a dead silence.

That Lumley was in possession of such a great sum of money had never occurred to the conspirators. But having it in his possession, there was nothing to prevent him from cramming it all into the pool.

No limit had been fixed. The confederates had left the game unlimited, for their own purpose, and Lumley had acquiesced—for his.

And now—

Mr. Banks had either to equal Lumley's stake, or "pass"—that is to say, throw up his cards and leave the pool to Lumley without a show of hands.

Banks and Joliffe looked at one another grimly.

They had not expected this.

To let the pool, containing now the greater part of their immediate capital, pass to Lumley without a struggle was impossible.

But to cover a bet of forty pounds, and then call for a show of cards! Suppose, after all, that Lumley had a stronger hand than Mr. Banks?

Suppose he was not bluffing this time, but staking money upon a stronger hand—cards stronger than the bookmaker's, and fully justifying his play?

It was possible.

Mr. Joliffe's face assumed an ugly expression at the thought. Mr. Banks was staring at him with wide-open eyes, as if waiting for instructions.

Lumley-Lumley yawned.

"Well," he said at last, "are you passing?"

"No," said Mr. Banks hastily. "Then put up your money."

Mr. Banks hesitated.

"It's a big sum," he said at last.

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders. "I guess so; but that's your bisney. There's no limit to this game."

"No; but—"

"Put up, or pass, old man."

"Yes, yes; certainly."

"There's no objection, of course, to my lending my friend Banks a little money?" said Mr. Joliffe. "He didn't come prepared for stakes of this size."

"Just as you like," said Lumley-Lumley, with a nod. "If the bet isn't covered, I take the pool. If it is, I go on as long as you like."

Joliffe drummed on the table with his fingers.

"I suppose an I O U will be all right?" he remarked.

Lumley shook his head at once.

"No paper," he said. "We're playing for cash. That's understood, I guess. I offered you paper the night before last, and you declined."

Mr. Joliffe was fairly caught.

"Wait a minute," he said.

He rose and passed into the bar. He came back with a little bag in his hand, and counted out forty pounds to Mr. Banks. The bookmaker, with a slightly trembling hand, put the money in the pool.

"Show up!" he said briefly.

Lumley-Lumley was in no hurry to turn up his cards. It was Mr. Banks' business to do so first.

The bookmaker showed his cards—a straight flush, jack high. It was a splendid hand, and one any poker player would have staked high upon.

Lumley grinned.

"You can't beat that?" exclaimed Mr. Banks anxiously.

"I guess I can."

"What!" gasped Joliffe.

"What have you got?" asked Mr. Banks, in a choking voice. "Not a royal flush?"

"Yes."

"Jack high?"

"Queen high," said Lumley-Lumley coolly.

"It's a lie!" gasped the bookmaker, forgetting himself for the moment.

Jerrold Lumley laughed, and turned up his cards. Five clubs were disclosed, ranging from eight to the queen in order.

It was a royal flush, and ended one card higher than Mr. Banks'. Lumley stretched out his hand to the pool.

"I guess I take that," he remarked.

Mr. Joliffe and his confederate rose to their feet instinctively. To let the junior take so much money away from them was not to be thought of. So long as they won, they could afford to be pleasant, but in the moment of loss their real nature showed itself.

"You're not going yet?" said Mr. Joliffe, in a husky voice.

Lumley was glancing at his watch.

"Time I got back to St. Jim's," he remarked.

"You'll give us our revenge first?"

"Oh, I'll go on, if you like!" said Lumley cheerfully.

"I told you I was going to skin you, you know!"

Joliffe gritted his teeth. It was beginning to dawn upon him now that Jerrold Lumley was not the inexperienced pigeon he had hoped to pluck. He was a fellow who knew the game of poker to the life, and had nerve enough to face any crowd at the game.

Never had the rascally landlord of the Green Man been so helplessly done, even by a professional sharper, as he had been by this mere schoolboy.

And the thing was growing clearer in his mind now. He and Banks had had such excellent cards—how was that? Was it possible that the boy had "stacked" the cards, and deliberately given them those good hands to lead them on, reserving for himself a hand just able to beat the best of them?

The cards, certainly, were marked, but marked in a way Joliffe had believed to be a secret between himself and Mr. Banks.

It seemed incredible that this boy had discerned the marks, learned them up, and turned his knowledge against the two swindlers in this way!

It was incredible. But—

The mocking light in Jerrold's eyes revealed only too plainly that, incredible or not, it was true.

And it was borne in upon Mr. Joliffe's mind that in this extremely peculiar youth he had met his master at the game, and at every art of blackguardism into the bargain.

At the thought his brow grew black with anger.

What was the use of being given his "revenge," if the markings on the cards were as familiar to Lumley as to himself, and now that the greater part of his capital was in the hands of his cunning and unscrupulous antagonist?

In his mind's eye Mr. Joliffe saw the rest of his money added to the heap Lumley was cramming into his pocket.

His eyes met Mr. Banks', and the landlord of the Green Man read the same thought there. The bookmaker had also "tumbled." He was too old a sharper not to realise when he had been taken in.

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The two men rose to their feet.

Lumley-Lumley had "skinned" them, to use his own expression, but he had not yet got away with the plunder; and they were two men opposed to two boys, in a place far from help.

"You young thief!" said Mr. Joliffe. "You've cheated!"

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"Cheated! You're dreaming! How could I cheat, unless the cards were marked? You weren't playing with marked cards, were you?"

Mr. Joliffe gritted his teeth. He couldn't very well answer that he certainly was, and he did not care to argue the point.

"You'll hand back that money?" he said.

The Outsider laughed again. Mellish, scared by the aspect things were assuming, shrank away towards the window. But Lumley-Lumley showed no sign of fear. The Outsider, rank outsider as he was, had a nerve that had never been known to shake.

"You'll hand back that money?" repeated Mr. Joliffe.

"Not likely!"

"Will you?"

"I guess not!"

"Then we'll take it!"

Lumley made a quick movement to the grate, and caught up a heavy iron poker. Then he sprang to the wall.

"Get out, Mellish!" he said. "You first!"

Mr. Joliffe sprang forward. Lumley made a savage swipe at him with the heavy poker, and the landlord of the Green Man sprang back only in time. He would have fallen stunned if he had caught the blow. Lumley evidently meant business.

Mellish was fumbling with the latch of the door. Lumley looked at the two swindlers with perfect coolness, his eyes scintillating. They were hesitating to rush on him. His hardihood amazed and dismayed them.

"Keep your distance," said Lumley. "I've played you at your own game, and skinned you, as I meant to do all along. No need to quarrel. We'll have a little game after this, if you play without marking the cards, on fair terms. It's silly to lose your temper. Get that door open, Mellish, you fool!"

But Mellish's hand had dropped from the latch as he caught sight of a form outside the glass.

"There's somebody outside!" he faltered.

Then even Lumley started.

CHAPTER 10.

Knox on the Track!

KNOX, the prefect, came quietly along the passage in the School House upon which the junior dormitories opened. There was a cunning expression upon the face of the senior, and his light eyes were glinting in the dark.

He paused at the door of the Fourth Form dormitory and listened.

There was no sound within.

Knox opened the door quietly.

The dormitory was dark and silent.

For some moments the prefect remained hesitating. Then he switched on the electric light, and the dormitory was flooded.

Several juniors started and awoke.

Knox cast a quick, anxious glance up and down the row of beds. He looked relieved as he saw that several of these were empty.

His suspicions had not been unfounded. More than once he had suspected the juniors, and had been proved in the wrong. But Knox was of a suspicious, fault-finding nature, and each time his suspicions proved to be unfounded, only made him more keen to show that there was something in them, after all, by catching the juniors in fault.

He was evidently right this time. Six beds in the Fourth Form dormitory were vacant, and it was nearly eleven o'clock.

The juniors who had awakened blinked sleepily at the prefect as he advanced into the room.

"Blake, Herries, D'Arcy, Digby, Lumley, Mellish!" muttered Knox, running his eye over the beds and counting up those who were missing. "Reilly!"

"Faith, and I'm asleep!"

"Reilly! Where are Blake and the others gone?"

"How should I know?"

Knox gritted his teeth.

"Hancock, do you know where they are?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"Where is Blake?"

"Not in bed," said Hancock, looking at the empty bed.

"I know that!" roared Knox. "Do you know where he is?"

"Out of bed, I should say!"

"Very well. I shall soon discover, and they will smart for this!" said Knox.

And he turned the light out and quitted the dormitory.

He left the Fourth Formers in a buzz of excitement. That there was trouble in store for Blake they well knew, and they were sorry. Jack Blake's determination to keep the Outsider of St. Jim's in the straight path was likely to cost him dear.

Knox hesitated in the passage.

He was a prefect, and it was his duty to look into such matters as this. But it is to be feared that it was not a sense of duty that was actuating the senior now. He was very much of a bully, and Blake & Co. had never knuckled under to his bullying, and that had bred a bitter dislike for them in the prefect's breast.

Knox was glad to find Blake in fault; to Lumley and Mellish he gave hardly a thought. But at the idea that Blake had broken bounds at night he felt an angry satisfaction.

But he must be sure.

It was possible that only some boyish jape had taken the juniors out of their beds, and they might be in the passages, or in the other dormitories.

It was even possible that they were hiding somewhere to delude the prefect into accusing them of breaking bounds, in order to cover him with confusion by proving the contrary.

Knox felt that he must be very careful. He had been made to look a fool before by bringing too hasty an accusation against Blake.

He reflected a few moments, and then made his way to the Shell dormitory. He entered and turned on the light.

