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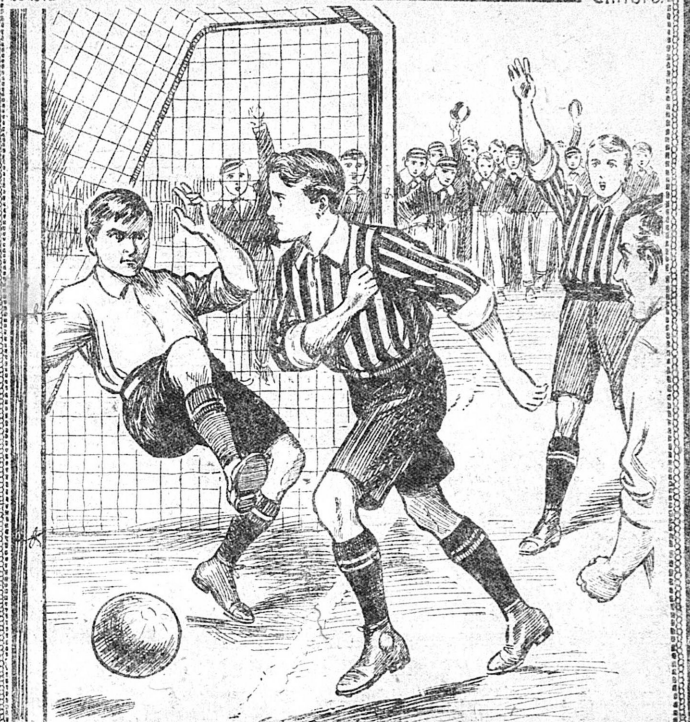
A Splendid Tale of  
Tom Merry & Co.  
and Lumley-Lumley.



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Tale.

*A Tale of the Terrible Three.*

By  
MARTIN  
CLIFFORD.



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## CHAPTER I. The Study Wreckers.

**B**UT—but what are we going to do, Lumley?" Mellish, the cad of the Fourth at St. Jim's, asked the question in an anxious tone of voice. Lumley grinned cunningly.

"Oh, we'll find something to do. Are you certain Tom Merry isn't in his study?"

"Yes, he's in the gym, with the others, but—"

"That's all right, then."

And Lumley-Lumley walked on towards Tom Merry's study with a firm stride.

Mellish followed, but there was nothing very firm about his stride. He kept looking at the whistling form of the millionaire's son in front of him with growing anxiety.

There were times when Mellish was a little afraid of Harold Lumley.

"Look—look here, Lumley, suppose Tom Merry turns up?"

"Well, we'll go for the beasts!"

"But—"

"You aren't afraid of them, are you?"

A  
Splendid Long, Complete  
School Tale of  
**TOM MERRY & Co.**  
and **LUMLEY-LUMLEY,**  
— BY —  
**MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

"No—no, of course I'm not afraid, but—"

"Don't jaw, then," said the millionaire's son coolly. "Here we are!"

And before Mellish could answer, Lumley had thrown open the door of the Shell study, sacred to the Terrible Three.

The little room looked very neat and snug in the red light of the setting sun. Lumley-Lumley noticed this and chuckled.

"Cozy, isn't it?" he grinned.

"Y—yes—"

"A bit too cozy, I should say. What's that there, Mellish?"

"Ink—"

Lumley-Lumley picked up the huge bottle of blue-black ink and drew out the cork. Then he sat down on the edge of the table, and calmly splashed the ink all over the carpet.

Mellish gasped blankly.

He had come to know the millionaire's son better than most of the juniors at St. Jim's since Lumley's arrival, for the pair shared the same study. And Lumley had surprised his study companion more than once with his cool recklessness.

But to deliberately ruin an expensive carpet as he was doing now, took the other junior's breath away.

"Any red ink about?"

"Don't be an idiot, Lumley!" gasped the cad of the Fourth. "It's a new carpet—"

"Hallo! What's this stuff?"

Lumley had jumped down from the table and was standing before an open cupboard. The cupboard contained a dozen or so bottles of differently coloured liquids, the property of Havers. The most enthusiastic photographer in the School House. The millionaire's son commenced splashing the contents of these about the room just as he had splashed the ink.

"Sure to make a fine old mess," he said. "Get out of the way and I'll scatter a little over those books."

Mellish had gone white. He moved towards the door. "I'm not having anything to do with this, Lumley!" he exclaimed. "I—I believe you're mad—"

"Rats!"  
"I do—I believe—"  
Mellish's words died away in a choke of amazement. Lumley had calmly thrown a bottle through the window, and the broken glass could be heard falling to the quadrangle below.  
"Hand over the poker, Mellish; Manners thinks a lot of his rotten old photographs."

"I—I tell you I'm not going to have anything to do with it—"

Mellish's voice trembled with fear. Study raids were anything but unknown at St. Jim's, in fact, the keen rivalry which existed between the New House and the School House was responsible for countless wrecked rooms.

But, in the past, a wrecked room had meant little more than the furniture overturned and the pictures turned to the wall. The juniors of St. Jim's were not given to ruining each other's property.

But Lumley-Lumley's raid was proving a very different thing.

It held Mellish spellbound. The millionaire's son was smashing Manners' photographs and their oak frames now. It seemed a terrible pity to see the tastefully mounted enlargements being wrecked by a poker.

Still, Mellish was not thinking of the pity of the thing. It was fear of the consequences which had caused his face to turn pale.

"Lumley, we—you'll get expelled—"

"Rats!"  
"I tell you you will," cried Mellish. "The Head will sack you for this—"

"Both!"  
Lumley's coolness fascinated the other junior almost as much as the damage he was doing. The millionaire's son hesitated at nothing that came to his mind to complete the wreck.

He pulled all Tom Merry's stamps from the box, and threw them about the room; he scattered ink and photographic developers in every possible direction, and he broke all that it was possible to break without making too much noise.

He had ripped the tablecloth down the centre, and grinned as he noticed the nicely polished table itself.

"A few nails wouldn't improve things, would they, Mellish?" he grinned. "I saw a hammer a minute ago—"

"You—you aren't going to hammer nails into their table!"

"Yes, I am," said Lumley-Lumley; "these six-inch ones."

The cad of the Fourth gasped. He was thoroughly frightened now.

"They'll know who has done it—Tom Merry will half sack you—"

"Rot!"  
"Yes, he will—"

"Rats! He'll think the New House juniors have done it. Here, pass that piece of paper."

Mellish did not pass it, so Lumley reached across the table himself. He hastily scribbled a few words on it, hesitated, then tore the slip of paper up.

"Believe me, I'll print it!" he said. "They might trace the handwriting. I'll print it!"

Mellish watched in wonder. His study companion often made him wonder by his quick witted cunning.

"It's not because I'm afraid of Tom Merry," he said, as he trimmed the second piece of paper with his knife; "he could whack me, I know, but I'm not afraid of a whacking. I've had a few of those in my time— Think they'll notice that?"

And before Mellish could stop him, Lumley had fastened his little slip of paper to the centre of the table by driving the largest nail he could find in the tool-box through it.

He viewed the result with a chuckle.

Mellish's face was whiter than ever as he read what was printed there.

"New House—cock-house of St. Jim's."

That was all Lumley had written. He had not been long at the old school, so his choice of words rather staggered Mellish. It would have been impossible to have chosen a better phrase.

Figgins, of the New House, would have left just such a message after a study raid in the rival House.

"But you oughtn't to have nailed it to the table, Lumley!" gasped the cad of the Fourth. "Figgins would never have done that!"

"Rabbits! If you're going to wreck a study, do it properly. Don't you see the wheeze?"

Mellish had a vague idea that he partially saw the plot, if Tom Merry could be convinced that it was his New House

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rival who had wrecked his room, the rivalry between the two Houses of St. Jim's might become something more than the keen sporting thing it had been in the past.

But would Tom Merry and his chums, Manners and Lovther, ever be convinced that the awful wreck was the work of Figgins & Co.? Mellish felt doubtful about that.

"Tom Merry will just sack Figgins, and Figgins will say he didn't do it," he exclaimed. "They'll suspect you at once, Lumley!"

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"Rot! You wait and see. I haven't half finished yet."

Then the millionaire's son overturned one of the chairs and commenced to saw the logs through. Mellish watched him with the same spellbound wonder, then his vague fear gave place to actual horror. Footsteps were scounding in the corridor outside the room.

"They're coming—Tom Merry is coming here, Lumley—"

Lumley's sharp eyes sparkled. He glanced once round the room, then darted for the door with a quick, noiseless stride.

"Mum's the word—Don't move!"

And using both hands, he turned the key in such a way that the door was fastened without the lock giving the usual click. Then he crept back again to the table.

"That's all right now, Mellish; they can't get in!"

"But—"

"And perhaps it's not Tom Merry after all, only someone passing along the corridor—"

But this time Lumley was interrupted himself. A gentle tap had sounded at the door.

"Eway let us come in, deah boy!"

"D'Arcy!" whispered Mellish. "I—"

"Open the door, you young asses!"

"That's Jack Blake!" muttered Lumley.

"And Digby and Herries will be with them. They'll break down the door or Tom Merry will come along and—"

The cad of the Fourth did not like to fill in the picture he was drawing mentally. He could guess what would be Manners' very natural wrath when he saw how his prized photographs had been treated.

The amateur photographer of St. Jim's would not be in a mood to listen to an explanation that Lumley alone had been responsible for the damage. Mellish wished now he had never said anything about study-wrecking to the millionaire's son.

"Eway open the doah, deah boy!—we want to talk about the footah!"

Mellish looked bewildered.

"What's to be done, Lumley? I—I—"

Lumley was over by the window now. He opened that with the same skillful silence he had manipulated the lock of the door.

He grinned coolly towards Mellish.

"It's all right; we can get out of the window—"

"Weally, deah boy; I must request you, as one gentleman to another, to open the doah to guests—"

"Open the giddy door, asses!"

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Merry?"

Jack Blake & Co. were becoming impatient. Herries could be heard hammering on the door panel with his fists. But Mellish had forgotten his fear of the chums of Study No. 6, or Tom Merry & Co.

He was staring blankly at Lumley-Lumley.

The millionaire's son was kneeling on the window-sill; he was getting out of the window.

"Come on!" he whispered. "We can get down to that ledge thing and walk along to the next window if we cling to the ivy. I expect the ivy will hold all right!"

"You madman—"

"What's the matter now? There's no one to see us."

Mellish's horror became intense.

It was a terrible fall down to the quadrangle, and Lumley had said he expected the ivy would hold all right. He did not know that the ivy would hold, he only expected it would!

And the millionaire's son already had his feet on the narrow ledge below the window-sill.

Lumley-Lumley was grinning.

"My hat, you do look white!" he chuckled in a low voice.

"Come on!"

"I—I—"

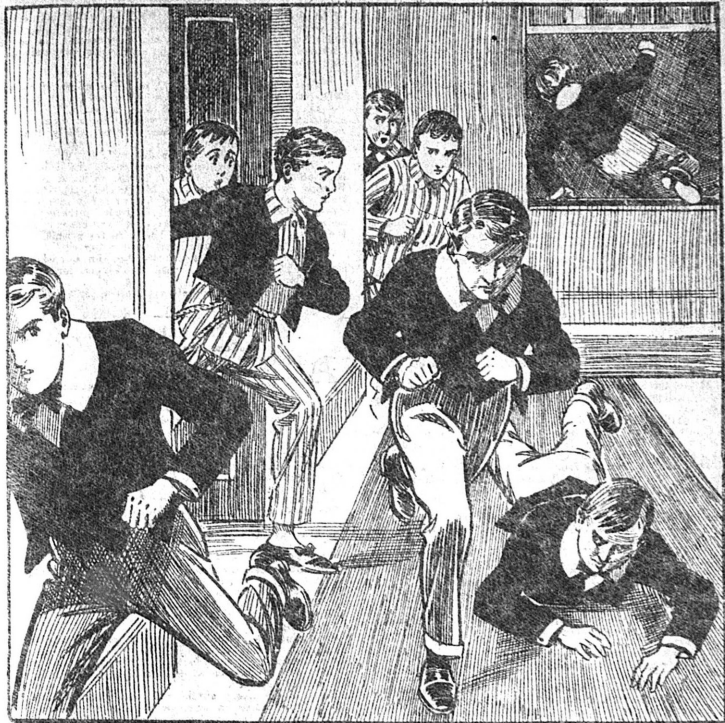
"Finking it, eh? My aunt, you haven't much nerve; it's safe as houses—I say, I was nearly forgetting—"

He pulled something from his pocket. It looked like a St. Jim's cap.

The next moment he had thrown it into the room in such a way that it went under the table. Then he turned to Mellish again.

"I'm going, anyway," he said without the slightest trace of fear. "If you don't do the same, you're likely to have a dusty time when those chaps get in. So long!"

And Lumley-Lumley took his hand from the window-sill.



"Fire! Fire!" As the cry was shouted wildly on all sides, juniors and seniors, white-faced and scared, came pouring from the rooms.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Mellish's Climb.

**W**HALLY, Tom Merry—"Look here, you young asses—" Jack Blake & Co., the chums of Study No. 6, were becoming aggressive. The door was being rattled, thumped, and kicked at the same time; it would only be a matter of moments now before the four would become alarmed.

Already there was an uneasy note in Jack Blake's voice. "Look here, Merry, don't act the goat. Open the door!" "Bai Jove, I don't believe there's anyone in the woon, dear boys—"

"Who could have locked the door and left the key inside if there isn't anyone in the room, ass?"

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that, Digby! Weally, Mannahs, unless you open the doah within three minutes, I shall have no other wesource but to administrah a feshful thwashin'—"

"Don't be a duffer, Merry!"

"I suppose nothing has happened to the kids?" It was the anxious note again. Jack Blake was clearly becoming alarmed at the dead silence which reigned behind the locked door.

Mellish realised that, and he more than half realised that a very unpleasant few minutes would be his when that door was open.

But to leave the study as Lumley was leaving it! Mellish's eyes started in horror as he watched his chum making his way along the ledge, and yet Lumley seemed to be enjoying it. He was chucking to himself all the way.

Then a fifth voice at the door made Mellish gasp. "Merry, or whoever is in the room, open this door at once!"

It was Mr. Lathom who was speaking. Jack Blake had not hesitated to stop the little Fourth-Form master the moment his alarm was really roused, for the leader of the Fourth Form juniors in the School House was given to thinking and acting quickly.

Anything might have happened in that room. The gas might have escaped and the juniors within overcome by the fumes. Anyway, things like that had happened before.

There was no good in taking risks.

If Tom Merry was only "japing," Mr. Lathom would understand.

But Tom Merry did not answer the Fourth-Form-master's voice.

"Shall we burst the door, sir?" flashed Jack Blake.

"Yes—yes, burst the door at once!"

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Mellish heard Mr. Lathom's answer, and a thrill of fear ran through him. It would be a very serious matter for him now, if he were found in that wrecked study.

With a gasp the cad of the Fourth clambered up on the window-sill. Then, with closed eyes, he lowered himself to the ledge.

The first thud of Jack Blake's sturdy shoulder against the door sounded loudly across the room. Even with the first charge, the door was giving. The screws were being torn from the woodwork at the lock.

"Allogethah, deah boys!"

"Now!"

There was another thud.

Mellish's face was deathly. If he had looked down, he felt that he must have fallen.

Even as it was, he was conscious of a weird temptation to fling himself by the concrete quadrangle below.

And he had to hurry along, too.

There was not a moment to spare. Any instant the door might give way and Mr. Lathom's face appear at the window.

With his breath coming in choking gasps, Mellish took his hand from the sill and gripped the ivy. Then he saw Lumley clamber through the next window, grinning at him as he did so.

"Come on, you funk!"

The journey had been nothing to the millionaire's son, but to Mellish it was something that would live again and again in his dreams.

Foot by foot he drew away from Tom Merry's window, dreading every moment the sound of Mr. Lathom's voice. But there was the still greater dread of the concrete quadrangle.

He would have given all he had in the world to feel his hand gripping the window-sill over which Lumley was peering.

"I shall fall—I can't do it—"

"Don't be an idiot!" snapped Lumley. "I never met such a funk. You can walk along a ledge like that with your eyes shut if it were on the ground."

That was true, but the fact that if he did slip, broken limbs would be the result, made all the difference in the world to the cad of the Fourth.

A crash sounded behind him.

The door of Tom Merry's study must have given way at last. Mr. Lathom was perhaps in the room at that moment. Mellish struggled on.

He half shut his eyes again, only to open them with a stifled cry. The branch of ivy he was clinging to had come away from the wall a little.

It could scarcely have come away altogether for the growth was a very old one, but the junior did not think of that.

He went on now in an agony of fear.

He wished he had stayed in the room, he wished anything could have happened almost, rather than he should be on the ledge.

Lumley's voice rang out coolly again.

"Come on, Mellish; it's as safe as anything. Here, I'll help you."

He leaned out of the window, and stretched out a helping hand. The other junior struggled on and caught the hand.

The grip he put on it made Lumley wince.

"My hat! there's no need to wrench my hand off, Mellish."

"I'm falling. I—"

"Bosh! Here, catch hold of that branch there. Now clamber up."

It was an intense relief to Mellish to be told what to do. He was shuddering, and in real danger of falling through his own fear.

Perhaps the millionaire's son saw this.

He looked at his study companion queerly as he leaned further out of the window.

"Come on, Mellish. Here you are!"

And he half dragged the other junior through the window.

Mellish dropped into a chair almost speechless.

Lumley-Lumley was still leaning out of the window.

"I believe there is someone in the room now," he said, withdrawing his head. "There's a pretty big row going on—"

"I wish it had been Tom Merry!"

"It's Mr. Lathom!"

"By Jove, is it? How could they have got in?"

"They—they burst the door," panted Mellish. "Lumley, they'll find out it was you who did the damage, and you'll be expelled."

The millionaire's son chuckled.

"No fear of that, kid," he grinned. "If I went and painted the doctor's face green while he was asleep, they couldn't expel me; but we'd better clear out of this."

"Tom Merry will find out who did it."

Once again Lumley-Lumley chuckled.

"Don't you believe it, Mellish," he said. "I don't care"

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if he does, as far as that goes, but he won't. Whose cap do you think that was I threw under the table?"

Mellish looked up. He was still very white, and he had forgotten the cap Lumley had thrown into the study until that moment.

"It—it wasn't Figgins!"

"That's just whose it was," said the millionaire's son. "Directly you told me about study wrecking, I went and got Figgins's cap. His name is inside all right."

Mellish's fear gave place to wonder for a moment. He looked at the junior whose toady he was rapidly becoming in unstinted admiration.

"My hat, that was a clever dodge!"

"Oh, rats! It was what anyone would do if he had a head on his shoulders. And I'm almost as much up against Figgins as I am against Tom Merry and Jack Blake this time. They have all helped to keep me out of the junior eleven. We'd better slip down the back staircase now, cut across the quadrangle behind the gym., and come in through the college gates just as if we had been for a walk."

"Yes, I suppose that's what you'd better do."

"And we can sprinkle a little dust on our shoes and clothes. That'll back up a yarn we've been for a country walk. Cut for it!"

And the pair scudded away, Mellish still white and shuddering.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Tom Merry's Mistake.

"ALTOGETHER, deah boys!"

"One, two, three—now!"

And Jack Blake, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Herries and Digby, the chums of Study No. 6, flung themselves at the closed door.

There was a splintering crash, and the door thudded in against a chair.

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

The door had given way with greater ease than Arthur Augustus had expected. The swell of St. Jim's was flung into the room.

"Gweat Scott! Bai Jove!"

"My hat!"

Digby came thudding into the study after him, and brought up in the small of Arthur Augustus's back. Arthur Augustus sat down in the fender.

"You howwid wufian, Digby! Bai Jove!"

"My hat!"

Jack Blake had saved himself by clutching the table. He was now staring round the room in blank amazement.

There was no one there, as far as he could see, but he was not conscious of looking for anyone. It was at the room the chief of Study No. 6 was staring.

"My only Aunt Jane!"

Jack Blake had seen a good many wrecked studies since his first day at St. Jim's. He had helped to wreck a fair share himself, if it came to that; but there had never been a room quite so dismantled as Tom Merry's neat little study was at that moment.

There was scarcely anything in the place that was not smashed or ruined in some way. The change from the study where he had so often had tea with Tom Merry was startling in the extreme.

"Good gracious!"

Mr. Lathom peered into the room in dismay.

"Good gracious! Whatever has happened?"

Jack Blake glanced round the room. It was fairly obvious to him what had happened. There had been a study raid.

"A House raid, by the look of it," muttered Digby. "I shouldn't think this is Figgins's work, though."

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"No, watah not. I considah Figgay is far from the type of fellah to wock a studay in this weally wotten mannah."

"Some young rotters from the New House, I suppose, though—Hallo!"

Herries had caught sight of the slip of paper nailed to the table. The effect it had upon the School House juniors was the very one Lumley had hoped it would have.

The Fourth-Former snatched the paper from the table. "Of all the cads! They've ruined Tom Merry's table."

"They've ruined everything in the room!" muttered Jack Blake. "If I were Merry, I'd slay someone for this."

"Yaas, watahah! I considah nothin' about of a feaful thwashin' wouid— Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus caught a glimpse of what looked like a cap under the table. He hastily picked it up.

