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A Tale of the Terrible Three.

by
MARTIN
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CHAPTER 1.

Like Blake's Check.

TOM MERRY stopped. He had to stop, because Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries, of the Fourth, were standing in the doorway of the junior common-room, and they had their arms linked, and filled the doorway from side to side.

They showed no disposition to move as the Shell fellow came down the passage, but rather stiffened up to meet him, and they regarded him with cheerful smiles.

So Tom Merry stopped.

"I want to come in," he remarked.

Blake shook his head.

"Can't be did," he said.

"Eh?"

"Can't be did."

"But I want to come in," said Tom Merry, looking puzzled. "I suppose you Fourth-Form bounders haven't taken possession of the common-room, have you?"

"That's exactly what we have done," said Blake, with perfect coolness.

"What!"

"We've taken possession of the common-room," said Blake.

"Exactly," said Digby.

"Precisely," corroborated Herries.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was standing behind his chums, and regarding Tom Merry through his eyeglass, chimed in:

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry grew pink.

"Oh, don't rot!" he exclaimed. "I want to come in.

A SHADOW IN THE SCHOOL.

**A Splendid Long, Complete School
Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.**

— BY —

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

I've left my Latin dictionary on the table in the corner, for one thing. And I'm coming in, anyway, for another."

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wats!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Tom Merry exasperated. "A joke's a joke—now, chuck it! Let me come in.

"Rats!"

"Wats!"

The hero of the Shell breathed hard through his nose.

"You see, we're holding a Form meeting in the common-room," Blake explained. "There's no room for the Shell bounders. Only the Fourth admitted."

Tom Merry fairly crimsoned with indignation.

"You're holding a Form meeting in the common-room," he shouted. "Go and hold it in the Form-room. Hold it in the wood-shed. Hold it on the roof! You can't hold Form meetings in the common-room, and turn the other Forms out, you fatheads."

"That's just what we can do," said Blake, with provoking coolness. "We're doing it."

And his comrades chuckled.

"I give you one minute to clear," said Tom Merry. "Then I'm going to charge."

"Stand by to repel boarders," chuckled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry receded a few paces to get room for a rush. To be excluded from the common-room by the Fourth was a little too rich—he, the head of the Shell, the Form above the Fourth, and, in fact, almost a senior—in his own opinion, at least.

Blake, Digby, and Herries stood fast.

"I'm coming," said Tom Merry.

"Come on, then."

A LONG, COMPLETE TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 141 (New Series).

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CHAPTER 2.

Figgins & Co. Go In.

"Yaas, wathah!"
Tom Merry charged.
He came for the Fourth-Formers at top speed, and hurled himself upon them like a stone from a catapult.

Blake staggered back, with Tom Merry's arms round his neck, the force of the rush tearing him from his hold upon Digby and Herries.

"Back up!" he gasped.

"Yaas, wathah! Collah the boundah, deah boys!"

Herries and Digby had hold of Tom Merry in a twinkling.

He was dragged off Blake, and the three of them together grasped him and hurled him back into the passage.

He landed there in a sitting posture, gasping.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of Fourth-Formers were behind Blake & Co. now, and they greeted Tom Merry's fall with a roar of laughter.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, screwing his monocle into his eye, and regarding the hero of the Shell.

"I wegard that as wathah funnny."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry jumped up.

"You bounders—"

"Come on," said Blake cheerily. "Try another rush."

"This way, deah boy!"

"Manners! Lowther! Rescue, Shell!"

Manners and Lowther, Tom Merry's chums in the Shell, came dashing up. The Terrible Three charged together at the blocked doorway.

The charge of the three champion athletes of the Shell sent the Fourth-Formers whirling back.

Blake bumped against D'Arcy, and he went staggering, his eyeglass fluttering to the end of its cord.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Weally, Blake—"

"Back up!" roared Blake.

"Weally, you know—"

The Terrible Three rushed into the room, over Digby and Herries, who were sprawling on the floor.

"Here we are!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Sock it to 'em!"

"Back up, the Fourth."

"Ya-a-as, wathah!"

The Fourth-Formers backed up their leader manfully. A dozen or more piled upon the heroes of the Shell.

The Terrible Three hit out valorously, but the odds were too great.

They were collared, and downed, and dragged to the doorway again, and hurled forth ignominiously into the passage.

The doorway was jammed with Fourth-Formers, yelling with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Outside!"

"No admission for bounders."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three picked themselves up. They were very dusty and very rumped. But they did not charge again. They might as well have charged a brick wall as that crowd of grinning juniors.

"You rotters!" gasped Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You outsiders."

"Ha, ha!" roared Blake. "You're the outsiders—we're inside."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard that as funnny."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This way, Shell!" shouted Tom Merry. "Rescue!"

"May as well shut the door," said Blake softly. "We can't waste all the afternoon talking to these Shell fellows."

"Wathah not."

"Shut the door."

Tom Merry rushed forward to put his foot in the way. Blake, who was a Rugger player of some skill, tackled him low, and he sat down again. The door was slammed, and a chair jammed under the lock to keep it shut, the key being missing.

"There!" gasped Blake. "Now we're all right."

"Not all here," said Kerruish.

"Can't be helped."

"Figgins & Co. haven't arrived."

"Oh, those New House bounders! Can't be helped! Enough of us to hold the meeting, anyway," said Blake.

"Gentlemen, the meeting is now open."

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen—"

Crash!

It was a thundering attack upon the door. But the chair-block jammed under the lock kept it fast, and the Shell fellows stamped and thumped in vain.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 141.

THERE were a dozen Shell fellows in the passage now with Tom Merry. They were all hammering at the door, or shouting through the keyhole. They didn't want to come into the common-room particularly. But, of course, they weren't going to be excluded from the common-room because a lot of Fourth-Form kids were there. They were determined to get in, simply because Blake & Co. were determined to keep them out.

"The cheek!" exclaimed Harry Noble, better known as Kangaroo. "The cheek—to hold a Form meeting in the common-room!"

"And without asking permission of the Shell!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn.

"Too bad!"

"Oh, it can't be allowed!" said Clifton Dane. "We shall have the bounders thinking they're on a level with the Shell next."

"Shouldn't wonder, by Jove!"

"Blake! Open this door!"

"Rats!"

"We're coming in."

"You'll have to get through the keyhole, then."

And a roar of laughter from the common-room followed that reply.

Tom Merry breathed hard.

"The bounders!" he exclaimed. "Hallo! Who's this? Another Fourth-Form bounder going to the meeting, I suppose."

It was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider of St. Jim's, as he was called. He looked in surprise at the mass of Shell fellows in the passage.

"What's the row?" he demanded.

"Buzz off!"

"What do you mean? I hear there's a Form meeting in here, and I'm going to attend it," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Well, you can't."

"I guess I can."

"No Fourth-Form bounders allowed to pass," said Kangaroo.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "We'll let him in. And we'll go in at the same time."

"Ha, ha!"

"Good egg!"

"You can go in, Lumley."

"I guess I won't, then," said the Outsider, coolly.

"You jolly well will!" exclaimed Lowther, collaring the Outsider and swinging him towards the door of the common-room. "Hallo, in there! Here's Lumley come to the meeting."

"Lumley can go and eat coke," came back Blake's voice through the keyhole. "No outsiders wanted at this meeting."

"Open the door!"

"Rats!"

"You can't work it," said Jerrold Lumley coolly. "Let me go."

"Oh, buzz off!"

The Outsider shrugged his shoulders and walked away. He didn't want to attend the Form meeting. As a rule, Lumley was outside most Form matters. He was an outsider in fact as well as in name.

Nobody liked him—and Lumley, who had a gift of frankness, would have been the first to admit that he hadn't given anybody reason to like him.

He always said that he was able to stand alone, and for a time he had been alone, and regarded the dislike of the other fellows with cool hardihood.

But of late he had shown some desire to mingle in the matters that interested his Form-fellows, and had made some advances towards good-feeling.

His coming to the Form meeting was one of them. But he was not very disappointed at missing it.

Jerrold Lumley had had a curious boyhood, and the fellow who had roughed it in the Bowery of New York, and had seen the seamiest side of life in London and Paris, before he reached the age of fifteen, regarded life in a junior Form at St. Jim's as decidedly slow.

He preferred gambling to football, and smoking to hockey, and he made no secret of his preference.

With the result that he was, as he was called, a rank outsider, and looked upon with suspicion and dislike by all the decent fellows at St. Jim's.

In calling a meeting of the Fourth, Jack Blake had not given a thought to the Outsider, and certainly he was not likely to be missed from the meeting.

As he walked away, the Shell fellows recommenced their attack on the door; but the chair held it fast, and two or three fellows had their feet against it inside as well.

"Hold on!" said Monty Lowther suddenly. "No good making a row and getting the prefects here. And hammering doesn't do any good, anyway."

"Quite right."

"Yes; chuck it!" said Tom Merry. "By George! Figgins!"

Three youths came down the passage. They did not belong to the School House, and really had no right there. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the New House—members of the Fourth Form.

"New House bounders!" exclaimed Clifton Dane. "Chuck them out!"

"Pax!" exclaimed Figgins, holding up his hand.

"That's all very well—"

"Of course it is," agreed Figgins, "so shut up! We haven't come here for a row. We were told there was a meeting of the Fourth Form—"

"And we've come to attend it," said Kerr.

"Just so," agreed Fatty Wynn. "I suppose it's a feed. I didn't have very much for dinner—only the usual school dinner, you know, and a pork-pie in the study, and a cake in the tuckshop, and some tarts and a dozen buns, and some milk chocolate, and so I shall be able to pile in, you know. Where's the feed?"