There were four empty beds there, and he at once noted that they belonged to Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, and Harry Noble. That the Terrible Three and Kangaroo were with Blake and the rest, he was certain. But where?

"Glyn!" he exclaimed, meeting the startled eyes of the Liverpool lad. "Tom Merry is not in bed!"

"Isn't he?" said Glyn.

"No. Do you know where he is?"

"Better ask him!"

"Do you know where he is, Dane?"

"Find out!"

Knox gritted his teeth.

"You're asking us to sneak!" said Dane angrily. "You won't get a word out of me! Yes, you can lick me if you like; but you won't!"

"Skimpole, do you know where Tom Merry is?"

Skimpole groped for his glasses, put them on, and blinked through them at the angry prefect.

"Did you speak to me, Knox?" he asked.

"Yes. Where is Tom Merry?"

"In bed, I presume," said Skimpole. "It is long past bed-time, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox scowled fiercely at the laughing Shell fellows. Skimpole blinked in surprise.

"Tom Merry is gone out," said Knox.

"Bless me! Is he? Oh, yes, now I remember—"

"Shut up!" said Gore.

"Really, Gore—"

"Hold your tongue, ass!"

"Hold your own, Gore!" exclaimed Knox angrily. "Go on, Skimpole! Look here! I have found a window unfastened downstairs. I looked into the Fourth Form dormitory, and found Blake and several others gone. Tom Merry and some of the Shell seem to have gone, too. I want to know where they are!"

"Very natural," said Skimpole.

"Well, do you know?"

"I do not know for a fact, but I think I can form a pretty clear idea," said the genius of the Shell thoughtfully.

"Shut up, Skimmy!" shouted a dozen voices.

Skimpole blinked round.

"It is all right," he said. "I'm not going to tell Knox anything."

"Where is Tom Merry?" shouted Knox.

"Under the circumstances, I beg leave to decline answering that question," said Skimpole, blinking at him.

Knox clenched his hands. But he had not come there for a row with the Shell, and he did not want to prejudice his case when it came before the masters by being guilty of violence now.

He left the dormitory.

He descended the stairs, and stopped at the window he had found unlocked. After a little thought, he climbed through it, and dropped to the ground outside.

Knox had been told, with the other prefects, of the suspicion that St. Jim's boys haunted the Green Man, and the thought that Tom Merry & Co. were the guilty parties filled him with fierce satisfaction.

To go down to the Green Man now, and find Tom Merry there—and Blake—and the rest—that was his idea!

What a triumph for him when he marched them all in to the Head, and stated what he had discovered. Knox was feeling quite elated as he went down the dark lane, his mind full of visions of the triumph to come.

CHAPTER 11.

Tom Merry's Timely Arrival!

TOM MERRY & CO., quite unconscious of the fact that a prefect from St. Jim's was on their track, stepped quietly along the dark path beside the Green Man.

Before them stretched the long garden of the inn, extending down to the bank of the Rhyl. On the left was the house, and from the back of the house light streamed from a half-glass door upon a wooden veranda, and upon the shadowy garden.

Tom Merry stopped, and looked up past the veranda at the window.

There was a thickness of curtain within which obstructed but did not prevent a view of the interior, and Tom Merry discerned moving forms within.

The outline of one of them, nearest the window, he knew well.

"It's Lumley!" he muttered.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Lumley, right enough!" said Blake. "I suppose it's settled what we're going to do—take him away, whether he'll come or not?"

Tom Merry's face set grimly.

"That's the programme," he said. "We'll tell him to come—and if he won't, we'll take him. Come on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry led the way up the steps of the veranda. He paused outside the glass door of that room.

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He caught a glimpse now of what was going on within, and it surprised him.

"By George!" he muttered. "It's a row there!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Lumley's got a poker!"

"Phew!"

"Looks as if he's been winning, and they don't want him to get away with the tin," Monty Lowther remarked.

"Then it's lucky for him we came!"

Tom Merry tried the door.

Mellish had just retreated from it, on seeing the shadowy form outside, under the belief that it was some member of the Green Man gang. Lumley thought the same thing, and as the door opened from outside, he retreated into a corner, still with the heavy poker firm in his grasp.

"More of you—eh?" said Lumley. "Well, come on, if you want to be brained! You'll find me a tough customer, I guess."

Joliffe did not reply, and Mr. Banks was voiceless. They stared blankly at the individual who entered the room from the veranda.

They knew Tom Merry by sight.

Lumley uttered a startled exclamation.

"Tom Merry!"

The hero of the Shell gave him a scornful look.

"Yes, Tom Merry!" he exclaimed. "We found you were gone, you see."

Lumley laughed.

"And you followed me?"

"Yes."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, following Tom Merry in and fixing his eyeglass disdainfully upon the Outsider. "We have twacked you down, you wottah, to bring you back!"

Lumley laughed again. The situation seemed to amuse him very highly.

Joliffe ground his teeth.

"You've no right in here, Master Merry," he said. "I'll trouble you to get out—and quick!"

Tom Merry looked at him contemptuously.

"I'll go when that chap comes with me, that's all," he said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lumley. "This is rich! I'm ready to go—and I'm glad of your company! Come on, Mellish, old man—our friends won't trouble us now!"

Tom Merry looked at him in surprise. He did not quite understand either the words or manner of the Outsider.

"You're ready to come?" he said.

"I guess so!"

"You don't intend to resist?"

"Not at all."

"No tricks, you know."

"Honest Injun!" said Lumley cheerfully. "You've dropped into this little game just at the right moment, as a matter of fact. My dear friends here were going for me, because I've beaten them at their own game!"

Tom Merry's eyes opened wide.

"Beaten them!" he exclaimed.

Lumley-Lumley nodded coolly.

"I guess so."

"You have won?"

"Yes."

"He's robbed us!" said Joliffe between his teeth. "You can take him with you if you like, Master Merry, but he doesn't go till he's returned our money!"

Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"You won't get a cent of it!" he said.

"You young swindler—"

"Oh, come off! It's a case of the biter bit, and you can't complain."

"You'll 'and back that money!" said Mr. Banks.

"Not a red cent."

The juniors of St. Jim's were all in the room now. There were enough of them to decide the question if Mr. Joliffe and his friends showed trouble. But they were puzzled and dismayed. The situation took them wholly by surprise.

They had come down to take a foolish lad from the clutch of the hawks. They had expected to find Lumley-Lumley the loser of a large sum, and still losing, but probably determined to go on playing in the hope of winning back his losses.

What they really found confounded them.

Lumley had been the winner, and the hawks had been plucked, and they were very savage about it, too.

"Bai Jove!" muttered D'Arcy. "I nevah thought of this, you know."

"You'd better come, Lumley," said Tom Merry shortly.

"I guess I'm ready!"

Mr. Joliffe made a forward stride.

"I tell yer he don't go till he's 'anded back the money!" he exclaimed fiercely. "He's cheated us!"

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"Cheated you!"

"Yes."

"In what way?"

"The cards were marked!" said Mr. Joliffe desperately.

Tom Merry turned a stern glance upon the Outsider.

"Is that true, Lumley?" he asked.

Lumley gave another shrug.

"Mr. Joliffe ought to know," he replied. "They were his cards."

"His cards!"

"I guess so."

"That's neither here nor there," said Mr. Joliffe. "The cards were marked, and that young rip gave us good hands to lead us on, and gave himself a better one—and—"

"And skinned you, just as I said I would," said Lumley coolly. "I don't hand back a red cent of it, either."

"Did you cheat them?" said Blake.

"Wolf eat wolf, my dear boy," explained Lumley, "and they happen to be the wolves who are eaten. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd better give them their money back."

"Not a cent."

"So cheating at cards is another of your accomplishments, Lumley," Kangaroo remarked. "It seems to me that a reformatory school is a more suitable place for you than St. Jim's!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry was perplexed. He had come there to force the Outsider away; upon the question in dispute between the Outsider and Joliffe he did not feel competent to decide. It was too difficult for him; but his original determination remained unmoved.

"I don't know which of you is the greater blackguard of the two," he said, in disgust. "But you seem to have got Lumley here to fleece him, Mr. Joliffe, and you only deserve what you've got. I've come to fetch Lumley back, and I'm going to do it. Come, Lumley!"

"Certainly!"

Lumley joined the juniors cheerfully.

Mr. Joliffe sprang towards him, and the juniors lined up to receive him.

"Stand back!" said Tom Merry quietly. "You'll get hurt if you don't!"

The landlord of the Green Man realised it. He muttered a curse and stopped. Mr. Banks had not made a movement. The fat bookmaker was not built for war, and he did not intend to be mixed up in a fight for any consideration.

"I'll have it back, though!" said Joliffe between his teeth. "You 'ear me? I'll have it back, and take it out of that young thief's hide, too!"

"You're welcome to try," said Lumley contemptuously.

"Get out!" said Tom Merry shortly.

The St. Jim's juniors crowded through the door. Mr. Joliffe gave them a savage look, and rushed from the room.

"Look out!" muttered Blake. "He's gone for help!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We shall have a fight on our hands before we get away very likely," said Manners.

"I guess so," said Lumley coolly.

The juniors scrambled quickly down the veranda. They were not afraid of Mr. Joliffe or his friends, but they had no desire to be mixed up in a row at a public-house, especially at that hour.

They ran down the lane beside the inn and reached the gate, and hurried out into the road, Mellish and Lumley in their midst.

There was a sudden exclamation in the gloom under the trees and the sound of a dog's fierce growl.

"Ah! I've got you—one of you! Ah!"

It was the voice of Knox, the prefect. The words were followed by a yell of terror. Tom Merry gasped.

