

STIRRING STORIES OF ST. JIM'S AND ST. FRANK'S INSIDE.

The GEM

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GUSSY *the* PEACEMAKER!

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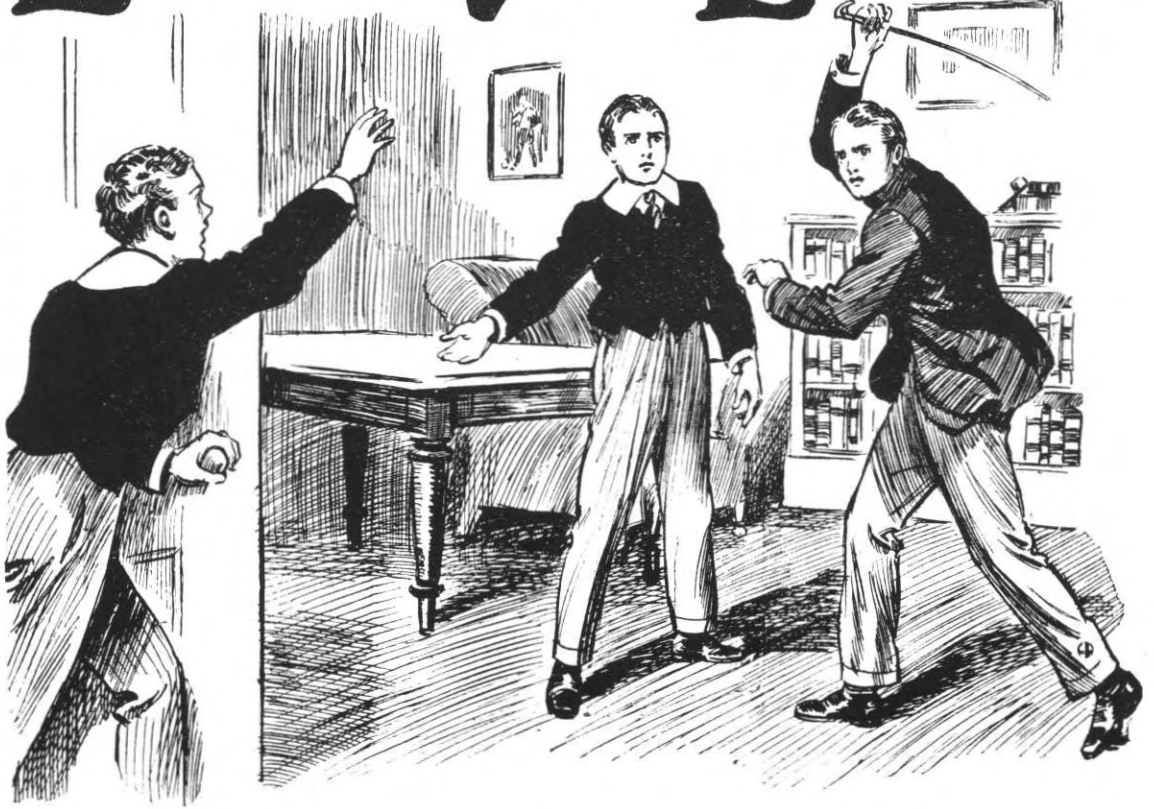
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Lumley's Last



CHAPTER 1.

The Last Chance!

DR. HOLMES, the Head of St. Jim's, was frowning. The St. Jim's fellows did not often see their headmaster frown. As a rule his expression was equable, pleasant, and kind. The famous school-boy who once described his headmaster as a "beast," but a just beast, did not belong to St. Jim's.

Dr. Holmes was just; but he had never been called a beast. To the St. Jim's fellows he was not only the Head of St. Jim's, but a kind friend upon whom they knew they could rely.

A frown upon the Head's brow was the exception, not the rule. But he was frowning now—a frown that knitted his brows darkly, and cast a shadow upon his kind old face.

The Head was sitting in his study—alone. The window was open, letting in a breeze and an echo of the shouts from the playing fields. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the footer ground was thronged. There was a pen in Dr. Holmes' hand, but he was not writing. He sat deep in thought.

He looked up, roused from his reverie, as Mr. Railton entered. The big, handsome Housemaster seemed to bring in a breath of the fresh, open air with him. Mr. Railton, Housemaster of the School House, was an athlete as well as a scholar, and the First Eleven at St. Jim's owed a great deal to him.

"Sit down, Railton, please!" said the Head. "You know, of course, what I want to speak to you about."

The Housemaster nodded.

"Lumley?" he said.

"Exactly!"

There was a pause. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, whom the

fellows at St. Jim's called the "Outsider," was not an agreeable subject for discussion.

The Outsider had caused nothing but trouble since he had arrived at St. Jim's. He had made himself unpopular with the boys and unpopular with the masters. A hard and suspicious nature, and a half-veiled impertinence towards those in authority, could not fail to have that effect.

And yet, at times, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had shown that there was a better side to his character—a glimmer of better things.

"The boy's case is peculiar," said the Head slowly. "His father is abroad, and I am reluctant, very reluctant, to compel him to leave the school. As you know, I am no longer bound by the agreement, which I signed in a weak moment, to keep Lumley-Lumley at St. Jim's for three years. I put that matter right when Mr. Lumley came to the school to take his boy away after his illness."

"Yes, it was a good thing," said Mr. Railton. "But I believe that many in the school still think that you are bound by that agreement."

"Be that as it may, I am driven to the conclusion that Lumley must go. Punishment seems to have no effect on him. I have never seen a boy of such hardy nature. And yet I should regret to have to send him away. What do you think, Mr. Railton?"

"The boy has his good points," said the Housemaster. "He is certainly plucky, for one thing."

"That is so. He is not all bad, and that is why I hesitate to expel him. But I cannot allow him to remain along with the other boys unless he alters his ways. He may taint others."

"That is the most serious aspect of the case, certainly," said Mr. Railton. "His early training, of course, is at fault. He seems to have led a hard and roving life before his father became wealthy, and he knows too much—and too little. Of 'playing the game,' as the boys call it, he knows

Chance!

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD**

nothing. He is hard and unscrupulous; he shows a total disregard for the rules of the school, and when he is punished he endures the punishment rather with the hardihood of a savage than with what I call fortitude. He is a strange character; yet, as I have said, there is good in him, if it could only be turned to account."

"But how to bring it out," said the Head. "That is the question—whether I should give him one last chance, and whether he would make anything of it."

"It is difficult to say, certainly."

"I have spoken to him—kindly and considerately, I hope," said the Head. "I have rarely failed to make an impression, even upon a hardened case, by putting the matter earnestly and seriously before the boy's mind. But in the case of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley I must confess to failure."

Mr. Railton was silent. He knew from his own experience how useless words were with the hard, cynical Outsider.

"But I have a new idea," the Head continued—"an idea for giving this boy a last chance, and you can help me."

"I shall be only too glad. Bad as he is, I should be sorry to see him expelled from the school."

"If it fails, I shall have no recourse but to expel him; but I hope it will not fail."

The Head paused for a moment, and then went on:

"If this lad were brought under the influence of a really good and noble nature, it might have a good effect upon his character."

"Quite so; but—"

"But he has shown no desire to form such a friendship?"

"If he has, he has failed. If he had made a friend of Merry of the Shell, or Blake of his own Form, it would have done him lasting good. But he is really on the worst of terms with them."

In fact, I hear that Tom Merry and Blake, who were great friends, have recently had trouble, owing to Lumley's conduct. He is the cause of endless trouble in the Lower School."

"I have no doubt St. Jim's would be better without him, Mr. Railton. But for the boy's own sake I am inclined to make one more effort."

"I shall gladly render any assistance in my power, sir."

"Well, then," said the Head musingly, "if it could be arranged for Lumley to be thrown into close association with such a boy as I have mentioned—say, Blake, as they are in the same Form—the Fourth—or Merry—"

"Merry, perhaps. He is in the Shell, and older than Blake, and of a somewhat more thoughtful character. I should think he would be more fitted. I think, too, that he is more likely to undertake such a painful task. For it will be a painful task to any lad who undertakes to become the friend of Lumley-Lumley. He may have to face ill-feeling among his own friends on the subject."

"Quite possible. You think Merry would be willing—"

"I think, with tact, he might be induced to act in the manner you wish, sir. In the first place I could arrange for Lumley to be placed in his study."

"Very good!"

"As a matter of fact, some of the Fourth Form studies are to be redecorated, and I could easily arrange for Lumley's to be the first. Lumley and Mellish would, therefore, have to find new quarters. Levison, the other occupant, is still ill with influenza. I would put Lumley in Merry's study temporarily, with Manners and Lowther. And I would speak to Merry on the subject."

The Head looked very relieved.

"Thank you, Mr. Railton. If you undertake this, it will remove a weight from my mind. I have been very troubled over the matter."

"I will undertake it, sir."

"It is Lumley's last chance," said the Head. "If it fails he must go. But if it succeeds, Mr. Railton, I am convinced that something may be made of the boy."

"I agree with you fully, sir."

And after a little more discussion Mr. Railton rose and quitted the Head's study.

His face was very thoughtful as he walked away. He had undertaken a very delicate task, and to one who understood boys less than Mr. Railton did, it would have presented insuperable difficulties.

But Mr Railton hoped to carry it through

CHAPTER 2.

Lumley Loses His Temper!

"HALLO!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell paused as they came along the Fourth Form passage in the School House.

Several articles of furniture—a table, a desk, several chairs, and a bookcase—stood in the passage outside a Fourth Form study, of which the door was wide open. From within came a smell of whitewash.

"Lumley's study's being done up," said Monty Lowther. "They've broken up the happy home, and no mistake. I wonder where Lumley and Mellish will dig in while it's going on."

"I don't envy the chaps who get them in their studies, even for a few days, anyway," Tom Merry remarked. "It won't be us, as we're not in the Fourth."

"That's all you know," said a sneering voice, and Mellish came out of the study. "He's been put in a Shell study."

"Lumley has been put into a Shell study?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes. Guess which study?" grinned Mellish.

"Not ours?" exclaimed Manners.

Mellish nodded.

"Yes," he said. "Yours."

The chums of the Shell went on their way without replying. The news was a surprise to them. It was unusual for a Fourth Form fellow to be put in a Shell study, and it was extremely disagreeable to the chums of the Shell to have the Outsider in their quarters.

Tom Merry had been more patient with him than any other fellow at St. Jim's. But even Tom Merry's patience had been exhausted.

"I suppose Mr. Railton doesn't know much about our private likes and dislikes," Manners remarked. "I wish I'd had a chance of speaking to him on the subject."

"It's rotten!" said Monty Lowther.

"Well, it will be for a few days only," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to stand it, that's all. I suppose we can put up with even the Outsider for a few days?"

"Yes, if we have to."

"Hallo!"

The chums of the Shell had reached their study. The fellow they were speaking about came out as they arrived at the door.

Lumley-Lumley was looking a little dusty. He had been carrying books into his new quarters. He nodded to the Terrible Three coolly.

"Have you heard?" he said.

"Yes," said Tom Merry curtly, "if you mean about your coming into our study. Mellish has just told me."

"I guess it's not agreeable news to you."

"It's not agreeable, certainly," said Tom Merry, in his downright way. "But you're welcome to dig in our study for a few days, as far as that goes. We're not going to cut up rusty about it."

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"Well, it's no good your bucking against Railton's order, I guess," he said. "But if you think I'm anxious to come into your study, you're mistaken. I'd rather dig in the Fourth, if I had my choice."

"We'd rather you did, too," said Lowther blandly. "What a pity it can't be arranged."

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider of St. Jim's, has tried his best to bring disgrace upon Tom Merry . . . And yet, with expulsion hanging over the head of the Outsider, it is Tom Merry who stands by him!

"Oh, no good jawing!" said Tom Merry hastily. "We shall be rather crowded, but we'll make the best of it. You'll want room to put your things, Lumley. Let's see what arrangements we can make."

They entered the study.

Lumley-Lumley's face was clouded. Cynical as he was, he had feelings to be wounded, and although he did not wish to show it, he felt the repugnance the chums showed to having him in their study.

"You can shove your books in the bookcase," said Tom Merry. "Have a shelf to yourself if you like. And there's room at the table for four."

"I guess so."

"I rather think I shall have tea in Hall this evening," said Monty Lowther carelessly.

Lumley-Lumley flushed red. Lowther's motive in making that remark was only too clear to the Outsider of St. Jim's. He strode towards Lowther with an angry brow.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"I mean what I say," replied Lowther, with a drawl in his voice that was very irritating to the angry Outsider.

"You don't want to feed with me?"

"Not particularly."

"You're going down to Hall to tea because I'm in the study?"

Monty Lowther shrugged his shoulders.

"I haven't said so," he said quietly. "And I'd rather not discuss the matter."

"Oh, if you're afraid to stand by your own words——"

Monty Lowther's eyes were gleaming now.

"If you put it like that, I'll be as candid as you wish," he said. "I don't want to eat with you. I don't like you sufficiently. That's plain English."

"And that's plain, too, I guess!" cried the Outsider.

Smack!

His open palm came with a ringing smack upon Monty Lowther's cheek, and the Shell fellow staggered back towards the window.

CHAPTER 3.

D'Arcy Decides!

IT was surprise, more than anything else, that caused Monty Lowther to stagger away.

The blow had been a sharp one, but it only tingled on his face. He was not hurt. But the red mark of it showed up plainly on the cheek.

It was only for a moment that Lowther staggered. Then he came springing forward, his fists clenched, and his eyes blazing.

Tom Merry sprang forward.

"Monty, stop!"

He thrust himself in between the two. Lumley-Lumley was standing his ground. He was no match physically for Monty Lowther. But he did not retreat an inch. He was willing to stand by what he had done. With all the Outsider's faults, no one had ever called him a coward.

Tom Merry dragged the angry Lowther back.

Lowther struggled in his grasp.

"Let go!" he shouted. "I—I'll smash him! Let go, Tom Merry!"

"Hold on, I say!"

"Let me get at him!"

"You shan't!" said Tom Merry. "Lend a hand here, Manners!"

"Oh, let him come on," said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "I guess I don't object to a little scrap."

Lowther made another effort to tear himself loose, but Manners lent Tom Merry a hand, and the angry junior was whirled back towards the window.

"Will you let me go?" panted Monty Lowther. "I'm going to lick that cad, I tell you."

"You're not," said Tom Merry.

"Cheese it," said Manners. "Tom's head of the study. You've got to toe the line. Chuck it."

"Ass!"

"Thanks! But chuck it, all the same!"

Lowther panted for breath. He desisted from struggling for a moment or two.

"What do you mean by this, Tom Merry?" he asked. "Why can't I go for the cad if I want to? Are you off your silly rocker?"

"No," said Tom Merry, "but you can't fight Lumley now. Mr. Railton's put him into the study, and it's up to us to take it quietly."

"Not if he lays his paws on us, I suppose!" roared Lowther.

"Well, you provoked him."

Lowther gasped.

"I—I provoked him?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "He had no right to act as

he did, but you knew he was an outsider. You started it."

Monty Lowther simply snorted. He was far from expecting his own chum to turn against him in this manner.

"Well, I like that!" he exclaimed. "Are you standing up for that rotter?"

"No, I don't like him any more than you do, but if Mr. Railton's put him here while his study's being done out, it's up to us to fall in with his wishes. Mr. Railton has always been decent to us."

"Quite so," said Manners. "Shut up, Monty! Tom's right, all along the line."

"Rats! I'm going to wallop Lumley!"

"Hold him, Manners!"

"Leggo! I——"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed a voice at the door. "Bai Jove, deah boys! Is this a new form of gymnastics, or—I really twust you are not havin' a wow!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form, who was looking in. D'Arcy was a most elegant junior, and his polite manners were famous through both Houses at St. Jim's.

The Shell fellows paused as D'Arcy spoke.

"I twust," went on Arthur Augustus severely, "that you are not allowin' yourselves the relaxation of a vulgah wow."

"Oh, rats!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah!"

"Buzz off!"

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort. I weward you as a wude boundah, Lowthah. And if you are havin' a wow——"

"I'm going to biff Lumley, but these silly asses are trying to stop me!" roared Lowther. "He's dotted me on the chivvy."

"Bai Jove! If Lowthah's dig has been insulted in this mannah, deah boys, you must allow him to wetaliate."

"There!" exclaimed Lowther. "I knew Gussy would back me up!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy, undah the circs."

"Let Gussy decide," said Manners.

"Yaas, that's a weally good ideah! You can always depend upon me to show you what's the wight and wpopain thing to do, deah boys!"

"Lumley's been put into our study," said Tom Merry, releasing Lowther while he explained matters to the swell of the School House. "Lowther immediately said he wouldn't feed with him."

"That was wathah wude!"

"And then Lumley-Lumley dotted him on the chivvy."

"That was vewy wude indeed."

"And now Lowther wants to wipe up the carpet with him."

"And I'm jolly well going to!" shouted Lowther.

"Undah the circs you had bettah let Lumley alone. You see, as Mr. Wailton put him in the study, it was up to you to wewvice him politely. Any othah course of conduct implies a diswewpect for your Housemash—and that is a thing of which I could nevah approve."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, you know——"

Monty Lowther was too excited to follow the excellent reasoning of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He suddenly broke loose and rushed at Lumley-Lumley. The Outsider of St. Jim's was quite willing to meet him half-way.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rushed between.

"Weally, deah boys—— Oh! Ow! Yawwooh!"

D'Arcy was acting the part of the peacemaker—but in this particular instance the peacemaker was not blessed. Lowther's fist caught him on one side of the head, and Lumley's in the ribs.

The swell of the Fourth gave a wild howl, and dropped on the carpet with a bump.

CHAPTER 4.

The Housemaster's Invitation!

"MY hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Ha ha, ha!" yelled Manners.

"Bai Jove! Yawwooh! Yow! Ah!"

"I'm sorry!" gasped Lowther. "What did you get in the way for, you duffer?"

"I guess it was your own look-out," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Bai Jove! You wottah!"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther raised the swell of St. Jim's up. He was gasping for breath and his head was swimming.

"Bai Jove, I weward you as a pair of feahful duffahs!" he exclaimed. "I have a gweat mind to give you both a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can see no cause for wibald laughter—"
 "Look here, you can chuck it now!" said Tom Merry, as he sat Gussy down in a chair. "There's been enough of this. You've hurt poor old Gussy between you."

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

Lowther grunted.

"Lumley's dotted me in the chivvy," he said truculently.

"Well, let it drop!"

"I guess you'd better," said Lumley-Lumley mockingly. "You might get another dot in the chivvy which you wouldn't like half so much, you know."

Lowther turned crimson.

"If you don't shut up," he said, breathing hard, "you may get shut up!"

"I guess there's nobody here who can shut me up."

"I can—and will!" shouted Lowther, his temper going again. "Look here, Tom Merry, I can't stand that cad—and I won't!"

"Hold on—"

"Oh, let him come on!" sneered Lumley-Lumley.

And Monty Lowther did "come on."

He rushed right at the Outsider and closed with him. The two juniors reeled to and fro in the study, kicking up clouds of dust from the carpet.

"Now, you cad!" roared Lowther, whirling the Fourth Former towards the door. "Out you go!"

"I guess not!"