"There isn't any feed that I know of," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I told you there wasn't, Fatty," said Figgins.

Fatty Wynn grunted.

"Oh, rot!" he exclaimed. "Blake's message said we were to come here for a very important matter. What could that mean, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "Nothing's important to Fatty except a feed."

"Well, you see, I get jolly hungry at this time of the year, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Form meeting's in there, and they're keeping us out," said Tom Merry. "You fellows can go in, if you like."

Figgins & Co. walked through the hostile ranks of the Shell. Figgins tapped at the door of the common-room.

"Here we are, Blake. Let us in."

"That you, Figgins?"

"Yes; and Kerr and Wynn."

"Those Shell bounders still there?"

"Yes."

"Then you can't come in. They'll rush us if you do."

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins warmly. "We've come to attend the Form meeting. We've got to come in."

"Sorry, but—"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! We're sowwy, but—"

"You see—"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Blake!"

"Ring off, then. You see, Figgy—"

"Open this blessed door!" said Figgins. "We'll keep the Shell back."

The Shell fellows laughed. There were more than twenty of them crammed into the passage by this time, and the offer of three New House Fourth-Formers to keep them back was a little comic.

Figgins kicked at the door.

"Open this, Blake!"

"You see—"

"Yaas, wathah! You see—"

"We'll kick till you do, then."

Crash! Crash! Crash!

There was an angry shout from the end of the passage, and the red and excited face of Knox, the prefect, appeared in view. Knox was the worst-tempered fellow in the School House, and his position as prefect gave him opportunities for giving play to his bad temper, of which he was by no means slow to take advantage.

"Will you stop that row?" he roared.

"Hold on!" muttered Figgins.

He bent and spoke through the keyhole.

"Open quick, Blake. It's all right, now."

"Right-ho!" said Blake.

The door swung open. The three Fourth-Formers walked coolly in. The Shell would have dearly liked to make a rush; but there was Knox at the end of the passage, slugging them for all he was worth, and the most reckless junior there did not feel equal to beginning a conflict under the very eyes of the prefect.

Jack Blake closed the door quickly behind Figgins & Co., and the chair was jammed into position again under the lock.

Knox stood in the passage for a good two minutes and talked to the juniors. The Shell fellows listened meekly. They preferred Knox blowing off steam in this way, as Lowther put it, to his reporting them to their House-master.

The prefect finally departed, with threats of what he

would do if there was so much as a whisper in the passage again that afternoon, and the Shell fellows looked at one another.

"All up!" said Monty Lowther laconically.

Tom Merry growled.

"I suppose so," he said. "The cheeky young beggars!" He knelt to the keyhole, and spoke through it to the Fourth-Formers within. "I say, you young bounders, we'll make you sit up for your cheek another time."

To which there came a monosyllabic reply, in the unmistakable tones of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—

"Wats!"

CHAPTER 3.

Hear, Hear!

FIGGINS indulged in a chuckle as footsteps died away in the passage. Kerr was grinning, too; but there was a serious expression upon the face of Fatty Wynn. He was looking round the junior common-room, but there was no sign of a feed to be seen.

"That was rather neat," Figgins remarked. "Knox is a first-class, gilt-edged, double-action, non-skidding beast, but he has his uses, hasn't he?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"I say—" began Fatty Wynn.

"It's all right now," said Blake. "We sha'n't be interrupted any more."

"And it's half an hour before afternoon school," said Digby.

"Plenty of time for the meeting—"

"But—but you said in your note it was an important matter," said Fatty Wynn, looking rather blank.

"So it is."

"But—but where's the feed?"

"The feed!"

"Yes. I supposed, of course—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't have much dinner; only—"

"There's no feed," said Blake, with a grin. "It's a Form meeting—"

"Well, there's no objection to that, of course; only I don't see why there shouldn't be some refreshments."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"We adjourn to the tuckshop for refreshments afterwards," said Blake.

Fatty Wynn brightened up.

"I suppose the meeting won't take long?" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you see, I get jolly hungry in this autumn weather. I suppose there's going to be something pretty decent at the tuckshop?"

"Every chap will be at liberty to order anything he likes," said Blake.

"Oh, good!"

"And as much of it as he chooses," went on Blake.

"That's all right."

BOYS WHO DO NOT READ "THE GEM."



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THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 141.

A splendid long complete story of the Juniors of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE NEW BOY'S SECRET."

"In fact, any chap can have the whole blessed stock of the tuckshop, if he chooses!" said Blake liberally—"provided—"

"Oh, that's all right!"

"Provided he can pay for it!"

"Eh?"

"There's simply no limit to the feed, except the amount of cash you have in your pockets," Blake explained.

Fatty Wynn gave him a freezing look, as the juniors burst into a roar. The expression of Fatty's face was worth more than a feed.

"You utter ass!" said Fatty Wynn.

"And now we'll proceed to bizney," said Blake. "I've called this meeting to discuss a matter of the most overwhelming importance—nothing else than the conditions of football matters at St. Jim's, and the proper position of the Fourth Form in this college."

"Well, that's a big order," said Figgins.

"Go on, Blake."

"Buck up, deah boy! If you pwefer it, I would explain the mattah, as pewpaws I could put it more cleahly—"

"Cheese it, Gussy!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"This is how the matter stands," said Blake, mounting upon a cane chair, and balancing himself there with some difficulty, for the chairs were not of the strongest.

"Is it?" said Figgins, in surprise. "On a chair?"

"Ass!"

"Well, I only go by what you said—"

"The matter stands like this," said Blake, unheeding. "The Fourth Form have proved themselves to be better footballers than the Shell."

"Hear, hear!"

The reply was unanimous. New House might quarrel with School House about many things, but all the members of the Fourth Form, of either house, were certain to agree upon that point.

"Well," said Blake, "you all know that the junior team is composed of Shell and Fourth. The captain is in the Shell—Tom Merry."

"Good old Merry!"

"Asses! Fatheads!"

"Why, what's the matter with Tom Merry?" asked Figgins, in surprise. "Of course, he's a Shell bounder, but—"

"Listen to me, then. Didn't the Fourth Form take up the Tipton challenge, when Tom Merry refused it, and beat Tipton hollow?"

"They did."

"Without any assistance from the Shell, either."

"They did."

"We had the assistance of those chaps from Greyfriars, though," said Fatty Wynn, in a thoughtful way.

"If Wynn is going to persist in dragging in matters that have nothing to do with the case in hand, I don't see how I'm to get on at all," said Blake resignedly.

"Shut up, Wynn!"

"Order!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ordah, deah boys!"

"Under the circumstances," pursued Blake victoriously, "I think the captainship of the Junior Eleven ought to be in the Fourth, not in the Shell."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm not suggesting myself as captain—"

"I should jolly well think not!" agreed Figgins.

Considering that Figgins was really agreeing with him, Blake did not look at all gratified.

"I say I don't suggest myself as captain—" he began again.

"Oh, that's settled, of course!" said Figgins.

"I don't suggest myself—"

"Yes; we've heard that."

"As captain," continued Blake. "But I don't see whom else the Fourth Form could choose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, they might choose me, you know."

"Duffers are barred, of course."

"Weally—"

"Blake's right," said Figgins. "Gussy's barred under that disqualification. But, of course, it will be admitted by most of the fellows here that the junior captain ought to belong to the New House."

Applause from the New House juniors, and a roar of denial and scorn from the School House.

"Oh, listen to reason!" said Kerr. "Of course—"

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Cheese it!"

Blake stamped his foot angrily for silence. The stamp was a little too much for the chair he was standing upon.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 141.

It gave way.

Blake's foot went through the cane seat, and he tumbled over. With a wild yell he rolled over, chair and all.

"Oh! Help! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow!"

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as wathah funnay, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake staggered up, with the chair still clinging round his leg. Herries and Digby lent him helping hands. The juniors were roaring with laughter, as Jack Blake turned a crimson and excited face upon them.

"You utter asses!" he cried.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who pushed that chair over?" roared Blake.

"Ha, ha! Nobody," chuckled Figgins. "You did it yourself. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You grinning chumps—"

Blake rubbed his leg as he dragged it out of the ruined cane chair. He was feeling very much shaken up. The mishap had nipped the beginning House row in the bud. Blake limped as he kicked the chair away.

"Look here, you duffers!" he exclaimed. "Don't jaw! I'm hurt. I'm going to get some embrocation. Look here! Are we going to have the junior footer captain in the Fourth, or are we not?"

"We are!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's settled, then."

And Blake limped out of the common-room, and the meeting broke up.

Ten minutes later a notice, drawn up by the Fourth Form Football Committee in No. 6 Study, was pinned up on the notice-board in the hall.

CHAPTER 4.

A Manifesto from the Fourth.

"I GUESS that's slick."

It was the voice of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, with its nasal twang, picked up by the Outsider in his days in New York.

The Terrible Three stopped as they heard it. Lumley-Lumley was standing before the notice-board in the hall, and grinning as he read the notice. There were a good many fellows there at the same time, all reading and all grinning.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, as he paused. "There's a new notice up, you chaps. Something to do with the Shell, perhaps."

"Let's look. Something up against somebody, I suppose, or that cad wouldn't be cackling over it."

The chums of the Shell joined the crowd before the board. Among the other papers pinned up there was a new paper in Blake's handwriting. That was the notice that was attracting so much attention.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "The cheek of it!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I guess it means business," said Lumley-Lumley.