"My hat! It's Knox!"

"The prefect!"

"And Towser's got him!"

CHAPTER 12.

A Fight with Toughs!

KNOX, the prefect, had reached the inn, and as he skulked along quietly in the deep shadow of the trees by the lane he had fairly run into Herries, waiting there with Towser.

Herries had not heard him coming. Knox was being very cautious and stealthy, desirous of making sure that the juniors were at the inn, by careful scouting, before he showed himself.

He ran into Herries without seeing him, and the next moment Towser was upon him. Knox had recognised the form as that of a boy, and although he did not know Herries in the dark he had no doubt that it was one of the juniors from St. Jim's.

He grasped Herries by the shoulder, but he reckoned without the bulldog. The growl of Towser warned him—too late! Towser's bite quickly followed his growl.



In a moment a terrific scrap was going on in the lane. Hitting out fiercely, the chums of St. Jim's soon showed the Green Man roughs that they were tough customers! The roughs found themselves outnumbered and outfought. Their mastiff fared little better against Towser, and he suddenly fled with his tail between his legs.

Knox gave a yell of terror as he caught a glimpse of white teeth, and then felt the same teeth snap upon him.

Towser, fortunately, snapped more trouser than flesh, but Knox felt the teeth all the same, and he leaped out into the middle of the lane, with Towser clinging to him.

"Oh!" he roared. "Help! Murder!"

The juniors, startled as they were by the sudden appearance of the prefect, could not restrain a shout of laughter at the ridiculous figure he cut.

Knox's wild jump shook Towser off, but the bulldog wasn't finished yet. He made another rush at Knox, and Knox dodged him wildly.

"Call him off!" shrieked the prefect. "Yow! Yah! Call him off!"

"Towser! Towser!"

"Help!"

"Towser! Towsy!"

But Towser declined to listen to the voice of the charmer. He supposed that Knox had attacked its master, and Towser was a faithful dog.

"Towsy! Towsy!"

"Yah! Help!"

Knox dodged the bulldog, and dodged again. Then he fairly bolted. The juniors saw him streaking down the lane in the dim starlight, with the bulldog after him.

They burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sound of voices and footsteps in the shadowy garden of the inn. Tom Merry cast a quick glance back.

"We'd better cut off after Towser," he remarked. "No good getting mixed up in a row with these blackguards."

"Quite wight, deah boy!"

The juniors hurried down the lane. Tom Merry was somewhat uneasy in his mind about allowing Lumley to retain possession of the money he had won at cards, but that was

evidently not a question to be settled now. Afterwards there would be time to call the Outsider to account.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, as they ran on. "Knox must have discovered that we were out of the dorm, you know, and followed us. There will be a feahful wow. He'll know who were out if he's been in the dorm, and, anyway, he's bound to recognise Towsah. It looks to me as if there's goin' to be a wow."

"You're right, Gussy."

"It's Lumley's fault," said Manners. "All the fault of that rotten Outsider!"

Lumley gave a sneering laugh.

"Why couldn't you mind your own business?" he replied.

"I didn't ask you to follow me, did I?"

"Well, there's one comfort—he'll get it in the neck!" said Digby. "I shouldn't wonder if he's expelled from St. Jim's!"

The Outsider laughed again.

"That won't happen," he said.

"You seem mighty sure about it."

"I am sure about it," said Lumley coolly. "The Head's made an agreement with my pater to keep me at St. Jim's for three years, and he can't expel me!"

"My hat!"

"As for anything else, I can stand it. It won't be any worse than you chaps get, anyway, I suppose."

"I should say it would, considering that you went to the Green Man to gamble and we only went to fetch you away."

"How will the Head know?" asked Lumley. "I shan't tell him so, and if you chaps start blowing your own trumpets you mayn't be believed. 'Self praise is no recommendation,' you know, as the old proverb says."

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, don't jaw, you worm!" said Tom Merry roughly.

"There's a ditch handy there, and you may get a ducking before we get in if you're not careful."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Jack Blake, suddenly stopping.

There was a loud growling and barking in the gloom behind. The juniors looked round, a light flashed, and there were footsteps and voices.

"They're after us!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's no good running; we shall have to have it out," said Tom Merry, setting his teeth. "Well, I don't mind so much here—only I didn't want to get mixed up in a row in a pub. We'll give Joliffe & Co. all they want if they tackle us here."

"What-ho!"

"There they are!" roared a voice.

"Look out for the dog!" muttered Blake. "That's Joliffe's mastiff, and he's a beast. Look out for his teeth!"

GIVING THE GAME AWAY!



Small Boy (as Customs official searches through his father's bag for dutiable articles): "Oh, he's getting warm, isn't he, dad?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to K. Watson, 201, Desborough Road, Eastleigh, Hants.

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps we had bettah wun, deah boys!"

"Afraid?" sneered Lumley.

D'Arcy turned on him.

"You uttah wottah!" he exclaimed. "I was thinkin' of my trowsahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind you trousers now, Gussy," said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "Buck up!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

The juniors stood together in the dark lane. The pursuers were close upon them now, and further running was not of much use.

Dim forms loomed in the starlight.

Mr. Banks was not there—running was not much in the fat bookmaker's line. But Mr. Joliffe could be recognised, and there were three powerful fellows with him—hangers-on of the Green Man Inn.

"There they are!" repeated Mr. Joliffe.

The running figures came to a stop.

It was only for a moment. Taking breath, they rushed at the juniors, the dog leaping on ahead with fierce barking.

But there came a low, rumbling growl from behind the juniors, and a powerful form leaped from the gloom and fastened on the mastiff.

It was Towser.

Herries had recaptured him at last, and returned with him in the nick of time. Towser fastened on the mastiff with a businesslike growl, and the two dogs went rolling over in the lane.

"Good egg!" murmured Tom Merry, glad enough to be relieved of that enemy more to be feared than Mr. Joliffe or his men.

Growling fiercely, the two dogs rolled over and fought. Meanwhile, the four rascals from the Green Man were upon the juniors.

The juniors hit out fiercely.

Lumley piled in with the rest, showing plenty of pluck, and Mellish was the only one who scuttled off towards the school, leaving the fighting to the others.

Mr. Joliffe and his friends had expected to have everything their own way when they overtook the juniors. They had regarded catching them as the only difficulty, but now they found that the lads were tough customers.

The odds were on Tom Merry's side, and the Green Man roughs, full-grown men as they were, soon discovered that they had taken on too large an order.

Mr. Joliffe went into the dust from an uppercut from Tom Merry, and each of his men had a couple of juniors to tackle, and found them too much for them.

Suddenly the mastiff broke away from Towser and fled. He had had enough of close quarters with the bulldog. Towser was rushing in pursuit when Herries' voice called to him:

"Towser! Fetch 'em! Good dog!"

Whereupon Towser changed his mind, and, instead of following the mastiff, he fastened upon the leg of the nearest rough.

The man gave a yell of terror.

Dragging himself away from the bulldog he fled at top

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speed down the lane, and his example was immediately followed by the others.

Mr. Joliffe, staggering to his feet, found himself deserted.

"Come back!" he roared. But the roughs did not come back. And Towser made a rush for Mr. Joliffe, and the landlord of the Green Man dashed off, with Towser in pursuit. And a yell from him in the distance showed that Towser had allowed himself one free bite, at least.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "That was warm!"

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, mopping his nose with a handkerchief. "I have weceived a feahful blow, deah boys! My nose is injahed!"

"Look at my eye!" grunted Blake.

"I cannot see it in the dark, deah boy. My nose——"

"Oh, blow your nose!"

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

"Oh, come on!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Let's get back to the school. We've got to face the music yet!"

And with that comforting reflection the juniors tramped on towards St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 13.

A Clean Breast of It!

DR. HOLMES was waiting for the juniors to come in. Mellish was in the Head's study, sitting on the extreme edge of a chair, and looking very anxious and uneasy. He had been in some time, but the Head had asked him nothing, leaving the investigation till the rest of the party should return.

Knox was in the study, too, and doing his best to keep an expression of ill-natured satisfaction off his face. Mr. Railton had just come in, to report the arrival of the juniors, and he was conversing with the Head in low tones.

There was a tap on the door, and Tom Merry & Co. entered.

The juniors had obeyed Mr. Railton by coming to the study as quickly as possible, and they had had no time to make any improvement in their appearance. Rough-and-tumble scrambling and fighting in the lane had not made them look very respectable. D'Arcy's swollen nose and Blake's darkened eye caught the attention at once. Their clothes were dusty and in disorder, and some of them had lost their caps. They looked, upon the whole, a remarkable set of hooligans for St. Jim's.

The Head's brow grew sterner as he eyed them.

Only Jerrold Lumley-Lumley met his gaze coolly. The rest, conscious of the poor appearance they presented, hung their heads, and kept their eyes on the floor.

"Well," said Dr. Holmes, breaking the silence, "you have returned?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Where have you been?"

"Out of bounds, sir!"

Dr. Holmes almost smiled.

"I am aware of that," he said. "Knox has made his report to me, as was his duty as a prefect. Kindly repeat what you told me, Knox."

Knox's eyes rested for a second upon Tom Merry, with a gleam of triumph in them. But his manner was subdued, quiet.

"I was making my rounds, and I found a window unfastened, sir," he said. "Knowing that these juniors were frequently in mischief when others are quietly in bed, I went to their dormitories. I found that there were ten boys missing, and these are the ten, sir."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"Having been already informed of St. Jim's fellows being seen at the Green Man, I decided to go there and investigate before making my report," said Knox. "I left the school quietly. I reached the Green Man, and found these boys just leaving, and they set a dog upon me."