"I'll—"

"Ahem!"

It was a slight cough from the passage.

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, stood in the doorway.

Lowther and Lumley-Lumley separated, as if each had suddenly become red-hot. They stood, dusty, dishevelled, panting, crimson. But, curiously enough, Mr. Railton did not seem to notice anything unusual. Perhaps the Housemaster was exercising his gift of tact.

"I wished to speak to you, Merry," he said, looking across at the hero of the Shell, who was very red and conscious. "I want you to come to tea with me."

Tea with the Housemaster was, of course, a great honour—much coveted by the boys, especially by the juniors.

"Th-th-thank you, sir!" stammered Tom Merry.

"Manners and Lowther as well, of course," said Mr. Railton, "and Lumley-Lumley. I wish also to ask the boys in Study No. 6 in the Fourth. Ah, you're here, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"You will take my invitation to Blake and Herries and Digby?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! Digby has gone home with Glyn, sir, to tea."

"Then, of course, he cannot come," said Mr. Railton, with a smile. "I shall expect the others—at six o'clock precisely."

And with a cheery nod Mr. Railton went on his way.

The juniors looked at one another.

"Blessed if I'm going!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Weally, Lumley," said Arthur Augustus, "you seem to be uttally unacquainted with decent mannaahs, deah boy! It is a great honah to be asked to tea with a mastah, and it is uttally imposso to wufese!"

"We must all go, of course," said Tom Merry quietly.

"It's beastly awkward!" said Lowther. "It's very kind of Mr. Railton; but, under the circumstances, it's—well, awkward!"

Lumley-Lumley burst into a laugh.

"I guess we can keep the peace at the Housemaster's tea-table," he remarked.

"I hope so."

"Six o'clock, I think Mr. Wailton said!" D'Arcy exclaimed. "I shall have to go to tell the chaps in my study. Au wevoir, deah boys!"

And the swell of St. Jim's left the study.

Lumley-Lumley, with a peculiar look at Monty Lowther, followed him out. The Terrible Three looked at one another in grim silence.

"This is jolly odd!" said Manners at last. "Why should Mr. Railton put the Outsider into our study and then ask us all to tea with him?"

"Perhaps it's his idea of pouring oil on the troubled waters?" suggested Monty Lowther, with a grin. "I don't suppose Mr. Railton would take the trouble, though."

"Well, it's odd."

"Upon the whole, it's just as well that I hadn't a black



As Arthur Augustus tapped him on the shoulder, Blake looked up from his task of warming the teapot. The next moment he gave a wild howl as a spurt of hot water from the kettle went over his hand. Crash! He dropped the teapot and it shattered to fragments on the floor.

eye or a swollen nose to take with me to tea with Mr. Railton," Lowther remarked thoughtfully.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "Now let's get ready." And the Terrible Three prepared for the visit to Mr. Railton's quarters, taking a great deal more care with their toilet than was their custom.

CHAPTER 5.

Tea With Mr. Railton!

MR. RAILTON'S study looked very cheerful and cosy. There was a good fire burning in the grate and the table was laid for tea. And the table looked very inviting. Great preparations had evidently been made.

Jack Blake & Co. had already arrived, and they could not help glancing at the good things with an appreciative eye.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther presented themselves within a couple of minutes of the arrival of the chums of the Fourth.

Mr. Railton shook hands with them cordially, with a few words of welcome.

The Terrible Three looked very neat and clean and cheerful, with perhaps a touch of consciousness in their manner which hinted at the fact that they had specially clean collars-on.

One guest only was expected now—the Outsider of St. Jim's. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had not yet arrived.

Was the Outsider coming?

The juniors did not think he would venture to disregard the invitation of the Housemaster; yet at the same time they realised that there was no telling what a fellow like Lumley-Lumley might or might not do.

Mr. Railton, perhaps, felt a twinge of uneasiness on the subject. If Lumley-Lumley did not come his little plan to place him on good terms with the other fellows would be spoiled.

Mr. Railton did not allow his manner to indicate what he was thinking. He was calm and cheerful and genial. He had started a never-tiring topic—football.

The kettle was singing on the hob, all ready for the tea to be made, for the meal was to be taken in quite a chummy way, as if Mr. Railton was simply a senior in the school, and Blake had already been settled upon to make the tea.

Blake could not help glancing at the clock after a little talk, even on the intensely interesting subject of football in general and junior House matches in particular.

It was ten minutes past six.

The Outsider was already ten minutes late. Was he coming? Would he have the cheek to stay away, or was this but another sample of his insolence?

There was a footstep in the passage and a tap at the door.

"Come in!" said Mr. Railton cheerily.

Lumley-Lumley entered. A look at his face was sufficient to show that he was late on purpose. It was but one more example of the impertinence that had made Lumley-Lumley a sore trial to the masters at St. Jim's.

"Ah, we are complete now!" said Mr. Railton, taking Lumley-Lumley by the hand in so genial a manner that even the Outsider looked less sullen.

Mr. Railton did not appear to notice that Lumley-Lumley was late. He did not seem to be aware that the Outsider had not a wholly pleasant expression upon his face.

"I think that we may take tea now, Blake," Mr. Railton said.

"Certainly, sir!"

"I suppose," murmured D'Arcy in Tom Merry's ear—"I suppose it will be all right if we hammah that cad aftahwards for his wudeness to Mr. Wailton?"

Tom Merry smiled.

"Quite, Gussy!"

"I feel as if I cannot stand him, you know, Tom Mewwy."

"Mr. Railton is looking at you."

"Bai Jove!"

Blake was making the tea. D'Arcy coloured under the momentary gaze of the Housemaster, and went to help Blake with the tea. Blake was pouring hot water into the teapot to warm it when Arthur Augustus tapped him on the shoulder. It was not exactly a judicious thing to do under the circumstances. Jack Blake looked up from what he was doing, and then gave a wild howl as a spurt of hot water from the kettle went over his hand.

Crash!

"Bai Jove!"

Blake sucked his hand and glared at his chum.

"You—you ass!" he panted.

The teapot lay in fragments on the floor.

"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther.

Mr. Railton smiled kindly.

"A little accident," he remarked. "It is of no consequence. I will ring for another teapot. I hope you have not scalded your hand, Blake."

"Oh, it's n-nothing, sir!" gasped Blake. "Only a little splash; only I was startled. I'm sorry the teapot's broken, sir."

"Yaas. Bai Jove! I'm awfully sowwy, too, sir!"

"It is of no consequence whatever."

The new teapot was quickly forthcoming. Mr. Railton handed it to Blake, and D'Arcy stretched out his hand to take it from his chum.

"You had better let me make the tea, deah boy," he remarked.

"Buzz off!" murmured Blake.

"Weally, Blake, you are not to be twusted with a teapot—"

"I'll—I'll—"

"It would be too wotten to have anothah accident, and—Weally, Hewwics—"

"Come and look at the aeroplane over the school, Gussy," said Herries, slipping his arm through D'Arcy's and forcibly leading him to the window.

"Weally, Hewwics—"

Jack Blake made the tea. Herries released the swell of St. Jim's as soon as that operation was safely over, and the juniors took their places round the table.

Mr. Railton assigned the place next to himself to Tom Merry, and next to Tom sat Lumley-Lumley, and Monty Lowther was on the other side. Little polite offices had, therefore, to pass between the juniors—which was, perhaps, the Housemaster's object.

There was a curious expression upon Lumley-Lumley's face.

The Outsider had come there with the intention of being silent and sullen, but in the gentle kindness of Mr. Railton he melted imperceptibly. In spite of himself, the sulky boy began to look more cheerful and good humoured, and the other fellows realised that it was up to them to make the tea party in the Housemaster's study a success if possible.

There was, therefore, a circle of cheerful faces round the table when tea began, and Mr. Railton took care that there should be no long intervals of silence.

It was a tea that could not fail to appeal to the juniors. Ham and fresh-boiled eggs were there in any quantity, and there were cakes, scones, doughnuts, marmalade, and various kinds of jam.



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And under the influence of his genial surroundings the Outsider's better nature was rapidly coming to the top. Mr. Railton noticed the change without allowing it to be seen that he was taking notes of anything.

And in the midst of the buzz of cheery talk, to the accompaniment of the clatter of cups and saucers and plates, the Housemaster felt that his object was being achieved, and that it was more than probable that Lumley's last chance would not be wasted.

CHAPTER 6.
The Terrible Three's Task!

"PASS the jam, Lumley."
"Certainly!"
"Try the tarts, Lumley, old man," said Herries in a stage whisper. "I can recommend them. Quite all right."
"I guess so," said Lumley-Lumley.
The chums of St. Jim's and the Outsider had almost forgotten by this time that they were on bad terms.
Indeed, amid such genial surroundings it was difficult for anybody to remain on bad terms with anybody else.
Mr. Railton quietly marked the progress of his little plan with inward satisfaction.
Lumley-Lumley's face was very bright and cheerful. His voice took on a softer tone, and the old cynical expression no longer lingered about his lips.
And strangely enough, in the circumstances, Lumley-Lumley helped to contribute to that result: for under Mr. Railton's kindly influence the Outsider came out strong, and he told more than one anecdote of his earlier days—days which had been spent amid strange scenes quite unknown to the St. Jim's fellows.
Lumley-Lumley had learned by this time not to relate yarns of reckless doings, or of hard dealings such as had shocked and surprised the fellows when he first came to St. Jim's. What he said was interesting, without making his hearers feel that he was an "awful outsider."
The little party broke up at last on the best of terms. Mr. Railton made the Shell fellows a sign to remain after the Fourth Formers had gone. The Fourth Formers—Blake, Herries, D'Arcy, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley—departed in the friendliest fashion possible, chatting cheerily as they went down the passage.

The Terrible Three were a little surprised at being detained, but they all three wore their politest smiles.
"Just a few minutes' more talk," said Mr. Railton, with a smile. "Draw your chairs up to the fire."
The Shell fellows obeyed. They wondered what was coming. Tom Merry had an uneasy inward feeling that it was something to do with Lumley-Lumley. He was right.
"You have a new boy in your study, my boys," Mr. Railton remarked.
"Yes, sir."
"Lumley will probably remain with you for a few days."
"Ye-es, sir."
"You do not mind?"
"It's for you to settle about it, sir, of course."
"That is not an answer to my question, Merry," said Mr. Railton, with a smile.
Tom Merry coloured.
"Well, sir, if you want me to speak out, we don't like Lumley-Lumley in our study, but we're willing to treat him civilly."
"You don't like him?"
"No, sir."
"The other fellows in the School House feel the same towards him?"
"I—I think so."
"It's not confined to the School House, sir," said Manners. "The New House chaps feel just the same."
"What is the cause of Lumley's general unpopularity?"
The three Shell fellows looked at one another helplessly. Respect for the Housemaster made it impossible for them to avoid answering his question; at the same time they had a horrible, uncomfortable feeling at being driven, as it were, to talk about the faults of a fellow who was not present.
"You need not mind speaking to me, my boys," Mr. Railton said quietly. The thoughts and feelings of the juniors were as clear as if they had been written on an open sheet. "I am intervening in this matter for Lumley-Lumley's sake. If you desire to help your school-fellow, the best thing you can do is to join hands with me in the matter."
That was really putting it very diplomatically. Mr. Railton had placed the Shell fellows in the position of being desirous of helping Lumley-Lumley—a thought that had not occurred to them before.
"The fact is," went on the Housemaster, in the most candid way, "I am sure I can rely upon you, and I'm going to speak very plainly. I want to help Lumley-Lumley.

He is the most unpopular boy in the school, and I fear that he deserves it only too well. At the same time, he has many excellent qualities."

"He's a plucky beggar—I mean, a plucky chap," said Monty Lowther.

"Quite so. Then don't you think there's a chance for Lumley-Lumley yet?" asked Mr. Railton. "Now, to be plain, unless a change takes place in Lumley-Lumley, he will have to leave St. Jim's."

The Shell fellows exchanged glances again. Nothing would have pleased them better than for Jerrold Lumley-Lumley to leave St. Jim's. And yet their Housemaster had, somehow, placed them in the position of wishing him to stay—or, at all events, taking the matter very seriously.

"Indeed, sir!" said Manners.
"Yes, Manners. Unless Lumley-Lumley changes, he must go. But the Head and I would be sorry to see the doors of St. Jim's closed upon one who was capable of becoming a credit to the school if he had a little help in time."

"Ye-es, sir."
"Now, why is Lumley-Lumley so unpopular?" asked Mr. Railton. "Speak quite frankly, and in complete confidence; regard me simply as a senior, like Kildare, and consider that we are discussing a matter for the well-being of a school-mate we want to help."

"Oh!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Well, go on, Merry."
"Well, sir, he's—well, he's a rank outsider," said Tom Merry. "He can't say I haven't given him a chance. I had a row with all the other chaps for playing him in the footer eleven. But he never would play the game; he doesn't seem to be able to do so. He'd keep the ball to himself all the time, and then more than once he fouled a chap who upset him."

"This is very serious."
"And he's not truthful; and how is a chap to get on with one who is not truthful?" said Lowther.

"But remember his early bad training," said Mr. Railton. "He was brought up in a class of people to whom untruthfulness comes quite easily. The same influence is at work even in his footer; he was trained to be selfish and hard."

"H'm!"
"But I don't see how we're to stand it, sir."
"No. I don't think you should, Merry. Certainly not!"

(Continued on the next page.)

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said Mr. Railton heartily. "You must not stand it; you must cure him!"

"Oh!" said Tom Merry, taken aback.

"As there is certainly good in him, why should we not make a combined effort to bring it to life?" suggested Mr. Railton. "The thought has long been in my mind that what Lumley-Lumley needs to set him right is friendship with some really decent lads. That is why I thought of you."

The Terrible Three coloured.

"I confess," said Mr. Railton, "that I have so far relied upon your co-operation in this matter, that that was my motive in sending Lumley-Lumley temporarily into your study."

"Oh, sir!"

"Now, I am going to ask a favour of you—for Lumley-Lumley's sake," said Mr. Railton. "The boy has had many disadvantages. Considering everything, he is not so bad as—as he might be. You see that?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Suppose you make up your minds to be very patient with him—to stand by him like true friends, and always treat him with politeness—for a few days at least," Mr. Railton suggested. "Back him up all along the line; let him see that you're willing to chum with him if he plays the game."

The chums of the Shell sat dismayed. It was a large order.

"You could even give him another trial at football, Merry," the Housemaster went on. "Give him a real chance—a last chance."

Tom Merry looked deeply troubled.

"If you wish it, sir—"

"I do wish it, most earnestly."

"Then I will try, sir."

"Thank you, Merry! I am sure that you will do your best. And you, Manners and Lowther?"

"I'll do my best, sir," said Manners slowly.

"And—and I, sir," said Lowther, not very heartily.

But any lack of heartiness in the manner of the juniors was apparently not noticed by Mr. Railton. He rose to his feet.

"Thank you very much," he exclaimed. "I'm sure you will not regret it, however the experiment turns out. But I think it will be a success, if you try your hardest."

And the Housemaster shook hands with the chums of the Shell, and they departed.

After the study door had closed on them they paused in the passage.

"Well, this is a nice go!" murmured Monty Lowther.

Manners grunted.

"We're in for it!"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, "we're in for it! And we've given Mr. Railton our word, and we've got to play up and do our best."

"Oh, yes!"

The chums of the Shell were agreed upon that, but their expressions were not very hopeful as they walked slowly away.

CHAPTER 7.

On Good Terms!

THE Terrible Three went to bed with the best resolutions for the morrow. They had determined to treat Lumley-Lumley with perfect courtesy, and watch how it worked.

When the Shell went down in the morning, Tom Merry & Co. looked out for the Outsider.

Blake and his chums were already down, punting a footer about in the quad, in the fresh, breezy morning.

Lumley-Lumley stood by the School House door looking on, with his hands in his pockets, and a hard expression on his face.

Gladly he would have joined the Fourth Formers in the punt about. But they evidently did not want him, and the Outsider was too proud to thrust himself where he knew that he was not wanted.

"Here he is!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"He looks as if he'd like some exercise," said Tom Merry. "Buzz off and get my old footer, Monty; we'll make him join up in punting it."

Lowther ran upstairs for the footer. Tom Merry tapped the Outsider on the shoulder in a most genial way.

Lumley-Lumley gave a start, and looked round. He was not usually greeted at St. Jim's in that friendly manner.

He did not speak, but simply looked at Tom Merry in a way that was decidedly uncompromising.

"Good-morning!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"What do you want?"

"Nothing."

"Then keep your paws off my shoulder," said Lumley-Lumley.

Tom Merry turned red.

"It's a cold morning," he remarked.

"I guess I know that."

"A little exercise would keep a fellow warm."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"We're going to punt a ball about till brekker," said Tom Merry, determined to keep cheerful and good-tempered in spite of the Outsider's uncompromising nature. "Will you join us, Lumley?"

"No!"

"Oh, pile in!" said Manners. "It will do you good."

Lumley-Lumley stared at them.

"Look here, what's the little game?" he demanded.

"Footer," said Tom Merry innocently.

"I don't mean that! Why do you want to make me punt about with you?" demanded the Outsider abruptly.

"You don't like me."

"Ahem!"

"As a matter of fact, there's no reason why you should," said Lumley-Lumley in his disagreeable way. "I can't say I like you much!"

"Hem!"

"I haven't treated you well, either," said the Outsider. "I've been going to say that I'm sorry for the way I acted over—the footer match the other day. It's been on my mind."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," said Tom Merry sincerely enough.

"Mind, I'm not saying that to butter you," said Lumley-Lumley aggressively. "I don't care twopence whether you think well of me or not."

"We know that."

"I was in the wrong, that's all, and—and I was sorry afterwards."

"Good for you."

"I've said that to satisfy myself, not to please you."

"Never mind; it does please me all the same," said Tom Merry good-humouredly. "You're a cantankerous sort of chap, Lumley. Why do you always make yourself out to be worse than you are?"

"I—I don't know that I do," said Lumley-Lumley, taken aback.

"Well, you do. Hallo, here's Lowther with the ball! This way, Monty! Now, you're joining us, Lumley, aren't you?"

Lumley-Lumley did not move.

"I don't make you out at all," he said. "It's only a few days since you told me you had done with me, and said something about punching my head if I should speak to you again."

Tom Merry coloured painfully.

"I was wrong to say it," he replied.

"No, you weren't," said the Outsider, rather reasonably; "after the way I acted, you were right enough. I wasn't surprised at it, and I don't owe you a grudge for it. But why have you changed all of a sudden; that's what I want to know?"

Tom Merry was silent.

He knew that it would not do to explain to the Outsider.

He was growing to understand the suspicious, jealous touchy nature of this strange lad much better than he had ever understood it before. He was beginning to realise that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley longed for a good and healthy friendship—that in his heart he did not value fellows like Mellish and Levison, who toadied to him for his money.

Yet, at the mere suspicion of being patronised or even helped, all the lad's unruly pride was up in arms at once.

If he had known that Mr. Railton had spoken to Tom Merry on the subject, that the Housemaster had taken a personal interest in his welfare, it would probably have been quite enough to set him against the whole plan for his benefit.

"Well?" demanded Lumley-Lumley.

"We want to be on good terms with you," said Tom Merry.

"After all what's happened?"