"Gweat Scott!"

"What's up now, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove, this is Figgay's doin', aftah all, deah boys!"

"Rats!"

"Weally—"

"Utter piffle!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "We know Figgins too well to think he'd do this. Everything in the place is ruined. There's pounds' worth of damage done."

"Yaas, watahah; but I am weally afraid that Figgay—"

"Go and eat coke! My—my hat!"

Jack Blake gasped.

He had seen what Arthur Augustus was staring at. It was Figgins's cap, with Figgins's name inside.

Jack Blake looked very blank at that moment. He glanced towards the door, but Mr. Lathom had gone. The little master had failed to realise the serious nature of the damage done to Tom Merry's room, so had decided it was a matter best left to the juniors themselves.

Jack Blake heaved a sigh of relief as he saw that Mr. Lathom was no longer there.

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle in his eye, and viewed the room with blank amazement. Digby and Herries were staring strangely at the chair, which had lost one of its legs.

"My only Aunt Jane, there's ink all over the placen."

"And Mannah's photographs are uttably ruined."

"Oh, practically everything in the study is done for," said Jack Blake, breathing hard through his nose. "The kids will want a new lot of furniture."

"Yaas, watahah!"

"What a rotten shame!"

Jack Blake spoke crisply. He liked Figgins of the New House, rather admired him, if it came to that; but the chief of Study No. 6 was nothing if not downright.

If his own chums, Digby and the others, had been responsible for the damage done, he would have said the same thing. It was a shame, and it amazed him to think that Figgins & Co. could have done it.

The four stood looking about them in silence.

It was towards Figgins's cap that their eyes turned most frequently, though. It was hard to believe old Figgins could be responsible for the wreck.

A moment or two slipped by, then Arthur Augustus turned hastily.

"There's someone comin' along the cowwidor, deah boys!"

"My hat, yos!"

"Detter shut the door!" flashed Jack Blake crisply. "This is up against Tom Merry. It's nothing to do with us, of course, but Merry wouldn't want prefects or masters dragged into it."

"Rather not."

"Pway shut the doah, deah boys!"

Herries slipped across the room, and pushed the door to. There was a slight thud.

"My hat!"

Someone was attempting to enter the study.

"You can't come in, kid. It's all right."

"Can't I, ass?" sang out the cheery voice of Tom Merry. "You hear that? We can't go in our own room, chaps."

"Hard cheese, isn't it?" came Lowther's laughing voice.

"Altogether, kids."

And there was a very much louder thud.

The door shot back at Herries like a flash, and Herries shot into Arthur Augustus's arms.

They staggered back just as Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther stood in the doorway.

The Terrible Three gasped.

Then they went pink, and Tom Merry dashed into the room.

"Of all the young rotters—"

"On the ball!"

"Weally, Mewwy, deah boy, pway let me explain!"

"Bump them!" yelled Tom Merry. "Bump them!"

And before Jack Blake & Co. could offer a defence, the Terrible Three flung themselves upon them.

Tom Merry dashed straight for Jack Blake, and sent him flying over a chair. Manners rushed at Herries and Arthur Augustus, who were still in each other's arms, and charged them into the book-case.

Lowther was rolling Digby on the floor, and Digby was yelling loudly in consequence. He knew how much ink there was on the floor, and Lowther did not.

"Fourth Form rotters!"

"Bump them! Bump the Fourth Form asses!"

Arthur Augustus gasped. He was wedged in between the sofa and the cupboard now, and Manners was sitting on him, struggling with Herries.

"You utter asses! Pway let me explain!"

"Bump them!" yelled Manners, who had just caught sight of the remains of a really good enlargement of Rylcombe Bridge, which had been one of his best achievements with the camera. "Who did that? Bump the young rotters!"

Manners was in dead earnest now.

Up to that point, like Mr. Lathom, none of the Terrible Three had realised the extent of the damage done to their room.

Manners was the first to realise that this was a much more serious raid than usual. He acted accordingly.

He saw the half-empty bottle of ink Lumley-Lumley had used, and remembered his enlargement of Rylcombe Bridge. A few inches away from him was Arthur Augustus's up-turned face, speechless with amazement, and Manners was not the type of junior to miss his chances.

He emptied the blue-black ink on Arthur Augustus's nose without a moment's hesitation.

"Is that how you like it done, ass?"

"Oh!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "You uttah wuffan! O-oh!"

He choked and spluttered, and Manners reached out for the red ink bottle as well. He thought there was still some of the liquid there.

But at that moment Jack Blake's voice rang out.

"Making rather an ass of yourself, aren't you, Merry?" he said quickly.

And he sat down on the edge of the table.

Tom Merry was staring round the room, a rather dark flush on his handsome face. He had only just seen the real state of the room, and his struggle with Jack Blake had stopped at the same instant.

A glance round was enough for the hero of the Shell.

"Blake, you didn't do this?"

The words were half statement and half question, but they were spoken quickly, as if Tom Merry had gritted his teeth.

His fingers had clenched on his palms a little, too.

Jack Blake was still sitting on the table.

"I shouldn't have thought there was any need for you to ask," he said tensely.

"But—but who has done it?"

Jack Blake did not answer. Figgins's cap was under the table for the chief of Study No. 6 had thrown it back where it had been found.

He liked Figgins immensely, but he also liked Tom Merry. As a matter of fact, the three great rivals at St. Jim's were also amongst the staunchest of chums.

Anyway, it was up against Tom Merry to settle his own affairs.

But for the moment Tom Merry was staring blankly about him.

Manners's face was flushed. His ruined photographs were all he saw, but it was enough. Manners had never been so near losing his temper in his life before.

"Digby, did you—you smash those pictures?"

"Of course I didn't, ass!"

"Oh!" moaned Arthur Augustus. "O-oh!"

"Herries, did you do it?"

"No, they were like that when we came in," said Herries.

"We had to burst open the door."

"My hat!" muttered Tom Merry.

And he stared with dismay at the room.

Arthur Augustus was still moaning rather dismally between the sofa and the cupboard.

## CHAPTER 4.

### To Interview Figgins.

"MANNNAHS! Mannahs, pway put your hands up instantly."

Arthur Augustus was recovering. He was on his feet now. He saw himself in the remains of the looking-glass, and gasped.

"Gweat Scott, Mannahs!"

"Oh, rats!" muttered Manners, still looking very dark.

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"Blake, do you know anything about—about those photographs?"

"No."

"They were like that when you came into the room, Herries says. Tom Merry, look here!"

Manners had found the slip of paper Lumley-Lumley had nailed to the table. Manners and his chief exchanged glances.

It was as hard for them to believe that Figgins had caused the wreck as it had been for Jack Blake to believe it. Lowther suddenly wheeled round, and picked up Figgins's cap.

He glanced at it once, then tossed it on the table.

"Yes, Figgins did this all right!" he exclaimed. "Rather the limit, I think."

None of the others said anything.

Even Arthur Augustus forgot the inky state of his face for the moment, and looked anxiously towards the Terrible Three. The way Tom Merry took the outrage meant a good deal to the pleasant life in the junior school.

And how they were to take it was puzzling Tom Merry a very great deal.

A wheeze which would mean refurbishing their entire room was something more than a wheeze which ever way you looked at it.

Tom Merry had his hands deep in his pockets.

"It isn't only the furniture," he said shortly. "The old sticks wouldn't matter so much, but they have thrown junk all over the photographs on the mantelshelf."

"And my enlargements are utterly ruined."

"And look at my books!" breathed Lowther. "Most of them were presents."

"Oh, it's too rotten!"

Jack Blake and the other Study No. 6 chums did not breathe a word. It was not their business, and Tom Merry was taking it very well.

Manners was the only one who looked like flaring up into a rage, but it would have been excusable in any of them. There were a good many objects prized for old association's sake that would have to be consigned to the dustbin in that room at that moment.

Tom Merry felt rather helpless.

"Bother it, I can't believe Figgys has done this."

"Well, you have to believe it," said Manners shortly. "His cap and that notice settles the matter."

"Y-yes, I suppose so."

"There's no supposition about it. Are you certain the door was locked when you came along, chaps?"

"Yaaa, wathah, as we had to bveak it down."

"Locked on the inside, too?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! And the key was in the doah, deah boys. The outsiders must have left the woom by the window."

Arthur Augustus had entirely forgotten all about the ink on his face now. The swell of St. Jim's had forgotten everything except that his friendly rivals in the School House were a good deal upset.

He stepped up to the still open window.

"Bai Jove, Figgins must have climbed along that ledge, deah boys."

"Rats!"

"Yaaa, weally, I can see here the ivy is torn away."

Jack Blake peered down, then turned to Tom Merry.

"I wonder if they were in the room when we were hammering at the door."

"Bai Jove, I cinsidah that more than pwob—"

"They must have been, or they would have left by the door," dashed Tom Merry. "My hat, they can only have just got back to the New House."

"Yaaa, wathah, that was what I was thinkin'."

They all looked at Tom Merry again.

What would he do now?

The hero of the Shell did not leave them long in doubt. He squared his shoulders, and stepped towards the door.

"I'm going to see Figgins," he said tensely. "Will you chaps come?"

"Rather!"

"Bai Jove, deah boys!"

"Got on with the washing!"

"Bai Jove, is there time, deah boys?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, glancing at his magnificent watch. "It will nevah do for us to be late foah coll ovah."

Tom Merry whipped out his watch, and his handsome young face clouded. It was time for the dormitories now. The bell sounded before he could answer even.

It was certainly out of the question to think of going into the New House now.

But there was still the determined flash in Tom Merry's steady eyes.

"Anyway, I'm going to see Figgins before I go to sleep to-night," he said. "I want to have this thing out with him."

"Bai Jove, isn't it imposa, deah boy?"

"Rats, Gussy! I'm going to slip out of the dormitory after lights out."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!"

"Will you chaps come with us?" asked Tom Merry. There was no need to ask whether Manners and Lowther were coming. "We should like you, if you don't mind the risk."

Jack Blake grinned.

"The risk won't frighton us, Tom Merry," he said. "And if Figgins has done this—well, it's up against all us School House juniors to turn the tables."

Tom Merry looked up.

Jack Blake was not quite convinced the wrecked study was the work of Figgins & Co. then. The Shell junior was glad to know that.

But he said nothing, and their ways separated at the study door. It was better not to say too much until Figgins had been interviewed.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Lumley's Latest Trick.

"WELL have a rest here, I guess!"

And Jerrold Lumley sat down on a table, and looked coolly towards the Ryll, as it wound its tortuous course among hills and woods.

Mellish stared at him in surprise.

"There isn't time for a rest, Lumley."

"Both!"

"I tell you there isn't!" exclaimed the other junior anxiously. "We shall have to run pretty hard to get in before call-over, as it is."

"Who wants to get in before call-over?"

Mellish's surprise became acute. Jerrold Lumley was always surprising by some means or other.

The idea of not wanting to get in before call-over was rather startling to a St. Jim's junior.

"There'll be an awful row—"

"Yes, a hundred lines each!" sneered the millionaire's son.

"Jolly awful, isn't it?"

"But it will—will go down against us in the record-books."

"That's more awful still. I wonder you haven't gone white again, Mellish."

The cad of the Fourth flushed instead.

"Oh, I don't pretend to have the nerves you have, Lumley; but you'll need them all when Taggies reports us for being late."

"Will Taggies report us?"

"Of course he will!"

"Good!" said Lumley. "That's just what we want." Mellish stared at him again. How being reported could be just what they wanted passed his comprehension.

Lumley-Lumley seemed to be enjoying the other's surprise, for he laughed heartily.

"What an ass you are, Mellish!" he exclaimed. "Don't you see if we turn up late, and get reported, it will add to the yarn that we've been for a long walk?"

"My hat!"

"I should have thought anyone would have fallen to a simple thing like that. What time do you make it, now?"

"It's about ten minutes after call-over."

"Good! We'll sprint for the college, and you'll see how I'll work it."

Mellish did not answer. There were times when he felt years younger than the millionaire's son.

But that was scarcely to be wondered at.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had not always been the son of the millionaire chief of Lumley-Lumley's Limited. Mr. Lascelles Lumley had once owned little more than a small office when he started out to beat the Yankees at their own game, as he expressed it, and in those days his son had been in the habit of sweeping out the office.

Jerrold's leisure hours had been spent in the New York streets, and that period of his life had not been without effect on him.

It was likely to influence his character for the rest of his life.

But Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley had succeeded in beating the Yankees at their own game, and his son was now reaping the benefits of an education at the great public school of St. Jim's. Perhaps it would have been almost as well for him if he had still been employed sweeping out the little office in New York, though.

Mellish followed, running at his best pace to keep up with the other junior, and he was almost breathless as they dashed up to Taggies' lodge.

Lumley-Lumley glanced quickly at his companion, and grinned. He had another surprise for the junior whose study he shared.





The millionaire's son scowled suddenly at the referee; but he refrained from making any insolent retort, and the game proceeded once more.

"Day up, Mellish. Perhaps the old ass won't hear us."

Jerrold Lumley made the remark quite loudly, and Faggles' window was open. Mellish stared at him blankly. Lumley was grinning more broadly than ever.

"Ten to one Taggles is drinking gin and water," he added, in a still louder voice. "We can easily pull the wool over his eyes, and slip past."

"Which you can't do nothing of the sort!" shouted an angry voice through the window. "Names!"

"Look here, Taggles!"

"Names!" snapped the school porter, pulling out his book. "Come on, give me your names!" began Lumley in what sounded like a rather scared voice.

"We went a little too far, and—didn't notice the time. We've run nearly all the way from the river."

Taggles snuffled.

"Which isn't a new sort of story!" he snapped. "I'll add it to the report, to show Mr. Railton what huntruthful young vagabonds you are. Names!"

"Lumley-Lumley—"

"And Mellish-Mellish!" chuckled a voice from behind. "Not to mention Faggles-Taggles."

Jerrold Lumley wheeled round. Figgins & Co. were standing behind them.

A flash came into the millionaire's son's eyes.

He was thinking of the wrecked study and the cap he had left there. But he said nothing to the grinning New House juniors.

He pushed on with Mellish instead.

The last thing he heard of Figgins & Co. were their voices as they gave their names to the porter in a loud voice.

"Figgins-Figgins!"

"And Kerr-Kerr."

"Not to mention Wynn-Wynn," added the last junior. "My hat! I feel almost faint with hunger. It must be this September weather."

Lumley did not speak again until the college was gained, but the flash was still in his eyes.

He had not forgotten Figgins's joke about his double-barrelled name.

He caught hold of Mellish's arm as they gained the top of the stairs.

"No, we're not going into the dormitory yet."

"But—"

"We're going to see Tom Merry."

Mellish gasped. In the circumstances, he would have thought the last thing Lumley could have wished to do would be to see Tom Merry.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "HERRIES' 1ST PRIZE."

But as usual the stronger-charactered junior carried all before him. Mellish followed, wondering, but without a single protest.

He looked very scared, though, as Lumley pushed open the dormitory door.

"Tom Merry here?"

"No. Who is it?"

"Lumley."

"h. Lumley-Lumley!" grinned French, in the darkness. "No, Merry-Merry has gone with Blake-Blake and a few others to see Figgus-Figgins about something-something-footer-footer. I expect."

"I suppose you think you're funny, eh?" growled the new boy. "You can tell Merry he won't think it so funny if he doesn't give me a place in the eleven before so long."

French sat up in bed.

"You'd get a place in the eleven quick enough if you were better than any of the others," he said shortly. "Tom Merry would overlook the fact that you're an outsider."

"Don't tell lies," snapped Lumley; and he slammed the door.

Mellish turned to him anxiously.

"It's all rot our hanging about here, Lumley," he said. "They'll suspect something."

"Rot! It will make them suspect us all the less, and I don't care what they suspect, as it happens. I'm going tooust that fat beast, Fatty Wynn from the eleven if it costs me fifty pounds."

Mellish looked rather blank.

He did not think anyone could get into the junior eleven of St. Jim's at the cost of fifty pounds or fifty hundred pounds if he weren't good enough. But Jerrold Lumley would not understand that.

The millionaire's son was standing still, a curious expression on his face.

"I say, would there be a row if Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and the others were found in the New House?" he asked suddenly.

"Of course there would."

"How do you get from one House to the other?"

"Through a communicating door, but I'm not going into the New House to-night."

"Isn't there any other way?"

"Through the grounds, of course; but the doors will be locked."

"Suppose we locked the communicating door?" flashed Lumley.

Mellish started. He had not thought that was what the other junior was drifting at.

At first sight it seemed a clever plan.

"Oh, but they would find some way of getting back. Trust Tom Merry."

"But— is that the communicating door?"

Mellish nodded, and Lumley darted forward. He was not looking at the door now.

"What's that thing?"

The cad of the Fourth started forward.

"My hat, you mustn't touch that, Lumley. It's the fire alarm. You'd get expelled if you rang it."

"How does the thing work?"

"Oh, it rings the big bell, and sets all sorts of electric alarms going. There's one in the New House, too, just at the other side of the door."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jerrold Lumley chuckled loudly.

The next instant he had opened the communicating door, and had thrusted his arm round the door-post.

"Yes, the bell-pull is here all right," he said calmly. "Get ready to scud for it."

"Lumley—"

"Rats!" breathed the other junior, and his hand shot out. The next instant he had wrenched the alarm bell pull, then he wheeled round, and locked the communicating door.

Mellish turned, and pelted away in wildest fear.

## CHAPTER 6.

### The False Alarm.

**B**OOM!

"Gwæt Scott!"

Arthur Augustus gave vent to the exclamation in dismay. Jack Blake gripped Tom Merry's arm.

"What was that?"

Boom!

The solemn, awe-inspiring note rang out again. It could not be mistaken. The fire alarm was being rung.

At the same moment electric bells rang out through the New House. It was as if countless telephone bells were sounding.

"Fire!"

Mellish breathed the word quickly. It had scarcely THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 135.

NEXT

THURSDAY.

"HERRIES' 1ST PRIZE"

escaped his lips than the word was shouted wildly on all sides.

"Fire!"

"The coll. is on fire!"

"My hat!"

Doors on all sides of the invaders from the School House were flung open. Juniors and seniors alike came pouring from the rooms.

A crowd of Second Formers dashed out, white-faced and scared. Tom Merry rushed after these.

"It's all right, you young asses—heaps of time—"

"Fire! Fire!"

There is something in the word itself which seems to carry terror with it. Even some of the seniors were white and scared looking.

A general rush was heading for the stairs.

Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, came racing from his study, shouting loudly:

"Steady there—heaps of time! Stop the young asses, you!"

In the gloom Monteith had not recognised Tom Merry. But Tom Merry was not thinking of the trouble which would follow his being in the New House. He had also forgotten about the wrecked study.

He did his best to stem the excited stream which was struggling at the head of the stairs. It seemed a hopeless task.

Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus came rushing to his aid.

"Pwaw keep cool, deah boys. Mannahs, I must guide you not to wumple my atiah."

Even in the excitement of a supposed fire, the swell of St. Jim's remembered his clothes.

All the time the electric alarm-bells were ringing with a nerve-racking steadiness.

Suddenly Tom Merry caught sight of what was happening at the window. Juniors were attempting to climb through,

"Asses! Stop them, Dig—"

Digby struggled through the excited crowd, and did his best to induce the fellows to see reason.

"There's tons of time!" he yelled. "There isn't a sign of smoke, even—"

"Perhaps it's a false alarm, deah boys."

"Boys—boys, keep calm."

Mr. Ratcliff had joined the throng now. The House-master was also clothed in nothing but pyjamas, for a cold in the head had sent him to bed at an unusually early hour for him.

Although he was shouting to the juniors to keep calm, he was not so very calm himself.

A good many man would have felt flustered on being awakened by a fire-bell.

Jack Blake was struggling to prevent some wildly excited Third-Formers making for a window, from which no escape could have ever been made.

"I tell you, you can't get down there, duffers!" the chief of Study No. 6 was shouting. "Wait your turn at the stairs—"

"Fire!"

The one word had more effect than all Jack Blake would ever be able to say.

The juniors heard his words, but the other single word was all that was required to inspire them to action.

Then Arthur Augustus' voice rang out again:

"Get into the School House, deah boys, the fish is only Leah—"

A wild rush was made for the communicating door. A highly-strung senior gripped the knob.

"It's locked—the door is locked!"

"Who has the key?"

Mr. Ratcliff was too flustered to remember where his key was, and the fact that they were cut off from the School House added terror to the situation.

Already juniors were scrambling down the ivy, at risk of life and limbs.

Outside, the quadrangle presented a strange appearance. Crowds of New House fellows were pouring out of the doorways, the juniors clad in pyjamas for the most part. A few had dressing-gowns, but not many.

And others were coming down the ivy in desperate haste.

Presently the door of the Head's private house was flung open, and the Head himself came rushing out. The old schoolmaster ran all the way to the New House entrance.

"Good gracious! Are the boys in danger? Where is the fire?"

There was no one to answer Dr. Holmes, and he would not have waited for an answer if there had been. He pushed his way into the New House against the struggling stream of excited juniors who were leaving it.

The cry of "Fire!" was cutting through the air incessantly. There was not a sign of smoke. The Head could not make it out.

"Mr. Ratcliff!" he shouted, rushing up the stairs. "Monteith, what has happened?"