The chums of the Shell, without taking any notice of the Outsider, read the paper through. It was short, if not sweet.

"NOTICE TO THE SHELL FORM AT ST. JIM'S.

"It having been proved, in the Tipton match and elsewhere and otherwise, that the Fourth Form are at the top in respect of football—

"And the Form, in a solemn meeting, have decided that the Shell are not much good on the footer-field, anyway—

"And whereas, under the said circumstances above and afore-stated, the Fourth Form consider the honour of St. Jim's juniors, as a footballing team, to be in jeopardy—

"The Fourth Form desire hereby to make it known by these presents that they have decided to play a team in future without any Shell-fish in it.

"And hereby and thusly give notice in due form that the captaincy of the Junior Eleven will henceforward and hereinafter be vested in the Fourth Form, to the exclusion of Shell bounders.

"And any of the above-mentioned Shell bounders who feel at all aggrieved by these presents are at liberty to signify the same in the usual manner, either with or without gloves.

(Signed),

J. BLAKE.

A. D'ARCY.

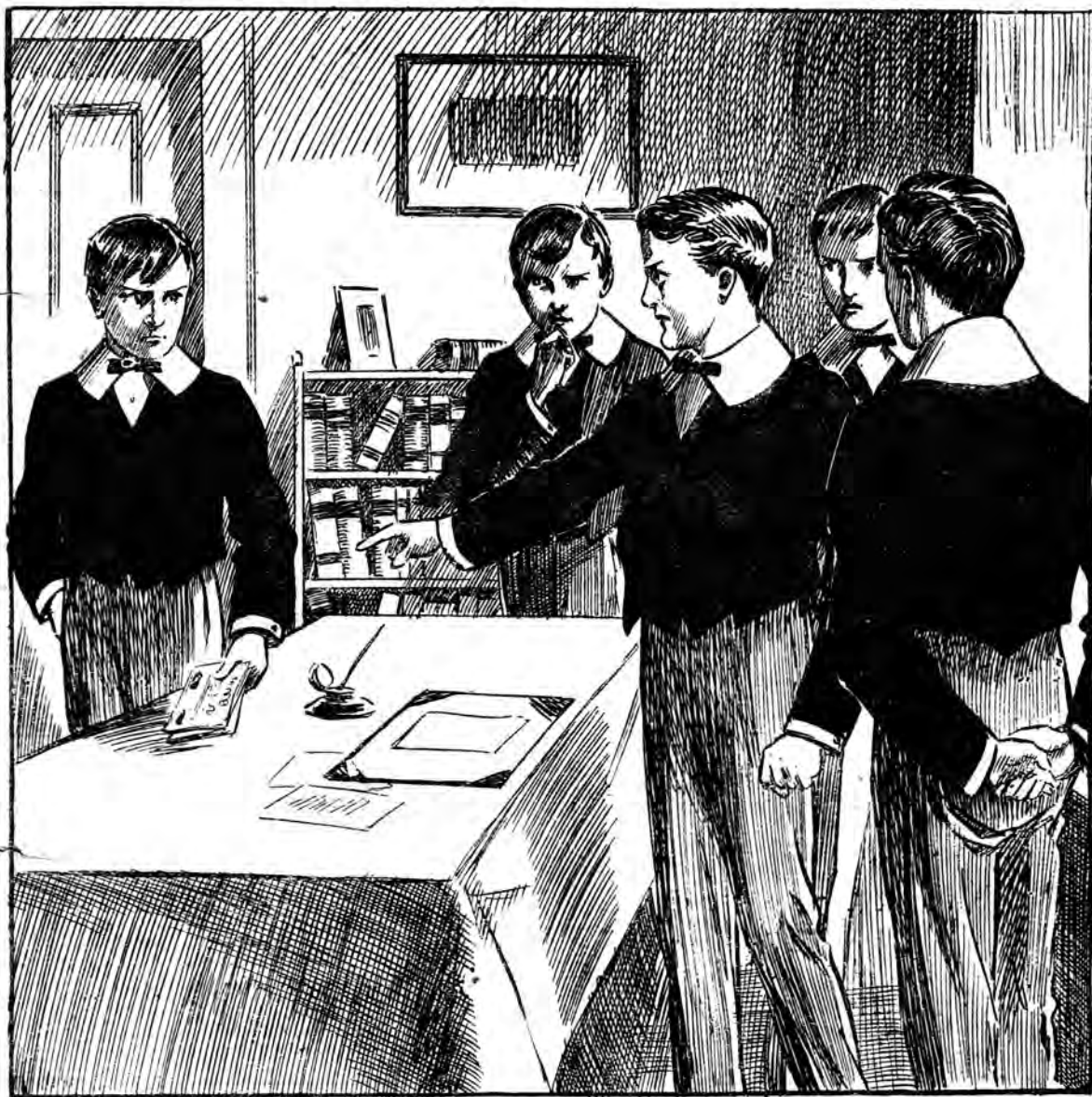
ARTHUR DIGBY.

GEORGE HERRIES.

G. FIGGINS.

F. KERR.

L. WYNN."



"Money talks!" remarked Lumley-Lumley tersely. "Put your money away," said Blake. "We don't want to touch it. Put it away, and don't play the goat." (See page 6.)

Tom Merry laughed.

"Of all the cheek!" he repeated.

"So that's what the meeting was about?" Monty Lowther remarked.

"Cheek!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Faith, and we mean business entirely!" said Reilly, of the Fourth. "No Shell-fish wanted in the Junior Eleven. We beat Tipton without yez."

"Rats!"

"And we can bate anybody without yez."

"Come on, you chaps!" said Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three made their way at once to Study No. 6 in the Fourth-Form passage. There was a sound of busy voices there; and as Tom Merry kicked open the door, he saw the leaders of the Fourth in the New House were in Blake's study, along with Blake and his chums.

They all looked round and grinned at the sight of the Terrible Three. They had evidently been discussing the matter.

"You're in good time," said Blake affably.

"Yaas, wathah! You can give us your advice, deah boys, on a wathah knotty point."

"You see," Blake proceeded, "Figgin's can't understand

that the new captain of the Junior Eleven ought to be a School House chap. He's got a wild idea in his head that a New House chap is good enough, which, of course, is——"

"Rot!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We want to settle it peaceably, if we can," Blake went on. "Now, what's your opinion on the subject, Tom Merry?"

"I think you're a set of cheeky asses!" exclaimed Tom Merry wrathfully. "What do you mean by that rotten notice on the board downstairs?"

"What it says."

"Do you call that playing the game—wanting to sack your skipper? I never heard of such a thing!"

"Well, everything has to have a beginning," Blake said philosophically. "You see, we're acting from a sense of duty towards St. Jim's. We feel that the Fourth Form will represent better than the Shell the—the best interests of the college."

"Hear, hear!"

"Now, look here, Blake, don't you work off on me fag-ends of the Head's last-day-of-term speech," said Tom Merry excitedly. "You've got to stop this rot. If you've

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any complaint to make, make it in committee, in the proper manner."

"We don't complain."

"Wathah not."

"Certainly not," said Figgins. "We merely want to make it understood that we feel that the Fourth ought to take the lead, and we naturally expect that you fellows will gracefully submit, and—"

"And bow to the force of reason," said D'Arcy.

"Exactly."

"You asses! Look here, you know you haven't a leg to stand on; and if we had an election for junior captain, I should poll all the votes," said Tom Merry. "Likewise, I'm not going to have this division between the Forms. The Junior Eleven will have to play both Shell and Fourth, if it is to be strong enough to meet other schools."

Blake nodded.

"No objection to that. We'll play Shell fellows, under Fourth-Form captaincy. See?"

Tom Merry snorted.

"You're getting windy in the head over licking Tipton!" he said. "As a matter of fact, it was Mark Linley and the other fellows from Greyfriars who pulled you through that match."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"But I'll tell you what," said Tom Merry. "We'll meet the Fourth in a Form match, if you like—Shell against Fourth—and if you beat us I'll resign the captaincy, and propose a Fourth-Form fellow as my successor."

"Bai Jove!"

Blake and Figgins exchanged glances.

"Well, that's fair enough," said Blake.

"Quite fair," assented Figgins.

"Fair as can be," said Herries. "I think it's a jolly good offer, and we ought to take it. We shall walk all over them, of course!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You're welcome to do all the walking-over you can do, and we'll stake the captaincy of the junior team—for this season, at least—on the result of the match," he said. "Is it settled?"

"Good! We'll play you!"

"We were going to have a House match on Saturday," said Tom Merry. "We'll have a Form match instead—Shell against Fourth."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Terrible Three left the study, with that important matter settled. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley met them in the passage.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" he asked.

"You can ask Blake," said Tom Merry, passing on.

The Outsider cast a very ugly look after him, and then went on to Jack Blake's study.

CHAPTER 5.

The Outsider's Offer.

"**I** WEGARD it as a wippin' plan."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was laying down the law to that effect when Jerrold Lumley-Lumley paused at the door of Study No. 6.

The Outsider listened.

"Of course it is," said Figgins. "It's ripping. We shall beat the Shell, of course."

"What-ho!"

"I don't see how they can stand against us," Blake remarked. "We're the top footballers of the Lower School."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The only question is, who's to be leader?" said Figgins thoughtfully. "I suppose in the important case of a Form match like this, you fellows will admit that a New House chap ought to take the lead."

"Wats!"

"And many of 'em!"

"Now, look here."

"Bosh!"

"You School House asses—"

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley entered the study. Both School House and New House fellows united in glaring at the intruder.

"What do you want?" was Blake's question.