"Yes."

"I guess I don't catch on."

"Take it for granted," said Monty Lowther, "and come and help us move the footer. The bell goes soon."

Lumley-Lumley still looked puzzled.

"You mean all this?" he asked.

"Of course!" said Tom Merry.

That was enough for the Outsider. Monty Lowther tossed up the ball, and the juniors were soon punting it about quite merrily. Kangaroo, Dane, Glyn, and French, and other Shell fellows came up to join in the fun, and there was soon quite a crowd, laughing and shouting merrily; the Outsider of St. Jim's as merry as any.

Mr. Railton stood for a moment on the steps of the School House and looked out. A pleasant smile came over the face of the Housemaster as he saw. It lingered there as he turned back into the House.



"Hallo! What's this?" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he picked something out of the drawer. It was half of a broken cuff-link, and on it was engraved the monogram "J. L." It was a clue to the culprit responsible for ruining the "copy" for the "Weekly"! "Jerrold Lumley-Lumley!" said Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 8.
Not Like Lumley!

"**B**AI Jove!"
"Hallo, Gussy! What are you burblin' about?" asked Jack Blake pleasantly.
"I was not aware that I was burblin', deah boy," answered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity. "I was uttahwin' an ejaculation. Look!"
And the swell of St. Jim's nodded towards the group of Shell fellows in the distance. The Fourth Formers had stopped their punt about, and were going in.
They looked across at Tom Merry & Co. in surprise.
It was new to see Jerrold Lumley-Lumley on such excellent terms with Tom Merry and his chums, and Blake could hardly believe his eyes at first.
"My hat!" he exclaimed at last.
"Yaas, wathah! It's vevy curious, isn't it?"
"Lumley must be turning over a new leaf."
"Or else Tom Merry is," suggested Digby. "He's done this thing before, you know. He twice played Lumley-Lumley at footer, against everybody else's wishes. I should have thought he'd be tired of it by this time."
"Same here."
"Faith, and ye're right," said Reilly of the Fourth. "But sure, Lumley seems to be playing up, and he seems to be quite happy."
Blake sniffed.
"Oh, he'll show the cloven foot soon enough."
"Yes, rather!"
"I veward it as pwactically certain, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "There is no doubt that Lumley-Lumley is a wank outsidersah."

The Fourth Formers stood and looked on for some minutes. Jack Blake's prediction that Lumley-Lumley would show the cloven foot was verified.
Bernard Glyn collided with the Outsider, quite by accident, and pushed him over on his hands and knees. The Outsider swung round instantly, and gave the Liverpool lad a shove that sent him spinning.

Glyn was far from expecting the attack, and he rolled over, and crashed on the ground with a bump.
"Oh!" he exclaimed.
There was a shout from the other fellows.
"Shame!"
"Cad!"
Tom Merry ran up. His face was crimson.
"Lumley! What did you do that for?"
"He shoved me over," said Lumley-Lumley sullenly. Tom Merry compressed his lips.
It was against Mr. Railton's wishes for him to quarrel with Lumley-Lumley; but he had never felt more inclined to do so in his life.
He controlled his temper, however.
Lumley-Lumley stood with a dark and sullen brow, as Bernard Glyn rose to his feet.
"I—I'm sorry, Glyn," he faltered. "I—I acted without thinking. I'm sorry if I hurt you."
Bernard Glyn had begun pushing back his cuffs. He stopped as the Outsider spoke and looked curiously at him.
"Oh, very well!" he said. "If you're sorry, that's all right."
And he walked away.
The Shell fellows went in to breakfast. Blake grunted as he turned towards the House.
"What did I tell you!" he remarked. "The chap's simply hopeless."
"Yaas, wathah! But—"
"Quite outside!" said Herries.
"Yaas; but—"
"Look here! What are you butting in like that for, Gussy?" demanded Blake.
"I was goin' to wemark, deah boy, that undah the circs, Lumley-Lumley's conduct could be overlooked. You see, he apologised to Glyn."
"What difference does that make?" grunted Herries.
D'Arcy gave his chum a severe glance.
"All the difference in the world, Hewwies," he
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remarked. "If one chap apologises to another that makes it all wight."

"My belief is that the Outsider said he was sorry because Glyn was going to punch his head," said Herries obstinately. "It's not like Lumley to do that."

"Not at all, deah boy. Lumley-Lumley is an awful outsidah; but he's got heaps of pluck—you must say that for him."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Cheese it, you two!" said Jack Blake. "And come in to brekker!"

At breakfast-table D'Arcy looked round for Lumley-Lumley, and dropped into a seat beside him. Hancock, who was going to take that seat, grinned, and went farther. He was not sorry to give up his place next to the least-liked fellow in the School House.

Lumley-Lumley looked idly at D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's gave him a most benignant smile in return.

"Good-mornin', Lumley, deah boy!" he remarked.

"Hallo!"

"I saw you bump Glyn ovah!"

"I've heard enough about that," said the Outsider savagely. "Let it drop!"

"I was not going—"

"Oh, chuck it!"

"I wepeat," pursued Arthur Augustus D'Arcy firmly, "that I was not going to throw your wotten conduct in your face, Lumley-Lumley. I was going to wemark that I was vevy glad to see you apologise to Glyn aftahwards."

"Oh, rats!"

"I'm afwaid you are a wude beast, Lumley-Lumley, upon the whole. However, I weally think there is some good in you. Whenever an injuwy is done, an apology should be quite enough to set the mattah wight between gentlemen. I am vevy glad to see that you are learnin' mannahs, deah boy."

"There is too much talk at this table," said Lathom mildly.

And D'Arcy rang off.

But when the juniors went out after breakfast the Outsider's look was a little more cordial. He realised that the swell of St. Jim's meant kindly. A new prospect seemed to be opening before Lumley-Lumley.

If the fellows were willing to forget old grudges and to be friendly, it was a chance for him—a chance to abandon his old ways of sullen isolation and defiance; a chance to set himself right with the school; a chance to bring friendship and good feeling into his life.

Lumley-Lumley thought it over seriously. In his dark, suspicious mind there was yet a lingering doubt that the fellows might be "rotting" him.

But if they were not—if they were willing to let bygones be bygones—surely he would be reckless to let the chance slip by.

And in Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's mind a resolution was slowly formed—a resolution that was to have a far-reaching effect upon his career at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 9.

The Evil Genius!

THERE was bright sunlight in the quadrangle, a cold breeze of winter stirring the branches of the old elms.

After morning school the St. Jim's fellows were keenly enjoying the fresh air and sunshine. One fellow sat upon a bench under the trees. It was the Outsider.

Many a time Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had looked on at the other fellows enjoying their game, and had felt himself to be what he was—an outsider.



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He had felt, at the same time, that it was his own fault—he had known that he had sullenly refused the olive-branch held out more than once.

In sullen pride and suspicion he had said to himself that he did not care; that his own company was sufficient for him, and that with his disreputable associates outside the school gates he could amuse himself better than by joining in the boyish sports of the juniors.

But he had felt all the time, secretly, in the depths of his heart, that it was not true; that he longed really for association with fellows like Tom Merry, and that he would have given anything for a real boyish friendship.

Why did he not make an effort?

He had made the effort more than once. But he had failed, and he had to confess that the fault lay with himself.

A hasty, revengeful, and suspicious nature was a bar to friendship. Every fellow who had tried to take up the Outsider had found him "impossible."

And so the nature of the boy had grown harder and more sullen. But now, it seemed, a gleam of light had crossed the dark path of the Outsider.

As he sat there, under the elms, pencil and book in hand, his face was brighter than it had been for a long time.

The book in his hand was his school Virgil, and Lumley-Lumley, in the hours of leisure, was trying to make up for lost time.

For the Outsider had made a resolve.

Tom Merry & Co. were making an effort to save him from himself, and though the Outsider did not fully understand that, he understood that he had at last a chance to set himself right with the St. Jim's fellows.

And he meant to do his best.

To become a cheerful, friendly fellow, instead of a sullen, frowning outsider, to become a worker instead of a slacker, to drop his cynical, scornful manners, and adopt a more boyish and hearty tone—all that required a great effort. But the Outsider of St. Jim's was prepared to make it.

Hitherto, in the endless troubles of the Form-room, Lumley-Lumley had contented himself with sullen submission, or sullen defiance. Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, had shown much patience in dealing with Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. But even Mr. Lathom had lost patience at last, and punishment had fallen thickly upon the lazy and insubordinate boy. The punishments were endured with sullen hardihood.

To set himself right with Mr. Lathom would not be easy. But Lumley-Lumley meant to do it if he could. Hence his work at this moment when the other juniors were at play.

He was construing "Cæsar" now—going over work that should have been quite familiar to him, but which he had neglected.

He was wrinkling his brows over it when Mellish came by. The cad of the Fourth was looking for the Outsider.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed.

Lumley-Lumley looked up.

"Well?" he said.

"I've got the fags you asked me to get yesterday," said Mellish.

"Oh!"

"I've put them in the study," said Mellish. "They're good! Are you coming to have a smoke?"

The Outsider shook his head.

"I can't come."

"Why not?"

"I'm working."

"Oh, hang! You don't want to do more prep than you're bound to, I suppose!" said Mellish. "What's the little game?"

"I'm awfully behind in class and I want to pull up."

Mellish burst into a sneering laugh.

"You don't mean to say you're trying to butter up Lathom?" he asked.

Lumley-Lumley turned red.

"I guess not," he said angrily.

"Then what are you doing it for?"

"To pull up, as I said."

"Oh, rot!"

Lumley-Lumley's eyes glinted. But he dropped them to his book again.

"Look here, the cigarettes are in the study, and we could have a quiet smoke," went on Mellish. "Blessed if I understand you lately, Lumley!"

"Don't try! Buzz off!"

"But I want you—"

"I can't come!"

Mellish sneered.

"Oh, I've seen it all!" he exclaimed.

"You've seen what? What do you mean?"

"I've seen you sucking up to Tom Merry and his friends!" said Mellish fiercely. "Do you think I'm blind? You think they may take you up again?"

The Outsider was silent.
 "They're only fooling you," said the cad of the Fourth.
 "You mark my words! As soon as they're tired of you they'll drop you fast enough."

"I don't believe it."
 "Rats! It's happened before!"
 "It was my fault."

Mellish sniffed.
 "Oh, if you're going to understudy good little Georgie in the story-book I'm done!" he exclaimed. "You make me sick, Lumley!"

Lumley flushed uncomfortably.
 "I'm not," he said. "There's nothing goody-goody about me, I guess! Still, I don't see why I shouldn't be civil to Tom Merry when he goes out of his way to be obliging to me."

"I expect he's got an axe to grind," said Mellish.

"I don't see how."
 "Oh, chaps don't take trouble over one another for nothing!"

"You don't, certainly!"
 "Oh, pile it on!" said Mellish. "I understand you! You think you'll be on the best of terms with Tom Merry now you're in his study, and you can afford to drop me!"

Lumley-Lumley shifted a little uncomfortably.
 "I wasn't thinking that," he said. "I don't know that I want to drop you. But I'm going to drop smoking. It's a fool's game, anyway!"

"It's the first time I've heard you say so!" sneered Mellish.

"Well, you hear me say so now, and I mean it."
 "Rot!" said Mellish. "Look here, those chaps in the Shell are making things all right for you now because they don't want continual rows in their study. Wait till you're back in your own quarters—they'll drop you like a hot brick!"

Lumley-Lumley started.
 "I don't believe it!" he said, but more weakly than before.

"It's the jolly truth, all the same! Look here, for goodness' sake stop this goody-goody rot and act like yourself!" urged Mellish. "Come and have a smoke! If it's for the last time it doesn't matter—come and say good-bye to the cigs!"

Lumley-Lumley hesitated, and rose.
 "I wish you'd let me alone!" he growled ungraciously.
 "Oh, come on! You can mug up 'Cæsar' afterwards!" Lumley-Lumley flushed, and closed the book.

He followed Mellish. Just as they were leaving the spot Tom Merry came up, with a cheerful and rosy face.

"Hallo, Lumley!" he exclaimed. "I caught sight of you. Are you finished?"

"Well, not exactly finished."

"What are you mugging up?"

"'Cæsar.'"

"Let me help!"

The offer was made so frankly and cheerily that even the Outsider could find no fault with it. He hesitated.

"I suppose this is child's play to a Shell fellow?" he remarked.

Tom Merry laughed.
 "Well, I think I could take you through it easily enough," he said, "and I shall be jolly glad, too, as well. Sit down and let's begin."

Mellish pulled at Lumley's sleeve.
 "You're coming with me?" he said.

"I—I—guess—"

The Outsider hesitated.
 "Look here, Tom Merry, Lumley's promised to come with me," said Mellish aggressively. "That rotten Latin can wait!"

"Better stick to it, Lumley."

"If you'd care to help me—later—"

said Lumley-Lumley hesitatingly.

"Oh, very well!"

The Outsider walked away with Mellish. There was a cloud on his face. He was in a dubious frame of mind. His good angel and his bad one had contested for him, and the bad one had triumphed for the time. Mellish grinned with triumph as he walked away with Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

They left Tom Merry with a cloud upon his face.

CHAPTER 10.

Caught!

"HERE you are!" said Mellish.
 The two Fourth Formers entered a Fourth Form study. It was the one Mellish was occupying at present, being temporarily disposed of, as Lumley-Lumley had been. The study belonged to Hancock and Drake of the Fourth, but both of them were absent now. It was an excellent opportunity for Mellish—and for Lumley-Lumley, if he had been what he had once been.

(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.

MINCING MATTERS.

Teacher: "Now, Jones, if I have two pieces of steak and I halve them, what do I get?"

Jones: "Quarters, sir."

Teacher: "Good! And if I halve them again?"

Jones: "Eighths, sir."

Teacher: "And again?"

Jones: "Sixteenths."

Teacher: "And yet again?"

Jones: "Thirty-seconds."

Teacher: "Now, if I halve them once more, what would I get?"

Jones: "Mincemeat, sir!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. MacWilliam, 48, Sinclair Drive, Langside, Glasgow.

* THE FAILURE.

The employer was interviewing an applicant for the job of office boy.

"Surely," he said, "you are the boy I saw climbing into my orchard?"

"Well, yes, sir; but I didn't really get in."

"Then you may go. I have no use for failures."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss L. Barratt, 91, Chestergate, Macclesfield, Cheshire.

* NOTHING TO BOAST ABOUT.

Football Fan: "Does your town boast of a football team?"

Soccer Cynic: "No—we apologise for it."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Beckett, 12, East Street, Epsom, Surrey.

* JUST LIKE FATTY.

Figgins: "Where are those apples I left on the table?"

Fatty Wynn: "I haven't touched one of them."

Figgins: "But I left five and now there's only one."

Fatty Wynn: "Yes, that's the one I didn't touch."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Hatfield, 180, Alliance Avenue Hull.

* ONCE BITTEN—

Sergeant: "What's the first thing you do when you clean your rifle?"

Private: "Look at the number."

Sergeant: "Oh! And what's the big idea?"

Private: "To make sure I don't clean somebody else's."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Street, 24, Anderton Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, 11.

* MIKE'S MISTAKE.

Jack: "Why are you putting all those patches on that inner-tube, Mike?"

Mike: "Well, it's like this. When I get a puncture it'll be mended already."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Blackshaw, 39, Marshall Road, Tottenham, London, N. 17.

* FREE LIGHTS.

Englishman (in Aberdeen): "Say, Mac, what are all those people rushing for? Has there been an accident?"

Scotsman: "Nae, mon; it's only someone lighting a match!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Lister, 138, Clark Road, Durban, Natal, South Africa.

But Lumley-Lumley seemed to be changing.

Smoking was a doubtful pleasure. Neither junior could honestly say that he enjoyed it. But it was against the rules—it was surreptitious. It involved a secret defiance of authority, and to certain natures all these things appealed.

But the Outsider did not look cheerful as he came into the study with Mellish, and the cad of the Fourth closed the door.

Mellish took a box of cigarettes from his desk and opened it, and held out the box to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

"Light up!" he said.

Lumley-Lumley hesitated.

"Look here, suppose a prefect looks in?"

Mellish sneered.

"Are you growing afraid of the prefects?" he asked.

"No," said Lumley-Lumley, flushing. "You know jolly well I'm not afraid of a prefect—or a master, for that matter. But—"

"Then light up!"

Mellish struck a match and lighted his own cigarette. He blew out a whiff of smoke.

"Go it!" said Mellish, extending the lighted match.

"Smoking's a mug's game!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"What put that into your head?"

"Well, it's rot! You don't care for cigarettes, and I don't either," said Lumley-Lumley abruptly. "We're simply playing the giddy goat. I'm not going to smoke!"

"Had orders from Tom Merry?" sneered Mellish.

Lumley-Lumley flushed angrily.

"Look here, don't keep harping on that string!" he exclaimed. "Tom Merry wouldn't and couldn't give me orders. Only this is a silly mug's game."

"You never said so before you went into Tom Merry's study."

The Outsider was silent. That was true enough, and he knew, too, that it was Tom Merry's influence that had changed him.

"Light up, for goodness' sake!" said Mellish. "Don't be a cad!"

He lighted another match.

"Well, it's jolly well the last time!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley.

"All right; have a good smoke, then."

Lumley-Lumley lighted his cigarette. He blew out a cloud of smoke. The atmosphere of the study was soon clouded with it, for the room was small, and there was a great deal of smoke from two cigarettes.

But Lumley's face remained clouded.

"This is something like!" said Mellish.

Lumley-Lumley grunted.

"Don't you like the cigarette, Lumley?"

"No!"

"Lost your taste for smoking, perhaps?"

"I never had any taste for it, and you haven't, either!" said Lumley-Lumley with a snort. "We were only humbugging all the time. What's the good of it?"

"Look here—"

"I guess—"

Lumley-Lumley stopped as the door of the study was flung open. Kildare of the Sixth appeared in the doorway. Kildare was the head prefect of the School House and captain of the school. As a rule, he was a very genial and good-tempered fellow. But now his face was dark with anger.

"What does this mean?" he almost shouted.

The two juniors started up.

Mellish, with a quick motion of the hand, flung his cigarette into the fire. Lumley-Lumley did not follow his example.

The obstinate pride of the Outsider was roused.

He had been caught in the act! Very well, he would not lie about it. He would stand to the punishment—the "racket," as he put it to himself.

He faced Kildare, the cigarette in his fingers.

"It's a little smoke," he said.

"You know it is forbidden, Lumley!"

"I guess so!"

"And you, Mellish?"

"I—I—"

"Whose cigarettes are they?" asked Kildare.

"Lumley's!" said Mellish eagerly.

The Outsider gave him a glance of scorn. Outsider as he was, he would never have tried to save himself at the expense of his companion.

But there was no dodge or shift that Mellish was not capable of to avoid the punishment he had fairly earned. Kildare fixed his eyes upon Lumley-Lumley.

"Is that true, Lumley?"

"I guess so!"

"The cigarettes were yours?"

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"Yes."

"Then you are the more to blame of the two. Mellish, you will do five hundred lines for this, and take them to Mr. Railton. I shall explain to him what they are for."

"Yes, Kildare," said Mellish meekly.

He was only too glad to escape a caning.