It was the head prefect who replied. Mr. Ratcliff was too flustered for the moment.

"We don't quite know, sir; the fire-alarm awoke most of the juniors. By Jove, some of you fellows are showing up pretty badly over this!"

The last remark was about the most judicious one Monteith could have made. It appeared to have instant effect.

Now the first excitement was over, the most scared of the juniors began to realise they were not acting as St. Jim's fellows were expected to.

The rush for the stairs became less panic-stricken. The juniors at the windows took Jack Blake's advice, and desisted from their wild attempts to leave the college by the ivy. But it was not the Head's idea that they should remain in the building in spite of the absence of smoke or any sign of flame.

"Leave as quickly, but as orderly as you can, boys!" he exclaimed. "I firmly believe it is a false alarm. You here, Blake?"

Jack Blake & Co. went rather red, but the Head did not press for a reply. He saw that they were doing good work in preventing a panic, and it was quite likely their invasion from the School House would be forgotten in the circumstances.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake hoped so, anyway.

Arthur Augustus had his monocle in his eye, and was standing at the top of the stairs. He was as cool and unconcerned as if he were about to go into class.

"I say don't wish about, dear boys; there is no dangah. Mewwy, dear boy, do you considah I have time to go and bash my hat—"

"Don't be an ass!"

"But my hair is in a weally shockin' state, though undah the circs. Bai Jove, they are nearly all out now, doctah!"

"Yes, thank goodness for that! Mr. Ratcliff, please get your call-over book. Monteith, see that all the boys answer for their names in the quadrangle."

"Yes, sir—"

"Are you seven boys the only School House boys present?"

"I think so, sir," murmured Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah, doctah!"

"Very well. Go into the quadrangle with the others. D'aw me, I see no signs of fire!"

Dr. Holmes followed the last of the boys—Tom Merry & Co.—from what was supposed to be the burning building. There was still no signs of smoke. But the electric fire-bells were still ringing.

## CHAPTER 7.

### Tom Merry & Co.'s Awkward Position.

"BAI Jove, what a wumpled and untidday crowd, dear boys!"

Arthur Augustus viewed the assembly in the old quadrangle through his monocle. It was more than an untidy crowd.

There was scarcely a junior there who had more than a dressing-gown on. Most of them had not waited to attire themselves to that extent, even.

And all the time the New House looked just as it always had looked.

Mr. Ratcliff was calling over the names and the fellows were answering them as rapidly as possible. A few spoke in rather subdued voices, and they were the few who hid left the college by the windows in wildest panic.

They wished now they had listened to Tom Merry & Co. The Head's face was becoming very grave. He was moving towards the New House entrance again. Monteith, Tom Merry & Co., and the Study No. 6 juniors followed him. They knew what the Head of St. Jim's meant to do. He was going to search the whole building.

Other seniors joined the party at once, so the juniors kept rather in the background. It would not have suited Tom Merry & Co. at all to have been sent back.

"I say allow a fellow of tact and judgment to lead the way, dear boys," whispered Arthur Augustus. "A false alarm—"

"Rats!"

"I don't believe there's a fire at all."

"Bai Jove, I was about to make that remark myself, Digby! I weally don't believe there's a fire."

"There wasn't upstairs, anyway," muttered Jack Blake.

"There doesn't appear to be any signs of one here, either."

"Bai Jove, Monteith is goin' down to the kitchens now, dear boys!"

The juniors crept forward and peered over the balusters.

They waited in suppressed excitement for Monteith's return.

They had not to wait very long. The head prefect came up, looking very blank.

"There isn't a sign of fire, sir!" he exclaimed to the Head. "Who can have rung the bell!"

"Perhaps it slipped in some way, and rang by itself," suggested Mr. Ratcliff.

Monteith shook his head.

"I should think that was almost impossible, sir, but I'll run up and see."

"Yes, do, Monteith. Will you other prefects make a thorough search of the house? It is very extraordinary that the boy, or servant, who rang the bell has not come forward and explained where he saw, or thought he saw, the fire."

"Bai Jove—"

"Dry up, ass!" breathed Jack Blake.

"Bai Jove, yaas, wathah, onlay I agreee with the doctah! It is weally weafarkable the juniah who wang the bell has not explained."

"Blake, is that you there?"

The chief of Study No. 6 started.

"Yes, sir."

"How did you come from the School House?"

"Through—the communicating door, doctah."

"And how long had you been in the New House before you heard the bell?"

Jack Blake thought for a moment or two.

"Not more than five minutes, sir."

"Then you were quite close to the bell-pull!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, glancing up. "You must have seen the boy who gave the alarm."

Jack Blake and Tom Merry glanced at one another. The point had not struck them before.

It certainly was strange they had not seen the junior who gave the alarm. But they had not.

"No one passed us, sir."

"Are you certain?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir, although we were all in a fluttah at the time!"

"Ass!" breathed Tom Merry.

"Weelly, Tom Mewwy—"

Monteith came hurrying up at that moment, in some excitement.

"No, the bell was rung by someone, doctah, and curiously enough the communicating door is locked on the School House side."

Arthur Augustus started.

"No, weelly, Monteith, the doah cannot be locked as we came through it—"

"I say the door is locked, D'Arcy, and the key is on the School House side. I saw the end."

"Bai Jove!"

The School House juniors looked puzzled. Dr. Holmes was beginning to look rather grim. He was forming a new idea about the false alarm.

"Follow me into the quadrangle, Merry"

"Yes, sir."

The juniors followed, a prey to unpleasant thoughts. However, the communicating door could be locked upon the School House side, passed their comprehension.

"None of our chaps would have been asses enough to lock us in by mistake—"

"A pre, might have done it."

"Bai Jove, nevah thought of that."

It was an explanation, certainty, and one that could easily be put to the test.

But they had all gained the quadrangle by now, and other matters chained their attention. The Head was mustering the fellows into a solid square.

"There is no fire!" he exclaimed. "I suppose the alarm was given by some lad who thought he smelt smoke. Which boy gave the alarm?"

No answer.

The juniors were staring blankly at one another. The seniors looked rather uncomfortable.

"Come on, boys!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "No nonsense, please; there is nothing to be ashamed of in giving a false alarm. Who rang the bell?"

Again there was no answer.

An ominous pause followed, which the Head broke in the end.

"Am I to understand that none of you rang the bell?"

There was a chorus this time. None of them had rung it. The Head's sternness became very acute.

"I regret to say the only other possible explanation is that the bell was rung as a practical joke," he said quietly. "The boy who played that trick must feel very ashamed of himself at this moment. He realises now, if he did not before, that grave injury might have been caused by the panic—that it is a mercy no injury did occur."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 135.

Another Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

NEXT THURSDAY: "HERRIES' 1ST PRIZE."

They were sombre words, spoken in a sombre manner.

The Head went on sternly.

"I call upon the boy who played the trick to confess at once," he exclaimed—"at once, I said!"

But no one answered. No one had anything to say. A few were looking towards Tom Merry & Co., but they were scarcely glances of suspicion as yet.

This was scarcely a trick that could have come from Study No. 6, or the Terrible Three of the Shell. Yet there had been a trick, and the New House had been invaded by Tom Merry & Co.

The New House juniors did not know quite what to think. The Head allowed the fellows to think it over for a moment or two, then waved his hand towards the college.

"Return to your dormitories at once, please," he said. "You may rest assured a thorough examination of the New House is being made, so you need not feel uneasy. There is not the slightest trace of fire. You seven School House boys are to return to your own House."

And Tom Merry & Co. walked away across the quadrangle. There were very puzzled expressions on their faces, and they did not talk much.

## CHAPTER 8.

### A Clue.

A FIRM tap sounded at the door of Study No. 6. Jack Blake glanced over his shoulder a little gloomily.

"Come in! Hallo. I'm glad it's you, young Merry!"

"Yes, young Blake; we thought we'd come and look you up."

Manners nodded wearily.

"Our place is hopeless now, you know."

Jack Blake jumped to his feet then.

"My hat! I had forgotten all about the wrecked study, asses!" he said cheerily. "We'll put up with you three in here until you can get straight."

"Thanks, kid!"

And Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther sat down, grinning a little. The grins did not last long.

It was obvious Tom Merry had come to Study No. 6 for some set purpose.

"Look here, Blakey—"

"Look here, Blake—"

Tom Merry and Manners exchanged glances. They had both commenced to speak together.

Jack Blake looked up again.

"I wonder if you kids have come here for the same reason Gussy is looking for you at this moment," he said grimly.

"My hat!"

"Is Gussy looking for us?"

Jack Blake nodded.

"He is, my son."

"About—about the false alarm last night?" asked Manners.

Jack Blake nodded again.

"Look here, we've made all sorts of inquiries in this House, and we can't find who it was who locked that communicating-door. Come in!"

"Bai Jove, deah boys—"

Jack Blake waved his hand impatiently.

"Oh, don't cackle, Gussy, we're trying to thrash this thing out!" he exclaimed. "It's absolutely certain that none of the pres. shut the door, and every junior says he didn't do it—"

"Blake, deah boy—"

"Ring off, Gussy! A New House chap has just sent us word that every junior in their kennel has passed his word that he didn't ring the bell, so—"

"So—"

"So," began Digby desperately, "we thought it must have been one of the School House chaps who did it."

"My hat!"

"Tom Mewwy, pway listen to me—"

"Rats, Gussy!"

"Weally—"

"Yes, really—"

Arthur Augustus's voice rose in his excitement.

"You uttah duffhans, deah boys!" he shouted. "I tell you I have some startlin' information, onlay if you are goin' to war—"

"About the fire-alarm, Gussy!"

"Get on with the washing, kid!"

Arthur Augustus calmed down and took a chair.

"Wight-he, deah boys! Onlay pway don't intewwupt me. You know Fwench—"

"Ass!"

"Weally! However, to pweess on with the mattah in hand, Fwench says two juniars came to the Shell dormitory THE GRAM LIBRARY.—No. 135.

last night—just aftah we had gone and asked foah Tom Mewwy."

Jack Blake looked disappointed.

"There's nothing very startling in that, kid!"

"Jolly feeble, I say!" exclaimed Manners.

"Wats!" answered Arthur Augustus. "Wats, deah boy! Fwench says he heard the two juniars coming along the cowardier agin about five minutes letah."

"My hat—"

"And he thinks that directely they had asked foah Tom Mewwy, they went towards the communicating-door, although that isn't the way to the Fourth Form-room, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus's audience were becoming excited. All of them were on their feet by now.

"Gussy, who were they?"

"Did French recognise them?"

"Yaas, wathah! As a mattah of fact, he only mentioned the affair in a casual mannah when he was speakin' to Weelly about Lumley-Lumley gettin' a place in the juniar eleven—"

"Gussy, was it Lumley?"

"Yaas, wathah—"

"And Mellish with him?" flashed Tom Merry.

"Fwench thinks it was Mellish. I considah it is quite a cert. that it was Mellish, undah the circs, as Lumley-Lumley is too much of an outsidah foah a decent fellow to chum in with—"

But Jack Blake and Tom Merry did not listen to Arthur Augustus's last sentence. They were facing one another with excitedly flashing eyes.

Could it have been Lumley-Lumley and Mellish who had rung the alarm?

Neither Tom Merry or Jack Blake were the type of junior to jump to conclusions, so it was doubtful how they would have thought the matter out. Anyway, there was some clue to go upon, and any clue would be welcome in this strange affair.

Jack Blake was rather dreading the sound of breakfast-bell. The Head would ask again who had been responsible for the false alarm, and, as far as the chief of Study No. 6 could tell, no one was going to own up.

Jack Blake tried to put himself in the Head's place. Seven juniars from the rival House were known to have been near the bell-pull at the moment it was rung. It would be a very unpleasant situation for Tom Merry & Co.

But with the mention of Lumley-Lumley's name the air seemed cleared a little.

Lumley had done many reckless things since his arrival at St. Jim's. The juniars had never forgotten the stone he threw at Gordon Gay of the Grammar School when on his bicycle, and it was difficult to think there could be anyone else in the college who would deliberately sound a fire-alarm.

Tom Merry's eyes were sparkling.

He was moving towards the door, when the door itself was pushed open.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was coming into the study.

He looked as cool and self-reliant as ever.

## CHAPTER 9.

### The Truth.

"H—HALLO, Merry! I want to see you!"

Jerrold Lumley faced the seven juniors with a grin. He walked in and sat on the edge of the table.

"I want to see you about the footer."

Tom Merry did not answer. He was looking very curiously at the millionaire's son, and Lumley was looking back.

"Oh, you can pretend not to know what I mean," he said, "but it won't wash! I want to know whether you are going to give me a place in goal in the junior against Highcliffe on Wednesday."

"You'll see when the team sheet is up, Lumley," breathed the hero of the Shell through his nose.

"Yes, but I want to know now; I want to know for a special reason."

"Why?"

Jerrold Lumley got down from the table.

"Oh, nothing much; only I mean to get a place in the eleven—and if you keep me waiting long for it—well, I may make things unpleasant."

Arthur Augustus started violently.

"Bai Jove, Lumley! I must say you leave me no othah resource but to considah you in the light of a w'etched outsidah!" he exclaimed in amazement. "I twest you know Tom Mewwy well enough to recog'nise he will select the best team poss—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Lumley—"



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"Dash! We all know Tom Merry picks his own chums—you are all chums in the junior eleven. It's a sort of family affair!"

Tom Merry went very pink.

It was grossly untrue, but the junior captain did not mean to press the point. He was thinking of something else at that moment.

He stepped up to the millionaire's son, his eyes flashing.

"Did you and Mellish ring the alarm-bell last night?" he said. "You were out in the corridor, and you were near the communicating-door. Lumley, I believe it was you."

"Rats!" said Lumley coolly.

"Bai Jove! If it were—"

"Rot! Everyone says you did it yourselves," answered the millionaire's son, without a trace of embarrassment. "But that's not what I have come to talk about."

"It's what we're going to talk about."

"Well, you can talk about it after I have gone!" sneered Lumley. "All I want to say is, if I'm not down to play football in place of Wynn against Highcliffe, I'd look out for trouble if I were you."

And he sauntered from the study.

Arthur Augustus dashed for the door, but Tom Merry held out a warning hand.

"It's no good trying to get the truth from that cad!"

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"Ring off!" said the hero of the Shell quarterly. "Are you chums coming with me to see Mellish?"

Jack Blake & Co. started. Mellish was the man to tackle; they would be justified in almost any trick to drag the truth from him in the circumstances.

There were grim expressions on the faces of the Study No. 6 chums as they followed the Terrible Three from the neat little room.

Not a word was spoken all the way to the study Mellish shared with Lumley-Lumley, and the door was flung open without the formality of a knock. Tom Merry did not feel like rousting about formalities.

Mellish, the junior who had earned the nickname of "Cad of the Fourth," jumped to his feet. He was very white.

"What do you want here, Tom Merry?"

"Shut the door!" said the Shell junior.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 135.

Another Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

NEXT THURSDAY: "HERRIES' 1ST PRIZE."

Mellish tried to pull himself together.  
 "Look here, I—I'm not going to have you chaps coming in just when you like—"  
 "No; it seems we've come when you don't like, though," said Tom Merry. "We want the truth about last night, Mellish."

"The truth! I don't know what you are talking about—"

"Bai Jove, you can scarcely owdit that, Mellish!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You must know, as all the school is talking about this false alarm, I wewget to say I must weward your wemark as a wank fib!"

"I tell you I don't know! If you mean—"  
 "Yes, that is what we do mean," said Jack Blake grimly. "We want to know wethat you rang the bell or not!"

"Rang the bell! Of course, I didn't!"  
 "Where did you go after you had looked into the Shell dormitory with Lumley to ask where I was?" demanded Tom Merry.

"I—I went back to our own room, of course—"  
 "Bai Jove! I weward that as fib nambah two, Mellish!" put in Arthur Augustus. "Fwrench heard you in the cowwidor five minutes latah."

"I tell you it's all a plot—"  
 Tom Merry looked at the cad of the Fourth scornfully.

"I suppose you know that the chap who rang that bell will be expelled," he said. "The Head won't look over a thing like this. And we are going to find out the truth, Mellish, you may as well remember that!"

"I don't care; I hadn't anything to do with it— Ah!" Mellish's breath came in a gasp.  
 Someone else had just entered the study. It was Dr. Holmes, the head-master.

Mellish's face became whiter and whiter, and in his heart Tom Merry had no further doubt. Mellish knew more about the false alarm than he pretended.

But how were they to find out?  
 It would be difficult, for when it came to the point "bumping" the truth out of the cad of the Fourth would be an unpleasant thing to have to descend to.

The next instant the juniors knew the whole affair was to be taken out of their hands. The Head had stepped up to Mellish.

"Mellish, you were out of your dormitory last night?"

"Yes, sir. We came in late—"

"Were you near the communicating-door?"

"No, sir."

"Mellish, that is untrue. Lumley has just told me you and he were within a few yards of the door."

"I—I— Perhaps we were, sir. Doctor, I didn't do it. I hadn't anything to do with it—"

"Had Lumley?" demanded the Head. And Mellish did not answer.

There was no need to do so. The junior's fear for himself had given his study companion away.

Except in actual words, Mellish had as good as confessed that it was Lumley.

The Head did not speak. He appeared to be waiting for someone, and he was not kept waiting long.

The door was pushed open almost immediately by Kildare, the college captain, and Lumley was with him.

The millionaire's son glanced once at Mellish's white, scared face, and gritted his teeth. Whatever his faults were—and they were many—Lumley-Lumley had his share of pluck.

"Lumley, it was you who rang the bell?" exclaimed the Head.

The millionaire's son shrugged his shoulders. As he would have termed it, the game was up.

"I suppose Mellish has sneaked?" he said, with a sneer.

"I don't care."

Arthur Augustus gasped.

"Bai Jove! Gwreat Scott!"

Jerrold Lumley's answer had taken Arthur Augustus's breath away. He could not understand it.

The Head did not answer. The expression on his face evened itself Lumley.

"I will inform you what your punishment will be in Hall this morning," was all the old school-master said. "For the present you are to remain in this room."

And the Head stepped out into the corridor with Kildare. Lumley grinned and sat down.

"My hat! He's in rather a wax, isn't he? I suppose it means another whacking!"

"It will mean that you will be expelled, you cad!" flashed Tom Merry. "And a jolly good job, too!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Lumley—"

"Bosh!" grinned the millionaire's son. "I tell you the Head can't expel me. My pater has landed me here for three years; signed agreement, which is in the hands of

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 135.

NEXT THURSDAY: "HERRIES' 1ST PRIZE."

Another Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

our solicitors, and all the rest of it. The Head can rage as much as he likes, but he can't fire me out!"

Tom Merry & Co. stared at the millionaire's son in amazement. Then the hero of the Shell flared up.

"Of all the rotten cads—"

"Rank outsider!"

Arthur Augustus was gasping.

"Bai Jove, there isn't a word to decscribe the boundah!" he breathed.

"Weally, Mewwy, aftah this I must uttaly wefuse to play footah with the cad! I wefuse to play in front of him, if he becomes the best goalkeepah in St. Jim's!"

"Same here!" ground out Digby.

Lumley looked up at that.

"Oh, rats! It's everyone for himself, you asses!"

"You are a cad, Lumley!"

"Am I, Merry?" scowled the millionaire's son. "Well, you'll have a cad in the junior eleven before long, and don't you forget it. If there's any trouble about my getting a place, I'll make it jolly hot for you. I nearly landed you even over the fire alarm last night—"

Lumley stopped speaking.

Tom Merry was standing over him with clenched hands.

"If you were worth it, I would give you the hiding of your life," he said; "something a lot worse than Blake gave you!"

"Yaas, wathah," gasped Arthur Augustus; "onlay he isn't worth it, deah boy. I wipose we leave the cad, as I considah it a maffah of dig, with me not to remain lough in the boundah's company than neccas."

"Yes," growled Jack Blake; "come on!"

And the seven left the study in amazed disgust.

## CHAPTER 10.

### Lumley is Punished.

"SILENCE!"

The Head uttered the word, more from force of habit than for any real necessity. There was little enough noise of any sort in Hall that morning.

The news that Lumley had given the false alarm the previous night had spread through St. Jim's in a wonderful way, and the juniors were waiting in expectation for the Head's verdict.

It was rather a solemn occasion, not unlike the occasion when Lumley-Lumley had been publicly thrashed for throwing the stone at Gordon Gay's bicycle.

But this time the general opinion was that Lumley would only remain so long in St. Jim's as was necessary to pack his boxes.

No one could have considered the Head over severe if he had expelled his new pupil.

But Dr. Holmes looked very worried.

"What ever is to be done with the lad, Railton?" he said, a trace of despair in his voice. "He—he is laughing, as if the whole thing were a joke!"

"So it is—to him."

"It is painful to think of what influence a boy like that may exert on the younger lads," went on the Head.

"Railton, would you advise my taking legal advice over the agreement I signed?"

The House-master shook his head gloomily.

"I am afraid that would be of little use, sir. It is regrettable the agreement was ever signed."

"It is, Railton—it is!"

And the Head sighed.

That agreement Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley had bluffed the kindly, unworldly old doctor into signing often preyed upon Dr. Holmes's peace of mind. Mr. Railton was a much better business man, and rather blamed the Head for signing it, in his heart; but Mr. Railton was also a logical man.