"No good saying I want politeness, I guess," Lumley-Lumley remarked easily.

Blake coloured.

"Well, as far as that goes, you're not entitled to it," he exclaimed. "You know we're not on good terms. What do you come here for?"

"About the Form match."

"What do you know about that?"

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"I've just met Tom Merry," said Jerrold, not thinking it necessary to mention that he had paused to listen at the door of No. 6 Study. "You're playing the Shell in a Form match, and—"

"And if the Fourth win, Tom Merry resigns the captaincy to a Fourth-Former," said Blake. "I don't see that it matters to you. You don't play."

"I guess I can play."

"Yaas, as a mattah of justice, I must wearnsk that I have seen Lumley at pwaictice, deah boys, and he has picked up amazingly."

Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose you don't suggest playing him in the Form team, Gussy?"

"Wathah not!" said the swell of St. Jim's promptly.

"I guess that's what I want," said Lumley.

"You'd better guess again, then," said Blake. "You've guessed right off the mark this time."

"Look here," said Jerrold Lumley. "If you play me, it's a dead cert that the Fourth Form will pull off the match."

"Ha, ha, ha! Modesty, thy name is Lumley."

"I guess it's about correct. I don't think you fellows have ever heard me brag of what I couldn't do."

"No, I'll do you that justice," said Figgins. "But at the same time, you're only a very passable footballer, and you're talking out of your hat now."

"What will you bet on it?"

"Bet?"

"I guess that's the word."

"I don't bet," said Figgins indignantly, "and you'd better not, either, unless you want to be sacked from the school."

The millionaire's son drew a leathern pocket-book from his jacket. He opened it, and drew out a wad of rustling banknotes. He counted out five of them upon the study table, the Fourth-Formers watching him in amazement.

"There's twenty-five quid there, I guess," said Lumley.

"Bai Jove!"

"I'll lay that against sixpence that we pull off the Form match if you play me, you to hold the stakes," said Jerrold Lumley.

The chums stared.

They knew of the habits of Lumley-Lumley. They knew that he smoked, that he drank, that he betted recklessly. They knew he was allowed almost unlimited pocket-money by his father, the canned meat millionaire. But this was a surprise to them. They knew, too, that Lumley generally knew what he was talking about. Among the scheming sharpers at the Green Man, Lumley had held his own, and more than held his own—he had "skinned" the sharpers, playing their own game upon them. In his betting, he had generally won. He was cool, keen, unscrupulous; but there was no empty swank about him. What he said he could do, that he could do.

There was a long silence in the study. The juniors were so taken aback that they did not know what to say.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley broke the silence at last.

"Money talks!" he remarked tersely.

"Bai Jove!"

"Put your money away," said Blake, at last. "We don't want to touch it. Put it away, and don't play the goat."

"It's a good offer, I guess."

"Put it away."

Lumley-Lumley replaced the banknotes in his pocket-book, and the book in his pocket. Then he stood facing the juniors.

"I mean business," he said slowly. "I dare say you wonder that I want to play in the eleven—"

"Well, you've never shown yourself anything like a sportsman before."

"Suppose I want to turn over a new leaf?"

Blake laughed.

"You don't believe me?"

"Well, turn over the new leaf, and we'll see," said Blake. "I suppose you don't expect us to take a yarn like that on trust?"

"But it's true."

"Rats!"

"Perhaps I'm tired of being called the Outsider," said Lumley, with a new note of earnestness in his voice. "Perhaps I'm not so black as I'm painted, Blake. Look here, I'll give you the thing straight. I'm sick of the present way things are going on. Tom Merry would give me a chance if I asked him. I ask you first, as my own Form-fellows."

"Bai Jove!"

"You accuse me of rotten ways. I own up. I was brought up differently from you chaps, and things don't seem the same to me. But look you, once I'm in the Form eleven, and treated decently all round, and I throw cards

and drink and cigarettes overboard together. I can play—I can win for the Fourth. Let me try."

"Bai Jove! As a mattah of fact, deah boys, I wathah think we ought to give the wottah a chance," said D'Arcy. "You wemembah that time he saved the millah's little gal from drownin'. I wefused to believe in it at first, but it has been pwetty well pwoved. Lumley wisked his life and dwenched his clothes to save a little gal from bein' drownded, and a fellow who would do that can't be all bad."

Jack Blake nodded.

"Yes, I know about that," he said, "and I'm blessed if I know how Lumley came to do a thing like that."

Lumley sneered.

"Oh, for goodness' sake let that rest!" he exclaimed. "I've been complimented by the doctor, and bothered by Lathom and Railton about it, till I wish I had left the little duffer to go under the mill-wheel. Chuck it! That's got nothing to do with the footer."

"It has!" said Blake. "It shows you've got a good point. What do you New House chaps say? Are you agreeable to giving him a chance in the team?"

"Oh, I don't care!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's try him in practice, and see how he turns out," said Kerr, the canny and cautious. "I don't know what he means by saying that if he plays, Tom Merry is certain to be licked. How do you make that out, Lumley? Are you such a dark horse, that you're going to surprise the whole coll. all of a sudden with your wonderful powers as a footballer?"

Lumley gave a shrug of the shoulders.

"Never mind that," he said. "If you play me, I'll answer for it that the Shell lose, and I'll stake anything you like on it!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You won't stake anything on it with us," said Blake, "and if you stake anything at all with anybody, you won't play. We don't want any rotten gamblers in the Fourth Form eleven."

"I'll agree to anything you like," said Jerrold Lumley, with unusual submissiveness.

"That sounds like business," said Figgins. "Let him join in the first practice, anyway, and we'll see. That's my opinion."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I'm agreeable," said Blake.

And so it was settled.

CHAPTER 6.

Heads, Blake.

THE idea of a Form match, to decide whether the captaincy of the Junior Eleven should belong to the Fourth Form or the Shell, caught on at once. Both Forms felt quite satisfied, because both felt quite certain of winning the match. Tom Merry hadn't the slightest doubt that a Shell team would knock the Fourth Form kids into a cocked hat; and Blake and Figgins gleefully told one another that they were going to do for the Shell this time. Both parties looked forward eagerly to Saturday, when the match was to take place.

Whether Blake or Figgins was to captain the Fourth Form team remained an open question for some time.

They joined cordially in the footer practice, and argued out the question of captaincy at the tops of their voices; but, as Kerr remarked, it was necessary to come to some decision, and Blake at last proposed to put it to the vote.

But at this the New House juniors demurred.

The School House was a much larger establishment than the New House, and about two-thirds of the Fourth Form belonged to it.

As they were certain to vote according to the House they belonged to, Blake was sure of a substantial majority in advance.

Kerr, on the other hand, suggested tossing up for it.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head seriously at the proposition.

"It's wathah like gamblin', you know," he remarked. "I don't like anythin' that savahs of gamblin', deah boys."

To which Kerr promptly rejoined:

"Ass!"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle in his eye, and gave the Scottish junior a disdainful survey from head to foot, and then from foot to head again.

"Weally, Kerr—" he began.

"We toss for choisee of goals in a footer match, ass," went on Kerr.

"Yaas, that's so, but—"

"And for innings in a cricket match—"

"Yaas, but—"

"But rats! You're talking bosh!"

"I wefuse to have my wemarks chawactewised as boah, Kerr. Tossing up a penny savahs of the wascally conduct of that boundah Lumley-Lumley."

"Eh?" said a voice at D'Arcy's elbow. "What's that?"

The swell of St. Jim's looked round and saw the Outsider.

He was not at all disturbed.

"I wemarked that tossin' up coins savahs of your wotten twicks," he said. "I don't like the ideah!"

"I guess—"

"Pway don't intewwupt, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, with a wave of the hand. "I'm thinkin' this out—"

"Got any other method to suggest?" demanded Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, go ahead!" said Jack Blake crisply. "If you can make any suggestion, we're willing to hear it, but I expect it's only rot!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come to the point."

"I'm comin' to it as fast as I can. I think that undah the cires., we—that is to say, you—ought to select some chap of supewiah bwain powah, and give the mattah to him to decide."

"Something in that," said Digby. "Suppose we ask Kildare to decide—Kildare or Darrel."

"Good!" said Figgins.

"That was not exactly what I meant," said D'Arcy. "I don't see why we should twouble the Sixth with our personal affairs."

"Whom do you suggest, then?"

"There's Lefevre, of the Fifth," remarked Kerr. "Suppose we put it to him?"

"No need to bothah the Fifth, deah boys!"

"I suppose we can't go and get an umpire from the Third or the Second," said Blake tartly. "Are you suggesting young Wally, for instance?"

"Pway, don't be an ass, Blake!"

"Well, whom do you name?" asked Figgins.

"Supposin' there were in the Fourth Form a fellow of unusual tact and judgment—and what you wequiah for this mattah is a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"Well, who's the chap?"

"He's standin' befoah you at pwesent moment, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

But Blake apparently did not understand. He looked at all the fellows who were standing near him in turn, with a perplexed look.

"Do you mean Lumley-Lumley, Gussy?"

"Certainly not!"

"Herries, then? Herries knows all about bulldogs, but I don't see that he's any special good for selecting a footer captain."

"I did not mean Hewwies."

"Oh, Digby, then! But—"

"Not Digby!"

"Well, I'm surprised at your selecting a New House chap to be the judge in this matter. I suppose you mean Kerr."

"I don't mean Kerr," said D'Arcy freezingly.

"Then it's you, Fatty!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Is it Reilly, then?"

"It is not Weilly."

"Then who the dickens is it?"