"As for you, Lumley-Lumley," said Kildare, turning sternly to the Outsider, "you will follow me to my study. Lines will not meet your case."

"Very well," said Lumley-Lumley quietly.

And he followed the captain of St. Jim's out into the passage.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came from the direction of the staircase at the same moment, and Kildare and Lumley-Lumley met them face to face.

CHAPTER 11.

The Outsider's Promise!

TOM MERRY paused.

He could see from the look of the school captain that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was in trouble again.

Kildare gave the Shell fellows a short nod. He was very much out of humour.

Lumley-Lumley made a mocking grimace.

The old expression had returned to the Outsider's features now. Once more he was the Outsider—the black sheep of the Fourth.

Kildare strode on; but Tom Merry caught the Outsider's sleeve, and he paused.

"What is it, Lumley?" Tom Merry whispered.

"Smoking."

"Oh! With Mellish!"

"Yes."

"That was what you left me for?"

"I guess so!"

Tom Merry looked at him keenly.

"You didn't want to do it," he said. "You let Mellish banter you into it, and now you're taking the lion's share of the punishment."

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"No need to tell me I'm a fool," he said cynically. "I know that already."

Kildare glanced round.

"Come, Lumley."

"All serene!"

Lumley-Lumley nodded to Tom Merry, and hurried after the captain of St. Jim's. Tom Merry stood with a perplexed and undecided expression upon his face. He was very impatient with the Outsider. But he realised very clearly that things were not so bad as they had been—that the Outsider was not the black sheep of old. He had been led into this against his will, and he had calmly accepted the major part of the blame, leaving Mellish to sneak out of the more severe punishment.

Tom Merry understood that quite well.

"Well," said Monty Lowther, "what are you standing about for, Tommy? Come on!"

"Just a minute!"

Tom Merry looked into Hancock's study. Mellish was there looking far from happy. He gave the hero of the Shell a glance of defiance. Tom Merry replied to it with a scornful look.

"So you've got out of a licking?" asked Lowther.

"Mind your own bisney!" said Mellish.

"You ought to have had one."

"Oh rats!"

"You brought Lumley-Lumley into this," said Tom Merry scornfully. "It would be only commonly decent to tell Kildare so."

"And take the licking?" said Mellish.

"Yes," said Tom Merry calmly.

"Well, I've no fancy for lickings myself—and Kildare looks as if he will lay it on, too," said Mellish. "Why can't you mind your own bisney, Tom Merry? I can't see that it has anything to do with you."

Tom Merry turned out of the study without replying.

"Where are you going?" asked Manners.

"To see Kildare and explain."

Mellish uttered a cry of alarm.

"Tom Merry! You cad! If you sneak about me—"

"Hold your rotten tongue!" said Tom Merry angrily. "I'm not going to give you away to Kildare. I'm going to speak up for Lumley-Lumley, that's all."

And he strode away.

Manners and Lowther made no effort to detain him. Tom Merry was "on the high horse" now, as they would have expressed it, and nothing they could have said would have stopped him.

(Continued on page 14.)

COME RIGHT IN, CHUMS, FOR A CHAT !



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! An extra-special St. Jim's story is on the programme for next Wednesday. It is a sensational and thrilling yarn, and is a great follow-up to the "Lumley-Lumley" series that ends in this number. This story is called:

"THE MYSTERY OF THE VAULTS!"

The reformation of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, as told in this week's grand yarn, is complete and definite at long last; but there is one junior at St. Jim's who still believes that the Outsider is only "gammoning," and he is Ernest Levison. But the cad of the Fourth Form gets a shock when Lumley makes it perfectly clear, with more force than politeness, that he is in earnest. From the Outsider's former friend, Levison becomes his bitter enemy, bent upon seeking revenge. The form his revenge takes—the mystery of masked men in the St. Jim's vaults, and the thrilling outcome of their sinister actions there, makes a yarn that you will thoroughly enjoy.

"THE HORROR OF THE RUINED ABBEY!"

In the next St. Frank's thriller of our popular series, "The Ten Talons of Taaz!" there are unusual and amazing developments. Two of the last three juniors who have yet to face ordeals devised by the priests of Taaz Temple are feeling the strain. Jack Grey, Arnold McClure, and Nipper are the remaining three of the "marked ten," and, as is only to be expected, the former two, at least, are very nervous and jumpy. Who will be next? It is

a nerve-racking wait. Read what happens to the next boy in the old ruined abbey near St. Frank's—and be thrilled!

ANOTHER REMINDER.

Remember, chums, what I have told you about the Annuals Christmas Clubs that newsagents run. These clubs make it easy to purchase the ripping Annuals that are continually being advertised in the GEM. Christmas is drawing near, and if you want to be sure of having your favourite Annual then, it is advisable to see your newsagent without delay.

WORLD'S SMALLEST WIRELESS SET.

An American has bored a hole through a needle from end to end, and an Englishman has done the same to a pin—both being feats requiring a high amount of patience and skill. Yet for patience, skill, and ingenuity the palm has to be awarded to a young man in London for making a crystal set that is no more than a half-inch square. He is Alfred Hinch, and he is very proud of the fact that he has now made the smallest receiving set in the world. Every minute part of the little crystal set—coils, catwhisker, and terminals—was made by Alfred, who is an engineer by trade, and the set picks up quite clearly the B.B.C. programmes. Alfred is of an inventive turn of mind, for he has rigged up a telephone system in his house, made a perfect model of St.

PEN PALS COUPON

10-11-34



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

Miss Iona Archer, corner Raglan Street and Ninth Avenue, Sydenham, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wants girl correspondents; age 16-20; Europe preferred.

Hamish Cass, 6, Frederick Street, Townfield, Dundee, Angus, Scotland, wants pen pals; Afghanistan, France, Siam, New Guinea.

George Esterhuizen, Outspan, Maitland, Cape Province, South Africa, wants a pen pal in England; age 16-17.

Miss Olga Whitefield, Gamman's Mill, Mamaku, Rotorua Lino, Auckland, New Zealand, wants girl correspondents; stamps, sports, dancing, books.

Paul's Cathedral, which can be lit up by electricity, and has invented a gadget for trapping flies.

ELECTRICITY !

How many eels would it take to drive a 10 h.p. motor? No, I haven't got bats in the belfry! For I know the answer. It is fifty. As you know, the eel has a lot of electricity in its body—enough to give anyone a nasty shock. It is the weapon nature has given it as a means of defending itself against attack. Well, if the electricity generated by fifty eels was harnessed, and the current could be sustained for long periods, there would be sufficient to drive a 10 h.p. electric motor.

Some years ago a Professor de Esperando went deeply into the subject of harnessing eels' electricity. He had two hundred caught, and each was fitted with a copper collar, from which wires ran to a small electric motor, and the current from their bodies was sufficient to drive it. But here's the snag. The eels got tired trying to swim away, and so the current was considerably reduced. However, the professor, from his experiments, discovered that two hundred thousand eels would supply enough electricity to drive a 40,000 h.p. electric motor.

CANNY CATS.

Carpenters were busy on a house in Oklahoma City. They were opening up a cavity wall to do some repair work. Imagine their amazement when with the wall opened, a small kitten walked out! It is assumed that the kitten went to sleep in the wall without anyone knowing, five weeks before, when the wall was built up. But how the kitten managed to live that long without food remains a mystery.

Yet another story of a canny cat is reported from Perth, Western Australia. This cat was appropriately named Felix, for like the famous Felix of the films, he kept on walking. He was taken to a new home one hundred and twenty miles away, but Felix pined for his old home. So one day he set out on the journey back. Nine days later he arrived back at the old home, hungry, and tired, but happy.

TAILPIECE.

"Did you follow my advice and count to induce sleep?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, doctor. I counted up to twenty thousand."

"And did you fall asleep?"

"No. It was time to get up."

THE EDITOR.

A. R. Riches, 13, White Hart Lane, Tottenham, London N.17, wants pen pal; Africa preferred; age 16-17; Botany and Natural History.

Maurice E. Barsley, jun., 42, Melbourne Street, Leicester, wants a correspondent; China, America, Gold Coast; age 17-18; photography, swimming.

Ronald Carrington, 49, Russell Avenue, Noel Park, Wood Green, London, N.22, wants correspondents; age 15-17; British Isles and Colonies; electricity, wireless, engineering, model railways.

H. R. Watson, Redbourn, Hull Road, Cottingham, Yorks, wants pen pal in England; age 12-13; stamps, woodwork, engineering.

Miss Elsie Shepherd, 13, Yachel Road, Reading, Berkshire, wants a girl correspondent in the South of England, age 12-15; swimming, stamps, books.

Miss Lilian Shaw, 18, Palatine Street, Harpurhey, Manchester 9, wants a girl correspondent in Glasgow, age 15-17; one who has been on the Manchester stage and likes the song "Paddy."

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LUMLEY'S LAST CHANCE!

(Continued from page 12.)

Meanwhile, Kildare had gone into his study and taken up a cane. Lumley-Lumley followed him in and stood coolly awaiting his punishment.

Kildare looked at him sternly. "You know you have broken the rules of the school?" he said.

"I guess so."

"Are you sorry?"

Lumley-Lumley was silent.

"Yes," he said, after a long pause.

"Very well. I am glad to hear you say so, Lumley, though you must take the caning, all the same."

"Oh, I guess I'm not afraid of that," said Lumley-Lumley coolly.

"I suppose it is useless to talk to you, Lumley," said Kildare. "You seem to be wanting in the feelings the other fellows have."

The Outsider shrugged his shoulders.

"I shouldn't wonder," he assented.

"And you don't care?"

"No."

"You will be made to care if you remain at St. Jim's," said the captain quietly. "Hold out your hand."

Lumley-Lumley obeyed.

There was a knock at the door, and it opened, and Tom Merry came in and held up his hand, to stay the caning.

Kildare gave him a frowning look.

"You should not interrupt me now, Merry—"

"Yes, I must, Kildare. I want to speak for Lumley."

"What can you possibly have to say for him?" asked the St. Jim's captain. "He was caught in the act of smoking, and he has given some of the cigarettes to another junior."

"Yes, but—"

"Well, if you can have anything to say in his favour I'm willing to hear it," said Kildare, lowering his voice.

"I think I ought to speak out, Kildare. Only, you won't take what I say in Lumley's favour as informing against another fellow, will you?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, Lumley has smoked before, I know—all the school knows it. But this time he didn't want to do it, and he was chaffed into it."

"Oh!"

"He wasn't half so much to blame as someone else," said Tom Merry. "I don't believe he wanted to smoke at all, only he allowed himself to be clipped into playing the giddy goat."

Kildare smiled.

"Is that true, Lumley?"

The Outsider gave a shrug.

"I guess I've nothing to say on the subject," he replied.

"You need not be afraid of implicating Mellish," said Kildare. "I shall make it a point, in the circumstances, to leave Mellish's punishment exactly as it is fixed at present. Tell me the truth."

"Well, I guess I had come to the conclusion that I was playing the giddy ox, and I meant never to smoke again," said Lumley-Lumley. "I'm not saying this to keep out of the punishment. I can take that."

"You intend never to smoke again?"

"I guess so."

"Will you give me your word?"

Lumley-Lumley hesitated.

"Give Kildare your word, Lumley."

said Tom Merry. "He will trust you."

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No. 39. Vol. 1. (New Series.)

GOALS GALORE

SAINTS RIDDLE CLAREMONT DEFENCE

Wally D'Arcy at the Microphone

Saints are at full strength, and Gussy is wearing his monocle again. There's been a lot of argument over that pane of glass, but old Gus—my major, you know—is obstinate and won't give it up! Here come Claremont, led by Teddy Baxter. They haven't done well this season.

Boomph! There goes the pill—out to the wing; Gus, eyeglass and all, is away like the wind. Blake takes a pass from him, feints neatly, and gives to Tom Merry. Merry is tackled in robust style, and goes sprawling, but not before he has given to Lowther, who steadies, shoots. The ball whizzes into the corner of the net—that's number one, boys!

The game restarts, and Claremont, under Baxter's leadership, are rallying desperately. For a time Fatty Wynn has his work cut out in goal. No flies on Fatty, though—see him flick that one out in the nick of time? It's a corner kick. Here comes the ball, sailing high into the goalmouth. All jump—heads bobbing. Baxter gets his curly pate to it, and pips in a lightning "header"—Fatty Wynn leaps—oh, good man, Fatty! A save in a million, that!

Now Saints are attacking again. Claremont have a nippy attack, but their defence cracks under determined pressure. Watch Lowther now—threading through like an Alec James. Lowther swerves to avoid a tackle, and slams the pill home—the goalkeeper is sprawling, the ball spins in the rigging, and Saints are two goals up! Now it's fast and furious! Having tasted blood again, nothing will stop them. Watch Gus—speeding down the touch-line, defenders panting in his wake. Across comes a pass, Merry takes it in his stride and bangs it home. No—well saved, goalkeeper! The ball is thrown out into play. Whoopee! Lowther leaps on it and smashes home a shot

which means number three for St. Jim's at the completion of a brilliant "hat trick" by Lowther! Well played, sir!

Claremont attack hard from the restart and Fatty Wynn comes into the picture once again. With stalwart Figgins and canny Keble in front of him, though, Fatty plays coolly and confidently, and is more than equal to demands.

Saints are back in front of the Claremont goal again. Watch Tom Merry shoot from a time from a centre from Digby. A great shot—it's a goal, sure enough. Now it's Gussy—my major, you know—is out for goal, too. Down the wing he races, the veering into the middle of the field. Stealing, he lets fly with a stinging drive that a professional keeper wouldn't relish. But by Jove, it's in the net, and Saints are leading at half-time by 5—0.

Second venture sees no slacking at Lowther, muddy, but cheerful, is an ever-present source of danger to the visitors. Digby makes a fine run, enabling Lowther to score from one yard range! Six—and how many more? There goes Tom Merry—winding like a serpent through disorganised defenders before slamming the pill right home for number seven! Gus is in the picture again now. A throw-in by Herries sees Gus away. Blake and Gus combine beautifully, Blake receives from Gus right in front of goal, and that's that! Yorkshiremen do miss. Eight to nil!

It's a riot now—there goes Tom Merry after his third, and Saints' ninth. An awkward angle, but Merry is a superb marksman. It's a goal! All over now—but is it? Lowther takes an unexpected opening and bangs in the tenth and last point! Five for Lowther himself—just watch his goal! What do you say—who laughs last last longest? It's certainly Lowther's hat to-day!

ST. FRANK'S FIGHT BACK

ROOKWOOD BEATEN IN LAST MINUTE

St. Frank's had a bad scare in the first half, when Jimmy Silver & Co. showed great form and took a two-goal lead. Tommy Dodd and Silver himself were the scorers. On the resumption, however, Nipper galvanised his men to action and reduced the deficit himself with an unstoppable drive. Pite equalised, but Jimmy Silver again put his side ahead by a clever "header." When all seemed lost, St. Frank's were awarded a penalty for "hands," and Handforth netted. With only a minute to go, Nipper scored the winning point—a great victory wrested from the clock!

GREYFRIARS	3	BAGSHOT
REDCLYFFE	1	RYLCOMBE G.
RIVER HOUSE	6	ABBOTSFORD

LEAGUE TABLE.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	
St. Jim's	..	8	7	1	0	47	11
St. Frank's	..	8	7	0	1	31	14
Greyfriars	..	8	6	1	1	33	11
Ryecombe Gram.	..	8	6	1	1	25	15
Rookwood	..	9	5	1	3	33	24
River House	..	8	4	2	2	24	15
Highecliffe	..	8	4	1	3	23	16
Abbotsford	..	8	2	0	6	13	27
Bagshot	..	9	1	2	6	7	23
Redclyffe	..	8	1	2	5	9	33
St. Jude's	..	8	0	1	7	6	31
Claremont	..	8	0	0	8	7	38

FULL RESULTS.

ST. JIM'S	..	10	CLAREMONT	..	0
Lowther (5) Merry (3)					
D'Arcy, Blake.					
ST. FRANK'S	..	4	ROOKWOOD	..	3
Nipper (2) Pitt, Handforth.					
Dodd, Silver (2)					

ery's Weekly



Week Ending November 10th, 1934.

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling



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Hallo, everybody! Did you hear about Mr. Ratchiff, the New House master? They say he rang up the B.B.C. to ask the announcer to speak a little louder, as his battery was running down! Like the commercial traveller, who, snowed up in a little North Country village, wired his firm that he would be unable to get away for a fortnight. The firm wired back: "Commence your summer holidays immediately!" "Cold" comfort, what? A new boy named Alixandrovladimir Ovoronovogobotolovskovitch is expected at St. Jim's. He is to be particularly requested to refrain from carving his name on the desks! Do you know any infallible superstitions, asks Mellish. Yes—it's always unlucky for a cross-eyed nigger to go looking for a gas leak with a lighted taper. And it's simply ghastly luck for a freckled Eskimo to light a match to see how much petrol he has left in his tank! "Did you find the steak all night, sir!" the waiter asked Mr. Selby. "Yes, I just moved a chip and it was there!" snapped Selby. Figgins told Blake to take a back seat. We are not surprised to hear that Blake immediately took "affront"! You remember Buck Finn? Buck has brought some extraordinary stories from America. Far-fetched, of course! Seal-hunters, he says, to deceive the seals, roll about like seals themselves. Thus "sealing" the seals' fate! "Now lie flat on your stomach," ordered Figgins, massaging Fatty Wynn after footer. "Can't," objected Wynn, "I shall roll off the bed!" "Is that Needle, Needle, Needle, Stitch, and Needle, solicitors?" demanded the voice over the phone. "Yes? Oh, I just want you to fix a 'suit' for me!" Lefevre of the Fifth has been trying to grow a moustache. He finds it very much like buying a car—a little "down" to start with! A competition for the ugliest nose was held in Wayland. Hundreds "turned up"! "Stact! Mrs. Mimms, the House dame, was bubbling over. "I've got a new recipe for an Egyptian stew!" she cried. "You make it of French beans, Swedes, and Spanish onions!" We shall need Dutch courage to tackle it! Mr. Selby has just been asked to "dinner, and is wondering what kind of a speech to make. Try a short one, sir! "Does this train stop at Kilburn?" asked the passenger of the Irishman. "Sure!" answered the Irishman. "Get out one station before I do!" Keep cheerful, boys!

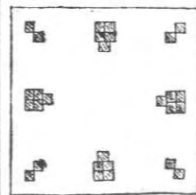
ST. JIM'S SPOTLIGHT

The "Bashful" Bruiser

Stand back, everybody! I don't need introducing. I'll introduce myself. I'm George Gore of the Shell, whom I expect you've heard of as a bit of a bully. Well, just to show that I'm something more than a "fag's menace," I'm prepared to take on anybody of my own age, and if he can stick sixteen rounds of my smashing blows, he will receive a handsome prize—to go with the "prize" nose I shall give him free in any case. Don't go away. I've heard there's a rumour that I've had to be chained up to prevent my running wild among the audience, but it's untrue. I only want to meet champions—or chaps who think they're champions! Step right up into the ring, please—mind, I shan't treat you gently! No takers? Hallo—yes, here's one! Why, it's Tom Merry! What's that? Fifty thousand readers of the GEM have wired accepting my challenge—I shall be booked up for weeks! Meanwhile, Merry himself accepts the challenge on their behalf. Seconds out—here goes, watch me knock Tom Merry into a cocked hat! Wham! That one would have laid him out, but it just missed. Thud! Ow! I stopped that one with my chin! Take that, Merry! Funny how I keep missing! Biff! Thud! Wallop! BUMP! Heck, I'm on the floor—rolling on the resin. I'm dizzy and dazzled—stars float before my eyes—can I have taken the K.O. from Tom Merry—or have those 50,000 readers hit me all at once? Call the challenge off, fellows! I've had enough!