The agreement was signed. It was no good regretting it.

Lumley was a fixture at St. Jim's for three years, and the best would have to be made of it.

The House-master was looking sternly towards the millionaire's son.

"I suppose you will thrash him again, doctor?" he said.

"I suppose so."

The juniors of St. Jim's never knew how much their Head hated these public thrashings, but in the case of Lumley-Lumley there really was nothing for it.

Dr. Holmes put up his hand again.

"Lumley, step forward!"

The millionaire's son winked at Arthur Augustus, and received a frigid stare in return. The swell of St. Jim's was bewildered at the want of respect Lumley had shown to the Head.

But the Head was not thinking about disrespect.

"Lumley, have you thought over what might have been a result from your reckless trick last night?" he said quietly. "Has it occurred to you that life might have been lost in the panic?"

"There was no telling from Jerrold Lumley's face whether he had thought of this. In all probability he had not.

"Have you anything to say—any request to express, Lumley, or explanation to give?"

The millionaire's son did not answer. His teeth were gritted, although his face was a little pale.

Then he came forward, and received the second public thrashing since his arrival.

It was severe, very severe indeed, but the junior did not utter a cry. If his trick had been a reckless one, he had not whined when the punishment was forthcoming—as Mellish would have done, for instance.

Anyway, Jerrold Lumley could face things with a stiff upper lip.

Arthur Augustus watched with horror.

"Bai Jove, what nerve the boundah has, deah boys!"

"Oh, he's got pluck enough!"

"Yaas, wathah; onlay isn't it the w'ong sort of pluck, Blakay?"

"Yes; you're right there," muttered Jack Blake. "Anyone can grit his teeth and hold his tongue when he's going through pain if he wants to. I wish it were over!"

"So do I, bai Jove!"

A public thrashing was not a pleasant spectacle, but it was not a long one. Lumley was released before very long, his face a good deal white and his eyes sparkling.

He walked to his seat behind Tom Merry, and sat down. To all outward appearance he was unshamed and unruffled.

"You haven't forgotten what I said about the footer, Merry?" he whispered coolly. "I mean to get a place in the junior eleven."

"Woally, Lumley—"

"Let me know as soon as you've picked your team against Highcliffe this afternoon, Merry."

Tom Merry turned and faced the millionaire's son.

"I picked the team just now," he said.

"Who is in goal?"

"Wynn, of course!"

Lumley-Lumley's face flushed, and he leaned forward a little.

"Then you haven't picked me?"

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know that you've done anything on the footer field yet to justify your displacing any of the regular eleven," he said. "When you have done that—"

"What bosh!"

"Look here, Lumley—"

"Oh, don't try that old game!" growled the millionaire's son. "I suppose you'd get ratty if I offered you a five-pound note for a place in the team!"

Tom Merry sprang to his feet.

There were times when the hero of the Shell could scarcely prevent himself landing out at Jerrold Lumley. Still, he could not do that very well in Hall.

"You rotten cad, Lumley!"

"Oh, rats!" snapped the other junior. "Ten pounds—"

"Are you asking for the best hiding of your life?" breathed Tom Merry.

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, very well, then! We leave it as it was, and look out for trouble. I'm going to play goal for the junior eleven, whatever happens."

And he turned away from the disgrusted juniors.

Tom Merry was breathing hard; then the Head dismissed them from Hall. The same warlike expression was on the Shell junior's face.

Jack Blake slipped his arm through his.

"Don't take any notice of the cad, Merry!" the Fourth-Former growled. "He doesn't know any better."

"Then it's time he was taught."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! But don't you considah it would be a waste of time to try and teach the outsidah? He really isn't worth the twouble, deah boy!"

"That's so, Merry."

"Let's ignore the uttah wotah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I foah one must wotah to address myself to him in futtah. Bai Jove, there is Figgins & Co.!"

Tom Merry started.

He had forgotten all about the wrecked study in the excitement of the other matter. He remembered now.

So did Manners. He was thinking of his ruined enlargements.

The amateur photographer of St. Jim's was rushing forward.

## CHAPTER 11.

## Figgins &amp; Co's Indignation.

"HALLO, you asses!"

Figgins sang out his greeting in a cheery manner. Tom Merry & Co. came up without answering.

Figgins stared at them.

"My hat! What's up with you, Manners?"

"By Jove, he looks hungry!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "It must be this September weather. Come and have a snack of something, Manners. I feel rather faint myself."

"Rats!"

"My hat, Manners—"

"Look here, Figgins," began Tom Merry quietly, "study wrecking is all right if—if it isn't done caddishly, but some of you New House chaps don't seem to know where to stop."

Figgins stared at his rival in increased amazement. He never remembered Tom Merry greeting him in that manner.

"Has he been out in the sun much?" asked Kerr.

"Oh, he's completely off his rooker!"

Tom Merry suddenly went pink.

"Look here, it was you who wrecked our study yesterday, and—"

"Wrong again, ass!"

"Another mistake, young Merry."

Tom Merry started. His old idea that Figgins could not have been responsible for the awful wreck of their rooms returned to him. The open face of the long-legged, grinning leader of the New House juniors somehow did not fit in with the awful state of the Shell study.

Tom Merry suddenly turned on his heel.

"Do you mind coming with us for a minute, Figgins?"

"Right-ho, kid!"

"You don't want us to go all the way back with you to the asylum, I suppose, asses?" suggested Kerr.

Tom Merry did not reply as he would have done in ordinary circumstances—he did not reply at all, as a matter of fact.

Figgins & Co. followed the seven, grinning.

The hero of the Shell led the way with a firm step, slowing down a little as he neared his study. Then he pulled his key from his pocket.

"I thought I'd lock up, Blakey," he said. "We'll keep the masters out of this."

"Yes, of course."

"Oh, we sha'n't need masters when I find out who ruined my enlargements!" muttered Manners. "I shall want some nice light gloves and a ring—that's all!"

"Enlargements—My only Aunt Jane!"

Figgins gasped. Tom Merry had thrown open the door of his study, and the spectacle which met the New House junior's eyes took his breath away.

The room was just as Tom Merry found it. Not a thing had been put straight. Even the slip of paper which had been nailed to the table was still there, and Figgins's cap was on the chair with the half-sawn logs.

Tom Merry had his hands in his pockets.

"I suppose you recognise the cap, Figgins?"

Figgins picked up the cap blankly. He looked at his own name.

"It's mine," he said. "I—"

"And you might look at that slip of paper," growled Lowther.

"And then glance round the room," breathed Manners.

"At first sight it doesn't look much worse than an ordinary wreck done as a joke, but if you look round closely—"

"My only hat! The place is ruined!" gasped Figgins.

"You'll have to get a whole new set of furniture!" exclaimed Kerr. "What a beastly shame!"

"Who on earth did it?" demanded Figgins. "Look here, Tom Merry, what did you hand me this piece of paper for?"

"We found that nailed to the table."

"What if you did?" exclaimed Figgins. "You surely don't think any of the New House chaps did this?"

Tom Merry went rather red. He looked at the cap. Figgins noticed that, and he flared up.

"My hat! You didn't think we three did it, kid!"

"Well—"

"Did you think we had done it?"

Tom Merry met his rival's eyes steadily enough.

"I didn't know what to think, Figgins. Your cap was under the table, and that slip of paper about the New House being cook-house on the table," he said quietly. "I don't think I really thought it was you, though."

"I should think not—"

"I—I'm sorry, Figg!"

Figg could not help a sensation of resentment at his rival's suspicions, slight as they had been, but he was a generous fellow. He could make allowance for the circumstances.

"No, kid," he said quietly, "we had nothing to do with it."

"I was certain you hadn't, in a way, old chap."

The ten looked at one another blankly. Figgins answered

the question he knew Tom Merry wanted answered without having to ask it.

"And none of our chaps did it," he said. "Perhaps I can prove that if you will tell us about the time this can have happened."

"Within an hour of the dormitory bell, wasn't it, Blake? We were in here after prep."

"Less than an hour, then."

"Good!" exclaimed Figgins. "All our chaps were down on the footer ground punting about from prep. to the dormitory bell, except you three. We went into Rylcombe, and were late in."

Lowther looked more puzzled than ever.

"Then it must have been a School House junior!" Figgins nodded.

"I suppose it must, Monty," he said. "I'll make inquiries when I get back to our side, but they won't be necessary. Monteith had every junior down on the footer-ground, looking for fresh talent. Is there anyone in the School House who is up against you chaps?"

The hero of the Shell started.

As far as he knew, there was only one junior who really bore him ill-will, and that was Jerrold Lumley.

And after what happened over the false alarm, it seemed natural that suspicion should fall on the millionaire's son.

"Lumley has been making threats because I haven't given him a place in the eleven yet," he said thoughtfully.

"Still—"

"Lumley! We saw Lumley and Mellish last night talking to Taggies. They were late in, like ourselves."

"My hat! Then it couldn't have been them!"

Figgins jumped to his feet.

"Wait a minute, my son. What did Lumley say to Tags about being late, Fatty?"

The Falstaff of St. Jim's thought for a moment.

"He said that they had been for a long walk, and hadn't judged the time properly, or something like that."

"And they had been runner?"

"Yes—only they never passed us on the road!" exclaimed Figgins. "Lumley is deep enough for anything. He might have wrecked this room, then gone out over the wall, or somehow, and come in through the gates just to prevent suspicion falling on him."

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, I know it sounds far-fetched, and all that, but Lumley has played deeper games since he came here. I'd follow up the clue, anyway, if I were you, kids."

"Yes, wathah! I consider there is no one else in the School House who would have done this, bai Jove!"

"Yes, there's that as well."

"And Lumley has been threatening you all along, kid!" put in Jack Blake. "My hat! I believe it was the cad!"

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

"I'll find out somehow, and if it were him—"

"Yes," muttered Manners. "if it were—"

"We'll bump him for a week," growled Monty Lowther.

"Chaps, it can't have been anyone else."

Arthur Augustus rammed his monocle in his eye with unusual force.

"Bai Jove, undah the cires. I am inclined to agree with you, deah boys!"

"Then I'm probably wrong for once," grinned Lowther, who would have jested at the stake.

"Weally, Lowthah— Gweat Scott! There goes the bell!"

Tom Merry stepped towards the door.

"This can wait, chaps," he said; "I'm going to thrash it out, but we've got the junior footer to think of first. You've seen the team-sheet, Figg?"

"Yes, kid."

"Waggonette leaves the school gates at two o'clock."

"Good egg! The usual team, I suppose?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Rather! Only we shall have to go all the way to win!" he exclaimed. "If we beat Highcliffe this afternoon, Kileara will do his very best to get us a match for Saturday. If we go under, perhaps he won't trouble so much."

"Oh, we shall win!"

"Don't be too sure, my son."

"Weally, Meww—"

"They're awfully strong, Gussy."

"Wats, deah boy! We shall win them off their feet, as I feel in remarkably good form, and the ground will just suit me."

The junior captain grinned.

"Then perhaps I sha'n't stand you down at the last minute after all, Gussy!" he exclaimed.

"Bai Jove!"

"I have to pick the best eleven, you know."

"Gweat Scott! I should uttaly refuse to be stood down at the last minute!"

"Oh, I don't say I shall do it, but— Scud for it, chaps!"

"Meww—Tom Meww—"

"As hard as you can!"

"Weally, Meww— Gweat Scott! He has gone when I was in the middle of a remark!"

And Arthur Augustus stared with speechless indignation after the retreating forms of the Terrible Three.

## CHAPTER 12.

### The Start for Highcliffe.

THE Highcliffe matches were amongst the red-lettered fixtures of the football season at St. Jim's.

They were home and away engagements, and honours had, up to the present, been fairly even. But this season there were unpleasant rumours in the air as to Highcliffe's strength at half.

That they had three good inside-forwards, Tom Merry & Co. knew of old, and if half what was said about the trio behind them was true; it was likely to be a gruelling afternoon.

Still, the St. Jim's junior eleven could be relied upon to extend the other side every minute of the game.

Tom Merry looked very fit and handsome as he stood by the door of the waggonette, his neat little football-bag in his hand.

"We're all here, then, kids?"

"Rather!"

"Got your goal-keeping gloves, Fatty Wynn? Shouldn't wonder if the ball gets greasy after a bit on account of the rain last night."

"Yes, Fatty's got his gloves all right."

"Rather! And some sandwiches for half-time—not to mention a small pork-pie—"

"Gweat Scott! You aren't going to eat a pork-pie at half time, deah boy?"

"Yes, and some cake. Ten to one I shall have plenty to do in the second half."

"Everybody got his togs, boots, etc.?"

"Rather!"

"And fresh laces? We don't want men off the field looking for new laces."

Tom Merry's eleven grinned.

The hero of the Shell was always like this on the start for an away match. He was a splendid captain, and if he did insist upon an answer to every question, they were sound questions.

The juniors scrambled into the waggonette, their football boots scattering dry mud as they hung by the laces from the bag-handles.

Tom Merry dropped into his place with a sigh of relief.

"New for half an hour's drive!" he exclaimed. "Right away, driver!"

With a rattle, the waggonette drove away from the gates.

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As Tom Merry spun the coin into the air, the professionals laughed sarcastically. Jack Blake and Figgins went a deep red.

Kildare, Darrel, and one or two of the other seniors gave a rousing cheer, looking tremendous fellows in their football clothes.

"Mind you win, Merry."

"Right-ho, Kildare! And mind you do the same."

Kildare laughed. He did not mind what one or two prefects would have described as cheek from a junior, and he liked to see Fourth Form and Shell boys juniors keen on the senior matches.

Arthur Augustus got up and waved elegantly. Lowther promptly sat down in his place.

"Thanks awfully, Gussy. Jolly decent of you—"

"Bai Jove—"

"Yes, I am quite comfortable, thanks," said the humorist of the Shell pleasantly. "Awfully decent of you to give me your place."

Arthur Augustus stared blankly.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Gussy often does things like that," grinned Jack Blake.

"Don't you, kid?"

"Weally, Blako— Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus glanced round. It was rather a close fit for the eleven juniors who were to play. Glyn and Reilly, the reserves, and Macdonald, who was to hold the flag. There was very little room to spare.

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle in his eye, and viewed Lowther through it.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I hope you are quite comfortable, old chap?"

"On the contrary, Lowthah, I must request you to wise, and—"

"Why don't you sit on the floor, Gussy?"

"I urtably wefasso to sit on the floah, Mannahs, and I ordah Lowthah—"

"Get out and walk a bit!"

"Or sit on the step."

"I wefusse to sit on the step. Lowthah, I should wewwet havin' to administah a feahful thwasin' in such an enclosed space as this wotten wagonette, but undah the circs.—"

"What did you say Gussy?" asked Lowther pleasantly.

"You wanted to get under the seat?"

"You waggin' duffah! Lowthah, pway get up instantly!"

"My hat, Gussy!"

Lowther looked at the swell of St. Jim's in well-feigned amazement. There was even a pretended indignant expression in his eyes.

"My hat, Gussy! Fancy wanting to take back the seat you gave me!"

"Wats, you wottah?"

"Rank bad form, taking back something you have given."

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"Rather!"  
 "You utah wottahs!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I wufus to admit that I gawe you my seat, Lowthah."  
 "How did I get it, then?"  
 "Of course you must have given it to him, Gussy," said Manners solemnly. "Wrotched bad form, I call it."  
 "You howwid wuttahs! Bai Jove!"  
 The juniors stared at Arthur Augustus in surprise. His indignation had disappeared in the most startling manner. He was gazing along the road behind the wagonette.

"Bai Jove!"  
 "What's up, Gussy?"  
 "What's the matter now?"  
 "I believe he can see the young lady from the draper's shop at Rykomba," grinned Lowther.  
 Arthur Augustus went pink.  
 "Weally, Montay, pway don't be so widdie! Can't you see who that is comin' along on a bicycle, deah boys?"

Tom Merry & Co. looked back.  
 There was only one cyclist on the road—a junior on a magnificent bicycle, about the best in the college after Arthur Augustus's own machine.  
 "My hat!"  
 "It's Lumley-Lumley!"  
 "Yaas, wathah! And coupin' to see the match, too. I wegar that as wathah astonishin', deah boys."  
 Tom Merry's mouth was set firmly.  
 "If he has come on the off chance of getting a game at the last moment, he'll have a shock."

"Rather!"  
 "He's turning off by the church."  
 "So he is, bai Jove! Pewtaps he is not comin' to see the match, after all, deah boys."  
 Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders. He did not care very much whether the millionaire's son came over to Highcliffe or not.  
 "Never mind about Lumley-Lumley, Gussy," exclaimed Tom Merry. "Behave yourself, and we'll make room for you."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"  
 "Oh, don't apologise! We know you're wrong."  
 "Bai Jove—"  
 "And for goodness' sake don't cackle!" finished Tom Merry. "We'd almost rather you sang than cackled. My hat, chaps, it is going to be a match to remember!"  
 And the junior captain was right.

It was a long time before any of the team forgot the Highcliffe match.

## CHAPTER 13.

### In the Pavilion.

"HEAH we are, deah boys!"  
 Jack Blake whipped out his watch.  
 "My hat, he has brought us along, and no mistake! We've over half an hour to spare."  
 "My aunt, so we have!"

The juniors jumped from the wagonette, to be greeted by old foes wearing the Highcliffe cap. They knew none of the fellows very well, but had met most of them on the football-field at one time or another.

"There's Jackson, their centre-forward."  
 "And Hickman, the goalie."  
 "Look fit, don't they?"  
 Tom Merry nodded. The Highcliffe team certainly did look fit enough.

But Tom Merry was seeking for three unknown faces—the redoubtable half-back line. He thought he had found them in three juniors standing together, perhaps the heaviest players on the side, to judge by breadth of shoulder.

They looked a splendidly built trio of halves.  
 Jackson, a curly-headed junior, with a laughing, open face, came up.

"Hallo, Merry! We've met before, you know."  
 "Rather! How do you do, Jackson?"  
 "You are jolly early," laughed the Highcliffe junior, as the rival captains shook hands. "We can't start until the advertised time, because the ref. won't be here. What do you chaps say to putting your bags in the pavilion, and coming in to have a look at the pitch?"  
 "Rather!"

"But is there time, deah boy?"  
 "It won't take you more than a quarter of an hour to change, so you have twenty minutes to spare. Collar their bars, chaps!"

The Highcliffe team at once took possession of their opponents' bags, and led the way to the pavilion. The St. Jim's juniors followed, chatting pleasantly.

It certainly looked as if they were going to be a fine, sporting game, to judge by the fellows who were to take part in it.

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"There you are," sang out Jackson. "Bundle the things in there, and come along."  
 "Yaas, wathah, deah boy, but—"

"Nice pavilion, kid."  
 Jackson nodded.  
 He was a little proud of the new pavilion, and he rather liked showing it to the rivals.

The bags, with their boots tied to them, were thrown in a heap on the floor, and the juniors were outside again.

Only one of them seemed to be nervous about the time. That was Arthur Augustus. He examined his watch at intervals of about twenty seconds on the way to the playing-pitch.

"Bai Jove, deah boys—"  
 "Oh, don't cackle, Gussy!"  
 "Weally, Figgy— Howevah, to get on with the washin'. Weally, on second thoughts, there isn't any too much time, after all."  
 "Rats!"

"Try third thoughts, Gussy."  
 "Weally, Lowther— We have onlay thwee-quarters of an hour, deah boys, and I am afwaid it will be wathah a wash to get changed in three-quarters of an hour."

Jackson looked round, with a laugh.  
 "My hat, you don't take three-quarters of an hour changing, do you, D'Arcy?"

"Well, pewtaps not quite that, deah boy, but it would nevah do to wisk it. I think I will turn back, Tom Mewwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Weally, I fail to see any cause foah wibald laughtah. Can't it pwayoin on any of you othahs not to wush it?"

"Rats!"  
 "Bai Jove—"  
 "Rabbitts!"  
 "Weally, Mannahs—"  
 "Piffle!"

And Arthur Augustus found himself alone, looking after the retreating juniors.  
 He turned on his heel hastily.

Three-quarters of an hour to change into football things was nothing out of the way for Arthur Augustus. As a matter of fact, he would have liked more that afternoon, because he had two new football shirts in his bag, and he wanted some time to judge which was the better one garment.

On the whole, Arthur Augustus decided to hurry back to the pavilion at once.

He almost ran the last few yards, then brought up dead. He could not find the door.

There was a window in front of him, but no sign of a door.

"Bai Jove, I suppose it is on the othah side!" he mused.  
 "Funnay I novah thought of that. Gweat Scott!"

In passing the window, Arthur Augustus had glanced in. The building, as most football pavilions are, was badly lighted. The window was pretty dirty, for one thing, and for another there was an old net stacked up near by, which helped to keep out the light.

But in spite of that, Arthur Augustus stopped dead.  
 There was someone in the pavilion!

"In the vistahs' compartment, too!" thought Arthur Augustus. "I wondah if it is my minah? I know Wally is eyelin' ovah. Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus peered through the window.  
 It certainly was not D'Arcy minor he saw in the pavilion.

The junior's back was towards him, so Arthur Augustus could not see his face, but the swell of St. Jim's did not think of that at the moment. He was too much occupied in trying to follow the junior's actions.

Whoever he was, he was on his knees, and the pile of football-bags and football-boots were in front of him. Arthur Augustus caught the glint of a large pocket-knife.