"I believe you are only wottin', you wottah. You know perfectly well that I was alludin' to myself all the time!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"Yourself!" ejaculated Blake, with an expression of great astonishment.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But you said a fellow of superior brain power."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"And a fellow of tact and judgment," went on Blake. "You couldn't expect me to guess that you meant yourself, from a description like that, now, could you?"

"I wefuse to continue this widdleous discush," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I will umpire in the mattah, if you choose, but othahwise—"

"And what would you decide?" asked Figgins.

"Yes, let's hear the oracle, anyway," Blake assented.

"I should not appoint Blake," said D'Arcy. "I considah that there are othah fellows in the School House—one othah fellow, at least—more fitted for the post of captain."

"Good!" said Figgins. "You'd decide for me. I say, Blake, we may as well leave it to Gussy, for all I can see."

"I should not decide for you, Figgay."

"What!"

"I should decide against you."

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"Oh, Gussy's no good," said Figgins. "We're wasting time."

"I should not appoint eithah of you," said D'Arcy. "I should suggest your both wetiwin' in favah of a bettah man—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Gussy again!"

"Well, undah the cires—"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"Hu, ha, ha!"

"Pway heah me, deah boys—"

But that was just what the dear boys declined to do. They walked away in a body, leaving Arthur Augustus to explain and expound his claims to the desert air.

Kildare had just come in sight, and D'Arcy's idea of selecting an umpire to decide the matter had found favour, though the juniors had no idea of selecting D'Arcy himself to make the momentous decision.

"Let's ask Kildare," said Blake.

Figgins nodded assent.

"I'm quite willing."

And the juniors stopped the captain of the school. Kildare looked at them inquiringly. The captain of St. Jim's was a School House fellow himself, but all of them had a complete faith in his fairness and impartiality.

"Well, what do you youngsters want?" he asked.

"We want you to umpire—"

Kildare laughed.

"What do you mean? Are you playing a belated cricket match?"

"No," said Blake, laughing. "We're playing the Shell at footer, and Figgy can't decide that a School House chap ought to captain the Fourth. We want you to umpire on the point, and decide between Figgins and me."

"Rather a difficult task," said Kildare, with a smile. "I should recommend talking it over."

"Oh, we've done that!" said Blake. "But you know what these New House chaps are! There's no getting them to listen to reason!"

"No driving sense into the heads of these School House kids, you know, Kildare," said Figgins. "You live with 'em, so you ought to know what it's like."

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Look here, Blake—"

"Why not toss up for it?" asked Kildare, interposing as the rival Fourth-Formers faced each other wrathfully.

"Well, that was what Kerr suggested," said Blake. "But Gussy thought that it savoured of gambling. Of course, Gussy is an ass!"

"It's the same as tossing up for choice of goals," said Kildare. "The matter must be decided some way, and that way's as good as any other. Toss up a penny—heads Blake, and tails Figgins."

And Kildare walked away.

"Well, that's good enough," said Blake. "We'll get some disinterested chap to toss up the penny. Here, young Lumley!"

D'Arcy minor of the Third stopped as Blake called him.

"Hallo, cocky!" he said.

Blake swallowed his wrath at being thus familiarly addressed by a fag of the Third.

"We want you to toss up a penny to decide a point," he said.

"Right-ho!"

"Here you are!"

Blake handed Wally a penny.

The fag tossed it up, and hid it in the palms of his hands.

"Heads Blake," said Kerr. "Tails Figgins. Show it up, Wally!"

Wally disclosed the coin.

"Heads!" shouted Blake, in delight.

And heads it was.

Figgins grunted.

"All right!" he said. "You've got it. Cut off, young Wally—you young ass!"

"I suppose I keep the penny?" Wally suggested. "I believe that's usual in such cases."

Blake laughed.

"Yes, you can keep it, kid," he said. "Now, then, you chaps, footer practice immediately after lessons, you know. We're going to beat the Shell."

"Well, it doesn't take you long to shake down, anyway," said Figgins.

"There are some chaps who are born to command," said Blake loftily.

And ten minutes later all the Fourth Form knew that Blake was captaining the Form team in the match with the Shell; and a little later it was announced definitely that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was included in the eleven.

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CHAPTER 7.

Mellish Does Not Like It.

MELLISH of the Fourth looked at the list posted up on the notice-board, and whistled. Jack Blake, the newly-appointed captain of the Fourth Form eleven, had put up a list of the players, and it had been read down with a great deal of interest by the juniors. The Terrible Three were interested, too, and they had read the list at once, to know whom they were to meet on Saturday afternoon.

The list ran as follows: Wynn: Herries, Kerruish; Kerr, Digby, Pratt; Blake, Figgins, D'Arcy, Reilly, Lumley.

Tom Merry whistled just as Mellish did. The last name in the list surprised him.

"So they're playing the Outsider," he remarked.

"Looks like it," said Lowther. "I know he's been taking up footer, and I hear he's coming on very well. Blessed if I should care to play him, though, if I were captaining a team."

"Same here," said Manners emphatically. "But I suppose it's Blake's bizney, and he can do as he likes. I hear Blake's captain."

Tom Merry nodded.

"He would be better without Lumley," he said. "But as you say, it's his own business."

And the Terrible Three walked away, discussing the coming match. Mellish glanced after them with a curious look in his eyes, and then read the notice through again. There was Lumley-Lumley's name, as plain as Blake's big, sprawling hand could make it. There was no mistake about that.

"Well, my hat!" was all Mellish could say.

Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, was Lumley-Lumley's study mate and chum—as near as he could be a chum to anybody. He was not clumsy by nature. But the two had many tastes in common; and Lumley's wealth led Mellish to toady to him, when other fellows did not care to speak to the Outsider. This new departure of Lumley's was a surprise to Mellish, and not a pleasant surprise. For if Lumley-Lumley intended to take up this sort of thing, it was pretty clear that Mellish's friendship would not be of much use to him any longer.

Mellish walked away in quest of Lumley. He ascended to the Fourth-Form passage, and glanced into the study they shared.

For a moment he thought that the study was empty.

"Not here, Lumley!" he called out.

There was no reply, and Mellish was about to quit the study, when he paused. The big armchair—an expensive purchase of Lumley-Lumley—was drawn before the fireplace, and the back of it was towards the door. It struck Mellish that someone was sitting in that chair, although he could not see him.

He stepped quickly towards it.

"Lumley!"

There was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, sitting in the chair, his hands lying idly beside him, his feet on the fender, his eyes fastened in a fixed stare on the fire.

Mellish knitted his brows. Lumley-Lumley was in the habit of treating him with unconcerned contempt, but at every new instance of the Outsider's insolence, Mellish showed as much anger as a toady could venture to do.

"You rotter!" he snapped. "Why couldn't you speak?"

Lumley did not answer.

"You heard me call, and you were letting me go away again without a word!" said Mellish angrily.

No reply.

"My hat! He's asleep!" ejaculated Mellish.

He shook Lumley-Lumley by the shoulder.

But he did not wake.

The Outsider remained stretched in the chair, his glassy stare fixed still upon the glowing embers of the fire, his limbs inert.

Mellish felt a spasm of fear as he looked at him. This was not sleep. What was the matter with Lumley?

Quick into his brain flashed a recollection of a strange attack Lumley had had when he was being ragged once by the juniors he had exasperated.

Was he ill?

"Lumley!" cried Mellish, and his voice now was shrill and frightened. "Lumley! Wake up, old man! Wake up!"

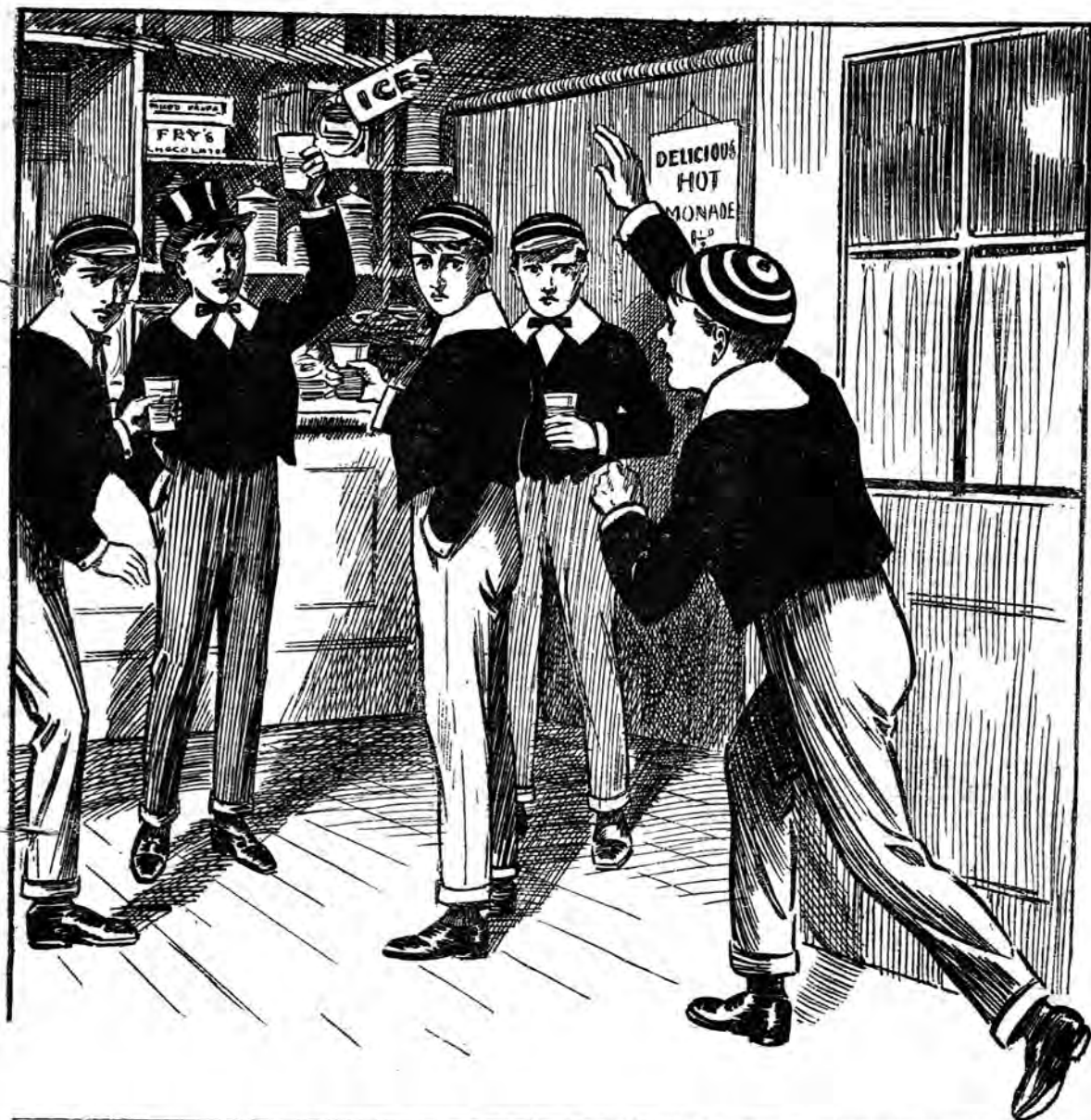
Lumley did not stir.