Monty Lowther, the Mirth Merchant

A reader asks just how many jokes I have in my mind. He wonders where I find so many. The answer is, quite modestly, that I have a billion of 'em! An English billion is a million millions, which means a lot and a lot! What do I do with so many jokes? Why, I just put them in the bank, and draw on them for "current" laughs! Can YOU imagine a billion? Can you? All those thoughts? What an empty mind you must have! Did you hear about the comedian who grew so tired of laughing that he picked a quarrel with a gangster, just to get a thrill? The gangster let fly with a six-shooter, but the joker was wearing a bullet-proof waistcoat, so the bullets only tickled, which made him roar with laughter again! What's that? Somebody wants to know if I am wearing a bullet-proof waistcoat at this moment. Excuse me, fellows, I'm off—the "wings" lend safety!



CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

Dame Taggles had been missing toffee from the tuck-shop, so she arranged 28 packets in a box as shown, and remembered there were nine packets along every side. Mellish stole four, and rearranged them so that there were still nine along each side. Later, he took four more, and again rearranged them successfully. How did he do it?

Give your word, old fellow, and keep it."

"Give me your word, and it is enough," said Kildare, laying down the cane.

"Look here," said Lumley-Lumley abruptly, "if I gave my word of honour I should stick to it."

"Then give it."

"You'll believe it?"

"Yes."

"All serene, then!" said Lumley-Lumley. "I give it! I don't smoke again. Honour bright!"

"Very good!" said Kildare quietly.

"You may go. I believe you."

Lumley-Lumley looked at him curiously. "You're not going to lick me?" he asked.

"No."

"Then it's a bit rough on Mellish. He's got five hundred lines, and I'm getting off scot-free," said Lumley-Lumley. "Can I—I—"

"Go on."

"Can I do half Mellish's lines?" asked the Outsider, colouring.

Kildare laughed.

"No," he said. "But—well, yes, you may. Tell Mellish you are going to do half. Lumley, I believe you would make a really decent fellow if you gave yourself a chance."

The two juniors quitted the captain's study.

"Much obliged to you for speaking up for me," said Lumley-Lumley in the passage.

"Not at all! It was only right. I'm glad you spoke up for Mellish, too—not that he deserves it."

"Well, I couldn't let him take it all," said Lumley-Lumley. "I guess that would have been pretty low down. Look here, do you think there's anything in what Kildare said?"

"About what?"

"If—if I gave myself a chance," he said.

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "If you gave yourself a chance, Lumley, I believe you would become one of the most decent chaps at St. Jim's."

The Outsider paused for a moment.

"You think that?" he said.

"Yes."

"I guess I'm going to try," said Lumley-Lumley.

And he walked away without another word.

CHAPTER 12.

Detained!

MR. LATHOM wore a slightly worried look in the Fourth Form Room that afternoon.

The Fourth Form master was having trouble, as usual, with Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

Lumley-Lumley was generally careless, and when called to account for his carelessness, he had a way of becoming impertinent. The most patient of Form-masters could not be expected to tolerate conduct of that kind.

But, as it happened now, Lumley-Lumley was doing his best. He had made honest efforts to make up the leeway caused by slackness.

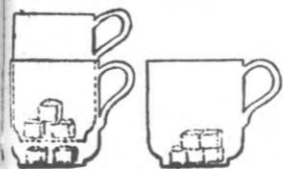
If he was very far behind the rest of the Form now it was owing to faults that he had since discarded.

But Mr. Lathom could not be expected to understand that. Of any unseen changes that had taken place in the Outsider's thoughts and feelings the Fourth Form master could not possibly be aware.

To him Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was the same careless, slacking, slovenly, impertinent lad of the week before.

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Solution of Last Week's Puzzle



"I shall lose patience with you, Lumley," said the mild Mr. Lathom. "I am assured you could construe better if you tried."

Lumley-Lumley was silent and sullen.

"I hope," said Mr. Lathom, "that this is not mere impertinence. You construe worse than many boys in the Third."

"I can't help it, sir."

"You must help it!" said Mr. Lathom angrily. "You will stay in an hour after school, Lumley, and study this passage, and see if you cannot make something of it."

When the Fourth were dismissed Lumley-Lumley remained at his desk.

Mr. Lathom gave him a look over his spectacles as he quitted the class-room. The Form-master felt sorry for him, and would have rescinded the detention, but he felt that for Lumley's own sake he had better not.

Of the Form-master's kindly feelings towards him, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley knew nothing. He only felt that everything was against him now, when he was trying to do better than he had done before.

He sat sullenly and despondently at his desk.

His pen was unused in his hand, and the sheet of paper before him was blank. The troublesome book lay open on his desk, but unread.

To Lumley-Lumley's ears was borne the shouts of the fellows on the playing fields. Why was not he free, like the rest? Why should he stay here? Angry rebellion came into his face.

He would not stay. He deliberately closed the book and put his pen away.

The whole House seemed to be deserted; everyone was out of doors. He was alone, deserted; there was no friend to miss him, to feel sorry that he had been detained.

Even Tom Merry, who had taken an interest in him, did not allow him to come in the way of his enjoyment. Tom Merry had forgotten him now.

Black and bitter were the thoughts of the Outsider.

He went quietly to the door.

He had been ordered to remain there for an hour, and Mr. Lathom would undoubtedly look into the class-room later.

If Lumley-Lumley left it, his absence would, of course, be noted as soon as the Fourth Form master looked in, and he would be sent for at once.

Severer punishment awaited him if he deserted the desk where he was detained; but in his bitter and reckless mood the Outsider did not care.

Was he growing tired of his new role, and did he wish for an excuse for dropping back into the old, sullen, rebellious ways?

It was quite possible.

He stepped through the Form-room doorway. As he did so, he almost ran into a junior who was coming to the door.

It was Tom Merry.

Lumley-Lumley started back in surprise as he met the hero of the Shell face to face. Tom Merry stopped, too.

"Going?" he asked.

"I guess so."

"I heard that you were detained," said Tom Merry. "Has Mr. Lathom let you off?"

"No."

"But you were going?"

"Yes."

Tom Merry's face grew very grave.

"Hang it all, Lumley, this won't do, you know!" he said.

"Don't play the giddy ox. You'd better get back into the class-room."

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders angrily.

"I guess not," he said. "I'm sick of it!"

"It's no good butting against the masters in that way, Lumley," said Tom Merry quietly. "It doesn't pay. Besides, Mr. Lathom is one of the kindest masters at St. Jim's, and I know it worries him when he has to cane a chap."

Lumley-Lumley sneered.

"I guess I'm not likely to think of him," he said.

"You might do worse."

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, Lumley! It's rotten being detained, I know, especially if you're alone; but you needn't be alone," said Tom Merry earnestly.

"Who wants to keep me company in this dreary place, then?"

"I do."

"You?"

"Yes, that's what I came for, when Blake told me you were detained," said Tom Merry, in his frank way. "I know you got into trouble over the construing. Let me help you with it. I've been through this, you know, and it's easy enough to me. Mr. Lathom won't object to my sitting

in here and helping you, though you're under detention. Let's go in and have a dig at it together."

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley hesitated.

But he had no excuse, even to himself, for disregarding Tom Merry's offer.

"Look here! You're very good," he said.

"Not at all. I just want to help."

"I guess I don't quite catch on to you," said Lumley-Lumley, after a pause. "But perhaps I shall some day. If you'll help me, I'll be glad."

"I will, with pleasure."

"I guess it's a go, then."

And Lumley-Lumley turned back into the class-room. Tom Merry went with him, and sat down with him at the desk.

"What is it?" he asked. "Virgil?"

"Yes."

"Where are you in it?"

"Second book."

"Trot it out, then, and we'll tackle it together."

And the dog-eared Virgil was "trotted out," and the two juniors, with their heads close together over the book, tackled it together.

So they were sitting, deep in the subject, when Mr. Lathom glanced in at the door.

The Fourth Form master seemed surprised for the moment, and then a smile came over his face, and he turned quietly away, and the two juniors did not even know that he had looked in.

CHAPTER 13.

Mellish Asks For It!

TOM MERRY and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley left the Form-room together when the period of detention was over. They had worked hard together at the desk, and Lumley-Lumley had felt the benefit of it.

He drew a deep breath as they went out into the passage. "I wish I'd worked a little harder!" he exclaimed. "It's not difficult to a chap that sticks to it. You're well up in this sort of thing."

"I've stuck to it," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

"That's it, I guess. Well, I'm going to stick to it," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Good! And I'll give you any help when you want it, like a shot," said Tom Merry. "You'll soon pull up with the other fellows, if you choose. You've got brains enough."

"Thanks!" said Lumley-Lumley, laughing.

And they parted on the best of terms.

Mellish met Lumley-Lumley at the corner of the passage.

"Tom Merry's been with you?" he asked.

"Yes!" said Lumley-Lumley shortly, and tried to pass on. Since the scene in Hancock's study, when Mellish had been the cause of his being caught by Kildare, and had basely thrown as much of the blame as possible upon him, Lumley-Lumley had come to a decision regarding the cad of the Fourth.

After that Mellish could not consider that he had any claim upon his friendship, and Lumley-Lumley did not intend to acknowledge any further claim.

He simply wanted to be rid of Mellish and his evil influence.

But the cad of the Fourth was not so easily got rid of. He caught the Outsider by the arm as the latter passed him.

"Hold on a minute, Lumley!"

The Outsider paused impatiently.

"Well, what is it?" he demanded. "I've got no time to waste on you!"

"You've been learning elegant manners from Tom Merry, I must say! What did he want in the Form-room?"

"He came to help me with my Latin."

"Oh rats!"

"A thing you never thought of doing!" said Lumley-Lumley scornfully. "Your friendship only goes as far as sneaking cigarettes into the school, and trying to make me take all the blame when a prefect drops on us smoking!"

"The cigarettes were yours, and that's all I said to Kildare."

"They were mine, as I had paid for them; but you brought them into the school, and you would have paid half for them, too, if you had been decent, and then they'd have been as much yours as mine. You are a cad, Mellish!"

"Well, I spoke too hastily!" he said. "Kildare looked so furious that I—well, I lost my nerve, that's all!"

"And you lost a friend, too!" said Lumley-Lumley.

Mellish gave him a very spiteful look.

"Rot!" he exclaimed angrily. "This friendship of yours with Tom Merry and his friends won't last—it can't!"

"I guess it will, if I can work it!"

"You can't!" said Mellish. "You've tried it before.

Didn't Tom Merry twice play you in a footer-match against Figgins' team, and didn't you break out each time? Do you think they'll ever give you another chance at footer?"

"Perhaps!"
 "Stuff! You can't expect it! They're going to tolerate you because you're too troublesome when you cut up rusty, that's all!"

"Have you finished?" asked Lumley-Lumley coldly.
 "You don't believe me?"
 "No!"

"And anything I can say won't make any difference to you—eh?" asked Mellish spitefully.
 "Not in the least!"

The cad of the Fourth looked at him in anger. He did not in the least understand Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

"You're mad! That's the only possible explanation!" said Mellish. "You're mad—just stark, staring dotty! That's what it is."

Lumley-Lumley laughed.
 "No, I'm sane now," he replied. "I've been a fool—an utter fool—but I've found it out in time! That's what it is! And if you think over your caddish ways, Mellish, and look at things in a more sensible light—"

"Oh, don't give me sermons!" said Mellish savagely.
 "Don't try to spoof me! I know it's all lies!"

Lumley-Lumley's eyes glittered.
 "You'd better chuck it now!" he said. "I don't take that sort of talk from anybody, I guess!"

"You're spoofing!" said Mellish, who was too angry and disappointed to care what he said. "You're lying—you know you are! You've got some secret game on—something you want to keep me out of, and you're lying to me—Oh!"

Lumley-Lumley's right came out, and Mellish staggered back against the wall. The Outsider was never slow to take offence, and he had stood a great deal from Mellish. He came up to the cad of the Fourth as he staggered against the wall, with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

"I guess I've had enough of that!" he said. "Stop it!"
 "You—you—"

"We can't get on," said Lumley-Lumley. "Let's part. That's all. And don't give me any more of your rot! I don't like it, I guess!"

Mellish stared at him savagely. He did not return the blow. He had no desire for a fight with the Outsider of St. Jim's. But he gave the Outsider a deadly look as the latter turned away.

Lumley-Lumley forgot the whole incident in half an hour. But Mellish did not forget.

CHAPTER 14.

An Editorial Disaster!

MANNERS and Lowther were doing their prep in the study when Tom Merry came in and joined them.

Monty Lowther looked up lazily.
 "Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Where's your new chum?"
 Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't know. I haven't seen him since I was in the class-room helping him with his Latin. Look here, make room for a chap! We've got to get some work done this evening!"

"I've nearly finished."
 "I don't mean that. I'm thinking of the 'Weekly.'"
 "Heaps of time!" said Manners. "Get this over, and we can wire into the 'Weekly' together, and get it ready for the printer before bed-time."
 "Right you are!"

And the chums of the Shell settled down to work.
 The "Weekly" was the junior school paper—"Tom Merry's Weekly" to give it its full title. The editorial office was Tom Merry's study, and the Terrible Three were editors-in-chief. A dozen more juniors were sub-editors, and, in fact, nearly every contributor to the paper had been admitted to the honorary rank of sub-editor.

The Terrible Three, however, had most of the work to do—cutting out and filling in, lengthening some columns and shortening others, accepting and rejecting copy, and so forth.

It was complained by some of the staff that the Terrible Three accepted all their own copy, and only rejected that of others; but that, of course, was editorial privilege.

When their other work was done, they prepared for their labours on the "Weekly." The copy and all papers appertaining thereto reposed in a large drawer in the book-case, which was kept locked, in case mischievous youths should at any time feel inclined to play tricks with those exceedingly valuable and important papers.

Tom Merry cleared the table, to make it ready for the flood of scrawled foolscap, and then groped in a pocket for his key, and went towards the bookcase.

Then he uttered a sudden exclamation.
 "My only hat!"
 "What's the matter?" asked Manners.
 "Did you open the drawer?"

(Continued on the next page.)



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"I? No!"
 "Did you, Monty?"
 "No! I thought you had the key."
 "So I have!" said Tom Merry. "The drawer's been forced open—the lock's busted! Some ass has been playing a game here!"
 "The rotter!"
 "The chump!"
 The Terrible Three frowned as they looked at the injury done. A chisel, or some such instrument, had been inserted, and the drawer had been forced open, breaking the lock, which was not a particularly stout one.

The drawer had been closed again, and Tom Merry had never noticed the damage until he went to unlock it.
 "That's awfully queer!" said Monty Lowther. "It looks as if somebody had been trying to get at the 'Weekly.'"

"Some curious beggar, I suppose!"
 "It's a jolly serious thing to bust a lock!"
 Tom Merry pulled open the drawer.
 There was a shout in the study the next moment.
 Inside, the papers belonging to the "Weekly"—more than half of which had been written out ready for press—were a mass of wreckage.

Sheets had been torn up into fragments, and ink plentifully sprinkled and splashed over the pieces. The "copy" was now undecipherable.

"My hat!"
 "Great Scott!"
 "Who could have done that?"
 The Terrible Three stared at the wreck.
 "It's a rotten jape by some cad!" exclaimed Tom Merry.
 "That's why the lock was broken!"
 "But who could have done it?"
 "We'll find that out!"

The wrecked mass of paper was turned out on the table. There was no possibility of saving any of it. Not a single sheet had been spared.

"Oh, it's rotten!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.
 "Beastly!"
 "Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he was about to lift out some more papers from the drawer. "What's this?"
 He picked out a glimmering oval of metal—evidently the half of a broken cuff-link. It was of gold, with the monogram engraved upon it—"J. L."

"J. L.!" exclaimed Manners.
 "Jerrold Lumley-Lumley!" said Tom Merry.
 "My hat!"
 The chums of the Shell stood transfixed.
 The broken cuff-link had belonged to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley—there was no doubt upon that point.

Had he dropped it in the drawer while engaged in tearing up the foolscap? It was only too certain.
 How else could it have come there?

"My word!" said Tom Merry, at last. "It was Lumley!"
 "The cad! Then he has been pretending all this time!"
 "Yes."
 "The hound!"

"He's spoofed us, and played this rotten, cowardly trick on us, just as we were beginning to trust him," said Tom Merry bitterly. "Oh, the cad!"

Lowther gritted his teeth.
 "We'll make him pay for it, then. If we hadn't found the cuff-link we might have suspected Mellish, or Gore, or Crooke, and—perhaps gone for them!"
 "Very likely."

"And all the time that cad—"
 "He would have been laughing in his sleeve at us."
 "He's been spoofing us all the time—and this shows it. But—"

Manners broke off.
 The door had opened, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider of St. Jim's, stepped into the study.

CHAPTER 15.

Innocent or Guilty?

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY had a very cheerful expression upon his face. He gave the Terrible Three a genial nod.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed. "You've finished your prep?"

There was no reply.
 Knowing what they did, the Terrible Three were amazed and silenced by what they regarded as the brazen effrontery of the Outsider.

Tom Merry held in his hand proof of the outrage the junior had committed; yet he could walk into the study with a cheerful smile on his face and friendly words on his lips.

Lumley-Lumley looked at them with an expression of surprise. Their silence and lowering looks struck him at once.

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"Anything the matter?" he asked.

Then his glance fell upon the mass of torn and inky fragments of paper on the table, and he gave a low whistle.

"Great snakes! What's that?"

Tom Merry looked at him scornfully.

"You don't know?" he asked.

"I? What do you mean?"

"This is the 'copy' we had ready for this week's number of the paper."

"Phew!"

"Some rotten cad has torn it to pieces and smothered it with ink to spoil it," said Tom Merry, in a voice trembling with anger.

"What a cad's trick!" said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

"Do you think that?"

"I guess so."

"You don't know who did it?"

Lumley-Lumley looked astonished.

"How should I know?" he asked. "If I had seen the hound doing it, I'd have stopped him, jolly quick, I guess. But I understood you kept the copy for the 'Weekly' locked up in a drawer."

"Quite right."

"Then how was it got at?"

"The lock on the bookcase drawer was broken. It's been forced with a chisel or something of the sort."

"My hat—regular burglary."

"Yes, quite as bad."

"I say, it's rotten," said Lumley-Lumley, with a look of concern. "That means a fearful waste of time for you chaps, and heaps of work. If I can do anything to help you, of course, I shall be only too glad."

The Shell fellows could contain themselves no longer.
 "You rotter!" shouted Monty Lowther. "Cheese it!"

"What!"

"For goodness' sake stop lying!" said Manners.

"Eh?"

"We know who did it," said Tom Merry quietly.
 "And we're going to make the hound sit up," said Lowther.

"Yes, rather!"