"Bai Jove!"

It almost looked as if the junior were hacking the boots to pieces, or else cutting them free from the bags themselves. Then the swell of St. Jim's received a shock. The junior with the knife had turned round.

It was Jerrold Lumley!  
 "Gweat Scott!"

Almost at the same instant the millionaire's son caught sight of Arthur Augustus, and started to his feet. Then he darted into the bath-room.

But Arthur Augustus had seen enough. He dashed round the pavilion, in search of the door.

"Gweat Scott, I believe the wottah was about to wemove our boots!" he gasped. "I shall administrah a fealful thwashin' if that were the case. Open the doah—open the doah instantly, you wottah!"

There was no answer.  
 Arthur Augustus rattled the door violently, and it gave a little. It was not locked, although fastened in some way.

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"Open the doah! I ordah you to open the doah instantly, you boundah—"

There was a dead silence in the pavilion.

Arthur Augustus put his shoulder to the door and exerted all his strength. It was giving way slowly.

"Bai Jove, I believe there's a wotchen chair, with the back undah the knob!" panted the Fourth-Former. "I shall thrash Lumley whatever happens now."

Arthur Augustus gave another vigorous push. The door was opening slowly, then suddenly it opened altogether.

Arthur Augustus floundered in. He had been right, a chair had been placed with its back under the knob. The swell of the School House knew that the moment he found himself within the pavilion, for he fell over it.

"You howwid wuffian! I must request you to put your hands up."

Again there was no answer.

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet, then he dashed for the little bath-room. There was no one there.

"Bai Jove, he must be in the othah section! Gweat Scott!"

Lumley was not in the home side of the pavilion either. As far as Arthur Augustus could see, the millionaire's son was nowhere in the building.

"Bai Jove, the window!"

The window Arthur Augustus had looked through was now open. That explained Lumley's disappearance at once.

"Bai Jove, I never thought of the window!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I wondah if I can see the boundah anywhere?"

But there was little chance of his doing that. A screen of timber commenced almost at the back of the pavilion, and there was a great deal of undergrowth.

It was pretty certain Jerrold Lumley had made for there as quickly as possible.

The swell of St. Jim's glanced at his watch.

"Bai Jove, there's no time to follow the outsiders now!" he mused. "However, I shall amindstah a faithful twa-hin' when we get back to the coll. What a lucky thing I turned up in time to prevent the wotthah collahin' our boots!"

Arthur Augustus had made up his mind Lumley's plan had been to take the boots away bodily.

If that had not been the case the Fourth-Former might have examined them, and if he had done so, he would have received his second great shock that afternoon. As it was, he commenced to change his things, pleased that he had discovered Jerrold Lumley before any damage was done.

A few minutes later Tom Merry and the others came in, still talking to Jackson & Co.

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

He wanted to tell Tom Merry and Jack Blake about the Lumley affair, but it would be out of the question to do so with the Highcliffe juniors about.

It would never do to let the rival school see the skeleton in the St. Jim's cupboard.

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy—"

"No time to cackle, now, Gussy."

"Yass, but I have something to tell you—"

"Tell it to Jack Blake instead."

"No, Figgins!" said Jack Blake. "He's dying to hear."

"Rats!" said Figgins hastily. "Leave it until after the match; you may have forgotten then, kid."

Arthur Augustus stared loftily.

"Pwey don't be widic, Figgay! However, I will leave it until after the match."

And the St. Jim's junior eleven commenced to dress.

## CHAPTER 14.

### The Highcliffe Match.

THE St. Jim's forwards took their places punctually on time.

Tom Merry had lost the toss, so he had the ball at his foot. The referee glanced along the line of eager St. Jim's juniors.

"Ready?"

The referee asked his question crisply. It was answered with still greater crispness.

"Yes, we're ready—"

"Phit!"

The whistle had sounded, and Tom Merry had kicked off, the sun in his face.

A neat pass to Jack Blake started the game, and a forward wing kick set Figgins going. Figgins was the fast man in the eleven, his long legs having paved the way for many a brilliant goal for the St. Jim's locker.

But this time Figgins had a foeman worthy of his steel.

If all the three Highcliffe halves were like the man marking him, rumour had not overrated the case in her usual manner.

Figgins was driven into touch in a masterly manner. The throw in was taken, and the ball came to Arthur Augustus, who was playing inside-left. The swell of St. Jim's took the ball as he did everything elegantly, and in a polished manner.

He tricked the centre-half and got away.

"Heah you are, deah boy!"

The ball was transferred along the ground to Tom Merry, and the Shell junior was unmarked.

He was some way out, certainly; but Tom Merry had a trick of serving up a simple-looking dropping shot that had found many a net.

He did his best that afternoon.

He sent in a crushing left foot shot, then gave vent to an exclamation.

Something was wrong.

His boot seemed to crumple up at the impact.

"My only Aunt Jane!"

The ball had gone yards over the bar, and Tom Merry was staring down at his left boot.

The sole was nearly severed from the upper.

Jack Blake stared at his rival from the Shell in astonishment.

"My hat! Kick the ground, kid!"

"N-no, I don't think so."

"You've made a hash of your boot, anyway."

Tom Merry looked dismayed as he knelt down, to effect the only possible repair of tying the laces round the sole.

The hero of the Shell relied more upon placing and neat footwork than kick and rush play, and a damaged boot was a big handicap to him.

"My hat, this is rotten!"

"Yes, hard cheese, old chap. Here comes the ball!"

Jack Blake jumped in the air and headed, Arthur Augustus dashed up and breasted the ball past the ball again.

"Come on, deah boys! Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus stumbled, then slipped down.

The ball was lost.

Jack Blake came up panting.

"You are an ass, Gussy! My only Aunt Jane!"

Arthur Augustus's boot had given out in very much the same manner as Tom Merry's had. The chief of Study No. 6 viewed the wreck in disgust.

"My hat, fancy playing in rotten old boots like that, Gussy!"

"Wats, deah boy; they are new!"

"Then they must have been beastly cheap, anyway."

"Wabbie, they were made specially for me, and they cost a guinea! I always have my football boots made especially for me—"

"Humph!"

Jack Blake was not impressed.

A forward line with two inside men playing in damaged boots was not a pleasant prospect when halves like the Highcliffe trio had to be faced.

"Back up, chaps! On the ball!"

But Jackson had the ball now, and he was going in great style. He rounded Kerr in finely, then dashed for Lowther.

Lowther charged him off the ball, then missed his kick in the most feeble manner.

Jack Blake could scarcely believe his eyes.

He had never seen Monty Lowther "boss" in quite so hopeless a fashion.

"Follow him up, Monty—"

"On the ball!"

But Lowther had stopped. He had done his best to run after Jackson, and his best had been nothing wonderful.

The last few yards he had hopped, something flapping from his foot in the most curious manner.

Then Lowther stopped and went down on his knees.

"Awfully sorry, Merry, but my boot has given out."

Tom Merry stared in amazement.

That three boots could have given out in less than a quarter of an hour was amazing. Jack Blake gritted his teeth.

"You chaps ought to be boiled in oil," he growled. "Why don't you look to your togs? My—my hat!"

And Jack Blake looked down at his own boots.

One of them was losing its shape.

"My—my aunt!"

The sole was half off.

Jackson was almost through. He sent in a fine, low shot, but Fatty Wynn was ready.

He dived down and saved at full length, then he got up, ready to repel the corner he had had to give.

The ball went behind, and Fatty Wynn dropped to his knees. He was also attending to his boot.

Tom Merry was binding his sole on with a piece of string D'Arcy minor had given him from the touch-line, and his face was very blank.

D'Arcy minor looked disgusted.

"Fine set of old fogeys you are, and no mistake!"

"Wally, Wally—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!" exclaimed the chief of the Fog Form of St. Jim's in still deeper disgust. "Anyone would have expected you to see that your boots were all right. Letting St. Jim's down, I call it."

"There must be somethin' the matter with the ground—"

"Something the matter with the old fogey way you kids have of taking a ball, more likely. Shall I slip along and get a ball of string, Tom Merry?"

"Yes—"

"Decently thick, Wally."

"Right-ho!"

And D'Arcy minor flashed away.

Before he was back again, Jackson had broken through the St. Jim's halves once more, and this time he had beaten Fatty Wynn.

Whether the St. Jim's custodian would have failed if he had not been handicapped by a boot that was almost in half, was another matter.

The Welsh junior from the New House was not the type of fellow to urge an excuse for a failure, but the fact remained that he slipped at the critical moment.

Tom Merry glanced round in dismay.

The brief spell of waiting seemed to have come to a great relief to his players. Half the St. Jim's side were now on their knees attending to their boots.

Jackson's surprise was almost equal to Tom Merry's dismay.

"My hat, your chaps aren't having much luck with their bootlaces to-day, Merry!"

"N-no; but it isn't the laces—"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus had suddenly given vent to an exclamation of horror. Forgetful of the fact that the referee was waiting for the juniors to take their places for the kick-off, he dashed across the ground.

"My onlay toppah, Tom Mewey—"

"Get back to your place, ass!"

"Wally, Gweat Scott, it is Lumley's doin'!"

Tom Merry started.

"What are you cackling about now, Gussy?"

"Our boots, Lumley. I saw the uthah wottah doin' something with a knife to our football boots—"

Arthur Augustus gasped. Tom Merry's hand had fallen on his shoulder heavily.

"What do you mean, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus lowered his voice just as the Shell junior had done. A thing like this must be kept from Highcliffe ears.

"I saw Lumley cuttin' our boots. I was lookin' through the window, onlay the wottah escaped. I nevah thought he was cuttin' the stitches, bai Jove, as I was undah the impression he meant to take the boots away altogether—"

Tom Merry did not wait for the finish of the sentence.

He looked down at his boot which had not yet given out.

The stitches were beginning to break. He examined them closely.

It had been cut, but so cleverly that a casual glance would never have revealed the fact. Lumley's cunning had stood him in good stead again.

Then a curious glint came into Tom Merry's eyes.

"Get back to your place, Gussy," he whispered. "Not a word. We'll stick it out whatever it shows."

And stick it out the juniors did, playing with every ounce of dash they could muster up.

The score was one nil against them, and they had that to wipe off; but it was fearfully uphill work.

The handicap of damaged boots was a far greater one than would have been expected.

Things would go all right for quite a long time, then when there was a good chance for a shot, something would happen to the boot which ought to have done the work.

Both Jack Blake and Tom Merry missed simple chances, and their chagrin was tremendous. They were having the better of the game, and they could not get the ball into the net.

It was exasperating in the extreme.

Still, they kept at it, never showing the slightest sign of slackening off, although more than one of the forwards could scarcely say he had a boot to his foot.

But time was getting on, and the interval whistle sounded with the score still one-nil against them, and on the play it ought to have been the other way. It was simply that the St. Jim's juniors could not shoot.

The moment the whistle sounded, Tom Merry faced round.

"Off the field!" he said briefly.

"Yaas, wathah. I wondah if I could buy a new pair of boots anywhere, deah boys?"

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"My hat! That's an idea!"

"Yaas, wathah. Wally!"

"Hallo, old son!" grinned D'Arcy minor, a large packet under his arm. "I've got the string and three pairs of boots. I hadn't got the money to pay for them, so I left my bicycle."

"But Jove!"

"Good lad, Wally!"

"Ripping!"

D'Arcy minor grinned.

"Oh, it takes a Third-Former to think of things," he chuckled. "I bought every blessed footer boot the chap had in his shop."

"Good!"

The juniors hurried to the pavilion, and repairs were made as rapidly as possible.

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Arthur Augustus had the new boots, as they had suffered most from Lumley's attentions, and the others did the best they could with the string. The best was not very good.

The St. Jim's side took the field again, very greatly handicapped in spite of their care.

But they were very grim looking.

Tom Merry could not see Lumley, but he knew the millionaire's son well enough to guess he would be watching the game from somewhere. And he would be longing to see goals flashed past Fatty Wynn.

But Fatty Wynn was looking more grim than any of them just then.

He had had half a dozen sandwiches, and some other provisions, and felt wonderfully fit. His sturdy Welsh fist and unerring foot was ready for anything.

And he was severely tried, too.

Shot after shot Jackson and his fellow forwards rammed in, but they were all treated in the same manner. Not one of them was allowed to find the net.

Then a change came over the game.

Damaged boots or not, the St. Jim's front line was surging up the field.

Tom Merry hated playing in new boots which were a size too large for him; but he did not think of that now. There was the goal deficit to be wiped off.

But as time wore on, it looked as if it were never to be wiped off that match, and the St. Jim's spectators were beginning to despair.

It was nerve-racking to see the old school struggling for the equalising goal when they were having three-quarters of the play.

"We ought to be three up!" growled D'Arcy minor.

"Four, you mean?" muttered Curly Gibson. "Oh, do play up, St. Jim's!"

"Shoot! Sho-ot!"

And Tom Merry did shoot.

He sent in a raking shot at close quarters which very few goal-keepers would have saved. The Highcliffe custodian did not even see the ball, and the scores were equal once again.

But the scoring stopped there.

Both sets of forwards struggled for the winning goal, with the St. Jim's quintet always more in the picture, but the ball could not be got into the net, and the game came to an end with the score one each.

That St. Jim's ought to have won fairly comfortably was the opinion of all, even Jackson, the rival captain.

"No luck, Merry," he said pleasantly. "If you chaps hadn't had trouble with your boots, you'd have had us in the cart."

"Rats!" grinned Tom Merry; but he knew there was a good deal in what the Highcliffe junior said.

If it had not been for the cut stitches, he felt certain Jack Blake and himself would have scored at least one each, and there was always that good Fatty Wynn left by to be thought of. Fatty Wynn was disconsolate.

"I'm awfully sorry, Tom Merry! I—I can't think why I was such an ass—"

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"I can, old chap," he said; and he looked down at Fatty Wynn's damaged boot.

Figgins nodded as he came panting up.

"Yes, it was the boot that did it, Fatty. My hat, what an epidemic of burst boots, Merry."

"Half the team."

"And mine were new this season, too."

Tom Merry drew his team on one side, and nodded to Arthur Augustus.

"Tell them what you saw, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus glanced round. They were all well out of the hearing of the Highcliffe fellows.

"Wight-ho, deah boys!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's, and he told all there was to tell.

The juniors listened in blank amazement.

Jack Blake could scarcely believe the evidence of his own ears.

"My hat, you must have made a mistake, Gussy!"

"Wads, deah boy!"

"But—but a St. Jim's chap—letting his own side down——"

"Yans, wathah! I agreee that it sounds impos." "

Jack Blake recovered himself at last, and faced Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

"Why didn't you tell us before the match, as?"

"Weally, Blake, if you wemembah I tried to tell Tom Mewwy, but I couldn't shout it out," said the swell of St. Jim's in surprise. "There are some mattahs bettah not talked about before outsiders, deah boy."

Jack Blake nodded. He understood.

"Of all the howling cads!" he muttered.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth. As far as it was possible to be certain over such a game as football, Lumley had prevented them winning. Tom Merry had made up his mind on that point.

The only other point was—what was to be done about it?

Figgins glanced at the Shell junior.

"Of course, Kildare mustn't hear," he said.

"No, of course not!"

"And Lumley must be dropped on pretty heavily!" flashed Jack Blake. "This sort of thing must be nipped in the bud."

The whole eleven looked as grim as the captain now.

Not only must the thing be nipped in the bud, but it was going to be.

School House and New House alike had had just about as much of Jerrold Lumley's tricks as they cared for. It was their turn now.

## CHAPTER 15.

### Lumley's Misfortunes.

"**B**AI JOVE! What are you stoppin' foah, dwivah?"

Arthur Augustus asked his question in surprise.

It was almost the first any of the junior eleven had spoken since leaving Highcliffe, but there was good cause for the remark.

The wagonette-driver had pulled his horses up almost on their haunches, and had jammed on his brakes.

"Cyclist in the middle of the road, sir. Hi, want all the road, young gent?"

Tom Merry started to his feet.

"My hat, it's Lumley, chaps!"

"Gweat Scott, so it is, deah boys! How wemerkably funny!"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

But the coincidence was not so strange, after all. Jerrold Lumley had remained at Highcliffe until the match came to an end, watching the progress as well as he could from the corner of timber by the pavilion.

The moment the whistle had sounded for the last time, he had started for his ride back to the college, and then his hat misfortune had befallen.

He had managed to pick up a thorn in his driving wheel, which resulted in one of those aggravating punctures which necessitate the tyre being blown up about every quarter of a mile.

Jerrold Lumley was blowing his tyre up now.

He turned to look at the advancing wagonette, and prepared to mount his machine again. Then Tom Merry sprang from the wagonette.

"We stop here a-bit, driver. Hallo, Lumley!"

The millionaire's son looked surprised. There was a curious note in the Shell junior's voice.

He had laid a hand on Lumley's bicycle, too.

Jerrold Lumley tried to wrench it free.

"What do you want, Merry?"

"You—you cad!"

Arthur Augustus came rushing up, then, and for the first time the millionaire's son looked uncomfortable. Up to that point he had been under the impression his plot had escaped detection.

It was difficult to believe that when looking at Arthur Augustus now.

"You wank outsiders, Lumley!"

Jack Blake had also come rushing up now, and the rest of the team were not far behind. Harry Noble, Kangaroo of the School House, was breathing hard.

Sport meant a great deal to the young Cornstalk, and anything like an unsporting action ruffled him more than most things did.

"Let's duck the cad in the horse-pond!"

"Yes, that's it."

"If you touch me, Noble, I'll half slay you!" scowled Lumley-Lumley. "There are eleven to one, but——"

"Oh, you can drop that sort of bluff!" exclaimed Figgins.

Any one of us here could give you a pretty sound hiding, you know that."

"Perhaps you could, but I'm ready to take any of you on."

Arthur Augustus found his monocle with a jerky sort of movement.

"That is quite poss., you wotah; but, as it happens, none of us would touch you in the ordinary manah. We are goin' to wemonswate with you foah your uttahn wotten twick of cutting our foath boots."

"Yes," said Tom Merry; "only remonstrate isn't quite the word."

Jerrold Lumley looked from one to the other.

He was completely surrounded, and he knew there was no chance of breaking through. Still, his face did not show much fear.

"Pluck was the best thing about Lumley-Lumley."

"I'd advise you not to touch me, Merry," was all he said.

The hero of the Shell was looking round.

He remembered the occasion Gordon Gay of the Grammar School had painted Lumley's face, and had sent him back to St. Jim's to be the laughing-stock of the whole school for the rest of the day. That had touched the millionaire's son in his weak spot.

He hated being laughed at.

The thing was to do something now that would make his entry into St. Jim's a matter to be remembered.

Kangaroo was thinking much the same, and a laugh suddenly broke out from the young Australian.

"What about the scarecrow, chaps?" he exclaimed. "Let's make the rotten cad change clothes with it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They all turned to look at the scarecrow in question, Lumley included.

It was in the centre of a field belonging to a small farmer, a great friend of the juniors of St. Jim's. If he had been there, a dozen apples each from his trees would have been theirs, let alone the rags from the ancient scarecrow.

Lumley began to struggle.

"If you dare to touch my things, Merry——"

"Yank him along, chaps——"

"Come on, you rotter!" panted Fatty Wynn.

Fatty Wynn was very much to the fore in the affair. He had not forgotten that first goal of the Highcliffe match—the shot he knew in his own heart he could have saved if his boot had not given out.

The Welsh junior was pink with indignation.

Lumley began to fight, after the manner of the New York street lads, where he had picked up a good many things besides a curious method of self-defence. He scratched Tom Merry down the face and he lugged Figgins on the shins, but the rival juniors did not trouble about this.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They saw now how to appeal to Jerrold Lumley—to wound his vanity.

Once they could get those old scarecrow things on him accounts would be a good deal squared as far as the Highcliffe match was concerned.

Lumley fought wildly.

"I'll make you sorry for this, Tom Merry——"

"Yank him along!"

"You see what I'll do to you——"

Arthur Augustus viewed the millionaire's son with surprise.

"Bai Jove, what an uttah cad, deah boys!" he exclaimed.

"He's fighting like a wretched degahuffin'. Do you know, Mewwy, I weally believe it was this yotah who wacked your study."

"I'll wreck it worse than that—I'll wreck all your rooms——"

"Bai Jove!"

In his anger Jerrold Lumley had admitted he was responsible for the wrecked study, but Tom Merry took no notice of the admission.

Perhaps Manners was a little rougher in helping to drag the Outsider through the hedge as he thought of his photographs, but it was the Highcliffe affair which claimed all their attention. It was up against them to punish an action like that, if only for the good of the public morals of St. Jim's.

And after all, the punishment was not too severe for the crime, but, as it happened, it was severer than they thought. Jerrold Lumley viewed the old clothes he was going to be forced to wear with the wildest rage.

He kicked and scratched—Kerr even said it bit his arm—but it was all to no purpose. They were too many against him, and if there had only been one the result would have been the same. Tom Merry & Co. had seldom been more determined.

Before he knew what was happening, the millionaire's son was being forced into the old clothes.

"No need to make him change, chaps," panted Tom Merry.

"Just shove the other things over his own."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 135.

"He'll take them off, dear boy."  
 "Not if we tie his hands behind him—"  
 "Good bye!"  
 "Look out for the sweep's feet—"  
 "Wight-ho, dear boy!"