Mellish glanced round the study helplessly. He was strangely frightened, and it was on his lips to shriek for help.

But a glass of water stood on the table. He seized it, and dashed the water into Jerrold Lumley's face.

The Outsider stirred and shivered.

His eyes turned upon Mellish with a cold and glassy stare that sent a shiver through the cad of the Fourth. But he was inexpressibly relieved to see Lumley move a little.



"Don't drink!" exclaimed Mellish springing forward, white and excited. "For goodness' sake don't!"
Tom Merry & Co. lowered their glasses in amazement. (See page 15.)

"Lumley! What's the matter with you?" Mellish gasped.
"Matter!"

"Yes. What is it?"

Lumley looked at him dazedly, and passed his hand across his brow, evidently for the moment not recollecting where he was.

"What—what is it?" he muttered. "What's happened? My face is wet! How did my face become wet?"

"I threw the water over you. You fainted or something."

"Fainted!"

"Yes. You didn't speak or move, anyway," said Mellish, his alarm subsiding as he saw that Lumley-Lumley was looking more like his old self again every moment now. "I was a bit scared, I tell you!"

The Outsider of St. Jim's staggered to his feet. His head was swimming, and he was very pale, and he grasped at the back of the chair for support.

Mellish made a move forward, as if to help him, but the Outsider waved him sharply and impatiently back.

"I'm all right!" he said curtly.

"Oh, very well! But—"

"Leave me alone!"

Mellish stood back. The Outsider was himself again now,

and there was the old unpleasant, sneering expression upon his face. If Mellish had felt a real friendship for the Outsider, the latter would have tried it very severely.

"I'm all right, I guess!" said Jerrold, speaking a little thickly. "It's only an—attack! I've had them before. I feel a little faint, that's all; but it's a rotten lie to say that I fainted! I've never fainted in my life!"

"You fainted then."

"It's a lie!" said Lumley fiercely.

Mellish drew back a pace.

"Oh, have it as you like!" he said sullenly. "I don't care a rap myself; it's no business of mine whether you fainted or not! If I were you, I should see a doctor, that's all!"

"Rot!"

"Well, I don't care! I came here to speak to you," said Mellish, changing the subject. "Your name's down—"

"Don't speak of this out of the study!" said Lumley, interrupting him with a harsh frown. "I don't want to be known as a spooney!"

Mellish made a gesture of deprecation.

"D'you feel quite better now?" he asked.

"I tell you I didn't faint!" said Lumley-Lumley doggedly.

"If Blake & Co. had seen you in that armchair, you'd have hard work to get them to believe you."

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The Outsider waved his hand impatiently. "There'll be no reason for Jack Blake & Co. to hear anything about it, if I've anything to do with it!" he said threateningly. "Why are you harping on that string?"

"Your name's in the team for the match with the Shell."

"Well? Tell me something new!"

"That is a novelty!" returned Mellish. "Does that mean that Blake is taking you up?"

The Outsider set his lips.

"So you're jealous—eh, Mellish?" he said quietly.

"I!" retorted Mellish. "Not much! You're welcome to a place in their rotten team, I assure you!"

The Outsider laughed.

"I didn't mean you were jealous of me," he said. "You must be a tenderfoot, Mellish, to think you can lay over me like that! Keep your mouth shut about this, that's all!"

Mellish bit his lip. He knew only too well what Lumley-Lumley meant in the last remark. The cad of the Lower School was deeply in debt to the Outsider.

Jerrold Lumley kicked open the door.

"Where are you going?" said Mellish.

"To an appointment with Blake & Co. on the football-field," said Lumley coolly.

The laugh that accompanied the words made Mellish wince. And with the slamming of the door, he realised that though he was alone, the Outsider knew as well as himself what his thoughts were. They were not pleasant ones!

"It can't last!" muttered Mellish. "That's one thing that's jolly certain; it can't last! There will be a row before long. Lumley's not the chap to pull with Jack Blake for a long time!"

And perhaps Mellish was right there.

CHAPTER 8.

What's the Matter with Lumley?

TOM MERRY walked slowly from the Shell class-room. Afternoon lessons were just over, and everyone was talking about football practice.

But the captain of the Shell did not join in. He was moody and thoughtful. The inclusion of the Outsider in the Fourth team puzzled him.

Manners and Lowther came along.

"Hallo, Tommy!" cried Manners. "Coming to help us push about the leather?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

The Shell skipper was puzzled.

He was thinking of the Outsider.

"Football, Tommy!" said Lowther persuasively.

"No," said Tom Merry—"no; I don't think I'll go down just now."

"Why? What the—?" began both the chums at once.

"I thought of going to watch the Fourth practice," went on Tom Merry.

Manners and Lowther exchanged glances. They understood. Blake's selection had puzzled them, too.

"But, really, Tommy," said Lowther, "we ought to do a little towards discrediting Kipling's famous statement about chaps who play about goals to-day. Now, do I look like a muddled oaf?"

"No. You're a windbag, Monty! Deflate, old chap! What's the row, Tommy?" asked Manners.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Nothing at all, Manners. I merely thought I'd go and watch the Fourth practice. There's a change in the team, you know."

"Rotten!" said Lowther emphatically.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Rotten or not, I suppose we shall have to play against him," said Tom Merry. "Have either of you seen him play?"

"Ish!" said Lowther.

"Oh, ring off, Monty! What sort of an answer's that?"

"Goodish! Fairish! Badish! Cadish!" went on Monty Lowther, with a grin.

Manners nodded to the captain of the Shell that he agreed with Lowther.

Tom Merry frowned a little.

"Anyway," he said, "I'll see for myself what Lumley's play is like. Blake's lot are turning out for five sharp. Bye-bye!"

"Oh, we'll come with you!"

"Good wheeze, Monty! The more the merrier!" said Tom Merry.

"Good!" said Lowther. "I wouldn't miss the trial trip of the new jersey for anything."

"Lumley-Lumley outside-right," said Manners, quoting the team-sheet.

"Outside rats!" said Lowther. "Come on!"

And, arm-in-arm, the Terrible Three went down to the junior football-field.

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"THE BLUE CRUSADERS" is the most popular football team of the day.

The practice game had just started. The game was not a full one, each side being several men short. But Tom Merry & Co. knew that Blake had got it up for the express purpose of seeing how Lumley shaped.

Figgins captained one side, Blake the other. All eyes were on the Outsider. But there was some surprise, and not a little comment, when the Terrible Three joined the spectators.

"They think they've got a soft thing on for Saturday, Blake," whispered Lumley-Lumley.

But Jack Blake did not appear to hear. As a matter of fact, he had already seen that the Outsider needed all his wind for playing.

"Blake, deah boy, Tom Mewwy & Co. are watchin'!"

"Yes; I know, ass! And if you were, you wouldn't have to rely on Figgy to take a pass that Lumley meant for you!"

"You don't mean to say, Blake—I'm sure, Lumley, I beg yowah pardon, deah—"

"On the ball!" roared Blake.

But the Terrible Three saw the sneer with which the Outsider returned D'Arcy's generous apology.

"Pig!" said Monty Lowther.

"He plays very decently, though," Manners remarked.

"And his going is very much above what I expected," said Tom Merry.

"Indeed, my sons," said Lowther. "Well, next time he comes down the wing, just listen and you'll hear a noise like someone blowing a fire."

"You don't mean to say that Lumley's puffed?"

"Yes, I do, Tom Merry, my son. I'll bet you what you like Blake goes for him about his wind when it's over," said Monty Lowther. "By Jove! That was a neat bit, though, kids!"

"It was," said Tom Merry and Manners together.

The Outsider was certainly playing up. He seemed to do just what he liked with the opposition.

"Here he come!" said Manners. "And, my hat, he doesn't look as if he's winded now!"