"That's not true, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

Dr. Holmes made a gesture.

"Let Knox finish, Merry."

"Yes, sir; but——"

"Go on, Knox!"

"I was attacked by a savage bulldog they set upon me, and had to leave," said Knox. "I have been bitten, and my clothes torn. I got back to the school as fast as I could——"

The juniors could not help grinning for a moment as they recalled Knox's hurried flight. There was no doubt that he had got back to the school as fast as he could.

Knox caught the grin, and scowled.

"And made my report, sir," he concluded. "That is all I know by actual observation, but there is no doubt as to their object of visiting a low public-house."

"You have heard what Knox says, Merry," said Dr. Holmes, turning to the hero of the Shell with a troubled brow. "I was never more amazed in my life when he

made the report. You are the last boy I should imagine guilty of such an offence. The other boys here, or most of them, bear the highest characters in the Fourth and the Shell. Mr. Railton is of the same opinion."

"Entirely so," said Mr. Railton.

"Thank you, sir!"

"And so, black as the matter looks at present, I have hopes that you may be able to offer me some explanation, Merry," said the Head. "If this is a wild prank, it is reprehensible enough, but I am very unwilling to believe that you and the rest could be guilty of acts of blackguardism."

And the look of distress in the Head's face showed how earnest he was. Tom Merry was deeply touched.

"It's good of you to think so well of me, sir," he said, in a low voice. "If I had gone to the Green Man to act the giddy goat—I mean to be a blackguard, sir—I should deserve all you could give me."

"You did not?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"You do not deny going to the Green Man?"

"No, sir."

"You knew it was out of bounds?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"And when Knox found you there—"

"We didn't set the dog on him, sir."

"He ran right into Towser and me, sir," said Herries. "Towser thought he was going for me, and so he went for him. Towser's a splendid dog, sir. He stands up for me."

"I am quite willing to believe that this explanation of the attack on Knox is correct," said the Head, while the prefect scowled. "But what explanation have you to give for your presence at the Green Man?"

Tom Merry & Co. were silent.

To say that they had gone for Lumley-Lumley was to make matters worse for the Outsider of St. Jim's. True, he deserved little consideration at their hands, but they could not be guilty of anything that savoured in the least of sneaking.

And by the sneering expression upon the Outsider's face it was pretty plain that he did not mean to help them out of the difficulty. In fact, it was not hard to see that he intended to make matters as bad as possible for Tom Merry & Co., and involve them in his own disgrace if he could.

"Well," said Dr. Holmes, gently enough, "I am waiting for your reply, Merry."

"I—I—" began Tom Merry.

Then he stopped.

"I do not understand your silence, Merry," said Dr. Holmes, after an awkward pause. "If you have an honourable explanation to give, you can give it, I suppose?"

"We went to the Green Man with honourable intentions, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We're not friends with Joliffe and his gang. We've—we've just had a row with them, sir, and we had a fight in the lane," said Tom Merry, flushing.

"Then why did you go?"

The juniors were silent again.

"I suggest questioning Lumley, sir," said Mr. Railton quietly.

The Outsider started. The Housemaster was much keener than the kind old Head, and he could see much more of the matter than Dr. Holmes could.

"Very well," said Dr. Holmes, bending his eyes upon Lumley-Lumley. "Why did you go to the Green Man, Lumley? I warn you to speak the truth, because, if necessary, I shall communicate with Mr. Joliffe to ascertain the facts."

The Outsider grinned. He knew what sort of a story Mr. Joliffe would be likely to tell about him after what had happened at the Green Man that evening.

"I suppose I'd better make a clean breast of it, sir?" he remarked.

"You certainly had better."

"Very well, sir. I went there for a little game."

"What?" ejaculated the Head.

"A little game, sir."

"A—a—a little game?"

"Yes, sir. Poker, sir—draw poker. I find things pretty dull at this school, sir," said Lumley, with cool impertinence. "I used to have a much livelier time. I'm now here, sir, and don't yet rightly know what's allowed, and what isn't. I'm sorry if I've done wrong, sir. I'm telling you the truth, and that's what you've asked for."

"You went to the Green Man to gamble with the men there?" asked the Head, drawing a deep breath.

"Yes, sir," said Lumley-Lumley coolly.

CHAPTER 14.

No Luck for Lumley?

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY did not move a muscle under the startled, searching gaze of the Head. He flicked a patch of dust from his sleeve.

The rest of the juniors were silent.

"Well, that is a frank confession, at all events," said Dr. Holmes at last. "That you are new to our ways here, Lumley, and that you have had a very peculiar training, I know, but you are perfectly aware that you have done wrong—grave wrong."

"I suppose so, sir."

"You have played cards for money?"

"Yes, sir."

"With Joliffe and the rest there?"

"Just so, sir."

"I do not quite follow," said the Head. "If you went there on friendly terms with Joliffe, and Tom Merry and these others have been fighting with him, I presume that you did not all go in one party?"

Lumley gave a slight shrug.

"I prefer to say nothing about the others, sir."

"You had better tell me the facts."

"I have done so about myself, sir. Is it fair to ask me to say anything against the others, who are here to speak for themselves."

"Perhaps not," said the Head slowly—"perhaps not."

Tom Merry's lips hardened. Lumley was not afraid of saying anything against them; he knew that the truth from his lips would save them. His words were carefully calculated to give the impression that they also were guilty.

Mr. Railton's glance searched Lumley-Lumley's face.

"You do not wish to incriminate the others, Lumley?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"I hope that is your motive," said the Housemaster. "I hope that your motive is not an infinitely baser one."

"I hope so, sir," said Lumley calmly.

Mr. Railton turned to the Head.

"I have something to say which may throw some light on the matter, sir," he said. "In the first place, only seeing with my own eyes would make me believe that Tom Merry and his friends would be guilty of base conduct. I spoke to the prefects yesterday about St. Jim's boys being seen at the Green Man, and Kildare had the idea of letting the juniors themselves investigate the matter, picking on the boys of the best character in the Lower Forms to do so. Kildare told me that Tom Merry had undertaken to do his best to discover what was going on, and to put a stop to it. I think it is possible that this prank is the result of Kildare speaking to him."

"Ah!" said the Head.

"Now, answer me, Tom Merry," said the Housemaster. "Did you go to the Green Man on business of your own?"

"N-no, sir!"

"Did you go because you believed that a St. Jim's boy was there, and you wanted to get him away from his rascally associates?"

Tom Merry coloured. He had a natural horror of appearing to have acted like a good little boy in a story-book, but he had to tell the truth.

"Yes, sir," he said quietly.

"Very good. I need not ask you—and would not ask you—the name of the boy; but in view of Lumley's confession it is needless. You will understand the matter now, Dr. Holmes."

"That Tom Merry and the rest went to the Green Man to fetch Lumley away!" exclaimed the Head.

"Yes, sir. I have not the slightest doubt that that is the case. It was certainly a very reckless freak, for Kildare

(Continued on the next page.)

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had, of course, not meant anything of the kind in placing the matter in Tom Merry's hands. I am afraid that the thought of an adventure out of bounds was not without its attractions for the boys. But that their motive was honourable, and that they were doing what they considered their duty, I am sure."

"I am glad to think so," said the Head slowly.

"That accounts for the facts that Lumley's visit to the Green Man was a friendly one, and that Tom Merry and the others fought with the roughs there."

"Quite so," said the Head, looking very relieved. "Now that this explanation has been made, Merry, you can have no objection to stating whether it is correct."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Go ahead, Tom Mewwy, deah boy!"

"It is correct, sir," said Tom Merry. "I would not have sneaked about Lumley, but he has told you himself why he was at the Green Man."

"Exactly so."

Jerrold bit his lip.

He had intended to injure Tom Merry & Co.; but his confession had not served the purpose after all. Mr. Railton had been too keen for him.

"Very well," said the Head, after a pause, "I take it that Lumley went to the inn to gamble, and Tom Merry and the rest went to fetch him away—a very foolish act on their part, but which, under the circumstances, I can excuse on consideration of their very excellent motives. But I must deal with you, Lumley. You have confessed to an action for which I should expel any other boy from this school."

"I am sorry, sir."

"You do not look sorry," said the Head sharply. "You have acted in a disgraceful manner, and very nearly brought serious trouble upon better boys than yourself. You have been fleeced, I have no doubt, by the sharpers at the Green Man—"

Lumley grinned, but did not speak. But Tom Merry spoke.

"You ought to know, sir, that Lumley has won a great deal of money," he said. "I think he ought not to be allowed to keep it. As he does not intend to tell you, I do so."

Lumley gritted his teeth.

"Hang you!" he muttered.

Dr. Holmes' brow grew harder.

"Silence, Lumley! You won money at the Green Man?"

"Ye-es, sir; I guess so."

"How much? Does anyone here know?" asked the Head, with a manner that implied very plainly his disbelief in any statements made by Lumley himself.

Mellish knew, and Lumley knew that he would say, so he answered:

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"About seventy pounds, sir."

The Head started.

"Seventy pounds!"

"Yes, sir. They tried to get it back by force, and that was the cause of the row."

"We helped Lumley to get away," explained Tom Merry.

"But we're not going to stand by him in keeping the money."

"Wathah not!"

"Oh, it's your turn now!" said Lumley. "Mine will come!"

"Silence, Lumley! You have acted disgracefully. It would have been bad enough if you had been fleeced at the Green Man, as foolish lads have been before. But to get the better of practised sharpers shows that you must be as cunning and unscrupulous as they are. You are a disgrace to St. Jim's."

Lumley was silent.