In spite of his struggles, Jerrold Lumley was forced into the clothes, and, remembering his ruined enlargements again, Managers picked up the ancient and battered tall hat.

"We'll tie this on someone."  
 "Rather—"  
 "There's some rope in the wagonette."  
 Digby flashed away towards the wagonette and nodded to the grinning driver. The junior eleven had often used the same vehicle for their away matches, and so the driver was used to similar stoppages in the endless dispute with the Grammar School.

He looked upon the present proceedings as just an ordinary trick, and chuckled loudly.

Jerrold Lumley was fully dressed now, and in a moment later his hands were fastened behind him. There was still a length of rope left.

Herries racked his brain for some use for it.  
 "Let's tie it round the boat's waist and make him trot with the wagonette, chaps."

"We'll get someone to untie his hands if we leave him to go to the colt, by himself."

"Bai Jove, I never thought of that!" admitted Arthur Augustus. "We'll, Lumley, I wogot there is no oitah resource fash us but to dwan you along at the cart's tail like Titus Oates and oitah wogonised wottahs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "My only Aunt Jane!"

The juniors yelled with laughter. There could be no doubt about it—the millionaire's son formed a striking spectacle as they dragged him to the rear of the wagonette and fastened the rope to the step.

Tom Merry jumped into the vehicle.  
 "All in, chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Bai Jove—"  
 "Go slowly, driver!" flashed Jack Blake. "Get on with the washing!"

And the horses were whipped up to a gentle trot.

## CHAPTER 16.

### The Return to St. Jim's.

"SURE, an' here they come, me bhoy!"  
 Reilly, the Fourth-Former from Belfast, gave vent to the exclamation in a shout.

Hancock, Korrush, and a host of other juniors rushed to the gates. The wagonette brizeng back the St. Jim's junior eleven was coming up the hill.

"Shure, an' they've won all right, me bhoy—"

"Trust St. Jim's! Cheer-ho, Tom Merry!"

There was no answer to Korrush's yell. The wagonette came along as silently as if it had been empty.

Not a single member of the eleven could be seen.  
 "They're lost—"

"How did you get on, Tom Merry?"  
 Again there was no answer.

"Figgins, you ass, how did you get on— My only Aunt Jane!"

The juniors gasped.  
 "My hat!"

An extraordinary-looking object caught their eyes—a figure that might have been anyone, clothed in clothes that looked as if they had come from the ark.

"Banshees and spalpeens, he's being dragged by a rope—"  
 "It's Gordon Gay—"  
 "No, Frank Monk—"  
 "Or Jackson of Highcliffe!"

Everyone spoke at once. They were all dashing for the wagonette, when suddenly the leading juniors swerved.

Tom Merry had cut the rope which had fastened the curious figure to the wagonette, and the curious figure was dashing for the college across the quadrangle.

"My only Aunt Jane—"  
 "Who is it?"

"On the ball, chaps!"

Jerrold Lumley heard the cries, and gritted his teeth. He knew he was being followed, and he knew the juniors were bent on catching him, and that was the very thing Lumley dreaded. He was not in the mood to be stopped.

If Kildare, the college captain, had barred his path it was more than likely the junior who had started life in the streets of New York would have flung himself upon him.

But Kildare did not try to stop Jerrold Lumley.  
 He saw him from his study window and looked away. There

are some things at St. Jim's the captain makes a habit of not seeing.

"Come on, chaps—"  
 "I believe it is Jackson—"

The juniors were thudding across the quadrangle, gaining on the millionaire's son with every stride. But Lumley spurred as he neared the School House, and dashed up the steps.

Someone was coming through the doorway at the top, but Lumley-Lumley did not see him. He dashed on, and the next thing he heard was a yell as he thudded into something which shook him all over.

It was Taggles, the school porter.

Taggles sat down, and gave vent to yell after yell.

Lumley went on, without even glancing at the fallen man. Jerrold Lumley was thinking of no one but himself at that moment.

"My only aunt's hat! It's Lumley-Lumley—"  
 "So it is!"

The juniors increased their pace, but it was too late now. By a fraction of a foot the millionaire's son escaped Reilly's outstretched hand, then darted at right angles, and disappeared into the nearest study, his own.

It was a clever movement, for the junior from Belfast went thudding in, and before he could turn a loud click rang out.

Jerrold Lumley had succeeded in locking himself in.

All sorts of inducements were offered in order to get Lumley to open his door, but each suggestion was treated with the same stony silence. After a time the juniors had to give it up, and retired, chuckling, in search of Tom Merry & Co. for details of the game.

The minutes slipped by. Half an hour had gone before Lumley came from his room, and when he did so he had got rid of his extra clothing.

He also appeared to have recovered from his rage, for his face was quite calm again but for a curious light in his sharp, keen eyes.

He walked quickly, making towards the seniors' studies. He stopped before one of the centre rooms, and knocked at the door.

It was Kildare he was about to visit.  
 "Come in!"

The college captain called out cheerily, and Lumley accepted the invitation.

"Are you busy, Kildare?" he asked, in his usual cool manner. "I won't keep you long."

"Fire ahead, then!" answered the brawny senior, looking curiously at the millionaire's son. "Anything the matter?"

"No—it's about the football."

Kildare nodded curtly. The affair of the false alarm was still fresh in his memory.

"Been over to see the match, then?"  
 "Yes. It was a draw, but we ought to have won. I have you a match for the junior eleven on Saturday, Kildare."

"The captain shook his head.  
 "No, I can't fix one up anywhere—"

"I could get a team to play Merry's eleven if you like," said Lumley slowly. "I'm not in the second junior eleven, you know, and—I should like a chance of showing them what I can do. I could scrape together quite a decent little team, who would give the juniors a good game, even if we lost."

"How do you mean—nick an eleven from the other juniors here?"

"Well, I could do that, of course," said Jerrold Lumley, a flicker of a smile playing about his mouth, "but there wouldn't be such excitement going. It wouldn't be much better than a scratch practice game."

"No, there is that."  
 "I was thinking of a team I could get in town. I know heaps of fellows who play."

Kildare looked doubtful.

"There are the expenses to be thought of, Lumley—"  
 "My team would come as my guests," exclaimed the junior hastily. "I ought to have explained that."

"It is very generous of you, youngster, and I'm glad to see you mean to take an interest in football—"

"Can I consider it settled, then?"

"Yes, I should think so. I am sure young Merry will be only too delighted— By Jove, the youngster has gone!"

There was something about the way in which Jerrold Lumley had conducted that brief interview which very much suggested another interview between his father and the Head, when the Head had been induced to sign the three-years agreement.

There was the same brevity about it, without one unnecessary word being said, and the same method of carrying the point. Jerrold Lumley had visited the captain's study for a certain clearly defined end, and he had achieved it.

The Lumleys, father and son, had a knack of getting their own way.

## CHAPTER 17.

## Lumley is Missing.

THE cad ought to be made to pay for the damage."

Lowther spoke in disgust.

He, Tom Merry, and Manners were looking at their dismantled study once again, and the spectacle brought their by no means unnatural indignation to the front again.

They had spent all their spare time the previous evening, after the Highcliffe match, endeavouring to set the room to rights, and now in the morning sunlight it looked very little better.

Tom Merry had his hands in his pockets.

"Still, I'm not agreeing to Lumley paying for anything. We don't want anything bought with his beastly money."

"But that's what he ought to do."

"I propose we give the cad the hiding of his life, anyway," growled Manners. "I'm going to give him the offer of standing up to me in the gym, with the gloves."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, that's the idea, only I'm going to do the thrashing."

"I am, you mean," said Lowther.

"Rats!"

"Look at my books!"

"Look at my photographs!"

"Look at my carpet!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He's done more damage to my things."

"Rats!"

The Terrible Three stared at one another, and all commenced to move towards the door. Manners was leading.

The other two pressed close at his heels.

There was still half an hour before call-over, so there was plenty of time to interview Jerrold Lumley.

Lowther flashed past Manners and rapped at Lumley's study door, flinging it open at the same moment.

Only Mellish was in the room.

"Where's Lumley-Lumley, Mellish-Mellish?" demanded Lowther.

"Yes, where's the cad, Mellish?"

The cad of the Fourth shook his head.

"I don't know: I—I think he has gone for a walk."

"Rats! He couldn't go for a walk at this time, and it's raining cats and dogs."

"Well, I don't know where he is; I've been looking all over the place for him."

"Humph!"

"Let's go down to the gym, chaps."

Manners and Lowther nodded, and hurried from the room. Tom Merry was leading the way this time, and he rounded the corner at a run. A gasp rang out.

"By Jove, youngster—"

"My hat, I'm sorry, Kildare!"

"Yes, so am I," growled the captain. "The next time you come round a corner, look about, to see if I am there. Oh, but I wanted to see you, Merry."

Tom Merry grinned. He was still a little breathless from a collision with the brawny captain of St. Jim's.

"Yes, Kildare?"

"I have managed to get you a game after all for Saturday."

"Good big!"

"Rather!"

"Is it a hot match, Kildare?"

The captain laughed.

"I don't know," he said. "Lumley-Lumley, of the Fourth, is going to bring down an eleven to play you. He says he expects they will give you a good game, but—hallo, what's the matter?"

The blank look of Tom Merry's face could scarcely have escaped notice. And Manners and Lowther were equally blank.

"What's the matter, Merry?"

"—I—Kildare, we can't play Lumley's eleven."

"Can't play them? Why?"

"The chap's an utter outsider, I mean."

Kildare looked puzzled.

"Yes, I suppose he is," he exclaimed. "Only a little cad would have given the false big alarm. Still, a footballer has to be taken on his merits as a footballer. I could not very well refuse his certainly generous offer to bring down an eleven at his own expense in order to fill a vacant date, Merry."

Tom Merry bit his lip.

Kildare could not be told about the cut boots. To go to the captain about a thing like that was outside the junior moral code at St. Jim's. Besides, Lumley had been paid out for the trick.

But to have to meet his eleven at the great winter game! It went very much against the grain with Tom Merry & Co., and they knew it would be the same with Jack Blake and Figgins.

"The match will be played on our ground, to start at two-thirty," said Kildare. "I would come and watch you, only we have an away match on."

And Kildare walked away.

The Terrible Three faced one another, and rammed their hands in their pockets.

"What's to be done, chaps?"

"Don't let's play the cad."

"N-no!"

It would go very much against the grain having to play Lumley after the Highcliffe affair, but it was doubtful whether it would not go still more against the grain to have to refuse to play him.

"Let's give his rotten team a jolly good whacking," exclaimed Manners.

"Fancy his going to Kildare!"

"Of all the beastly cheek! He never even asked us if we wanted a match."

"Oh, the outsider wants bumping!" growled Tom Merry. "If we do play him, we'll play the game of our lives."

"Rather!"

"But that's not until Saturday," said the hero of the Shell. "I propose we find Lumley now, and I'll give him a good thrashing then, we'll see if he has anything to say about a factor match."

"Yes, only I'll do the thrashing, Tom."

"Rats!"

Tom Merry was already on his way to the gym.

But another surprise awaited them in the finely-appointed building. Lumley was not there, although he had been seen.

"Shure, an' he came in for his bag an hour ago!" grinned Reilly.

"His bag?"

"Yes. He had an old portmanteau here. I suppose he wanted something out of it."

"Which way did he go, Pat?" asked Tom Merry.

The junior from Belfast shook his head.

"Blest if I know, me bhoy, an' blest if I care a great deal."

Manners became desperate.

"How's time going, Monty?"

Lowther glanced at his watch.

"It'll be call-over in a minute, kids," he said, lowering his voice. "I suppose the cad is trying to keep out of our way."

"Looks as if he's going to succeed, too," growled Manners.

Tom Merry looked rather puzzled.

Jerrold Lumley did not, as a rule, trouble to keep out of anyone's way. Still, he was not to be seen anywhere in the quadrangle that morning.

The hero of the Shell shrugged his shoulders.

"Anyway, we'd better get near Hall," he said shortly.

"It's only putting off the thrashing until the morning break—There goes the bell!"

The three hurried on, gaining Hall a few minutes after the Study No. 6 chums. Jack Blake nodded cheerily.

"Just in time, kids!" he whispered. "They haven't got to your names yet. Hallo!"

Mr. Latham was calling out the names from the call-over book. As long as a junior was there to answer to his own name, the little Fourth Form-master overlooked a hurried entry.

But he had stopped now at one of the names.

"Lumley-Lumley!"

There was no answer.

Mr. Latham raised his eyes from his book, keeping his finger on his place.

"Mellish, isn't Lumley-Lumley here?"

"N-no, sir," ventured the cad of the Fourth; and Mr. Latham put a cross against the name.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake exchanged glances.

Jerrold Lumley would be in more trouble over this. It would probably mean detention for Saturday afternoon, and so the match would not come off. The juniors expected to see the millionaire's son come rushing into Hall every moment.

But their expectations were not realised.

Jerrold Lumley did not put in an appearance in Hall, nor was he in the class-room when Jack Blake & Co. made their way there.

And Mellish was as surprised as they were.

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Another Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

# ANSWERS

NEXT THURSDAY: "HERRIES' 1ST PRIZE."

CHAPTER 18.

No News!

**K**ILDARE—er—when did you see Lumley-Lumley last?"

Kildare was walking along the corridor when Mr. Railton stopped him; and the captain thought for a moment or two.

"I think it was last night, sir."

"You did not see him before call-over this morning?"

"No, I believe Merry, of the Sixth, was looking for him. Mellish, when did you see Lumley last?"

"Not—not since yesterday," said the ead of the Fourth.

"Humph!"

Mr. Railton looked very ill at ease.

Neither Mr. Lambton nor myself can find any trace of the lad," he exclaimed. "I have heard some talk of his paying a visit to the gymnasium and taking away an old parchment with him. I shall report the matter to the Head at once. Will you come with me, Kildare?"

"Certainly, sir."

They hurried along, taking no notice of the curious glances directed towards them by the juniors of the Fourth. That Lumley was not in the college was pretty general knowledge in all the School House by now.

Dr. Holmes glanced up as the House-master and the captain came into the room. Mr. Railton did not beat about the bush.

"An extraordinary thing has happened, doctor," he exclaimed. "Lumley-Lumley, of the Fourth, is missing."

"Missing? Dear me! How do you mean missing, Mr. Railton?"

"He is nowhere in the college, as far as we can tell, sir."

The Head got up.

"But he was here last night."

"Yes, sir, and he was here this morning," put in Kildare. "Really says he went into the gymnasium for an old bag, but since then he has not been seen."

"I believe he has run away from the school," said Mr. Railton shortly. "Both Houses have been searched. I have asked the mason to try and discover whether any of his things have been taken away. Ah, here she is!"

Mrs. Mimms came into the room, looking startled.

"Yes, Master Lumley Lumley has taken a lot of things, sir," she said to Mr. Railton. "His second suit has gone, and his night attire."

"Then he has run away."

Kildare rapped out the words, although he looked very blank.

"I can't make it out at all," he added anxiously. "The youngster came to me with the offer to bring a team down to St. Jim's, to play the junior eleven, and seemed very keen about the match."

"Perhaps that was merely bluff, Kildare."

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, Lumley was scarcely like other juniors of his age," said Mr. Railton drily. "His life in the streets of New York has given him a sharpened ear beyond his years. Shall I ring up the railway station and try to trace him, doctor?"

"Yes, please do so, by all means. This is very strange. Will you come back here, Mr. Railton?"

"Certainly, sir."

The House-master was not long away. He came back looking very stern.

"A boy answering to Lumley's description and wearing the St. Jim's cap took a ticket to London, and left by the eight-thirty train," he said briefly. "I am afraid there is no doubt about it, Lumley has run away from school, doctor."

"Hess my soul! Will you pass me those telegraph forms, Kildare?"

"You are going to wire to his father, sir?" asked Mr. Railton.

"No, his father is in America."

"Ah, yes, of course! To the solicitors who—who hold the agreement you signed, then?"

"Yes," answered the Head harshly. That agreement was rather a sore point with him. "Bird & Beaky was the name. I shall simply say, 'Fear Lumley has run away.' They will understand from that."

"If they know their client's son they will," returned the House-master drily. "I wonder if he will come back!"

The Head looked up, and for an instant the two masters' eyes met.

Ever since Lumley's introduction to St. Jim's, there had been little but trouble with him. He had already undergone two public thrashings, and there had been countless minor troubles.

Both the House-master and the Head heartily hoped Lumley would find his way to America and join his extraordinary father and remain there.

Of course, the best would have to be done to trace him, THE GREAT LIBRARY.—No. 185.

but the two worthy gentlemen could not help hoping the best would not mean a return of the millionaire's son to the old school.

Dr. Holmes glanced at his watch. "I will have the telegram despatched at once," he exclaimed. "Of course, the boy may have gone direct to the solicitors, in which case he will have already arrived."

"Yes, sir; we shall have an answer within the half-hour I expect," said Mr. Railton. "I did not know the lad had taken his public thrashing as much to heart."

The Head looked puzzled again.

As far as he was a judge of juniors—and these were few-better judges of the average junior—Lumley had taken his punishment with a coolness and indifference which had been simply amazing. That he had made up his mind to run away on that account was almost beyond the old school-master's comprehension.

"He is an extraordinary lad," he sighed—"most extraordinary."

"And his father is an extraordinary man, and his life has been extraordinary, too."

"That is very true, Railton, very true indeed. I trust nothing will befall the reckless boy."

Mr. Railton smiled rather grimly.

It was his private opinion that things were likely to befall the people who got in Lumley's way rather than befall him. The House-master would have trusted Lumley to get across the world with the minimum of trouble to himself and the maximum to other people.

The School House was in great excitement for the rest of the morning. The news that Lumley had run away was greeted with almost unmix'd feelings.

Really, of the Fourth, summed up the opinion of the whole House with, perhaps, the one exception of Mellish, who had benefited a good deal from sharing a study with a junior to whom money was no object.

"Shure, aw' it's jolly fine hearin', me bhoyas," chuckled the junior from Belfast. "A fellow who can cheat at cards, and play the tricks that cad can, wasn't wanted at St. Jim's!"

"Heah, heah, deah boys!"

And Jack Blake nodded.

The chief of Study No. 6 was not given to deep thinking, still, his head was screwed on the right way. He had long since realized that Jerrold Lumley was not the best of influences in the Fourth.

"Jolly good riddance to the rotter!" he exclaimed. "Hope we don't see the ead again. I haven't forgotten that Highcliffe affair."

"No," said Fatty Wynn, "neither have I."

Very little except that strange affair was talked about for the remainder of the morning, and a keen glance was kept on Taggles for a sign of a telegram.

But no telegram made its appearance at St. Jim's, for it was not until midday that the Head received an answer to his wire.

Even then it was in the form of an express letter.

The Head hurried with it to Mr. Railton.

"Read that," he said, in a dismayed tone of voice.

"What extraordinary people these solicitors must be!"

The House-master read the few lines aloud.

"Dear Sir,—We have to thank you for your telegram. In reply, our knowledge of Master Lumley justifies our assuring you there is nothing to be alarmed at. No doubt Master Lumley has absented himself from St. James' Collegiate School for some purpose of his own, and will return when that purpose is achieved. Please telegraph to us when he does return. Your faithfully,

(Signed) BIRD & BEAKY."

Mr. Railton read through the letter twice, then threw it down on the table.

"I really don't know which is the most extraordinary, sir," he exclaimed. "Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley, the son, or his solicitors. Bird & Beaky appear to look upon a boy running away from school as something of an everyday occurrence."

"Isn't—ain't it astounding?"

"It is, sir, and the latter completely ties our hands," said Mr. Railton. "I believe it is meant to do that. It is a direct hint that we need not trouble to trace the absurd boy."

"That is how I read it, Railton—"

"I think it is the only way to read it, sir," said the House-master.

Dr. Holmes looked rather bewildered. He was not a business man, and he did not pretend to be one.

"Railton, what would you advise my doing?" he asked.

"I admit this is beyond me."

The House-master thought for a moment or two, then picked up another telegraph form. He scribbled in silence for a moment or two,



"I should send that to Bird & Beaky, sir," he said at last.

The Head glanced at the few lines.

"I leave the matter entirely in your hands."

That was all Mr. Railton had written.

"If you sent that with your name at the bottom, I think we shall have done all that is expected of us," Mr. Railton said. "Messrs. Bird & Beaky evidently know their client's name, and so will know that he will come to little harm in any civilised part of the world."

"That is so, but—"

"And they are in a far better position to know what the boy's father would wish done in the case," went on the House-master. "Personally, I believe Mr. Lascelles Lumley would be rather pleased at the chance of his son learning more of the world by wandering about in London alone. I admit I do not understand a good many of Mr. Lumley's points of view."

"No, Railton, neither do I," sighed the kindly old school-master. "Thank you very much. I will send this telegram at once, and I sincerely trust the lad will come to no harm." Mr. Railton smiled a little as he left the study.

## CHAPTER 19.

### Jerrold Lumley Reappears.

NOT another word arrived from Messrs. Bird & Beaky that Thursday.

On the Friday the Head sent another telegram, asking if Jerrold had been traced, and received a reply late in the afternoon that he had not, and the doctor made up his mind then that he had seen the last of his pupil.