By a series of clever passes, Lumley-Lumley and Reilly had got the ball to themselves. With a clear field in front, the Outsider suddenly showed a desire to keep it to himself. On he came, with the patient Reilly in attendance at inside right. Kerruish, who had been lent to the opposition, came out to meet him.

"His right's all right," said Monty Lowther, "but he can't even dribble with his left."

The Outsider heard Lowther's remark. Flinging a look of defiance at the chums of the Shell, he turned to dodge Kerruish.

But Monty Lowther was right. The Outsider's left foot was his undoing. Feinting, as if he were about to pass to Reilly, he clumsily kicked the ball in earnest.

The ball went farther forward than he had intended in any case, and Kerruish made no mistake. He almost snarled as the Manxman sent the leather flying into mid-field.

"Serve the greedy beggar right!" said Manners disgustedly. "Fancy, with Reilly at his side like patience on a monument!"

"That won't do, Lumley!" rang out Jack Blake's voice.

"What won't?" said the Outsider, testily.

"Pottering about with the ball like you were doing then.

It was a certain goal if you had passed to Reilly."

"Was it?" called out Fatty Wynn. The renowned goalie of the Fourth had also been lent to the scratch team Blake was playing.

"Shut up, Fatty!" said Blake. "You mustn't keep the ball to yourself, Lumley. I don't like losing points. And besides, it isn't the game."

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"Faith, now, it's a good skipper ye are, Blake!" said Reilly.

"Get up the field! And you, too, Lumley—"

"I suppose if I want to go for goal myself, I've a right to please myself!" said Lumley-Lumley sulkily.

"No, you haven't—you'll do what your captain tells you! Buzz off!"

Lumley-Lumley reluctantly obeyed. He had been more used to giving orders than taking them, but he was conscious that Blake was taking note of his hard breathing, and he said no more.

"Well? Did you hear him breathing like a broken-winded cab-horse, Tommy?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Oh, I say, Monty!" said Tom Merry, keeping his eyes on the play at the other end of the field. "His breathing sounds like too much cigarette, certainly, but he plays very decently, as I said before."

To do Lumley-Lumley justice, his addition to the Fourth did not seem such a bad thing as the Terrible Three had anticipated. Except for that fault in his wind, he played up in a manner that would have drawn Tom Merry's attention at any time. Tom Merry was a keen football skipper, and he knew that Lumley-Lumley would make a splendid forward if he stuck manfully to the game, and let smoking alone. He determined to say as much to him when he came off the field. His chief fault was selfishness in play, but after Blake's warning he was not likely to be guilty of that again—or, at all events, not so openly.

The practice ended, and the Fourth-Formers came over, breathing deeply. Lumley-Lumley glanced at Tom Merry, with a slight sneer on his face.

"Well, as you've come to the show, what's your opinion of it?" he asked.

Tom Merry did not like either his tone or his manner, but he was not there to quarrel with Lumley-Lumley. He answered quietly.

"I think you play wonderfully well, considering."

The Outsider was a little taken aback. He could never understand that a fellow might be on bad terms with him, and yet be a generous foe. He had expected detraction at least, if not open jeering.

"I guess that's all right," he remarked, after a pause.

"Yes. If you want a word of advice from a fellow who's played more footer than you have, keep off the smoking," said Tom Merry.

Lumley looked at him with a peculiar expression.

"I haven't smoked to-day," he said, "nor yesterday—nor the day before. I gave it up when I thought of entering the Form eleven."

"Then what's the matter with your wind?" demanded Jack Blake. "I couldn't help noticing that you were rocky there, Lumley."

"I'm all right—sound as a bell."

"Rather too much sound," remarked Monty Lowther—"in fact, quite a noise!"

"It will mend," said Lumley, looking at Blake without heeding the humorist of the Shell. "I shall play up all right on Saturday, you'll see."

"I hope so."

"And we'll win," said Jerrold Lumley. "The Shell are booked for a licking, I guess, and—"

He broke off short. A strange paleness swept over his face, and he caught suddenly at Tom Merry, who was nearest to him, for support.

As he grasped the Shell fellow's shoulder, Tom Merry, greatly surprised, but on the alert at once, reached out a hand to hold him. Lumley-Lumley leaned heavily upon the hero of the Shell for a moment.

"Good heavens!" cried Blake, in real alarm. "What's the matter, Lumley?"

The Outsider straightened up.

"Nothing," he said thickly, through his teeth.

"But—but what—"

"I'm all right now. It was just a little faintness."

And without another word the Outsider of St. Jim's dragged his coat about him and strode away without assistance to the School House.

Blake looked after him with a very doubtful expression, and then met Tom Merry's eyes.

"Blessed if I know what to make of it," he said.

"He can't be fit."

"Wathah not, deah boys!"

"Yet he played up all right," said Blake. "Well, if he's not fit on Saturday, I shall play Hancock in his place. But I hope he will be. It really looks to me as if we've been a bit hard on the chap, you know—and he's got his good points. I shall play him on Saturday if he's able to play."

"Yaas, wathah!"

CHAPTER 9.

A Slight Suspicion.

JERROLD LUMLEY'S form on the football-field excited a certain amount of surprise among the juniors. The contempt he had always expressed for manly sports of all kinds had not led the fellows to suppose that he would ever develop as a footballer. The fact that he had done so, and that Jack Blake was playing him in the Fourth-Form team, gave the juniors something to talk about. Lumley's faintness after the footer practice, too, was commented upon. But when the Outsider was seen afterwards, he showed no sign of that. He was as cool, collected, keen as ever, and certainly did not look as if he was ill in any way. The general impression he gave was that he would be in good form physically on the Saturday, and that he would do his Form credit in the match against the Shell.

"He's a curious beggar, that chap," Kangaroo of the Shell remarked to a group of Shell fellows, as Lumley-Lumley passed them, going down to another practice. "There's a lot in him, though he's a howling outsider in most things. He has a way of doing things he's set his mind on. Now, a couple of weeks ago no one would have imagined that he would become a footballer, and now—"

"Yes, it's odd," said Tom Merry.

"Then no one would have guessed that he'd ever get a place in the Form team for the Fourth—but he's got it."

"Yes, rather!"

"I don't like him," said Kangaroo, "but a chap must admit that there's something in him. Do you know, a lot of fellows believe that the Fourth will lick us on Saturday, just because Lumley-Lumley has said so."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Rot!" said Manners.

"I know it's rot," agreed Kangaroo. "We shall lick them hands down. At the same time, I hear that Lumley-Lumley told Blake that if he were played, he would guarantee that the Fourth Form would win."

"Gas!"

"And he offered to lay a big sum on it."

"Well, he knew that Blake wouldn't bet," Gore remarked.

"Perhaps that was it, but—"

"But what?" asked Tom Merry, as the Cornstalk junior paused.

"Well," said Kangaroo slowly, "Lumley-Lumley believed what he said, of course. The question is, how did he feel so certain? He may think a lot of his own play, but he can't think enough of it to feel certain the Fourth will win just because he's in the team. He's not idiot enough for that!"

"Hardly."

"Then why does he feel so sure?"

"Give it up," said Clifton Dane. "What do you think?"

Kangaroo was silent again.

"Well," said Tom Merry, "what are you thinking of, Kangy? What are you making a blessed mystery about?"

"I hardly like to say what I was thinking," said the Cornstalk slowly. "It looks so jolly suspicious. But—"

"Go ahead."

"What are you suspecting?"

"I suppose it isn't possible that Lumley was thinking of foul play of any sort?" said Kangaroo slowly.

Tom Merry started.

"Foul play!"

"Yes. He was so jolly certain about winning."

"Do you mean fouling any of us on the field?"

"Oh, no, that wasn't the idea! But—well, the thought's hardly shaped in my mind at all, really, only—only how did he feel so jolly certain?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Just gas, I expect," he said. "I don't see any way he could get at us, Kangy. I suppose he couldn't have any of us spirited away before the match, eh?"

The juniors laughed.

But the Australian lad was quite serious.

"Well, if some of the best of us couldn't play, the match would have to take place all the same, as there's no other date open," he said. "Then the Fourth would lick the Shell."

"That's so, but—"

"But we shall all play," said Monty Lowther.

"Yes, I suppose so."

"I don't trust Lumley," said Tom Merry, "but—hang it!—I don't think any thoughts of that kind are in his head, Kangy. Not that I blame you for suspecting the bouncer! He's always shown himself such an unscrupulous cad!"

"Well, we shall see."

And so the talk ended. But the juniors remembered it—and ere long, too, they had good reason to remember it, and to admit that the Cornstalk had not been over-suspicious after all, but had been the keenest of any of them.

The Shell were turning up to regular practice now, as well as the Fourth. Tom Merry had every confidence in his team,

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but he was not the kind of leader to leave anything to chance. The team was a very strong one, consisting of seven School House fellows and four from the New House. The School House fellows were the Terrible Three, and Kangaroo, Glyn, Clifton Dane, and Gore. From the New House came French, Jimson, Payne, and Richards.

Tom Merry felt that that was a team that could stand up to anything the Fourth Form could muster, and win. Blake and Figgins were of a different opinion, but Saturday would decide. If the Fourth could beat the Shell, Tom Merry was quite willing that the junior captaincy should pass from the Shell to the Fourth. If the Shell could not hold it, they did not deserve to have it. But nobody in the Shell had the least expectation of a defeat—unless Kangaroo had a lingering suspicion that the cunning of Lumley-Lumley would overreach them in some under-hand way.