"Lay the money you have won upon the table."

The Outsider obeyed.

"That money will be returned to the Green Man," said Dr. Holmes, while Lumley bit his lips with chagrin. "You shall not keep a shilling of it! If you have not given the correct amount, I shall ascertain it from Joliffe."

"That is correct, sir."

"I cannot take your word. But for a certain difficulty I am under in the matter, I should expel you from the school," said the Head sternly. "As that cannot be done just now, I shall make an example of you in another way. You will be flogged, Lumley, and confined for a period of three days in the punishment-room, on bread-and-water."

The Outsider's face hardened.

"Very well, sir," he said quietly.

"You others are excused," said Dr. Holmes. "You have done wrong, and such a thing must not occur again, but at the same time I thank you for taking this trouble, and running this risk for the honour and reputation of the school you belong to. You may go."

"Thank you, sir! Good-night!"

The juniors left the Head's study, followed by Knox. The prefect was in such a rage that he could hardly trust himself to speak. He had confidently looked forward to seeing the juniors flogged, if not expelled; and to see them thanked by the Head instead was a bitter pill to swallow.

He paused in the passage, and glared at them.

"You got off this time," he said. "Another time you won't escape so easily."

And he hurried off to his room, and closed the door with a slam that rang through the silent House and awoke a good many sleepers.

Tom Merry laughed contemptuously.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "Knox seems to be quite watty, you know. I wegard him as a cad."

"And he is a cad," said Tom Merry. "But we needn't be afraid of him. We've got off jolly well, though, considering. Mellish is luckiest of the lot. He ought to have a flogging as well as Lumley, and he's been passed over."

Mellish gave them an appealing look.

"I've had a lesson," he muttered huskily. "I wouldn't go through the last quarter of an hour again for anything! You fellows won't speak?"

"Of course not," said Blake disdainfully. "You've got off cheap, but I wouldn't be in your shoes for a great deal."

Mellish moved off without replying. The juniors went upstairs to bed. Lumley-Lumley did not speak a word till they were outside the dormitory.

"I suppose you're feeling pretty satisfied with what you've done for me?" he said then, in a low and bitter voice.

"We've done our best," said Tom Merry. "I'm sorry you're going to be flogged and to have punishment-room, but it's your own fault. You were warned plainly enough not to go in for this sort of thing."

And the Terrible Three went on into their own dormitory with Kangaroo.

Blake and the rest entered the Fourth Form dorm. Lumley was very silent. But the bitter look upon his face showed that his thoughts were busy, and that they were not pleasant ones.

The juniors tumbled into bed. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke a word to the Outsider before he laid his head on the pillow.

"Lumley, I'm sowwy about that floggin', you know," he said.

"Oh, go to sleep!" said Lumley.

"But weally—"

"Oh, ring off!"

And the swell of St. Jim's, brimming with suppressed indignation, repressed a desire to get out of bed and go for Lumley on the spot, in consideration of the fact that the Outsider was to be flogged in the morning. He took Lumley's advice instead, and went to sleep.

THE END.

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THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

When Justin B. Farman, of St. Frank's, learns that strange things are happening on the ranch he has inherited, he goes out to Arizona to investigate, taking with him Nipper, Handforth & Co., Willy and Archie Glen-thorne. No sooner do the seven schoolboys arrive by plane than they are attacked by mysterious horsemen known as the Black Riders, who are terrorising Ghost River Valley. The St. Frank's chums are unarmed, however, but the plane is destroyed by fire. The pilot leaves by stage-coach, only to fall into the hands of the Black Riders. Later, after a narrow escape from an avalanche of boulders, Nipper & Co. get a warning from the Riders. "You were lucky to escape. Quit now, or there will be no next time!"

Sudden Death!

THE sun was low over the hills as a number of riders approached the sprawling logwood buildings of Ghost River Ranch. There were eight in the party—Justin B. Farman and his six St. Frank's schoolfellows, and Square-Deal Reeve, the ranch foreman. The boys were tired after long hours of riding in the hot sunshine over the wide-flung range.

"Well, boys, I guess it beats me," said Farman, after dismounting and removing his Stetson. "I've a darned good mind to rename this corner of Arizona, and call it Peaceful Valley."

"Don't you be figgerin' to do no such thing, boss," said Square-Deal Reeve, shifting his chew from one corner of his mouth to the other. "I'll allow things have been perty quiet for a coupla days. But I guess that's jest the way of things in this valley. You ain't forgettin' what happened in Whisperin' Canyon?"

None of the boys could forget that startling incident—when rocks had crashed down from the heights, and they had only escaped death by a hairsbreadth.

At first they had suspected old Mesa Matt, the lone prospector, of foul play, only to discover that Mesa Matt had been trapped, too. The old man had made light of his injuries, and was carrying on in his lonely mountain shack.

Since then nothing had happened. And that was two days ago. True, on the way home from Whispering Canyon, the boys had found an ominous message from the mysterious crooks who haunted the valley: "Quit now, or there will be no next time!" This was proof enough that the rocks had been loosened deliberately.

But young Farman was more determined than ever to stick to his inheritance. He and his schoolboy friends had ridden out, penetrating to the far-flung boundaries of the range. For two days they had explored, and they had found nothing to account for the ugly disappearances of men and cattle.

"Well, junior?" asked Big Jim Farman, who was sitting on the wide veranda of the ranch-house.

"Nothing doing, dad," said his son "It sure beats me!"

"Mebbe you'll understand how I feel then," said Big Jim, almost grimly. "I've been here for quite a few weeks, and I haven't figured out any explanation. All we know is that lone cowboys sometimes fail to return; that cattle disappear; and that there's a gang of rustlers who call themselves the Black Riders. But what does all this amount to?"

"Very little, sir," said Nipper "Nobody knows where the vanished men have gone—or the cattle, either. Nobody knows who the Black Riders are, or who leads them. If only we could pick up a clue of some kind we might be able to get on the trail. What we need is a good starting point."

"Regular young detectives, aren't you?" asked Big Jim good-humouredly. "But listen, boys! I'm telling you that this thing is too big for you."

"Meaning, dad?" broke in Farman.

"Figure it out for yourself, son!"

"Well, I guess that's easy; you want me to sell out and quit," said the American boy. "But I'm not a quitter, dad!"

"Neither am I, junior—and you know it," said his father. "But where's the sense of hanging around this hoodoo ranch? I don't want you boys to go out and get killed. I'm plumb worried every time you ride away from the ranch. There's trouble brewing, and you don't need to take any notice of the peaceful look of things."

"Hallo! There's somebody coming along the trail," said Handforth suddenly. "It's a buckboard and team—"

"Two of the boys, that's all," said Mr. Farman. "I sent them into town for supplies."

The buckboard was swinging along at high speed, swaying from side to side, the team galloping. Clouds of dust arose in the rear.

"Kinder hurrying some," observed Square-Deal, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,369.

"Tain't like Slick Ed to tote himself along at that speed."

"Perhaps something has happened in Fortune City," said Handforth eagerly.

"Nothin' much don't happen around that doggone township," said Square-Deal, shaking his head. "Least-ways, not in the daytime."

The buckboard came rattling up at a fine swinging speed. Slick Ed, who was driving, yelled to the horses, and Twirly Sam, who was with him, leapt clear and ran towards the ranch-house.

The St. Frank's schoolboys stood in a group before the veranda, and they were truly Western in appearance; for they were rigged out in cowboy fashion, with coloured or check shirts, scarves, wide-brimmed hats, and leather chapps.

"What's the hurry, Sam?" asked Mr. Farman.

"Telegram for you, boss," said the cowboy. "Ed and I thought mebbe it might be kinder important, so we burned up the trail."

Mr. Farman took the yellow Western Union envelope, and tore it open.

"Gosh!" he ejaculated, in a startled voice, after he had read the message.

"What is it, dad?" asked his son eagerly.

"This wire is from New York—from the headquarters of the Coast to Coast Airways Corporation," said the big ranchman. "They're making inquiries after their pilot, Captain Merton. He hasn't reported, and they're kind of anxious."

"But that's strange, sir," said Nipper. "Captain Merton left here the day after we arrived. He ought to have been in New York by now."

"Looks like he came into this valley, and never got out agin," said Square-Deal Reeve. "He wouldn't be the fust, neither."

"But we went to Fortune City with him," protested Handforth. "We saw him on the stage-coach which runs to Crag Junction."

This piece of news was startling. Farman and his schoolboy friends had flown from New York direct to the ranch—and the plane had been wrecked on arrival, for the Black Riders had swooped down and had set the machine on fire. Nobody had been hurt, and Captain Merton had left the valley for the railroad. This was the first hint that something was wrong.

The boys little knew that the Black Riders had held up the coach, taken the airman, and carried him to a cavern prison in the hills. The coach-driver had been warned by Diamond Eye, the bandit chief, that if he "spilled anything" he would die.

"Saddle a horse for me, Square-Deal," said Mr. Farman abruptly.

"It's as good as saddled right now, boss," replied the foreman, hurrying off.

"Going into town, dad?" asked Farman. "We'll go with you."

"Why not?" said his father.

Soon they were on the trail, riding hard. When they reached the half-ruined mining town of Fortune City, some miles distant, the sun had disappeared, and twilight brooded over that strange, sombre township of crumbling buildings.

In the centre of Main Street they dismounted and secured their horses to the old-fashioned hitching-rail.

Garish lights were already showing in the Blue Star Saloon, and outside the post office the stage-coach was waiting—or perhaps it had just come in from Crag Junction. Lights were gleaming from the windows of the First National Bank, which was owned—like the rest of the property in Fortune City—by Mr. Elmer C. Kyle, the "big man" of the valley.