The juniors of the School House had already made up their minds on that point, and when Saturday came round without a single clue to the missing junior's whereabouts, Jack Blake & Co. were ready to forget the affair.

"I wathah fancyy there can be no doubt in the matlah, wath boys," said Arthur Augustus. "The wotlah has wathohed foah good."

Jack Blake grinned.

"You once retired from St. Jim's, didn't you, Gasey?"

"Weslly, Blake—"

"Have you forgotten, then?"

"Weslly, Blake, I twest you are not twynin' to draw a wathid between my tempowawly wotiahment and this wewy wathid wannin' away on the part of a wank outsidah?"

"Hs, hs, hs!"

"Weslly, I fail to see any weasoh foah wihald laughtah, wath."

"Hs, there's a slight difference, perhaps!"

"A slight difference! Pwaw don't be so woidic, Digbay. Wath cases are uttaly different. When I considared it a wath of dig wath me that I should wotiah tempowawly wath St. Jim's, there was no othah wewesoh foah me—"

"Wing off, an!"

"I wufuse to wing off—"

"Dry up, then!"

"I wufuse to dry up—"

"Here comes the Heah, an!" breathed Jack Blake. Arthur Augustus started. He did not wish to discuss his "retirement" from the school in the presence of the Head, and Dr. Holmes was making directly towards them.

The Head stopped, as was his custom when he met any of the juniors talking in the quadrangle.

"A splendid day for football, boys."

"Vvas, wathah, doctah—"

"We haven't a match to-day, though, sir."

"So I hear from Kildare, Biske. Still, I suppose you will do a practice game?"

"Hather, sir."

"Blake is just going to see Figgins to try and arrange a doctor," explained Digby.

"An, yes; a very good idea."

The Head was about to walk on, when something arrested his attention. A cab was coming up the road towards the college.

He looked as though it were going to stop at the school. The doctor watched with interest.

The cab had stopped now, and someone was getting out.

"Holmes adjusted his spectacles.

"Can you see who that is, Blake?"

Jack Blake stared.

"It—it looks like a junior, sir, and he's carrying a bag."

"A junior! But—"

"Bai Jove—"

"My hat—"

"It's Lumley, sir!" Herries gasped.

Dr. Holmes also gasped. About the last thing he had

expected to see in the world was Lumley driving up to the school alone in a cab.

The old school-master was staggered.

"It cannot be Lumley! It is impossible!"

"But it is, sir, and he's coming here."

There could be no doubt about it. Jerrold Lumley had got out of the cab, and Jerrold Lumley was walking towards the little group.

He seemed just as cool as ever.

He raised his cap before he was within speaking distance, then the Head received one of the shocks of his life.

Lumley had greeted him with a smile.

"I have got back all right, sir. I caught the express down."

To say that the Head looked blank was understating the case to a tremendous degree. He looked as Jack Blake had never seen him look before.

And Jack Blake himself looked pretty blank.

Jerrold Lumley came up, still smiling.

"It was awfully hot in town, sir, but I managed to get my team all right. They are at the Rylcombs Arms, and will drive up here ready changed. We ought to have a decent game, Blake."

Jack Blake did not answer. There was something about Lumley's manner which made him grit his teeth.

Then Dr. Holmes recovered himself.

"Lumley, what is the meaning of this? How dared you leave the college? Explain instantly!"

The questions came in a stern though quiet voice. The Head had not thundered the words as Mr. Selby might have done, but they were none the less impressive.

Lumley's answer made Arthur Augustus's breath come and go in gasps.

"How dared I leave St. Jim's, sir? I—I had permission."

"Lumley!"

"Yes, sir, I had, Kildare gave me permission."

Jerrold Lumley's explanation was so preposterous in Jack Blake's mind that he could scarcely believe he had heard right. Kildare could never have given permission for a junior to absent himself from the school and spend two days in London alone. It was unthinkable.

Lumley was facing the Head with an expression of surprised innocence on his face now, which made Dr. Holmes feel still less certain of himself.

"I do not understand you, Lumley!" he exclaimed. "Your explanation is ridiculous. Kildare is as surprised at your disappearance as myself—"

"But—but— There is Kildare, sir. May I call him?"

The Head called to the captain himself. Kildare came up, starting as he caught sight of Lumley.

Lumley was trying to look a little hurt, and was succeeding.

The Head ran his hand across his forehead.

"Kildare, Lumley tells me that—that you gave him permission to go to London."

"Good gracious, sir."

"You did nothing of the sort, of course?"

"Of course not, doctor!" exclaimed the captain, looking as blank as the Head had looked. "It would hardly come within my scope to give a junior permission to go to town."

"Kildare, you did give me permission."

"I gave into your room and asked you if I might bring an eleven down from town to play the St. Jim's juniors, and you said I might," exclaimed Lumley quickly. "Please, sir, you aren't going to doubt my word?"

Jack Blake & Co. knew the millionaire's son really better than either the Head or Kildare, and they saw through his pose. Lumley was acting, and that he was acting well only made the chief of Study No. 6 long the more to knock him down.

"The howling cad!" he thought.

Lumley's manner was almost aggressive as he faced the captain.

"You can't have forgotten, Kildare!" he exclaimed. "It was on Wednesday evening—"

"I remember your coming to my study, certainly—"

"And you remember my asking you if I might bring a team down from London?"

"Of course, but—"

"There, doctor!" exclaimed Lumley quickly. "Kildare remembers all right!"

The Head still looked bewildered, Kildare was rather grim.

He dropped his hand on Jerrold Lumley's shoulder.

"Wait a minute, my lad. You said nothing to me about going to town—"

"I—I— Kildare, how could I bring a team down if I didn't go for it? I am certain I told you the train I meant to catch—"

"That is untrue."

"No, really, Kildare! If I didn't, it wasn't for any reason. I thought you understood, and I left St. Jim's in the ordinary way. Doctor, you don't think I took French leave!"

There was almost a note of horror in Jerrold Lumley's voice. His pose was perfect.

The Head did not know quite how to answer.

Even Kildare began to look doubtful.

"But the whole story is absurd!" he exclaimed. "I had no authority to give you permission to leave St. Jim's—"

"But you did give me leave."

"Nonsense!"

"No, Kildare, you did. I—I— Please, sir, oughtn't I have done?"

That last question was a masterpiece of cunning. It showed Jerrold Lumley up in his cleverest and worst light at the same moment.

Jack Blake's face was a study.

He saw that the millionaire's son was winning his game of bluff.

The Head's sternness was relenting.

"Do you mean to assure me that you were not aware that Kildare could not give you permission to leave the school, Lumley?" he demanded.

"I—I thought it was all right. I don't think I thought about it at all, sir; Kildare can give us permission to extend our leave."

That was true. It was another masterpiece of bluff.

The Head was completely deceived.

There appears to have been a remarkable misunderstanding," he exclaimed. "This had certainly appears to be under the impression you gave him permission to go to London, Kildare."

"It is preposterous—"

"Of course, he has not been at St. James's for long. You were not at school before, were you, Lumley?"

"No, sir; I had a tutor."

"Ah! There certainly appears to have been a mistake—one it is very difficult to believe can have been made. Lumley, you must understand in future that no one could give you permission to absent yourself from the college except myself."

"Yes, sir; I wish I had come to you direct."

"I—I— Come with me and explain to Mr. Railton, Kildare," concluded the Head. "This is very strange."

And the doctor and the captain walked away.

Jerrold Lumley looked after them, then the moment they had turned the corner by the gymnasium he burst into a roar of laughter.

"Great Scott! What a tenderfoot the Head is! Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums from Study No. 5 were staring at him in amazement.

Novor for a moment had any of them doubted Lumley was acting, and they were all conscious of a tremendous impulse to rush at him and bump him until the dinner-gong went.

Arthur Augustus was the first to speak.

"You uttah cad, Lumley!"

"Oh, rats!"

"So you are!" cried Jack Blake. "Chaps like you aren't fit for any school better than a reformatory, you rank outsider!"

"Bosh! It's everyone for himself!" grinned the millionaire's son. "I jolly well knew the Head would never give me permission to go to town, so there was nothing for it but to bluff Kildare—"

"You—you howlin' wottah!"

"I suppose you're jealous, because you couldn't have done it as well, D'Arroy!"

On the contrary, I feel all in a flutter because there is such a wretched cad in St. Jim's, Lumley!"

"He ought to be turned out of the place."

"Cad!"

Jack Blake & Co. looked at the millionaire's son in utter contempt.

That a St. Jim's junior could stand up and tell the falsehoods to St. Jim's Head that Lumley had done, staggered them. That a St. Jim's junior could want to do such a thing disgusted them perhaps more than Jerrold Lumley had ever done before.

And to force Kildare into the ridiculous position he had was something else that it was difficult to think of quietly.

Jack Blake would have loved to have had the gloves on with the millionaire's son at that moment.

And all the time Jerrold Lumley was grinning delightedly.

"Oh, you are a funny crew here!" he exclaimed. "You are a set of kids compared with me."

"Baf Jove! We aren't a set of cads, anyway!"

"No; a set of fools, more like," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Has Tom Merry made up his mind to give me a place in the junior eleven yet?"

"The next library, No. 135.

"NEXT

THURSDAY:

"HERRIES' 1<sup>ST</sup> PRIZE."

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"HERRIES' 1<sup>ST</sup> PRIZE."

"I don't think Tom Merry will ever do that—now!"

"Oh, won't he, Digby; you wait until after this afternoon's match!"

Arthur Augustus glared.

"Baf Jove, there won't be a match this afternoon!" he gasped. "I foah one shall uttally refuse to meet such a cad as you on the football-field!"

"Oh, rats!"

"I uttally refuse to play—"

"Bosh!" said Jerrold Lumley. "I'm just going to talk to the Head about my team, and you'll find it difficult to refuse to play me after that. Ha, ha, ha!"

The situation was one that made Jack Blake have to exercise restraint to prevent himself knocking Lumley down.

The millionaire's son was going to talk to the Head—the Head would very likely request them to play, afterwards.

Jack Blake saw that.

"And I'm going to apologise to the Head for my—mistake," added Lumley, with a grin. "That will help things on. If it weren't for sneaking, wouldn't you chaps just love to split to Kildare?"

That was true.

But for the moral code at St. Jim's, Jack Blake & Co. would have felt it a great pleasure to prevent the doctor being bluffed any more.

But that, of course, was out of the question.

Lumley had picked up his bag again.

"Two-thirty, sharp," he said. "And may the better team win."

Then he walked off, chuckling loudly.

## CHAPTER 20.

### Lumley's Eleven.

"THE utter cad!"

"The rank outsider!"

Tom Merry and Figgins of the New House spoke together. They, too, had no doubt about Lumley's story, directly it became known, and repaired to Study No. 5.

Arthur Augustus still looked rather flustered.

And the athletic pundah has the fearful cheek to think we will play his wotten team this afternoon, deah boys—"

"Y-yes!" exclaimed Jack Blake.

"D-does he?" muttered Tom Merry.

"L-like his cheek!" said Figgins.

And the three juniors looked at one another.

"Of course, we uttally refuse to meet the boundshs—"

"Y-yes, I suppose so!" agreed Tom Merry. "Still—"

"Still—"

"It would be rather great to play them and wipe them off the earth," commented Figgins carelessly. "I mean—"

"But it is imposs., deah boy! The uttah cad has made it imposs.—"

"He wouldn't like being whacked!"

"And, of course, his side are a scratch lot—I should think we could whack them pretty comfortably."

"And that would be an awful blow to Lumley-Lumley," said Manners absently. "About the worse possible blow."

Arthur Augustus started.

"Baf Jove, I nevah thought of that, deah boys! But we have to think of our personal dig."

"I suppose if we don't play them," said Herries, "Lumley will say we were afraid."

Arthur Augustus started again.

"Great Scott! He wouldn't have the fearful cheek to say that—"

"But, of course, if we played them and whacked them horribly, we show him what we think of him and his rotten team."

"Baf Jove! I nevah thought of that, eithah, deah boys!"

"Still—"

Tom Merry grinned a little.

"Well, I put it to the meeting. Do we play the cads, or tell them to go and eat coka?"

"Play them—"

"Whack them off the earth—"

"Massacre them."

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"It is weally wottah a difficult point to decide, deah boys," he exclaimed, "as it is entirely a mattah of personal dig. I considah the mattah had botah be discussed carefully—"

"It's already decided, kid!"

"Weally, Figgay—"

"Hours ago, and we play them if it snows sharks!"

"Weally, Mannahs, you forget that I haven't voted yet—"

"Vote away, then!"

"I must refuse to wash the mattah—"

"Two-thirty sharp, kids!" said Jack Blake tersely.

"Rather!"

"Bai Jove, deah boys! Mewwy, Blake, Figgay! The wottahs have gone!"

And Arthur Augustus stared at the closed door in blank amazement.

"I must huwvy aftah them?" he gasped. "They have wushed this mattah in the most weckless mannah pios, and I feah they have not considahed the personal dig. of the affair. Bai Jove! Have you seen Tom Mewwy, Weilly, deah boy?"

"Rather!"

"Good bizny—"

"Yes," grinned the junior from Belfast. "Saw him last weck down on the river. Of course, he may have left by now, but you can run down an' see for yourself, me bhoy!"

And Reilly wandered on.

Arthur Augustus replaced his monocle and stared after him, then he asked Hancock for Jack Blake.

Hancock had not seen the chief of Study No. 6, neither had anyone else the swell of St. Jim's met. Then the gong sounded, and Arthur Augustus had to hurry into the dining-room.

As it happened, the Fourth-Former was told to sit at the big table, so could only see the leading members of the junior eleven in the distance. Then, when the meal came to an end, and Arthur Augustus jumped to his feet, he found that Tom Merry & Co. had already left the room.

"Bai Jove! How we-markably wotten! Perhaps they are in the gym."

But the juniors were not in the gymnasium, nor were they in any of the studies Arthur Augustus visited, and the worst of it was time was getting on.

It was after two o'clock already, and the match, if it were played, started at the half-hour. Arthur Augustus became desperate.

"Fwench, I ask you, as one gentleman to another have you seen Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes, kid; he's down on the footer-ground."

"Thanks, awfully, deah boy!"

And the swell of St. Jim's flasted away.

He ran the whole distance to the football-ground, raced through the gateway, and dashed for the pavilion.

"Mewwy—Mewwy, deah, boy—"

"Cheer-oh, kid!" sang out the voice of the hero of the week.

"Turned up at last, then?"

"Yaas, wathah! As a wathah of fact, I have been lookin' deah you wottahs all ovah the place. Pway where are you, deah boy?"

"In the pavilion, ass!"

"Bai Jove! I have thoroughly considahed the mattah, Tom Mewwy!" added Arthur Augustus, as he hurried round the door.

"You don't say so, kid?"

"Yaas, I do, deah boy, and I have come to the conclusion that it will be quite in keepin' with our dig. if we play Lumley's Eleven— Great Scott!"

Arthur Augustus had found Tom Merry & Co. at last. They were in football things.

"You haven't much time to scramble into your togs, Figgay!"

"Weilly, Figgay, I twust I am not in the habit of scwumbin' into my clothes! I am wathah surprisid, Tom Mewwy, that you should have changed already, when you didn't know what my deah, on the mattah—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Pway don't intewwupt, deah boy—"

"Speech! Speech!"

"Weally, Mann—"

"So say all of us!"

"You uttah waggin' wottahs!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I refuse to discuss the mattah with you further—I wulose to see you to address me, even! Bai Jove, theah is Lumley, deah boys!"

Tom Merry and Jack Blake forgot about Arthur Augustus, and peered from the pavilion window.

There was Lumley all right, certainly, but there was no sign of the eleven.

"Bai Jove! Suppose it is a wotten wag, deah boys?"

"Rat!"

"He is already changed, Gussy."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's. "I suppose it is all wright. We will give the wottahs a most feahful thwashin', deah boys."

And the other ten of the junior-team of St. Jim's nodded, looking very determined.

They were all ready to take the field now, and hurried out. Lumley-Lumley had a ball under his arm, and goal-keeping gloves on his hands. Figgins, the speedy winger, noticed this.

"Just let me get a decent pot at him, that's all!" he grinned.

"Heah, heah, deah Foy! Bai Jove! Where are the othah wottahs!"

No one knew. They were not going to ask Lumley; but, as it happened, there was no need to.

A waggonette was seen approaching the ground at that moment.

Lumley's Eleven had arrived all right.

The juniors watched with interest. They had all wondered a good deal what sort of a team the millionaire's son had been able to scrape together.

And the next instant they knew.

"My—my only Aunt Jane!"

Ten fully-grown men were stepping from the waggonette.

A set of finely-built, strapping fellows coming from all the counties of the North Country, to judge by their looks.

"Great Scott!"

"I—I— Phew!"

Tom Merry & Co. were gasping.

Jack Blake started forward.

"There must be some mistake! These fellows ought to be on the town ground!"

"No, there isn't a mistake, Blake," said a cool voice from behind; "it's quite all right. This is my eleven."

And the chief of Study No. 6 wheeled round to find himself facing Jerrold Lumley.

"But—"

"They are professionals," said Jerrold Lumley calmly. "You chaps think yourselves so wonderful on the footer-field that I didn't think it worth while bringing down an amateur eleven. As I said, we shall give you a good game," he added, with a sneer.

Tom Merry was looking at the professionals in amazement. It was easy enough to see the type of men they were—the class of professional not quite good enough to be signed on by any team, and so forced to be content with sking out a precarious living by keeping near the headquarters of small clubs and playing occasionally for so much a match.

They had no reputations to gain or lose by playing a junior eleven from a public school, and Lumley had paid them well.

That was obvious from the amount of respect they showed him.

"Is this the team, sir?" asked one burly Yorkshireman, of about twenty-two. "They oughtn't be difficult to beat."

"Yes, this is the team, Carter."

Carter clucked loudly. Then Tom Merry whipped out a coin.

"Are you captain?" he said tensely to Lumley.

"Yes."

And the coin spun in the air.

The professionals laughed as they watched, and Jack Blake and Figgins went a deep red. They admired Tom Merry immensely for the way he had taken the surprise, but they knew what he must be feeling with all those hulking professionals surrounding him.

"Heads!"

It was tails, so Tom Merry pointed to the school end of the ground.

"We'll have the sun at our backs," he said curtly.

"Places, chaps!"

And the juniors took their places, scarcely believing that this could be anything but a dream.

## CHAPTER 21.

### The Match.

CARTER kicked off the moment the referee's whistle sounded.

Lumley had brought the referee, but he seemed a capable man. He pulled one of the professionals up for hands the moment the game was started.

"Bai Jove, the weel, is a sport, deah boys!"

Tom Merry nodded as he raced up the field. It was something to know they were to have a good referee.

Louther took the free kick, and placed well in front of goal, but the visiting backs were too heavy.

Jack Blake dashed at the ball, but he was swept aside. Then the professionals came down the field.

Their football was nothing much to look at, judging from a professional standpoint, but their weight was tremendous compared with the juniors. The forwards seemed to plough their way through the halves in the easiest manner possible.

Then Carter had the ball.

He was in front of goal. It looked a certain score, but Kerr was waiting. The Scots junior flung himself at the man.

There was a thud, and Kerr was a good deal shaken, but he had spoilt the shot. It came into Fatty Wynn's hands feebly.

"Well played, Kerr!"

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"Oh, well-booted, Fatty Wynn!"

The ball was up in mid-field again, and Tom Merry had it. "Show them what we can do, Blakey!" he panted, and he passed at exactly the right moment.

The centre-half had dashed for him, which meant that Jack Blake was unmarked.

The chief of Study No. 6 was away in a flash.

"Wing it, old chap!"

It was Tom Merry's voice again, and Jack Blake knew which way he meant.

The ball was kicked cleverly out along the line a dozen feet in front of Figgins.

Then the New House junior showed what he could do in the way of speed. He seemed to be walking away from the heavy professional half.

He centred beautifully, and Tom Merry flung himself at the ball. The backs were closing upon him—the left back was almost up with him, and that particular back had been in trouble with more than one board of club directors for unfair tactics.

He went down on one knee, and swept Tom Merry's legs from under him.

He may have been attempting to play the ball—the points are always difficult to decide—but even if he were he had no right to attempt to play it in that manner. Tom Merry went to grass with a thud.

Then something else happened, which made the spectators forget the trip.

A junior was dashing up, with a monode flying at the end of a long black cord.

"Pway back out of the way, deah boy! Bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus, the elegant swell of St. Jim's, took the ball right off the professional's toe.

The other back flung himself at him, and many juniors would have lost the chance. But when it came to the point, Arthur Augustus's nerves were as steady as steel.

With absolute coolness, he tricked the back, dashed past a half who had come to the rescue, and before anyone quite grasped his intention, had very gently tapped the ball past Jerrold Lumley.

The school were one up!

The cheers which rang out round the ground were deafening. D'Arcy minor, Curly Gibson, and Jameson flung their caps in the air, and never troubled to look for them again. Hancock and Reilly were shouting themselves hoarse.

The junior eleven had drawn first blood against the professionals!

"My hat! Aren't our chaps playing!"

Tom Merry panted the words as there was a momentary pause in the game while the referee reminded Lumley-Lumley that he was not playing an altogether clean game. The millionaire's son scowled sullenly; but refrained from making any insolent retort.