Lumley stared at them blankly. He seemed hardly able to grasp the meaning of their words for the moment.

"You—you don't mean to say that you suspect me?" he gasped.

"Didn't you do it?"

"I?" shouted Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes, you?"

"No, I didn't!"

"You deny it?"

"Of course I do. I know nothing whatever about it. I never knew anything of it till I came in here a minute ago."

"You haven't been to the drawer at all?"

"No."

Tom Merry held out the broken half of the cuff-link.

"Then how did that come into the drawer, among the torn papers?" he demanded.

Lumley-Lumley stared blankly at the glimmering disk of gold. He did not seem to be able to credit his eyes.

"Is it yours?" asked Tom Merry.

"It is mine," said Lumley-Lumley. "I noticed some time ago that my cuff was loose. I've lost a link somewhere this evening."

"You admit that it is yours?"

"Of course it's mine. I've the fellow to it on the sleeve. You can see," said Lumley-Lumley, pulling out the wrist-band of his shirt.

The chums glanced at the sleeve link. It was exactly the same as the disk Tom Merry held in his hand. On Lumley-Lumley's right wrist the cuff was loose.

"You were wearing this to-day?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, certainly."

"When did you break it?"

"I don't know. It was all right in class this afternoon," said Lumley-Lumley. "I know it was all right when you were helping me with my detention work."

"I have just picked it out of these torn papers."

Lumley-Lumley wrinkled his brow.

"I guess I can't understand it," he said.

"You deny having broken open the drawer and mucked up the papers?"

"I guess so. I don't savvy at all."

Tom Merry smiled contemptuously.

"But I do," he said. "If I hadn't found this link, I might have suspected somebody else wrongfully. But I know now who did this."

"You think I did it?"

"I know you did."

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley turned pale.

He was silent as he looked steadily at the accusing faces of the chums.

"I did not do it," he said at last. Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose you don't expect me to believe that?" he asked.

"I don't know—it's the truth."

"That broken link dropped among the papers while you were tearing and inking them," said Manners. "How you can have the nerve to deny it passes me."

"And me, too!" said Lowther.

"I—I tell you I didn't do it. Honour bright."

"Then how did your cuff-link get into the drawer among the papers?"

"I don't know."

"The drawer was locked till it was forced open," said

"Can't you tell the truth for once in your life?" he asked. "Why can't you own up that you did it?"

"I didn't do it."

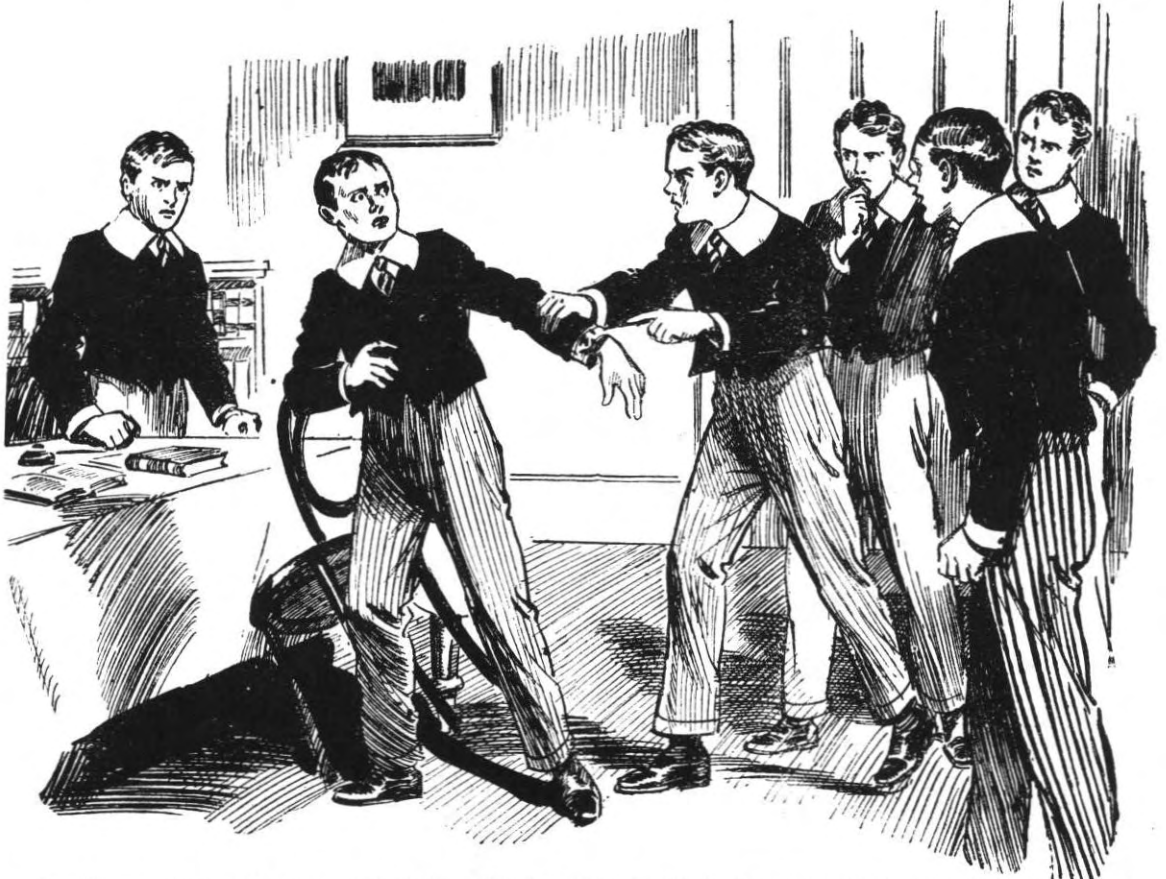
"Well, you can lie as much as you like," said Manners, "but you'll take your medicine all the same. You're not going to get off scot-free for what you have done."

"No fear!"

Lowther crossed to the door and locked it. The Terrible Three turned grim looks upon the Outsider of St. Jim's.

But there was no fear in the Outsider's looks. He faced them calmly.

"Go ahead!" he said. "I never did it, and I'll try to find out who did. But if you want to rag me, go ahead! Here I am."



Tom Merry quickly grasped one of Mellish's wrists, forced his hand into view, and pointed to the shirt cuff. It was stained with ink. "How did you do that?" asked Tom. "I—I upset a bottle of ink," said the cad of the Fourth. "I guess he's the fellow," said Lumley-Lumley, "who mucked up the 'copy' in Tom Merry's study!"

Tom Merry. "You admit that the link was on your sleeve since afternoon school. I left you at half-past five, after your detention, and you had it on then."

"Yes."

"How could it have come into that drawer, then?"

"I don't know."

"You will have to tell a yarn a little more convincing than that," said Monty Lowther scornfully.

Lumley-Lumley's lips trembled.

"It's the truth," he said. "I suppose you won't believe me. It serves me right. You've known me to tell lies, and I can't expect you to take my word."

Tom Merry looked at him searchingly. He would gladly have believed the Outsider. But was it possible to believe him?

"Can you make any explanation?" he asked.

Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"I guess not. I'm stumped! If the sleeve-link was in the drawer, I suppose it was dropped there by somebody."

"But you were wearing it."

Lumley-Lumley gave a hopeless shrug of the shoulders.

"I give it up," he said.

Monty Lowther sniffed angrily and contemptuously.

CHAPTER 16.

Gussy, the Mediator!

THE chums of the Shell had been advancing towards Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. But now they stopped.

They had intended to punish him—to give him a "bumping," and then to throw him out of the study, as the author of the outrage upon the "Weekly" fully deserved.

But now they stopped.

Perhaps the doubt crossed their minds. Yet the evidence was perfectly clear. Perhaps it was the thought that, after all, it was the Outsider—a fellow who could not be expected to act decently.

At all events, they stopped, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley stood untouched. He had not stirred. He looked at them calmly.

"Well," he said, "I suppose it's a ragging. Go on!"

"We shall not touch you," said Tom Merry, after a pause. "After all, you're not worth it."

"I guess—"

"It won't undo what you've done if we bump you black and blue," said Manners. "I don't know that it's any good ragging you."

"Oh, let him alone!" said Monty Lowther. "I knew how it would turn out. The fellow's a hopeless cad, and the more we trusted him, the more he would have played us dirty tricks. It's in the nature of the beast. We've happened to find him out the first time, that's all. Let him alone; he's not fit to touch."

Lumley-Lumley coloured.

"I suppose it's no good my saying that I didn't do that?" he asked.

"Not much."

"Then I guess I won't say anything," said Lumley-Lumley quietly. "Only I'm sorry."

"Sorry you did it?"

"No; sorry you think I did it."

Tom Merry made an impatient gesture.

"Oh, drop the subject, for goodness' sake!" he exclaimed.

"You make me sick. Here's your sleeve-link. You can look in the drawer for the other half of it, if you like."

"I don't suppose it's there," said Lumley-Lumley. "I did not drop this half there, at all events. But I won't stay here while you suspect me. You can have your study to yourselves."

He began to collect up his books.

"You haven't done your prep," said Tom Merry.

"I can do it downstairs. I'm not staying here while you think of me as you do," said Lumley-Lumley quietly. "I'm not flying into a temper about it. I know I've no right to expect you to believe me, I've not got my back up, but I don't step into this study again till this matter's cleared up, that's all."

And he quitted the room, closing the door behind him. He left the chums of the Shell looking uncomfortable.

"I suppose there's no doubt about it?" Tom Merry remarked at last.

Lowther laughed scoffingly.

"Of course there isn't!"

"Not the slightest," said Manners.

"He's changed," said Tom Merry slowly. "He would have stuck here, in defiance of us, at one time, and stayed all the more if we wanted him to go."

"I suppose he's got some slight sense of decency," said Lowther. "We'd better chuck away all this and start afresh."

"I suppose so," said Tom Merry ruefully.

And the inky fragments of the "copy" were thrown into the wastepaper-basket, and the chums of the Shell sat down to work.

Meanwhile, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had gone downstairs with his books. His own study was still in the hands of the paperhangers, and the work was proceeding very slowly. He did not care to ask for permission to work in anybody else's study; but he had the choice of the Form-room and the Common-room.

He went into the latter.

He was soon at work; and the sight of a fellow doing his prep there, instead of in his study, although not uncommon, attracted attention.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had been feeling very kindly of late towards the Outsider of St. Jim's, came up to him and tapped him on the shoulder.

Lumley-Lumley looked up.

"All alone, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy.

"I guess so."

"Doin' your prep down here, eh?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Not a wov, I hope?"

"Yes."

"Nothin' sewious?"

"I don't know."

"Bai Jove! I thought you were gettin' on wathah well with Tom Mewwy lately, you know," Arthur Augustus remarked.

"So did I," said Lumley-Lumley grimly.

"Weally, Lumley, this is wotten, you know. Pewwaps a mediatah would be of some service to you," D'Arcy suggested. "I should be vevy pleased to use my good offices."

Lumley-Lumley grinned.

"Thanks; you couldn't do any good."

"You have offended them somehow?"

"Some cad has mucked up the 'copy' for the 'Weekly.' Tom Merry thinks I did it."

"Bai Jove! That's awfully sewious. All of it wuined?"

"Torn to pieces and smothered in ink."

"Are you quite sure you didn't do it, Lumley, deah boy? If you did, I could not act as your mediatah."

"Well, I didn't, and that's the end of it."

"The mattah will have to be inquired into, deah boy. I am wathah inclined to believe your statement," said D'Arcy. "I know you have been an awful fibbah, but I believe you are tellin' the twuth now."

Lumley-Lumley impulsively held out his hand.

"Put it there!" he exclaimed.

"Certainly, deah boy!"

D'Arcy shook hands with the Outsider.

"I am goin' to look into this," he said. "I will also mediate between you and Tom Mewwy, deah boy."

"But—"

"You can rely upon my tact and judgment!"

"I guess you'll make matters worse."

"Wats, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked away. Lumley-Lumley half rose to stop him, and then sat down again. After all, he reflected, D'Arcy's mediation would make matters no worse, if it did not make them better.

CHAPTER 17.

D'Arcy Puts His Case!

"EDITORIAL notes!" said Monty Lowther. "I suppose they can be left out. No need to write all that out again."

Tom Merry looked up warmly. As the author of editorial notes, he had quite a different opinion on the matter.

"Ass!" he said, with more than editorial frankness.

"But that stuff, you know—"

"My dear chap, the editorial notes are part of the paper that's most eagerly read. There are readers who turn to the editorial notes first, before they read anything else."

"Only when they edit the paper," said Lowther.

"Ass!"

There was a tap at the door, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the study.

"I twust I am not intewwuptin' you, deah boys," he remarked.

"Well, you are," said Lowther.

"Am I stoppin' your work?"

"Yes."

"I'm sowwy, then," said D'Arcy. And he came in cheerfully and closed the door. "I'm sowwy, especially as it can't be helped."

The editorial trio gazed at the calm interrupter. Monty Lowther dropped his hand, carelessly as it were, upon the inkpot.

"Pray excuse me, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, keeping a wary eye upon Lowther. "I have come upon a mattah of gwreat impurtance—in fact, I am a mediatah."

"A what?"

"A mediatah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to mediate between you and Lumley-Lumley. You have been quawwellin' with him."

"Not exactly—we dropped him."

"You think he mucked up the copy for the 'Weekly.'"

"We know he did."

"I wathah think it ought to be investigated."

"We're busy!"

"I shall not waste time, I twust. In the first place, pway tell me what weason you had for suspectin' Lumley-Lumley."

"Oh, he's bound to have it!" said Monty Lowther. "He won't be happy till he gets it. Go ahead, Tommy, and get it over!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"The drawer has been broken open," said Tom Merry, in explanation, "the copy was torn to pieces and smothered in ink. We found half a broken sleeve-link among the papers. The chap who tore them must have dropped it there."

"Bai Jove!"

"That's all clear enough, I suppose?"

"Whose sleeve-link was it, deah boy?"

"Lumley's, of course!"

"You are sure?"

"He recognised it as his own when we showed it to him."

"Somebody may have bowwowed it—"

"He was wearing it after afternoon school, and admits that it must have become unfastened and dropped off since then."

"And this outwage was committed aftah aftahnoon school?"

"Yes, of course. I looked at the papers after dinner to put in some copy, and they were all right then. Besides, Lumley-Lumley was wearing the cuff-link then, and I tell you we found it in the drawer among the papers."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"As a mattah of fact, deah boy, I wathah think you are quite wong," he remarked.

"Ass! I tell you—"

"A sleeve-link may be wathah weak, or just on the point of bweakin'," said D'Arcy calmly, "but even then it would weiqwah a jerk to bweak it. Why should it bweak when a chap is merely teawin' papahs?"

"Well, that must have required some exertion, I suppose?"

"It is far more likely, Tom Mewwy, that Lumley-Lumley bwoke the cuff-link somewhere else, and it dwopped without his noticin' it."

"H'm!"

"I wegard that as an extwemely pwobable theowy," said the swell of the School House firmly.

"But if it dropped somewhere else how did it come into the drawer where we kept the copy?" bawled Manners.

"It must have been put there."

"Put there?" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But who should put it there?"

"The chap who mucked up the papahs," said Arthur Augustus.

"But why?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you are an ass, you know! Lumley-Lumley has lately been on good terms with you. Somebody has twied to stop it."

Tom Merry started.

"Mellish!"

"Well, I would not suspect anybody without pwoof. But certainly Mellish has twied to stop Lumley-Lumley fwom wefermin'. I know that for a fact."

Tom Merry nodded.

"It's true enough," he said.

"Vewy well! Suppose Mellish or Cwooke or one of those chaps who have an intewest in keepin' Lumley-Lumley as he was—suppose they picked up the link? They would recognise it as Lumley's fwom the monogwam. Then—"

Tom Merry started up.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "I'm beginning to think that we may have done Lumley-Lumley wrong, after all, you fellows!"

"Oh, I can't think it!" said Lowther uncomfortably.

"And you can't take his word. He's such a liar!"

"He was, but—"

"Give him a chance, deah boys. Suppose we twy to find out just where he might have lost the sleeve-link?" suggested D'Arcy.

"Good!"

Tom Merry swept the papers into the drawer, with a frown upon his brow. The thought that he might have been unjust to Lumley-Lumley weighed upon his mind.

"Come on!" he said abruptly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the Terrible Three went down with Arthur Augustus in search of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 18.

The Guilty One!

LUMLEY-LUMLEY was finishing his work in the Common-room. He looked up in some surprise as the Terrible Three came in with Arthur Augustus. They came directly up to him.

"Gussy has been putting the matter in a new light, Lumley," said Tom Merry, in his straightforward way. "I think that it may not have been you, after all, who mucked up the 'copy' for the 'Weekly.'"

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"Are you going to give me the benefit of the doubt, then?" he asked.

"We are going to get at the truth."

"I guess that's difficult."

"My deah chap, what is wequialied is a fellow of tact and judgment," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a superior smile. "That's all wight—I've taken the mattah in hand. In the first place, where did you lose the sleeve-link?"

"I don't know."

"Where did it get bwoken?"

"I don't know that either. If I'd known it was broken I should have looked after it, of course."

"My impwession is that it must have been bwoken by a blow or jerk," said D'Arcy. "Have you been punchin' anybody since aftahnoon school?"

The Outsider grinned.

"Well, I did punch Mellish's head just after I left Tom Merry. He was pitching it to me a little too strong."

The Terrible Three uttered an exclamation together.

"Mellish!"

"I guess so."

"Bai Jove! Where did that happen?"

"In the Form-room passage."

"We had bettah go and speak to Mellish, deah boys. I wegard it as extwemely pwob that the sleeve-link burst on that occasion, and Mellish may have picked it up. Mellish is just the chap to destroy the 'copy' for the 'Weekly,' too."

"Yes, rather!"

"Bai Jove, we'll see what Mellish has to say! Anybody seen Mellish?"

"He's up in my study," said Hancock.

"Thank you, deah boy!"

(Continued on the next page.)



"I'll help you with your sums for that Fry's Cream Tablet"

"Nothing doing. I've done 'em."

"All right, I'll swop two unused Malay States."

"Not for a whole bar. Half."

"Oh, all right—miser."

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Up the stairs again went D'Arcy and the Terrible Three, a tortoise, and even Mellish, bad as he was at heart, felt and Lumley-Lumley accompanied them this time. The a spasm of inward shame at that moment. Outsider's face was brighter now. He saw a chance at last of setting himself right with the chums of the Shell.

Mellish was in Hancock's study dawdling over his prep. There was a suspicious scent of cigarette smoke in the air, but of that the juniors took no notice as they entered.

Mellish rose to his feet in alarm as the five juniors marched into his study.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "What do you want?"

"The twuth, deah boy."

"I—I don't understand."

"Lumley-Lumley punched your head early this evening in the Form-woom passage—"

"Look here—"

"On that occasion he bwoke a sleeve-link, and dwopped it without noticin' it, and you picked it up—"

"I—I—"

Mellish's face went a pale greenish tinge.

"You went to Tom Merry's study and broke open the dwawer where the 'copy' was kept, and tore it up and smothahed it with ink," said D'Arcy, inexorably. "You left Lumley-Lumley's broken sleeve-link there to implicate him—because you wanted to bweak off his fwiefndship with Tom Mewwy and keep him in your own wotten ways."