"Waal, say, this is an unexpected honour," said Mr. Kyle, who appeared in person as the boys were dismounting. "Anything wrong up at the ranch, Jim?"

"No; but I'll talk to you later, Elmer," said Mr. Farman. "I've got some telephoning to do. Maybe you'll entertain the boys?"

"Nothing I'd like better," replied the genial mayor. "Say, sonnies, how about stepping across into the Blue Star? It's a real saloon nowadays, I guess. We're able to sell hard liquor again, just as we did in the old days."

"Awfully decent of you, and all that sort of thing," said Archie Glenthorne, in a doubtful voice. "But hard liquor is most frightfully—er—hard, isn't it? I mean to say, hardly the kind of stuff to dish out to the lads of the village."

"Make your mind easy, son," laughed Mr. Kyle. "Any saloon I run is sure respectable. Come right in."

Handforth was eager. At home in England he had seen many talkie-pictures of the Wild West, and he knew just how a saloon in a hard-boiled cattle town should look. But

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some of his illusions had been dispelled of late, and he was anxious. The cowboys of Ghost River Ranch, for one thing, spent most of their time in working, instead of going about the range with guns in both hands. Handforth considered it all wrong. However, the Blue Star Saloon pleased him mightily.

For it was almost exactly like the saloons he had seen on the "pictures." It was big, with tables dotted about, and at the tables sat hard-faced cattlemen, playing poker; some of them had their guns near at hand, in case of trouble. There was a long bar, with a brass footrail, against which other cowboys were lounging and drinking. It was indeed a typical Western saloon—with only one discordant feature. At least, so Handforth thought. On one side there was a modern soda-fountain, gleaming with chromium plate and white marble. An attendant in a spotless white uniform was making up soft drinks and icecream sundaes.

"Guess this will be our side, sons," said Mr. Kyle, with a smile.

The St. Frank's fellows partook of ice-cold fruit sodas, and the drinks did much to quench their parched throats.

"Everything the kids have is on the house, Ned," said Mr. Kyle to the attendant. "Dish out anything they like to order."

"O.K., mayor," said the attendant, with the easy familiarity of the West.

Big Jim Farman appeared at that moment in the swing doors of the entrance. He beckoned to Mr. Kyle, and the mayor crossed over to him. The boys went, too, forgetting their free drinks. They all gathered outside, in the dusk, on the boardwalk.

"Say, Elmer, there's something almighty queer about this," said Mr. Farman grimly. "I've just been talking to New York. That young airman who piloted the boys here has not reported. The company says it's had no word from him."

"He left on the coach for Crag Junction," said Mr. Kyle. "Why, I saw him myself!"

"I've phoned the railroad officials at Crag Junction, and they say that no stranger has boarded an East-bound train during the last week," said Mr. Farman. "That means that Merton never got to Crag Junction."

"Well, it's almighty queer!" said Mr. Kyle, frowning. "The coach-driver would have made a report if anything had happened to his passenger on the trail."

"Why not ask him?" said Handforth abruptly. "There he is—over there—standing by the coach now."

"Sure," agreed the mayor. "That's the man—Carey by name. He's been driving the stage-coach for years."

"Trustworthy?" asked Mr. Farman.

"If he wasn't, he wouldn't be in my employment," said the other. "Yes, I run the stage line between here and Crag Junction."

They went across the road in a body, and Carey, faced by Mr. Farman, looked startled.

"Aimin' to ride with me, mister?" he asked. "The next trip is to-morrow—"

"A young man named Merton was with you on your outward trip two days ago," interrupted Mr. Farman. "What became of him?"

The man looked suddenly terrified.

"Say, what's the racket?" he asked, turning truculent.

"Better answer, Al," said Mr. Kyle, moving nearer.

"Say, Boss, I don't know a thing!" protested Carey, with a gulp. "I remember the guy. Young feller—clean shaven—said he was a plane pilot."

"Did anything happen to him on the journey?"

"No, sir! He went right through with me to Crag Junction, and I guess that's all I know," replied Carey promptly.

Nipper eyed him intently. The man was lying—his very manner proved it. Yet Nipper believed that he was honest enough; he was frightened, for he kept looking into the shadows beyond Big Jim Farman and Mayor Kyle. It was almost as though he expected trouble from somewhere.

"So Merton got to Crag Junction," said Mr. Farman slowly. "What then?"

"It ain't no business of mine what folks do when they leave my coach," replied Carey. "I took him through safe, and that's all I aim to do."

"Do you happen to know if he boarded the train?"

"Why, sure! I see him!" said the man eagerly.

"East-bound train—or West-bound train?" demanded Mr. Kyle, with sudden sharpness.

The man looked confused; he opened his mouth, but hesitated.

"Come, come!" said the mayor grimly. "There aren't many trains at Crag Junction, Al."

"Waal, mebbe I didn't see him get aboard the train!" growled Carey. "Say, does it matter a heap? Am I supposed to dry nurse my passengers after they get to Crag Junction?"

"No, Al—it's all right," said the mayor. Carey was glad to escape, and he went into the saloon.

"That man was lying!" said Mr. Kyle gruffly. "Maybe there's nothing in it—we sort of scared him, perhaps. Queer, too, because Al Carey has always been straight. I guess I'll question him later."

"And we'll question him now," murmured Nipper, as he and the other boys moved off. "Come on, you chaps!"

"You said it!" exclaimed Farman, his eyes burning. They went back to the saloon—apparently to resume their soft drinks. But, once within the swing doors, they went across to the regular bar, where Al Carey was drinking rye whisky.

"Fill up again, Al!" said Nipper genially. "We're strangers in town, so the drinks are on us."

"That's O.K. with me," said the coach-driver. "Say, tenderfeet, ain't you? Waal, I'll be a croakin' horn-toad! Reg'lar cowboys, ain't you? Dressed like you was the real thing?"

Some of the other cattlemen had been attracted, and there was a good deal of laughter. Nipper and Handforth and Farman, between them, kept paying for Carey's drinks—and, very rapidly, the man became noisy. Nipper waited until Carey's tongue was considerably loosened.

"About that passenger of yours," he said casually. "You

The Empty Cartridge Shell!

THE death-dealing bullet had come through a near-by window, and the whole saloon was now in an uproar. Al Carey had been killed because he had been about to "spill the beans." Nipper and the other boys were horrified. If they had known there had been any such risk as this they would never have questioned the man. But it was too late now.

The one thought which throbbed in Nipper's brain was—how had the killer known when to shoot? The shot had come at the very moment Carey had been on the point of talking. Yet any man outside the saloon could not have heard his words.

Nipper had noticed, however, that a swarthy-featured ruffian of half-breed type had been lurking near, and this man was now loudly calling for drinks. Nipper noticed something else, too. Gazing quickly at the broken window, he saw, in the fading light, the half-ruined walls of a big stone building opposite. And for just a brief flash there was a haze of smoke against one of the upper windows.

"This way, boys!" said Nipper crisply. He dragged Farman and Handforth back, and they



"Waal, it was this ways," said Carey, the coach-driver. "The coach was in lone country up in the hills when—"
 Crassh! There suddenly came a shattering of glass, and more than one cowboy grabbed for his gun. "Look!"
 shouted Handforth, horrified. Al Carey was reeling, and from his throat came a gurgle.

can't fool me, Al! You didn't take Captain Merton to Crag Junction."

"I did so," muttered Carey unsteadily. "Say, kid, you can't get me to spill anything."

"Who's trying to?" retorted Nipper mildly. "Do you think we don't know that your coach was held up by the Black Riders? They took Captain Merton, didn't they?"

Carey looked at him in a frightened way. "Say, young feller, not so loud!" he muttered.

"There's fifty dollars for you if you tell us what happened to your passenger," said Farman in a low voice.

"Gee!" said Carey, eyeing the money greedily. "Mebbe I could risk it with you kids. Waal, it was this ways. The coach was in lone country up in the hills when—"

Craaaaash!

There came a shattering of glass, and more than one cowboy grabbed for his gun. Farman and Nipper heard a heavy thud near them, and Al Carey reeled. From his throat came a gurgle.

"Look!" shouted Handforth, horrified.

The coach-driver was clutching at the bar, sagging down, and the next second he collapsed in a limp heap on the floor. An ominous red stain was showing on his chest. No other sound came from his lips—for he was dead!

escaped from the saloon, and the rest of the St. Frank's fellows were with them. They were all looking pale and shaky.

"But we can't leave the poor chap there—" began Handforth.

"There are others to look after him," interrupted Nipper. "He's dead, anyhow!"

"Dead!" muttered Farman. "And all because we questioned him! We killed him, fellers!"

"Don't be an idiot!" snapped Nipper. "How could we know? There was an ugly looking blighter near us, and I believe he gave a signal to somebody in the building opposite. That's where the shot came from, anyhow. Come on! We're going to look into it."

Excited, thrilled, they dashed across the road with Nipper. Evidently somebody else had seen, too, for a cattleman, gun in hand, joined the boys as they reached the other side of the street.

"Anybody hurt over in the saloon, kids?" asked this man.

"Hurt!" ejaculated Handforth. "A chap was killed!"

"The shot came from this old empty building," said the man. "Gee! Mebbe we'll get the killer if we hurry. He was on the fourth story—I saw his gun smoke."

With reckless force the man charged at the crazy-looking door of the empty building. It smashed to fragments under the force of that assault, and the cowboy went hurtling through.

"You kids got guns?" he panted, as he steadied himself. "Yeah? Mebbe you'll need 'em!"