There was scarcely a player on the St. Jim's side who was not playing his best game of the season. Harry Noble was splendid at half, bundling into the big forwards with a total disregard for jars and bruises, and Herries and Digby, the wing halves, kept to their men like sharks.

There could be no doubt about it, the St. Jim's juniors were playing a splendid game, and still held the lead. They were holding it when half-time came.

Quite a short interval was taken, then the duel started again.

And as Tom Merry had expected, the professionals were improving every moment.

Their weight forward was almost too much for Herries, Kangaroo, and Digby, tackle desperately as that trio did. It was not their fault that Carter & Co. rushed them off their feet at times through sheer weight.

And the pressure in front of Fatty Wynn was becoming acute. It seemed impossible that the goal could escape again, but it did for quite a long time.

Then at last the equalising goal came, for Carter had rammed one past Fatty Wynn which no goalkeeper playing could have saved.

"Beaten him at last!" he grinned as he passed Tom Merry in the field. "By Jove, he plays a fine game."

Tom Merry nodded.

He rather liked the burly Carter. He was rough, and perhaps not quite fair in his methods at times, but his faults were all summed up in wild heavy charging. If he took a player in the back instead of the side, he merely grinned, just as he grinned if any of the juniors accidentally caught his chin.

There was nothing very much to grumble at in Carter. But one or two of the others were black sheep, indeed.

They were lazy, skulking sort of players, who, rather than follow a man up, would bring him down, and saunter back for the free kick as though it were all a matter of course.

But this game was going very much in the professionals' favour now, and Tom Merry became desperate.

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"Would you play a third-back, Gussy?"

"No, wathah not; play six forwards, deah boy, and wun up a score."

Arthur Augustus never admitted a game was lost until he found himself in the pavilion.

But time was wearing on, and every minute Tom Merry expected to see the referee point to the centre of the field while Fatty Wynn fished the ball out of the net.

But, somehow, that never quite happened.

There were countless narrow shaves, so narrow that the forwards gasped, and all the time felt thrilled to be playing in front of such a set of defenders.

Kerr, Lowther, and Fatty Wynn were simply magnificent. They kicked anywhere, they charged down, and they gave corners galore; but corners did not count. Every one that was taken was fruitless.

Fatty Wynn was judging the flight of the ball like a county cricketer on the boundary line.

Time after time he dashed from the goal, his sturdy fist meeting the ball with a thud that put heart into the juniors in front of him. A good goal-keeper means everything to a pair of backs.

"Take the man, and leave the ball to me!"

That was all Fatty Wynn had to say through the game.

But it seemed impossible that the goal could remain intact. The St. Jim's forwards were doing scarcely anything. The opposing halves, often the best part of a fourth rate professional team, were using their weight to its best advantage.

St. Jim's forward had only to gain possession to be bowled over.

And the hands of the college clock were creeping round.

Ten minutes to go—five, then three!

"Bai Jove, the game will be a draw, deah boys!"

Tom Merry gritted his teeth. A draw would have been very creditable to the junior eleven, but it was almost as bad as a loss, in Tom Merry's eyes.

They had set out to beat Lumley's Eleven.

To fail to do that would be something the hero of the Shell would be long forgetting.

Two minutes to go!

It seemed all over now. Unless Carter sent in another of his terrific shots. Then suddenly a yell went up.

"Merry!"

"Tom Merry!"

The ball had come out to the Shell junior, a long pass from the gasping Lowther.

Tom Merry wheeled round, and whipped the leather out to Figgins. Instantly the New House junior was racing up the field.

"Pass! Oh, do pass!"

And Figgins did pass. He gave the ball to Jack Blake beautifully.

"Tommy!" gasped the Fourth-Former, and Tom Merry had the ball again.

They had been a series of beautiful passes, but there was just one more needed, unless the Shell junior meant to toe and beat the back by himself.

But the junior captain of St. Jim's did not mean to attempt that.

"A quick tap in front of him, Blakey!" he gasped; and the ball was passed back to Jack Blake.

A professional rushed at the chief of Study No. 6, and so the forward tap became a weak spot. Jerrold Lumley had the ball in his arms.

Then the well-knit figure of Tom Merry flashed by.

Lumley saw him coming, but it was too late to dodge, and the next instant there was a heavy thud.

Tom Merry had flung himself at ball and goal-keeper at one and the same time, and all three of them thudded to the ground.

There was a loud, tearing sound.

Something had happened. Tom Merry struggled to his feet, and saw that he was over the line. Then he understood what the tearing sound had meant.

He had bundled the ball and Jerrold Lumley right through the back of the net!

That was the end of the game.

The ball was kicked off again, but it was time, and the scene which followed can be well left to the imagination.

Tom Merry & Co. had beaten Lumley's Eleven, a professional team with the exception of the goal-keeper, had had to admit defeat by two goals to one. It was scarcely surprising that St. Jim's lost its head.

It would have been surprising if the old school had not done so!

THE END.

(Another splendid long, complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. Thursday, entitled: "Herries' 1st Prize," by Martin Clifford. Please order your copy of *This Gem* in advance.)

A Splendid New Series.

An Animal Story.

# THE PASSING OF JACKY.

By F. ST. MARS.

JACKY got out of his cage when no one was looking. Being a jackdaw, black of character and colour, with a grey patch on the nape of his neck like a monk's cowl, and eyes of wondrous clearness, he would. His was the mischievousness of a monkey plus the brightness of a bird.

Jack's cage-door was tied with string. He did not undo the string. He worried at it till the string snapped and the cage-door flew open. Also, Jacky flew out.

There was nothing remarkable about this, of course. Only Jacky was travelling by train just then. He was being sent to the "Zoo," but he never got there. He flew out of the guard's van instead, and because the train was travelling very fast, the wind took him, and hurried him like a piece of paper. He nearly hit the last buffer of the van and ended his rascally life there and then before he recovered, and with consummate skill dodged a telegraph-pole, ducked under the wires, dived round a signal-post, and skimmed the railway hedge with only half an inch to spare.

Then he got his wings to work in real earnest, and removed into the country.

For a space he went very fast indeed, his one desire being to get a great space between his black self and that fiery, sporting monster, the train. He was very frightened, and he was a scrap mischievous then. Possibly, I think, he expected the train to turn round bodily and pursue him.

Nothing happened, however, and it was very still and peaceful out there in the country. His desire for fun returned, therefore, gradually, and, still flying at about thirty miles an hour, he looked about for something to do. That with him meant the same as someone to worry. Moreover, he was hungry.

When he spotted a field, green as the sea at mid-day—a twenty-acre expanse of coolness, with woods all round it, where pigeons cooed, and a cuckoo was wandering aimlessly. There were coops in this field—chicken coops—and they were all arranged neatly in long rows, so many yards between each, with hundreds of chicks running between, and men and things to be had for the asking.

How on earth was he to know that this was a rearing-field for pheasants, the most carefully-guarded birds in all England? How, also, could he guess that he was scheduled in these parts to "vermin"—one to be shot, or trapped, or otherwise abolished on sight?

He did not know, but slid to earth, and settled so suddenly among a group of pheasant chicks that he frightened them almost out of their little wits. They fled all ways in great confusion, tumbling backwards, some of them, in their hurry to get away, which pleased Jacky mightily. He watched their terror for a bit, with his head on one side, and then fell to work on the corn he had driven them away from.

Later he found a pheasant chick which had fallen into a water-pail, and was nigh drowned. He helped it out—yep, he helped it out. "Kind bird," you say. Um! Well, he then murdered it quietly, and started in on a second meal, of pheasant this time.

Jacky had no more begun to enjoy a good feed off the pheasant chick when the remark of a cock-sparrow sitting on a corn-bin made him pause. The cock-sparrow was calling something names, and it wasn't him. Who, then? Jacky jerked his head up, and viewed the world first with one eye, then the other. Being low, he could not see far, but save for one hawk poised in the heavens miles away, he could see no cause for the sparrow to swear.

Nevertheless, the sparrow continued to say things that would have made your hair curl. Suddenly Jacky became rigid. He had seen a flash—a flash that could, as experience had taught him, be made by only one thing—namely, sun being a gun-barrel. That was true in this case, because a gamekeeper was trying to creep up to him between the coops even then.

It is not so much true to say that Jacky went as that he was gone. There was a black streak across the sky. It might have been Jacky, or, again, it might not. The gamekeeper thought it was. He left fly both barrels, and Jacky heard the song of the shot beneath him, and got away with the loss of two tail-feathers—which, by the way, the cock-sparrow took away later and worked into his nest.

That was all.

No, it was not all.

Any other bird but a jackdaw would have left the whole contraption alone. Jacky, however, had got fairly used to men, and had in a way lost his fear of them what time he lived in a cage.

He went away and sat in an oak-tree on the edge of the wood. The copper rays of the afternoon sun were drawing long shadows between the branches, a jay was hollering somewhere among the foliage, and fat and comely-looking rabbits were beginning to dot the green expanse of the field, as rabbits will towards evening.

Jacky watched the keeper go to his hut, and, taking out the empty cartridges from his gun, throw them on the ground. From his pocket he then took two full cartridges, and was just about to re-load his gun when his master came and called him for something. He put gun and cartridges on a box, and went away.

Now, if you know anything of jackdaws, you will know that they have a mania for collecting bright and shining things. The heads of those cartridges were brass, and they shone. That was enough for Jacky. Instantly he was seized with an overpowering desire to steal them.

You can imagine Jacky looping up to the keeper's hut, one eye on the prettily back of the keeper, one on the cartridges. He anchored on a coop, and pretended to be interested in corn or a flock of finches—green, gold, russet, and yellow and white bunches of feathers—feeding near, or anything else but the real thing.

Then he slid to the ground, and took a sidelong hop to the empty cartridges flung there. He took them up and placed them alongside the others on the box, cocked his head on one side, and admired the effect of the brass winking in the sunlight. But the used cartridges were smoke-blackened, and not nearly so bright as the fresh ones. These latter attracted Jacky most, and he finally flew away with them and hid them in a hollow of the oak-tree.

After a bit, black he went, honestly intending to fetch the two empty ones also, but his eye was caught by a nestful of pheasant's eggs, which the hen who was sitting upon them had just left for a moment in order to get a drink of water.

You know what fish is to a cat, or cheese to a mouse, or strawberries and cream to us? Well, so are eggs to jackdaws. Jacky's beak watered—if a bird's beak can water—for those neat, polished, glossy buff eggs. So much so that he forgot all about cartridges, and started in on those eggs. Moreover, he was an expert on eggs. If you wanted to see eggs scientifically broken, sucked dry, and done with in quick time you should have seen the way Jacky handled this wild-fall. He just gloried in it, and had removed the contents of six out of the twelve eggs from the inside of their own shells, where they would ultimately have turned into nice, fat pheasant chicks, to the inside of his black self, where they certainly would not, when—oh, horrors!—the fowl returned.

The keeper, appearing round the corner of his hut a minute later, discovered a yellow jackdaw and a yellow fowl in the middle of a heated argument on the nesting-box, enveloped in what appeared to be a gigantic egg-flip. Seeing that they had carried on a sixty-second battle on the remaining six eggs, this is no matter for surprise.

The keeper snatched up gun and cartridges, and, loading as quickly as possible, fired. The result was a wretched little "snick-snack," and Jacky, for the second time, vanishing into space. For Jacky, as you will remember, had left only two empty cartridges in the place of the new ones. This saved his life, but was quite an unintentional act on his part, of course.

Jacky removed to his tree, where he played with his new toys, the stolen cartridges, holding them in his claws, and hammering them with his long, strong, black, straight beak. This was great fun—hammer, hammer, hammer, ham—Bang!

The keeper heard the report from right away at the other end of the big, twenty-acre field. He heard it, and snatching up his gun, ran towards the sound with great, plunging strides. He was the only person who had any kind of right to shoot on that strictly preserved ground in the nesting season, and he was only allowed to shoot vermin.

"One of thy besty poachers, I'll be bound!" muttered he, and got hot and angry at the thought.

That was true, but not the kind of poacher he meant. Under the oak-tree from whence the sound had come his most careful search revealed no signs of a poacher at all. Only he discovered numerous black feathers lying about the grass under the tree, and that was all. The cartridges had done the rest, for in his hammerings Jacky had struck the cap of the cartridge, and—pif! Like Humpty Dumpty, "Not all the king's horses nor all the king's men could have put Jacky together again."

THE END.

(Another of these wonderful little stories next Thursday.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 135.

Another Splendid Long Complete School Tale of Tom Merry &amp; Co.

NEXT THURSDAY: "HERRIES' 1ST PRIZE"

## A Splendid Old-time Sea Story.

## In the Service of the King.

By LIEUTENANT LEFEVRE.

## Read this First.

Oswald Yorke, one-time knight of the road, joins the Navy as a midshipman under the name of John Smith. His first ship, the frigate *Catapult*, is wrecked under peculiar circumstances, and Oswald is one of the few survivors. A naval court is held at Jamaica to inquire into the loss of the frigate, and Captain Burgoyne, the *Catapult's* scoundrelly commander, gives evidence which is entirely false, accusing the late Lieutenant Fryer and Oswald of inciting his crew to mutiny. These accusations are supported by Second-Lieutenant Brabazon, Burgoyne's toady, but unanimously refuted by Dr. Telford and the rest of the *Catapult's* survivors. "Arrest Captain Burgoyne and Mr. Brabazon!" says the admiral sternly at the conclusion of the evidence. "Arrest me!" shouts Burgoyne, his face livid. "It's a plot to ruin me—a plot!"

(Now go on with the story.)

## Denounced—The Only Way Out—Oswald Released.

"Arrest that man and remove him from the room!" said the admiral once more, in a voice of thunder.

Sullenly, with downcast face, Burgoyne moved towards the door, followed by Brabazon, who seemed scarcely to have the strength to crawl. But at the threshold Burgoyne paused and turned towards the room again.

"Wait!" he cried. "I have not done yet. I have yet something more to say!" He raised his hand and pointed at Oswald. "I denounce that young man as a thief and a highwayman! His name is not John Smith, but Oswald Yorke, and I demand that he shall be sent back to undergo his trial in England, where there are dozens who can swear to his identity."

Then he went out, and the door closed after him.

The admiral dropped his hands upon the table and groaned audibly.

"The man is mad. Drink has turned his brain," said Captain Turnbull.

"Mad, and a coward—I have already proved that," said Captain Maher.

"Gentlemen, there is no more to say," said the admiral, lifting his face, which had suddenly grown very white. "A court-martial will be held at the earliest moment, when the charges against Captain Burgoyne, Mr. Brabazon, and Mr. Smith shall be gone into. In the meantime, all three shall remain under arrest."

He rose, and the others also.

The inquiry was at an end.

The admiral paced slowly up and down his room in deep thought. He knew that it was only spite that had prompted Captain Burgoyne to denounce Oswald, and felt that he could have no evidence to prove his assertion.

Still, what could he, the admiral, do? He could not altogether ignore Captain Burgoyne's accusation against Oswald. To do this would seem to give colour to Burgoyne's assertion; while, if he acted on Burgoyne's demand, and sent Oswald back to England for trial, he knew that it was only too true what Burgoyne had said—there were scores of witnesses ready to prove that John Smith was Oswald Yorke. The admiral rang the bell.

"Is Captain Turnbull still here?" he asked.

"Yes, sah," said the negro servant.

"Ask him if he will kindly come to me here."

Captain Turnbull entered the room in a few minutes.

"You sent for me, sir. You wish to speak to me?"

"I do. I want to ask your advice. I want to repose a confidence in you."

Captain Turnbull bowed.

"I need hardly say, sir, that your confidence will be respected."

The admiral slipped his arm through the captain's.

"You heard what Captain Burgoyne said as he was leaving the room—the accusation he brought against Mr. Smith, the midshipman of the *Catapult*?"

"I did. It seemed to me that he invented that most extraordinary lie to further persecute that young man."

"It was not a lie, Turnbull. It was the truth," said the admiral quietly.

"The truth? Impossible! That boy— Sir, I cannot believe it!" cried the astonished captain.

"Yet it is the truth. I have cause to know. Listen."

The admiral told Captain Turnbull of that first meeting with Oswald on the moor, and of the drive to Portsmouth, and Oswald's story.

"It was in a fit of desperation, guided by the knowledge of his innocence, and the persecution he was enduring, that the boy took to the road," said the admiral. "When he told me the story from beginning to end, I believed him implicitly. I resolved to give him a chance to leave the life into which he was drifting behind him. I could see, also, that he had the making of a good sailor in him. Perhaps you have noticed the lad yourself, Turnbull?"

"I have, I noticed him especially. His is not a vicious face."

"Far from it," said the admiral. "My idea was to send him to sea at once. The *Catapult* was on the point of sailing. Burgoyne called on me at the hotel, and then seemed to recognise Oswald Yorke. I had already expressed my wish about Yorke—or Smith, as he must now be called—sailing in the *Catapult*, and to alter this would but have made a certainty of Burgoyne's suspicions. I must confess—"

The admiral paused, and changed colour.

"There was much at stake, Turnbull," he said apologetically. "A young man's life, his whole future. I lied, I confess it, and I trust that I may be forgiven. I told Burgoyne that I had known Smith for a long time, and was acquainted with his family. It was not true, Turnbull; but, perhaps the reason for the lie will plead for me."

Captain Turnbull pressed his superior's arm sympathetically.

And now, after having saved Burgoyne's life, Smith is denounced by him."

"The man is a villain, a coward, and a drunkard!" said the admiral fiercely. "But what can I do now to save this lad from his revengeful hatred?"

Captain Turnbull waited thoughtfully for some moments in silence.

"I think I can only see one way," he said at length.

"A court-martial will be held on Burgoyne and Brabazon, also on Smith, who is accused by Burgoyne. But there is no real evidence at all against the lad in this case. You have Telford, Pringle, and Maxwell, all to prove that he did his duty, and that neither he nor Fryer incited the men to mutiny."

"I know it. The charge is ridiculous; it falls to the ground."

"Then the only plan I can think of is to release Smith from his arrest at once, and to send him off to sea. I have my sailing orders. In three days the *Fireball* weighs anchor. The lad could ship with me."

The admiral grasped Captain Turnbull's hand warmly.

"You are a good fellow!" he said.

The court-martial on Burgoyne and Brabazon can be held after the *Fireball* has sailed. Let the boy come on board at once. He shall have his rating, and will settle down by the time we sail."

"It is the best plan—the only plan—and I am grateful to you for having suggested it. I confess that I have a great liking for this lad. I believe that he is capable of doing great things. He is frank, manly, open, and brave. You are doing a kind action, Turnbull. Perhaps one day you will be rewarded for it."

"I want no reward," said Turnbull, smiling. "If there is good in the boy it will come out, and he will make his own way without further help from me. But I will watch him carefully. If I find him worthy, I will be his friend."

"You will find him worthy, I am sure of that!" cried the admiral. And with a warm handshake the two officers parted.

Oswald had been taken back on board the *Cynthia*, on which ship Captain Burgoyne and Mr. Brabazon were also closely confined in their cabins.

Towards evening a boat put off from the *Fireball*—which was lying about a cable's length distant from the *Cynthia*—and a midshipman came on board with a letter for Captain Garvin.

"Dear Garvin"—wrote Captain Turnbull—"As the enclosed will prove, Sir Samson has decided to release young Smith, and I shall be glad if you will kindly allow him to return with this boat's crew, as, in accordance with the admiral's wish, I have rated him on board the *Fireball*.—Yours sincerely, PETER TURNBULL."

"The admiral and Turnbull have evidently been laying their heads together," thought Captain Garvin. But he had no course but to obey, for the admiral's letter was a formal release of Oswald.

(Another instalment of this stirring serial next Thursday.)

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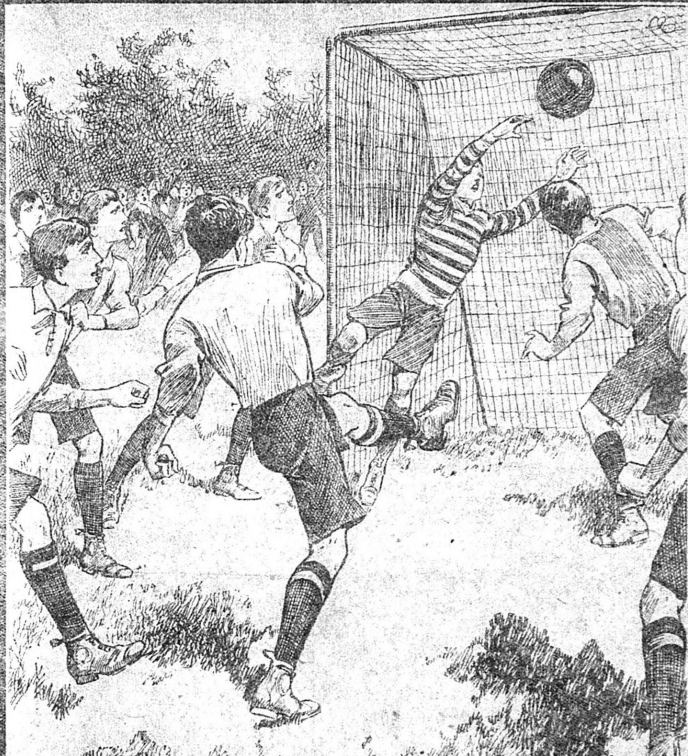
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