"I—I—"

"Isn't that true?"

"I—I—" stammered Mellish.

"Bai Jove! How did you get your cuffs so inky, Mellish?" asked D'Arcy suddenly.

The cad of the Fourth put his hands quickly behind him. But Tom Merry grasped one of his wrists, forced his hand forward into view, and pointed to the shirt cuff.

The cuff was darkly stained and splashed with ink—and it was evidently new ink.

"How did you do that?" asked Tom Merry sternly.

"I—I upset a bottle of ink."

"Where?"

"Here, in the study. I—I—"

"And you stained your cuffs in cleaning it up?"

"Yes," panted Mellish.

"What did you clean it up with—a duster?"

"Ye-es."

"Where's the duster now?"

"I—I threw it away."

"Where?" asked Tom Merry, mercilessly.

"In the dust-bin behind the House. I—"

"Lowther, old man, go and look!"

"I—I mean I burnt it," gasped Mellish. "I—I forgot. I meant to throw it away, and I—I burnt it instead."

"Bai Jove! That's wathah too thin, you know!"

"I should say so!" remarked Monty Lowther contemptuously. "Why, you miserable young liar, you expect us to believe a word of that?"

"I guess it won't wash!" Lumley-Lumley said, with a grin. "You mucked up the 'copy' in Tom Merry's study, Mellish, and you got your cuffs in that state doing it!"

"I—I—I—"

"And you put my sleeve-link there!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mellish looked round the table, with a hunted look in his eyes.

"If—if you touch me, I'll yell for help!" he panted. "I won't be ragged! I'll yell, I tell you!"

"We want the truth!" said Tom Merry. "Did you tear up the 'copy' in my study?"

"I—I— What are you going to do?"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"We know you did it!" he said. "It's clear enough! But I'd rather hear you confess it yourself. Tell us the plain truth, and we'll let you alone."

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"Hang it all, Tom—"

"He's not worth touching," said Tom Merry contemptuously. "It's soiling your hands to put them on a chap like that! Let him alone!"

"Well, if you put it like that, deah boy—"

"Now, Mellish, the truth—the truth, mind, or you'll get bumped till you yelp!" Tom Merry exclaimed roughly.

"You won't touch me?"

"No."

"On your word?"

"Honest Injun!"

"Well, you see," stammered Mellish, "I—I did it!"

"Bai Jove!"

The cad of the Fourth covered from the scornful glances of the juniors as he said it. They had promised not to touch him, and he knew he was safe; but the scorn in their looks was not pleasant, even to Mellish. Contempt, the Eastern proverb tells us, will pierce even the shell of

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felt

"I think we've finished here," said Tom Merry quietly.

The juniors quitted the study. Mellish stood by the table looking after them. He had prided himself upon his cunning. He had taken a cowardly pleasure in a deep-laid scheme. But now he somehow felt that it was not worth while—that even if he had succeeded, it was not worth while.

In the passage, after the door was closed, the juniors paused. There was a smile of satisfaction upon the aristocratic countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He had taken up the matter when the Terrible Three had dropped it. He had solved the mystery—he had established the truth.

Tom Merry gave the swell of St. Jim's a ringing slap on the shoulder.

"Bravo, Gussy!" he exclaimed.

"Yow!"

"What's the matter?"

"Ow! You've hurt me, you feahful ass!"

"Oh, never mind that, Gussy! Don't bother about trifles!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Look here, Lumley—"

"You are intewwuptin' me—"

"Exactly! Look here, Lumley, we're sorry," said Tom Merry. "We thought you had done it, and you hadn't, and—and we're sorry."

Lumley-Lumley grinned.

"It's all right," he said. "As I said, I don't bear you any grudge for suspecting me. You had a right to, after what you've been used to from me."

"I wegard that as puttin' it handsomely," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I must confess, Lumley, deah boy, that I have wegard you as a wank outsidah, and a weally impossible boundah, you know. But, weally, I think you have somethin' in you, and I shall wecognise you in future."

"Go hon!"

"I mean it, deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus walked away serenely, leaving the other fellows grinning.

"Come to the study, will you?" said Tom Merry, linking his arm in Lumley-Lumley's. "We're going to have roast chestnuts."

"I guess so."

Mr. Railton came down the passage. He glanced at the Outsider and the chums of the Shell, and nodded genially.

"I hope you get on pretty well together in the study, my boys," he remarked.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry brightly. "And we're jolly glad to have Lumley-Lumley there now. What do you chaps say?"

"Quite so!" said Manners.

"Oh, rather!" said Monty Lowther.

Lumley-Lumley coloured with pleasure.

"It's jolly decent of you to say so!" he exclaimed. "I guess I like being there, sir. It's made a lot of difference to me, sir—more difference than anybody would guess."

The Housemaster smiled.

"I think I can guess, Lumley," he said. "I'm glad to see this, and after you have left Tom Merry's study, I hope this friendship will continue."

"Thank you, sir!"

Mr. Railton walked on with a genial face, and a few minutes later he was speaking to the Head. And that conversation brought a very satisfied expression to Dr. Holmes' face.

"You think the experiment has been a success, then, Mr. Railton?" he asked.

"I do, sir."

"And our surmise that there was good in the boy was well founded?"

"Quite so. He will be a credit to St. Jim's if he goes on in the way he has started now," said Mr. Railton.

"Of course, there will be more difficulties and troubles yet. But Tom Merry evidently regards Lumley-Lumley with real friendship, and that is a proof of a great change in the boy."

"I am glad to hear it."

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had had his last chance, and had made the most of it; and it was Tom Merry, the junior he had tried to ruin, whom he had most to thank for his successful reformation.

THE END.

(Next Wednesday: "THE MYSTERY OF THE FAULTS!" Who are the masked men who hold secret meetings in the St. Jim's vaults? And what is their object? Tom Merry & Co. are involved in an amazing mystery in our next great yarn.)

WHEN HANDFORTH MAKES THE FIREWORKS FLY HE'S THE CENTRE OF THE DISPLAY!



BY EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

The Fifth—and the Seventh!

BANG!

The last lesson of the day in the Remove Form Room at St. Frank's was rudely disturbed by the violent report of a cannon cracker. Several boys jumped, others laughed; but one, Walter Church, started to his feet, as pale as death. Then, realising the harmlessness of the occurrence, he sank back into his seat, shaking in every limb.

Mr. Crowell, the Form-master, hammered hard on his desk with a ruler.

"Who did that?" he demanded angrily.

The silence in the Form-room was like something solid.

"I am well aware of the fact that to-day is the Fifth of November, but the Form-room is no place for the promiscuous letting off of fireworks!" continued Mr. Crowell, glaring round. "Unless the culprit immediately comes forward, I shall have no alternative but to detain the entire Form—!" He broke off, for his gaze, roving up and down the ranks of the Remove, had just then rested upon Church. "Church, are you ill?"

"No, sir," said Church unsteadily.

"Did you ignite that wretched firework?"

"No, sir."

"Then apparently it exploded very near to you," said Mr. Crowell, his anger evaporating, and a look of friendly concern coming into his face. "Upon my word, Church, you look dreadful. You are as white as a sheet."

"I—I'll be all right, sir!" muttered Church, trying to pull himself together.

The Form-master frowned as he strode forward.

"I cannot understand why a minor explosion—on a day when we may be in momentary expectation of explosions—should affect you so seriously, Church," he said kindly. "You haven't been yourself for some days. If you are feeling ill, tell me so. Usually you are most painstaking and neat; but of late you have been guilty of constant inattention, your work has been slovenly, and you are displaying an unwonted and increasing nervousness."

"I'm sorry, sir," said Church huskily. "There's nothing really the matter. I'll be all right in a minute."

"You don't look all right, my boy!" retorted Mr. Crowell. "Curiously enough, I have recently noted the same nervous symptoms, in a lesser degree, in you, McClure—and in you, Grey. All to-day, instead of working with your usual diligence, you have been on a constant jump, starting at the slightest sound, looking up from your work with something very akin to fear in your eyes."

"It's the excitement, sir, I expect," said Nipper, the Form captain. "It's Guy Fawkes Day—"

"Oh, no!" interrupted Mr. Crowell. "That is not a satisfactory explanation. These three boys have been jumpy for days—and Church, in particular, has been most marked in his nervousness. Have you had bad news of any kind, Church?"

"No, sir. It's nothing—nothing at all!" he burst out, his voice almost shrill.

"If you won't confide in me, I cannot make you," said Mr. Crowell quietly. "But you are certainly in no fit condition to continue work. I will excuse you, Church. You had better go and lie down."

"Please, sir, I'd rather—"

"Do as I tell you, Church," said Mr. Crowell. "If you are not feeling better by tea-time I shall send you to the doctor. In any case, report to me then."

Church rose somewhat unsteadily to his feet, and left the Form-room—followed by the gaze of his schoolfellows.

Truth to tell, most of the fellows in the Remove had noticed the increased nervousness in the boys Mr. Crowell had named. McClure and Jack Grey, however, pulled themselves together for the moment, and were apparently normal.

"Now, perhaps we can continue our work," said the Form-master. "If there are any more disturbances I shall be very angry."

Apparently he had forgotten his original intention of detaining the Form, and the Remove was greatly relieved. Nipper found Handforth and Travers and one or two others exchanging meaning glances.

The rest of that lesson seemed interminable, but it was only a matter of twenty minutes. Immediately upon release Handforth and McClure made a dash for Study D in the Ancient House. They were closely followed by Nipper, Tregellis-West, Watson, and Jack Grey. Bursting into the study, Handforth was relieved to find Church sitting in the easy-chair before the fire.

"Crumbs! I was worried about you!" said the burly Removite.

"Old Crowell's beginning to notice—and the chaps are beginning to notice, too," said Church wretchedly. "I'm sorry, you chaps, but I can't help it. This—this suspense is getting awful!"

Nipper, the last in, closed the door. His face was serious. "You've got to pull yourself together, Churchy," he said earnestly. "I know it's a strain, but your turn might not come for a week or two."

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"That's just the trouble!" muttered Church. "It's the waiting that gets me down. I wish the 'call' would come now—this very minute!"

"Same here!" said McClure and Grey, in one voice. "There's no sense in letting it get hold of you like this," said Nipper, almost impatiently. "I'm in just the same boat, aren't I? Ten of us were marked down to answer the Call of Taaz. Six have undergone the ordeal, and they have come through safely. Four of us are left—they'll come through, too."

But his words brought no comfort to Church and McClure and Grey. Nipper himself was made of sterner stuff—which was natural, for he had been brought up in a hard school.

Church, as he sat there, pictured that scene, many weeks earlier, when he and nine other Removites had taken the old lifeboat out to the wrecked steamer Transon. They had unwittingly looked upon the face of Raa-ok, the High Priest of the Temple of Taaz. Death was the reward for all infidels who looked upon that sacred face; but because the boys had gone out on a mission of mercy, Raa-ok had spared them. But he declared that Taaz, the Vulture God, must be satisfied, and every boy must, in turn, undergo an ordeal to prove his worth in the eyes of Taaz.

The priests had mysteriously vanished, but that they were living somewhere in the district, secretly, was proved by the fact that six boys had already answered the "call." This "call" was uncanny in itself, for the priests possessed the power of concentrating their wills, and making any given boy obey. It was a kind of mass hypnotism—the mass, in this case, consisting of the Tibetan priests, who concentrated on their one selected victim.

"At any moment of the day or night the call will come, and one must answer," Raa-ok had said. And thus it had been. For the boys who remained, now that the number was getting so few, the suspense was rather dreadful. It was inevitable that they should become noticeably affected. It was useless for them to ask the other fellows what manner of ordeal awaited them, for those who had "been through it" were sworn to silence, under pain of death. And their grim experiences at the hands of the yellow priests assured them that the threat was no idle one.

"We mustn't get scared, Churchy," said Nipper gently. "I'm not scared," muttered Church, with some show of spirit. "But this waiting is too awful for words! Whose turn will it be next? Mac's? Grey's? Yours? Or mine? It might be mine!" Alarm leapt into his eyes. "I'm not afraid, but I wish those yellow beasts would choose me next and get it over!"

"For goodness' sake, Churchy, buck up!" said Handforth. "You've got to go and report to old Crowell, and you don't want to look half-dead, do you? For two pins he'd shove you in the sanny. Look at me! I've been through it, and I'm all right. Look at Montie and Watson. They've been through it, too. There's nothing to worry about. If it wasn't that the priests of Taaz would kill us all outright, I'd tell you what we went through. But you'll get through your ordeal."

"You've only got to keep a stiff upper lip, and you'll come through with flying colours, old boy," said Tregellis-West. "This is most frightfully silly—it is, really. Don't forget it's the glorious Fifth, and we're goin' to enjoy ourselves this evening. Buck up, old son!"

They managed to calm the unhappy Church until he was something like normal. And when he reported to Mr. Crowell he came successfully through that minor ordeal. He was not ordered to report to the doctor.

Thereafter, a hearty meal, and the prospect of the fun to come, produced a further improvement. When Church went out of doors with the others for the Guy Fawkes celebrations he was like a new man.

"After all, it's dotty, getting junpy about it!" he said cheerily. "What-ho for the good old Fifth! Why should I worry? It might be weeks before my turn comes. Rats! I'm going to enjoy myself!"

"That's the spirit!" said Handforth heartily. It was a fine, frosty evening—ideal weather for the celebrations. The fellows of the Remove and the Fourth had clubbed together to buy an immense supply of fireworks. There were rockets by the score, Roman candles by the hundred, crackers and squibs galore, and some very special "set pieces," for the big display. Everything was arranged in the paddock, where an enormous bonfire had been built. The juniors were determined to enjoy themselves.

Practically the entire Junior School made tracks for the paddock directly after tea, and then it was discovered that someone had been stealing the fireworks—two of the biggest and finest of the set-pieces.

"The skunk!" growled Handforth, and everyone agreed. The set pieces had been erected, of course, during daylight, and the theft must have occurred during the hour of

darkness, whilst the fellows were at tea—and while the paddock was necessarily deserted. Nobody had dreamed of setting a watch on the fireworks.

"It's a mystery," said Nipper, after he had made an examination. "The blighters have completely cut away the 'waterfall of fire' and our giant catherine wheel! It's not a jape. It's a deliberate piece of robbery. Those fireworks cost three or four pounds, and they were two of the best we had."

"Think it was done by somebody from the village?" asked Travers.

"It's not likely," replied Nipper. "They couldn't use fireworks like that without a lot of questions being asked. It might have been done by a passing tramp, who hopes to sell the fireworks to somebody miles away. Anyhow, it's no good worrying about it. There are plenty of others."

So the mystery remained unexplained. But everybody was happy. There were fireworks everywhere, hissing and sizzling and crackling and banging. Yells of cheery laughter rang out on the crisp night air. Maroons were exploding, stars of every conceivable colour were shooting about in the sky, and the scene, in fact, was gay in the extreme.

The bonfire, with an enormous Guy sitting on top, was a great success. The flames licked up with ever-increasing intensity, and the juniors, collecting round and venturing as near as they dared, were having a high old time.

Church had bucked up so much that Handforth ceased to be anxious. Church was entering into the fun of the celebration as heartily as anybody, throwing squibs under people's feet, and letting off cannon crackers with as much gusto as Handforth himself. His shouts of laughter, after his recent nervous depression, were good to hear.

"He's all right now, Mac," said Handforth, comfortably. "He allowed it to get hold of him, that's all. Nothing to worry about to-night, anyhow. Those giddy priests won't take any action with all this din going on."

How wrong Handforth was, was proved not ten minutes later!

Church, dodging about with a new supply of jumping crackers, seemed to lose some of his enthusiasm. He no longer threw crackers; he stood as though thoughtful, staring at the great bonfire. If any of the other fellows had taken the trouble to look at him closely they would have seen that his expression had become rigid, and in his eyes there was a far-away look.

It was, in truth, a rapid change. Within two minutes he turned his back to the fire and began walking with deliberate steps towards the far corner of the paddock, lying dark and deserted.

Handforth had made it his business to keep an eye on his chum, and it was not long before he discovered he had momentarily lost sight of Church. He went dashing about, looking here and there. Church's sudden absence from the jollification brought a quick fear into Handforth's mind. Running out of the glare of the bonfire, he was just in time to catch a glimpse of Church's figure as it vanished vaguely into the gloom in a corner of the paddock.

"Hallo!" muttered Handforth, with a jump. Then: "By George! This looks fishy!"

Somebody threw a bunch of sizzling squibs at him, but he took no notice. He ran hard in the direction which Church had taken, and now he could see that Church was walking with a peculiar stiffness, looking neither to right nor left.

It was the call! Handforth knew it. There could be no mistake, for he had seen other fellows in that same condition. And the burly Edward Oswald was filled with alarm and concern for his chum.

For he knew how nervy Church had become of late. He was in no condition to face the kind of ordeal which the priests of Taaz would submit him to. And failure to go through the ordeal meant death!

Handforth could have turned and shouted. He might have attracted the attention of McClure and Nipper, and one or two of the others "in the know." But Handforth did no such thing. He followed alone. It was characteristically reckless, and he was soon to pay dearly for it!

The Rain of Molten Fire!

WALTER CHURCH broke through the hedge at the corner of the paddock, and found himself, within a minute, plunging into the black, deserted recesses of the shrubbery.

There was a well-defined footpath here, and it led through the leafless trees straight to the gaunt, ivy-covered ruins of the old monastery, from which St. Frank's had originally obtained its name.

The ruins, so near to the school—so easily within ear-shot of the revelling juniors—were yet strangely isolated,



Emitting a roaring hiss, the giant catherine wheel circled faster and faster, the fire getting ever nearer to Handforth's head! Unless help came quickly he was doomed. And the only help he could expect was from his chum Church, who was bound hand and foot!

Once within that belt of trees Church was utterly alone. He might have been miles from the school; for, after dark, nobody ever ventured in this direction. Indeed, even during the daylight hours, the boys seldom visited the ruins.

So, within sound of the shouts of his friends and the popping explosions of the fireworks, Church felt he was quite alone. He walked on, penetrating into the heart of the ruins. The shadowy figure of a man in flowing robes stood half-concealed by the ancient masonry. His yellow face was impassive, and he watched Church silently.

Not once did Church pause. Reaching the crumbling steps which led down into the old vaults, far beneath the ground, he commenced descending. His will was no longer his own, for he was blindly obeying the call.

Handforth, his pulses thudding, was not far behind. He was certain now as to his chum's destination. The priests of Taaz were down in the vault—and there they would wreak their will upon Church. Handforth's heart was pounding as he crept into the ruins. He vowed that Church should not be friendless in this vital hour.

Then, as he approached a dark gap in the floor which marked the beginning of the stairway, the shadowy figure of the priest stepped forth.

Handforth had no opportunity of defending himself—of even putting up his fists. A curious puffing sound smote the air, and in the next second Handforth found himself enveloped in a cloud of peculiar dust. In that flash he knew what had happened, for once before, to his knowledge, the priests had used that secret method of dealing with their enemies.

Handforth started back, and in his throat there was a choking sensation. His brain reeled, and he felt an awful, intense blackness sweeping over him. Only for a moment did he stagger, then he crashed to the stone floor, and lay motionless.