He dashed for the mouldering stairs, with the boys at his heels. It was dark in there, and there was a smell of dampness, of earthy decay.

"Guess this is the old Signal building," said the cowboy. "Gee! I remember it when it was full of white-collared clerks! Things ain't what they was in Fortune City."

They reached the first floor, stumbling over fallen debris. Then up again, half expecting every moment to see a stab of fire from the darkness above. The killer was up there somewhere—

And outside, Main Street was in a tumult. Men were shouting, and crowds were already beginning to force their way into the Signal building. But the boys had a good lead.

Nipper was very doubtful if the gunman would be captured; but he was hoping that he would pick up a clue of some kind. It was certain that the mysterious killer was connected with the Black Riders—

"Right here!" panted the cowboy.

He went charging through an open doorway. There was an empty room beyond—and one window was standing wide open. Handforth rushed in, and the other schoolboys followed—all in a bunch. None of them noticed, in that tense, exciting moment, that their guide had rapidly sidestepped, allowing them to pass him.

But in a flash the cowboy was back through the doorway; and at the same second there came an ominous sound of crumbling wood. The boys felt the floor shaking like a jelly beneath them. Too late they realised their peril.

Craaaaaaash!

The rotten, decayed floorboards and joists gave way under the weight of the boys, the floor disintegrated beneath them, and they went hurtling down amid a blinding smother of dust and debris into an abyss of blackness.

Thud! Nipper landed on something hard, yet it seemed to him that it was shaking like a jelly. Yells and groans were sounding near by in the smother and dust and darkness. With a sense of astonishment he knew that he was not hurt—not even bruised. He staggered up, and managed to pull an electric torch from his belt. The light flashed on, and it beat back as though a fog had swept over the scene. But it was only dust.

"Handy—Willy—Farman!" gasped Nipper. "Where are you?"

"Leapin' rattlesnakes!" came a choking voice. "Say, what happened, anyway?"

"Help, and all that sort of thing!" came another voice. "Good gad! Will somebody kindly take this building off my chest? SOS, dash it! I'm in the most frightful fix."

"Steady—steady!" warned Nipper urgently. "This floor is as rotten as the other—and it might give way at any moment. For goodness' sake move carefully, you chaps!"

"Who said we could move at all?" asked Handforth dazedly. "By George, where am I? Who's that grabbing hold of my leg?"

From somewhere outside men were shouting, and Nipper heard some of the words: "Tragedy!" "All the boys killed!" "Floor fell in!" Louder and louder grew the commotion.

But Nipper kept calm. The dust was settling now, and he saw, to his relief, that Justin B. Farman and Willy Handforth were on their feet. Then Church and McClure, amid a crackling of rotten wood, came in sight.

Both Archie and Handforth were pinned down by the debris, but the others quickly went to their aid, and, heaving the broken boards aside, freed them.

And all the while they could feel the floor quivering and shaking under their feet. Now and again an ominous crack would sound when they moved. At any moment they expected this second floor to give way under them.

"Keep well apart, you chaps," said Nipper. "We've got to thank our lucky stars that we're all alive and more or less uninjured. Don't do anything until I give you the word."

He flashed his light round, and something glinted in the dust and rubbish of the floor. At first he gave it no attention, but suddenly he recognised the thing for what it was, and a little exclamation of surprise and satisfaction escaped him.

"By Jove!" he said tensely.

He picked the object up. It was the bright new shell of a recently discharged cartridge! The bullet from this shell had killed Al Carey! The gunman, lurking at the window above, had ejected the shell from his gun, and by an extraordinary chance it had fallen with all the wreckage, and Nipper had found it. He slipped it into a pocket. On the shell there was the mark of the hammer—and such marks,

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under a microscope, are as distinctive and characteristic as a man's finger-prints. In a word, it was a clue—although whether Nipper would be able to make use of it was another question.

The first thing was to get out of this death-trap.

His light vaguely revealed a doorway. The door itself was half smashed, for a great joist, falling endwise, had crashed through it. Masses of wrecked floorboards were sagging drunkenly across the doorway, too. But there was room for the boys to crawl out.

"Follow me," said Nipper tensely, "and take it easily!"

On hands and knees he went through the opening, and, fortunately, it was large enough to take him. He got through without disturbing any of the precarious wreckage. Once outside he got to his feet, for the flooring out there was sound.

The others followed, and Nipper flashed his light upon them as they emerged. They were dusty, torn, tattered, and two or three of them were bleeding from nasty gashes and grazes.

It seemed almost miraculous that no limbs were broken; but perhaps the very rottenness of the wood accounted for the fact. Instead of inflicting fatal injuries, the wood had crumpled like powder.

"Whew! That was a jolly narrow escape, you chaps," said Handforth, taking a deep breath. "Fancy that floor being so rotten!"

"The gunman knew it, and he must have made his way to the window by carefully walking round the walls, so that he would not cross the shaky floor," said Nipper. "We might have crossed safely if we had gone singly; but we ran in a bunch, and our weight was too much."

"Where's that cowboy who was with us?" asked McClure, nursing a crooked arm.

"You may well ask," said Nipper grimly. "Don't you realise, you chaps, that that man deliberately led us into the trap?"

"What!"

"We can't prove it, but it's obvious enough," went on Nipper. "He led the way upstairs, he showed us the room, and at the last moment he must have dodged back. He reckoned that the floor would give way—and the other floors, too. If that had happened we should certainly have been killed, because we were four floors up. But only one floor smashed, and so we escaped."

"But—but it's impossible!" protested Farman, aghast.

"What about that mysterious affair in Whispering Canyon?" retorted Nipper. "We were nearly killed then. That cowboy seized his chance, and he tried to kill us all. It was so dark that we did not even see his features, and we could never recognise him again. You see, there's no proof. Even that half-breed chap in the saloon is safe. I believe that he gave a signal to a confederate in this building, but I can't prove it. We're up against hidden enemies all the time, you chaps."

Further conversation was impossible, for would-be rescuers were now appearing. There were many shouts in the lower part of the building, and men with flaring torches were coming up the stairs.

Big Jim Farman and Mr. Kyle were in the forefront of the rescuers. At first, on entering the building, they had expected to find the dead or injured bodies of the boys on the lowest floor of all. But soon they were relieved, for the schoolboys came down to meet them.

"O.K., dad!" sang out Farman. "No need to worry—we're not hurt much!"

"Thank Heaven for that!" shouted Big Jim. "Gosh darn it! I sure thought you were killed, junior!"

The whole town seemed to be in Main Street when the boys emerged under the starlit sky. The city's fire brigade had turned up, and the excitement was at fever pitch. Cheers rang out when it was learned that the seven young "tenderfeet" were safe.

"By heck, things are sure getting tough around here!" said Mr. Kyle darkly. "It's no longer safe for a man to take a drink. You've got to get the killer of Al Carey, if it's the last thing you do, Dirk!"

Dirk Dixon, the sheriff, grunted.

"How'll I start?" he asked. "These blamed killers never show themselves. Why was Al rubbed out, anyway?"

"Because he knew just what happened to the missing man—Captain Merton," replied Kyle. "That's why he was rubbed out. Al was going to speak. Say, did he tell you boys anything?"

"Not a thing," replied Nipper. "He never had the chance."

"Waal, I guess it's a durned game!" said Dixon gloomily. "Al was a straight-shooting guy."

Nipper said nothing of his suspicions to the men, and the other boys took their cue from him. Everybody in Fortune City believed that the affair had been a pure accident, precipitated by the eagerness of the boys themselves. In a way this was right; but it was certain, nevertheless, that the mysterious enemy had proved himself to be an astute opportunist.

At last Mr. Farman and the schoolboys were able to get away. They mounted their horses and rode out upon the trail for the ranch. A large number of friendly cowboys insisted upon riding out as an escort, and Mr. Farman was glad. It was dark now, and there was always the risk that the Black Riders would swoop down.

"Well, considering that you youngsters were grumbling at the quietness of things less than a couple of hours ago, we haven't done so bad," said Big Jim ominously. "You've seen a man murdered before your eyes, and you were mighty nearly killed yourselves!"

"Yes, dad," said his son, in a sober voice. "And we know that Captain Merton was grabbed somewhere between Fortune City and Crag Junction. Al Carey knew it, and he was killed because he knew it. But where's Captain Merton now?"

"Gone—like many another man in this valley," said Big Jim Farman. "Gee, son, I don't like the look of things!"

"But we're not going to quit now, dad!" declared the determined Removite. "We'll carry right on—until we find out who these crooks are, and bring them to justice."

They reached the ranch-house without adventure, and here the escort bade them a cheery good-night and went galloping back to Fortune City. As the sound of the hoofbeats died away on the night air a brooding stillness settled down.

It was a dark night, and filmy clouds had now drifted up to conceal the stars. On every hand stretched the lonely grasslands, silent, empty, mysterious.

The ranch-house, with one or two warm, welcome lights twinkling from the windows, seemed like a tiny island in a sea of loneliness.

"Come along indoors, boys," said Big Jim. "I guess we'll need to get busy with hot water and lint and bandages. Some of you need patching pretty badly."

They limped in, and were glad of the cheerful brightness. "Well, we're safe here, boys," said Farman. "There may be enemies in the valley, but they can't harm us here."

He spoke with confidence, for Square-Deal Reeve and his faithful cowboys were mounted on guard around the ranch-house. In addition, every door and every lower window was capable of being barricaded at a moment's notice. Not for one minute during the hours of darkness was the ranch-house left unguarded or unprotected.

There were other gadgets, too—which Farman and his schoolboy friends had rigged up. They were ready for the enemy at any hour.