Church made his way down the worn steps, and now—thanks to Handforth's recklessness in following alone—there was no living soul who knew that he had left the bonfire.

A turn of the circular stairs took Church right into the grim, old vault. There were two ways of entering the vault—the one Church had used, and the crazy, crumbling underground tunnel which ultimately joined up with the old quarry workings. The priests of Taaz had already made

use of these deserted workings, so it was clear enough how they had discovered this "back way" into the precincts of St. Frank's.

No sooner had Church set foot in the vault than he shivered from head to foot. The trance-like condition dropped from him as he might have shed a cloak. He stared about him with dazed, bewildered eyes. A few ruddily flickering lamps were burning—lamps of quaint Oriental design. And all round him, like ghosts in the flickering shadows of that strange chamber, stood silent, robed figures.

"Oh!" ejaculated Church, with a jump.

He did not know how he had got down here, but he recognised the vault in a moment. He knew that he was in the hands of the priests of Taaz, and as he fell back a step his face was pallid.

"There is nothing to fear, my son," said a soft, almost kindly voice, in perfect English. "Satisfy Taaz, the Omnipotent, that you are worthy of continuing your earthly existence, and all will be well."

The voice reassured Church to a certain extent, but he gave a quick glance behind him to see if his way of retreat was open. It was not. Two of the priests had moved to his rear, and were barring the way.

"I'm not afraid of you!" said Church, with desperate defiance. "I've been expecting this all the week, and I'm glad it's come! Well, what are you going to do to me?"

"That, Unbeliever, you will find out," replied Yeza, the chief of the attendant priests. "You must obey my instructions without flinching—for only thus can you be restored unharmed to your friends. My orders are not my orders, but the orders of Taaz. Disobedience to Taaz can be atoned for by death alone. You understand, my son?"

"Why talk?" asked Church shrilly. "Why don't you get on with it?"

"You are nervous—and nervousness is not well in one who needs all his courage," replied Yeza gravely. "Collect all your strength, son of an infidel father, for you will need it. It is written that your ordeal shall be in keeping with the great celebration which is even now taking place in the fields of your school. Know you, my son, that fireworks were used in the Far East centuries before they came to this country? Fireworks are good for warning off evil spirits; thus Taaz looks kindly upon our activities at this moment."

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He raised a hand and pointed. Church, following the direction of that yellow finger, saw that an immense rope of fireworks had been slung across the roof of the vault—stretching in a straight line from one wall to the other.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed Church indignantly, forgetting his predicament for the moment. "So it was you who stole our fireworks!"

"The moment was opportune," replied Yeza. "You, at least, will witness the burning of this piece."

Church stared. He did not understand. Yeza spoke to one of the other priests in his own tongue, and the man came forward with a flaring torch, which he held near the touch-fuse of the great firework—which was, indeed, the "Waterfall of Fire."

"You are now to obey," said Yeza solemnly. "You will lie here, as I indicate. Place yourself on the floor, my son, so that you are lying full length, face upwards. Your head shall rest on the chalk mark you see on the stone."

Church looked, and an icy coldness crept all over him. For the chalk mark—where his face was to be—was immediately underneath the very centre of the "waterfall."

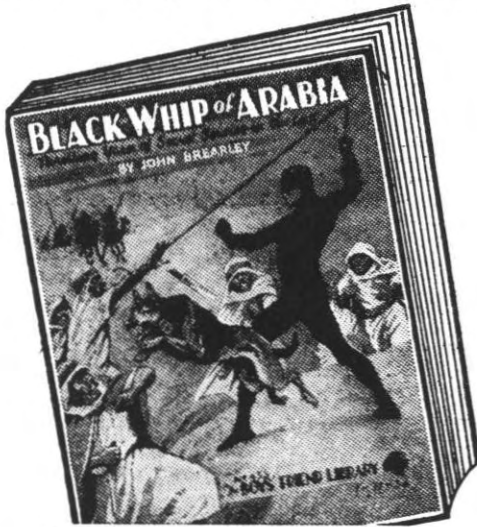
"But that would mean death!" he protested, swinging round on the impassive Yeza. "You know what will happen when you light this fuse, don't you? The end of the 'rope' will send out a dense rain of dazzling, white-hot molten fire! Then it will creep along, right across the vault!"

"It is so!" agreed Yeza, nodding.

"But if I am lying there, I shall see the molten fire dropping nearer and nearer!" panted Church hoarsely. "Then, when it reaches me, it will fall on my face. I shall be blinded—disfigured for life—even if I am not killed!"

"Yet you must obey, for disobedience means certain death," replied the priest. "If you move, if you attempt to

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"In a little while," said El Kut, the rebel Arab sheik, "I shall have money and guns. Then will I sweep these cursed British into the sea, and there's not a man who can stop me."

But he was wrong. A dark figure dropped from a tree that overhung El Kut's castle wall. It was a man dressed in black from head to toe, and from whose hand dangled a long coiled whip. He moved away into the desert and two figures joined him—an Alsatian hound and an Arab urchin. It was Black Whip, the Gang Buster, and his pals.

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shift your head so that it will be out of the path of fire, it will be a sign that you are a craven and unworthy of life. My son, we have the means at hand to destroy you cruelly, but if you do as you are bidden you will emerge from the ordeal unscathed."

Church was dazed by the horror of it. Without quite realising what he did, he lay full length on the floor, his head on that fateful spot—so that when he looked up he was staring straight at the firework rope. And once there a strange paralysis seemed to grip him. His resistance, in fact, was at low ebb. He was dumb and powerless with horror.

Yeza gave a signal, and instantly the other priests applied the torch to the touch-paper. There was a momentary splutter, and then that grim, old vault became brilliantly illuminated with a white, dazzling glare. The firework, as it burned, gave forth a mighty hissing roar, and the sound was exaggerated to a terrifying degree by the echoing and re-echoing of the confined walls. Dense clouds of white smoke went curling and billowing into the darkness of the arched roof.

The white-hot cascade of molten fire was splashing to the floor, and it was creeping nearer and nearer to the helpless St. Frank's junior. For Church was, indeed, utterly helpless now. Staring up, he was fascinated by that creeping cascade. His will was no longer governed by the priests, but it was, nevertheless, almost dominant. He tried to move, but his muscles refused to obey the urge of his brain.

He could only lie there, knowing that within a few moments the white-hot fountain would be showering upon his face, burning into his eyes, blinding him. Round about, the priests stood, watching like so many statues. Not a man moved. They were waiting for Church to show the first sign of active fear. Whilst he remained still they were satisfied.

They knew nothing of the strange paralysis—which was next door to unconsciousness—which had gripped the junior. His eyes were wide open and full of alert intelligence. He was watching the progress of the deadly fountain. He was, in fact, obeying the orders of Yeza to the letter.

And now, with ever-increasing rapidity, the roaring cascade drew nearer. Within a second or two splashes of fire would reach Church's face, although the direct fall of molten liquid was not dangerously close. The vast clouds of smoke, so characteristic of such fireworks, were getting denser, and now billowing down and enveloping the priests.

Nearer—nearer—
And in that dramatic moment a mighty roar sounded from somewhere in the background. The priests, unprepared for any interruption, swung round, and knives leapt into their hands.

But before one of them could move a step, the burly figure of Edward Oswald Handforth came charging through the white clouds of smoke, to be revealed in the blinding glare from the roaring firework.

"You murderous devils!" shouted Handforth hoarsely. "Church! Church!"

He leapt forward, dodging two of the priests who tried to seize him, and the next moment he had seized Church by the feet and dragged him clear of the rain of molten fire.

The Wheel of Death!

BEFORE Handforth could help Church to his feet, strong, sinewy hands seized him and dragged him back. He was held in a vice-like grip.

Church, as one awakening from a dream, sat on the cold floor, looking about him dully. And now the great firework had taken full charge, and was cascading in a molten fountain from one side of the vault to the other.

Handforth, breathing hard, glared defiantly at his captors. He was as reckless as ever. Only one thing mattered just then. He had saved Church in the nick of time.

His very presence in the vault was due to a miscalculation. Or perhaps it can be called a fluke. In normal circumstances, he would have lain unconscious for an hour after that spray of pungent dust had enveloped him. But it so happened that he had been left lying in such a position that his face was in close proximity to a gap in the crumbling wall. Through this gap had come a continuous draught of cold air. It had revived Handforth after only a few minutes.

Again he had had the chance of stealing away and fetching help. It was possible that he could have eluded the watchfulness of the priest who stood on guard. Instead, Handforth had preferred to leap at the priest and deliver a smashing, knock-down right to the jaw.

Having done that, he had gone charging down the circular stairway to the vault below.

"Fool!" said Yeza, his voice charged with anger and



Mr. E. S. Brooks welcomes letters from readers. Write to him c/o The Editor, The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

PLEASE do not ever think, A. R. Galliver (Washaway, Bodmin), that I am wasting my time when I read your letters—and letters from all other readers. I wish I could reply to you all at much greater length, but my space is rather limited. Yes, it would be nice to have a weekly paper devoted entirely to St. Frank's stories, wouldn't it? But that's up to you. You can be quite certain that if there is a sufficient demand for such a paper, the Editor will see that the demand is supplied.

Sorry I did not reply to your previous letter, Lionel E. Lanyon (Melbourne). Yes, it arrived quite safely, and I can only plead, in excuse, that I was tremendously busy. It's just impossible for me to reply to every letter by post.

contempt. "By this action, rash unbeliever, you have earned death."

He spoke rapidly to one of the other priests, and this man hurried from the stairway. It was clear that Yeza was concerned regarding the man he had left in the ruins. Handforth's unexpected arrival was a puzzle.

"You tried to kill my friend!" said Handforth defiantly. "I was just in time to save him."

"Your friend, without flinching, was obeying the sacred orders of Taaz!" replied the yellow man. "Motionless, with perfect stoicism, he awaited the coming of the falling rain which he believed would blind and disfigure him. Thus he earned the forgiveness of Taaz."

"At the cost of being blinded and disfigured!" retorted Handforth.

"Not so, impetuous one!" said Yeza. "At the moment of your entry, we were on the point of pulling your friend clear—just as you pulled him clear. He had acquitted himself well, and the ordeal was at an end. Taaz is pleased, and the boy may go in peace."

"Oh!" said Handforth, rather blankly. "But how do I know that you would have pulled him clear? It's all very well to talk now—"

"Talking will serve no purpose," said Yeza curtly. "You have interfered whilst one of your friends was undergoing his test, and you have done this in spite of our warnings. Death shall be your reward!"

"And—and my friend?"

"He shall go free—but not yet," replied the chief priest. "Immediate liberty would give him time to reach your other friends, and bring them hither. So he shall be tied with ropes, and he shall watch as you die."

He motioned to two of his companions, and they seized Church, dragged him back, and commenced binding him. "Handy, you shouldn't have come!" panted Church. "They mean it! They're going to kill you!"

"I'm not dead yet," said Handforth aggressively. "If they mean to kill me, why don't they stick their daggers into me? I'll tell you why! They've planned something more cruel—something lingering. They tried it before, and I escaped, didn't I? Sometimes, it's possible to be too clever, and I'll beat them again!"

"You are right, noisy one, in saying you escaped us on an earlier occasion," said the high priest grimly. "You failed in your own task, and you were condemned to death. But in some way you escaped. You shall not escape a second time."

An intense gloom had settled over the vault now, for the "Waterfall of Fire" had expended itself, and now only the feeble gleams from the quaint lamps penetrated the darkness. The vault was filled with a dense fog of choking fumes, but they were now clearing rapidly as the smoke drifted up the circular stairway.

Then an interruption came, for the priest who had been sent to the surface returned, bringing with him the man who had suffered from Handforth's punch. The former spoke with intense earnestness to Yeza.

Handforth and Church could not understand; but the man was urging haste. He brought the information that

I'm glad to hear that you are still keen on my stories. With regard to your further remarks, please read my reply to A. R. Galliver. I'll look up the titles you want, and let you have them in next week's issue.

Names List No. 16. Ancient House, Sixth Form: Edgar Fenton, George Wilson, David Biggleswade, Hobart Conroy. West House: Arthur Morrow, Harold Frinton, Llewellyn Rees, Leslie Stanhope. Modern House: Walter Reynolds, Percival Mills, Harold Carlile, Francis Goodchild. East House: Simon Kenmore, Guy Sinclair, Charles Payne, Augustus Parkin. The above are the prominent Sixth Formers who have appeared from time to time in the St. Frank's stories.

Since you received a reply from the Editor, the last time you wrote, Eric Robert-Hewitt (Melbourne), it's pretty clear that you addressed your letter to him. For all letters which are addressed to me are sent straight on, and I reply to them personally. Lionel Corcoran, the youngster who owns the Blue Crusaders Football Club, is no longer at St. Frank's. I am glad that you liked "The School From Down Under," in spite of the few inaccuracies. You, being an Australian on the spot, are naturally in a position to correct me. Many thanks. Since you are so keen on reading about the school itself, and Bellfong, and Bannington, there's not the slightest doubt that you are enjoying the present mystery series.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

the smoke had reached the surface, and was going up into the night air in a great column, which might very easily be seen beyond the trees. In that case, it was likely enough that investigations would follow. So there was urgent need for hurry.

Yeza gave his orders. The men who were binding Church rapidly completed their task. They dragged Church back, and placed him to the wall. Others thrust Handforth forward, and he was suddenly lifted clean off his feet and held against something which moved at his touch.

Ropes were cunningly passed round him, binding him securely to that thing behind him.

"More tricks, eh?" he asked, with a sniff. "Trying to put a scare into me, I suppose?"

"This time, boy, death will be certain—and it is written that you will endure great suffering before oblivion envelops you," said Yeza coldly. "Twice you have offended the mighty Taaz; thus shall your suffering be doubled."

In the light of the flickering lamps he looked straight into Handforth's face, and, in spite of himself, the reckless Removite shivered. For there was something utterly snakelike and venomous in Yeza's gaze. It was no idle threat. These yellow men, who worshipped the Vulture God, were preparing a diabolical fate for him. Even now, Handforth did not realise what awaited him.

Church, bound hand and foot, helpless on the other side of the vault, could see very little through that choking murk. He only knew that the priests were in a great hurry! Several of them, indeed, had already vanished—making their exit by way of the tunnel which led to the quarry workings. They had finished their tasks. Only Yeza and one other remained.

A torch was applied to the "something" behind Handforth. Then, for the first time, he realised with horror that it, must be a firework. He gulped.

The giant catherine wheel!

As that thought came to him, there was a sudden mighty splutter, followed by a roar of sparks which cast a blazing illumination on the scene. Yeza and his fellow priests sprang back—but, before doing so, Yeza gave the wheel a heavy pull. It started swinging round, and now the explosives were creating an appalling din.

"So!" shouted Yeza mockingly. "We leave you, young fool! For some time—perhaps a full minute—you will be unharmed, for you are within the outer rim of fire. But then it will burn closer and closer, reaching first your head and your feet. Your bonds cannot burn until you are dead—for you are secured by your waist. Farewell! The will of Taaz shall be done!"

The two priests plunged into the tunnel, and were gone. "Handy!" almost shrieked Church.

But Handforth was unable to reply. The enormous catherine wheel was increasing its speed, whirling round and round, emitting a terrifying, roaring hiss.

That catherine wheel had been the prize firework of the juniors. It was a veritable giant, fully eight feet from edge to edge—a circular mass of explosive material.

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The priests had secured it to a heavy stake in the centre of the wall—which acted as a pin. They had prepared it, in fact, for Church—in case he failed in his ordeal.

Church was almost mad with fear for his chum; and now that his own danger was over he had recovered completely. His old confidence had returned; he felt that a tremendous load had been taken from him. He strained and wrenched at his bonds, shouting incoherently to Handforth meanwhile, little realising that his voice was completely drowned by the roar of the giant firework.

The catherine wheel was whirling faster and faster. Handforth was dazed, but he was still conscious enough to know that if the fire reached him he was doomed. And, with Church bound hand and foot, it seemed impossible that any help could come.

As it whirled and burned, the wheel made a fascinating spectacle. Before long the fire would reach Handforth's head and his feet. Already it was creeping nearer and nearer to the wheel's centre. That roaring intensity of fire might not kill Handforth on the spot, but his burns would be so appalling that there would be no chance of his recovery. Those burns would encompass his head, his neck, the upper portion of his back and his legs. Not until then would his bonds catch fire, and thus release him. This time, without question, the priests of Taaz had made certain.

Yet—

As Handforth himself had said, he was still alive! Yes, and he was still unharmed. The fire had not yet reached him, although the wheel was whirling like a top, and blazing fiercer and fiercer every second.

But Church was granted added strength in that terrible minute. Rapidly wrenching at his bonds, he did not even notice the agony they caused him as they bit deeply into his flesh. It seemed to him that many minutes had passed, and he was certain that he would be too late. Yet he still struggled on.

And then, suddenly, one rope burst, to be followed a second later by the loosening of another. Like magic, Church's hands were free. To wait whilst he unfastened his legs might be fatal.

Struggling up, he felt in his pocket, and a hoarse shout of triumph escaped him as his fingers encountered his pen-knife. With one movement he opened the biggest blade, then, hopping awkwardly, he fairly hurled himself across the vault, through the choking masses of acrid vapour.

He came near. He saw the wheel hurtling round, and

his heart almost failed him. Then he flung himself forward again, clutching desperately.

The driving power of the great firework was, after all, only sufficient to keep the wheel turning, and at Church's first clutch it checked its speed. He clutched again, and this time he stopped the wheel completely. Millions of sparks were roaring sideways along the wall.

Slash—slash!

Church brought his knife into operation, cutting recklessly through Handforth's bonds. As the ropes fell away, Handforth was loosened. With a sudden forward thrust, he fell, the last of the ropes cut free. He crashed into Church, and they both went sprawling to the stone floor.

Behind them, the wheel, freed from its burden, commenced turning again, and now it rapidly attained an incredible speed, roaring in triumph over its regained freedom.

It was Handforth, in spite of his dizziness, who first recovered his power of movement. He dragged Church free of the falling sparks—for Church was still only half liberated.

Safe, they lay at full length on the floor for some moments, recovering their breath. Then Church sat up, coughing, and he cut the ropes which bound his ankles.

"We—we've got to get out of this, Handy," he said hoarsely. "We shall die of suffocation if we don't. My throat's on fire, and my lungs are choked. Are—are you burnt?"

"Scorched a bit—hair singed, too," said Handforth. "But that's all. Thanks, old man! I don't know how you did it. Those devils! We must go before they come back."

They groped their way through that awful smother, and, somehow, they found the stairs.

But all the way up they were enveloped in the blinding, suffocating fumes, which surged about them—seeking an outlet, just as they were seeking it.

Then, at last, they staggered into the ruins—into the clear, crisp, frosty night air. And they stood there, gulping in the life-giving oxygen. Dishevelled, blackened by the fumes, scorched, they looked like a couple of scarecrows.

"Church, old man, you saved my life," gasped Handforth at length. "You're a giddy hero!"

"Rats!" retorted Church. "You saved mine first. And I want to thank you, Handy. But, listen—we must never tell what happened here to-night. No one must ever know."

"No one!" echoed his chum.

(Next Week: "THE HORROR OF THE RUINED ABBEY!")

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