But would the enemy come?

The Signal in the Night!

CAPTAIN MERTON, having finished his evening meal, lit a cigarette. He was sitting at a table in the little rock alcove which jutted out from the big cavern where he was imprisoned.

He was getting used to his captivity now, but all the same he chafed and fretted. Working alone, day after day, he had grown sick of his own company. And the hopelessness of his position was beginning to "get" him.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal post your notice to **The GEM LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.**

George Whitfield, Earsdon-Grange, Earsdon, Northumberland, wants to hear from readers in Australia, America, France, and elsewhere, who would exchange foreign magazines and papers.

Eric and Allen Bowler, of Shannon, Wellington, New Zealand, want correspondents in England; ages 17-23.

Arthur R. Turner, 275, Blackpool Street, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, wants correspondents; ages 12-15.

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Tom Williams, 87, Peel Road, Bootle, Liverpool, 20, wants a pen pal in Mexico, or a seaport, who is interested in ships and aeroplanes; age 12-14.

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There was no escape from this cavern. He could not even find the rock door by which his captors came and went. It was an extraordinary thing that never once had Captain Merton seen the door, and he was certain that his mysterious captors watched his every movement. They only opened the secret door when his back was turned, or whilst he slept. He had searched the walls of the cavern again and again, but without result.

"So she is taking shape?" said a voice.

The airman spun round, startled. The big cavern was in darkness. He was allowed no artificial light save the single lamp in this rock recess, and it was fixed securely to the wall, so he could not move it. He never worked after sundown.

Rising to his feet, he peered into the shadows.

"You come like ghosts, and you go like ghosts," he said complainingly.

"Which is fitting enough, pardner, seeing as we're located right in Ghost Valley," said the shadowy figure.

It approached, and Captain Merton recognised Diamond Eye, the mysterious leader of the gang. It was the first time Diamond Eye had visited him since the day of his capture. Other men dressed in black had come, bringing him food, but not the chief. He stood just within the circle of light now—a tall, clumsy figure clothed in black from head to foot. The cowl was an integral part of his costume, and his "eye" of chromium-plated gauze shimmered weirdly. Even his hands and feet were encased in dull black cloth.

He moved nearer, limping—for he had a clubfoot. No doubt this deformity was a sound reason for his precautions. Captain Merton wondered if there was any man in Fortune City, or in the valley, who had a clubbed foot—any man, that is, known by name.

"Thought I'd nose in to see how things are going," said Diamond Eye, suddenly flashing on a powerful electric lamp. "Waal, say, you're doing fine, pardner! She's beginnin' to take shape, huh?"

He was directing his torchlight upon the aeroplane. Already Captain Merton had erected the fuselage and the landing gear.

"I'll need help with the engine," said the airman.

"Sure, buddy," agreed the other. "When the time comes I'll see that you have all the help you need. Say, she'll be a smart little ship when she's all fixed."

Captain Merton did not fail to observe that Diamond Eye held a gun in his hand, and the airman knew that if he made any attempt to attack he would be shot down without mercy.

"How long are you going to keep me here?" he asked, forcing himself to speak calmly.

"Just as long as I need you," replied Diamond Eye. "Play straight with me and you'll be sitting pretty."

"Have there been any inquiries about me?"

"Why, sure," said the other. "Say, I hear there was some excitement in town this evening. Feller got bumped off. I guess you know the guy—Al Carey, the stage-coach driver. The poor fool got soused, and he was figgerin' on lettin' up what happened."

John W. Dixon, 11, Dyvrig Street, Cardiff, wants a pen pal keen on sport—fishing specially; age 16-17.

Arthur Davenport, Westward Lane, Brimington Common, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, wants a pen pal in Central London.

R. Thomas, 33, Louise Street, Garden Lane, Chester, wants pen pals overseas; ages 12-14.

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Joe Harrison, 17, Cruickshank Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wants pen pals interested in swimming and other sports.

Ronald J. Noonan, 32, First Avenue, Fivedock, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents in Germany, Austria, and France.

Hugh Ellis, 2, Fulbrooke Road, Newnham, Cambridge, wants correspondents in U.S.A. interested in film stars and autographs; ages 14-16.

Tony Baylis, Whitehall, Alcester, Warwickshire, wants correspondents in America, Australia, and New Zealand, who are interested in sports; ages 14-16.

Dennis Ince, 255, Rhodes Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wants to hear from readers interested in weather topics and forecasting; ages 19-22.

Peter G. Kennerley, 9, Sunningdale Road, Wallasey, Cheshire, wants a correspondent who collects stamps, in Roumania or U.S.A.; ages 12-16; also wants to correspond with a reader who is keen on Rugger.

Desmond G. Fenley, 100, Arabella Street, Roath Park, Cardiff, wants a correspondent in South Africa or New Zealand; age 14-16.

G. Butler, 82, Queen's Head Street, Islington, London, N., wants correspondents.

"So you killed him—you, or your men," said Merton coldly. "You'd kill me, too, if it suited your purpose."

"Remember them kids you brought by plane?" went on Diamond Eye, in a mocking voice. "Say, I'm getting kind of tired. Them kids are out for trouble, and I'm aiming to give them plenty."

"You dirty hound! You wouldn't kill—"
"Pipe down, sap!" snarled the man behind the mask. "Them kids think they're smart, and I guess it's up to me to pull them wise to themselves!"

"Perhaps they're smarter than you think."
"Forget it!" jeered Diamond Eye. "Say, they're so doggone skeered of me and my black boys that they keep a guard at the ranch-house day and night. Do you get that? The poor mutts think that their activities have been secret. But I know everything. And to-night the young simps will find out just how dangerous I am."

He snapped the light off, stepped back into the shadows, and his black form merged instantly with the darkness. Captain Merton leapt forward as he heard a mocking chuckle. When he struck a match a moment later in the body of the cavern, he found himself alone.

"Say—" began Merton, and then he shrugged. "He wondered if he was being watched—through some secret spyhole. Somewhere along the rock walls there was a section which could be silently opened and closed—and so cunningly was it made that there was no trace of the door to be seen."

The imprisoned airman went back to his "private apartment." He sat down, and from an inner pocket he took two long, pencil-like objects. His hands shook, for he was labouring under excitement.

His captors had searched him when he had first been seized, but it had been only a perfunctory operation—they had made certain that he was carrying no gun. They had allowed him to keep his watch, his fountain-pen, his money, and his other personal effects.

The things in his hand were two patent signal rockets. He always carried them when flying, for use in an emergency—in case his plane was forced down in lonely country. Regulation rockets, of course, were kept in the plane itself. But in the event of a bad crash they might be rendered useless. So Captain Merton always carried the small pocket type.

Distress signals! And up in the roof of his cavern prison there were slit-like openings, through which the stars twinkled.

The distress rockets were useless in the day-time; and he had not dared to use them at night hitherto for fear of wasting them. But Diamond Eye had just informed him that a constant watch was being kept at Ghost River Ranch. That meant that a distress signal in these hills would probably be seen. The airman remembered showing one of the rockets to Nipper. Nipper would know exactly what the signal meant. He was a shrewd youngster, and he would put two and two together—

But what if his enemies saw?
It was a big chance to take. Perhaps watchful eyes were directed towards him at this very moment.

But Captain Merton was a game young man, and he was determined to take the risk. It might mean rescue. Otherwise, he would be kept a prisoner here for months until he had finished his job. And afterwards—was it likely that these desperadoes would allow him to go free? Having made him serve their purpose, it was odds that they would ruthlessly get rid of him. Better to take the big chance now whilst he had it within his grasp.

With trembling fingers he secured one of the rockets to an aeroplane strut. There was no fuse to be lighted—the mere touching of a tag would instantly put the thing into operation. The great danger was that he might miss the opening in the roof. In that case, the rocket would strike the rock, and come harmlessly down into the cavern again.

Carefully he fixed the strut to the half-erected plane—securing it so that it pointed in a dead line towards the biggest of the vents above.

When all was ready he gave the tag a sharp pull. There came a quick, hissing puff, and a cylindrical inner section shot up from the outer casing, leaving behind it a trail of sparks.

Up—up safely through the opening in the rock roof. Captain Merton stared anxiously, and he hardly breathed. Then high above in the black night sky he saw a sudden, dazzling burst of coloured lights.

"Feels kind of ugly to-night," said Justin B. Farman, in a low voice. "Mebbe that's not the right word, but I guess you know what I mean, Nipper."

Supper was over, and the two boys were leaning against the rail of the veranda. The others were still indoors—one or two of them, in fact, stiff and aching from the results of their startling adventure in Fortune City.

"Well, we're prepared," said Nipper confidently. "I wish the Black Riders would come. We'll give them one or two surprises—eh? We're not so slow. Hallo, what the— Look there, Farman!"

He clutched at the other's arm and pointed. Far away in the hills a strange burst of coloured fire had shown itself in the sky. For some moments it hung there mysteriously, and Nipper caught his breath in with a sharp hiss.

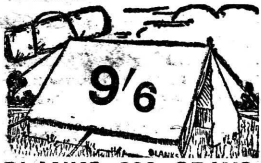
"A rocket!" he exclaimed tensely. "A distress rocket! What can it mean, Farman?"

"Search me," said the American boy helplessly.

"Merton, the airman!" yelled Nipper. "He had some rockets in his pocket. Yes, Merton must have fired it—as a signal to us."

"And it showed up just to the left of that jutting crag along the western border of the valley," said Justin B. Farman. "Skull Rock. Keep it in mind, Nipper."

(Next week's gripping chapters of this great serial are the most thrilling yet. Don't miss them, chums.)



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