By Saturday morning, at all events, nothing had happened to shake the confidence of the Shell. It was a fine, bright morning, cold and clear, and the Shell fellows were feeling in the highest of spirits.

So were the Fourth, for that matter. When they came out after morning classes, Jack Blake met Tom Merry in the passage, and gave him a cheerful grin.

"Getting ready for the licking?" he asked.

"We're getting ready to give it!" he said.

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Many wats, deah boy!"

"All of you fit?" asked Blake.

"Fit as fiddles!"

"Lumley said he thought you were looking a bit pale this morning, at brekker."

"Stuff! I don't feel pale, anyway!"

"No, you look all wight," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his monocle and giving Tom Merry a leisurely survey through it. "You will probably give us some little trouble before we lick you."

"Well, we'll try to!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

The juniors went to dinner in high spirits. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley glanced across from the Fourth-Form table several times at Tom Merry, with a somewhat peculiar expression upon his face.

Blake followed his glance, and grinned.

"Tom Merry's all right," he said. "You were mistaken, Lumley. He's as right as rain!"

Lumley shook his head.

"He doesn't look to me quite steady!"

"Well, he does to me. By the way, how are you feeling yourself?"

Lumley's lips twitched for a moment. There was very little colour in his face, but there was grim determination in every feature.

"I'm as right as anything, I guess!"

"Good! You look a little pale yourself."

"Oh, that's nothing—I never have a high colour," said Lumley-Lumley. "I haven't been smoking, if that's what you mean. I'm as fit as a fiddle!"

Jack Blake nodded, and the subject dropped.

CHAPTER 10.

A Surprise.

THE kick-off was timed for half-past two, as the days were growing shorter. But that left a good interval between dinner and the kick-off. When the boys came out of the School House dining-room, Jerrold Lumley strolled upstairs to his study. A few minutes later, Mellish followed him. Mellish seemed very much interested in the movements of Lumley-Lumley of late.

Since his inclusion in the Form team, Lumley had hardly spoken a word to his former crony.

Mellish, certainly, was not the kind of fellow any decent lad would want to chum with.

If Lumley-Lumley had made up his mind to be decent, it was only natural that he should want to see as little of Mellish as he could, and only meet him when they were thrown together by the fact that they occupied the same study in the Fourth-Form passage. At the same time, the Outsider might have been a little more delicate in the way he dropped an old friend.

Mellish, truly, was a toady and hanger-on rather than a friend. All the same, he might have been dropped a little more politely. But Lumley-Lumley had never shown much consideration for others in any part of his career.

He had taken up with Blake and the decent set, and was certainly trying to get on with them. He did not want Mellish any more. He dropped him.

He did not know, and did not care, what a tempest of rage this roused in the breast of the cad of the Fourth.

The humiliation of being taken up or dropped at pleasure was not pleasant, but Mellish had stood that sort of thing

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many times. But now Lumley-Lumley no longer chummed with him, a source of income was cut off. Mellish could borrow no more money of him; and it was as if the horn of plenty had suddenly run dry. Then, Mellish had no other friend—nobody liked the carping, sneering, ill-natured fellow. His only study-mate had friends outside the study; and Mellish had no companionship now within it, and very little outside. Lumley regarded him openly as a sort of dog that would come and go at a nod. Mellish had toadied to Lumley, but had never liked him. Now he had nothing to gain from him, and he did not conceal his dislike—which was rapidly intensifying into a bitter hatred.

Mellish knew all about the Outsider's declaration that if he were played in the Fourth team, the Shell would lose.

And Mellish was far more keen than other fellows when it came to smelling out evil. What was only a vague suspicion in Kangaroo's mind, was perfectly clear in Mellish's. He knew, as well as if Lumley-Lumley had told him so, that the Outsider meditated some treachery towards Tom Merry & Co.

The question was, what form would it take? How did he intend to take measures to make the Shell lose that important match?

Mellish pondered over it, and kept his eyes on Lumley-Lumley, quite unknown to that youth. Lumley despised Mellish too much to dream of fearing him.

Mellish divined Lumley's thoughts on the subject. The Shell defeated, the captaincy of the junior teams would pass to the Fourth Form—to Blake or Figgins. Lumley, then, would always be assured of a place in the Junior Eleven—he might even aspire to become its captain.

Only, Tom Merry & Co. had to be defeated first!

How?

In a fair match they had at the very best equal chances—as a matter of fact, they had more than equal chances, as a higher and older Form.

Foul play was intended, then. Mellish knew that. Yet Saturday afternoon had come without any move on the part of the Outsider. It wanted but an hour to the match. What was Lumley-Lumley thinking of? Mellish pondered as he followed on the track of Lumley-Lumley upstairs.

There was a very spiteful look on Mellish's face.

If he could catch Lumley-Lumley in his treacherous scheme, whatever it was—if he could gain clear proof—then to denounce him before Tom Merry!

That was Mellish's idea—his revenge for Lumley's insolence of late. It would show the Outsider that if his friendship was not to be valued, at all events his enmity was to be feared.

Mellish grinned at the prospect. If he could only contrive it. But Lumley-Lumley seemed too deep for him.

Mellish paused outside the study door. Lumley had closed it after going in. Mellish listened, and heard the sound as of a glass touching a glass.

His heart beat.

There was something curiously secretive about the sound—something that set his thoughts alert. He suddenly threw open the door and stepped into the study.

Lumley-Lumley was standing at the table.

Mellish saw that he had a glass in his hand, and that a phial was standing on the table, half full of a whitish liquid. Lumley-Lumley was stirring something in the glass—a pale liquid with a dull opal light in it.

Only for a second did Mellish see as much.

The glass fell from Lumley-Lumley's hand as he swung round startled, and crashed into a hundred pieces on the floor.

A look of black fury swept over the Outsider's face.

Mellish started back.

"Sorry," he muttered. "I—I—"

"You spying hound!" roared Lumley. "You—you sneaking spy!"

He sprang towards the cad of the Fourth.

Mellish, scared by his expression, made a spring back to the door. The Outsider rushed at him and seized him by the throat, and shook him as a dog shakes a rat.

Mellish gasped and struggled.

"Let go!" he muttered thickly. "You're choking me! Let go! You mad fool, let me go!"

"You spying hound!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had just come upstairs to change into his football things, and had caught sight of the strange scene in the passage.

He ran forward, and caught the Outsider's arm.

"Welease him, you ass!" he exclaimed. "You are hurtin' him!"

Lumley-Lumley looked for a moment as if he would turn upon D'Arcy, but he was already recovering command of his temper, and he did not.



A look of black fury swept over the Outsider's face. "You spying hound!" he roared. "You—you sneaking spy!" Mellish started back. "Sorry," he muttered. (See page 12.)

He released Mellish, and flung him to the floor. The cad of the Fourth lay there gasping for some moments, and then picked himself up, and, looking like a spiteful cat, slunk away.

D'Arcy looked at the Outsider in astonishment.

"Weally, Lumlay, I wegard this as goin' too fah!" he exclaimed. "You were chokin' that boundah!"

Lumley breathed hard.

"Hang him!" he said.

"Yaas, wathah! I have not the slightest doubt that he deserves to be hanged!" assented Arthur Augustus. "But I must remark, that I do not approve of this wuffianly conduct, Lumlay!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Lumlay——"

Jerrold Lumley went into his study and slammed the door. D'Arcy stared indignantly at the closed door for a moment, and then, swallowing his wrath, he went away to his own quarters.

Lumley stood gritting his teeth in the study.

"Hang him!" he muttered. "Hang him!" He was not referring to D'Arcy. "Did he see? But if he did—he couldn't guess! Hang him!"

Five minutes later Jerrold Lumley quitted the study, with

a slightly worried wrinkle in his brow. He looked for Mellish, and found him on the School House steps. Mellish did not speak as he came up, but his eyes burned.

"I guess I'm sorry I handled you so, just now," said Lumley, as civilly as he could. "You startled me, you know. I was just taking—some medicine, and I wasted it dropping the glass!"

Mellish made no reply.

"Look here, if five bob's any use to you," said Lumley, rattling some money in his pocket.

Mellish's eyes glittered.

"I don't want your money," he said.

Lumley-Lumley gave him a searching glance, and then shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess you can do as you like about that," he said, carelessly, as he walked away.

Tom Merry was just coming in to the School House. He stopped for a moment to look at Mellish.

"Turning over a new leaf?" he asked, with a laugh.

Mellish looked at him.

"I've got a reason for not touching Lumley-Lumley's money," he said. "I wouldn't touch it—or the chap himself—with a poker!"

Tom Merry whistled.

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"You've been chummy enough with him up till lately," he said.

"That's over!"

"Yes; I've noticed it. But——"

"You don't blame him for treating me as he has done!" said Mellish, with a sneer. "Well, perhaps I shall have something to tell you about him—soon!"

And Mellish walked away without saying more, leaving Tom Merry in a state of considerable astonishment.

CHAPTER 11.

A Sudden Warning.

FATTY WYNN, with his extremely plump calves showing beneath a very well-filled-out overcoat, paused outside Dame Taggles' little tuckshop under the elm, in a corner of the great, rambling quadrangle of St. Jim's. He looked rather dubiously at Figgins and Kerr, who were watching him.

"What would you fellows say to a few tarts?" he asked.

"I should say rats!" said Figgins, cheerfully. "What would you say, Kerr?"

"Rats!" said Kerr.

"Well," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully, "suppose we say buns, then?"

"Rats!"

"Or cream puffs?"

"More rats."

"I'm feeling rather peckish," said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "I get awfully hungry in this late autumn weather. No good trying to play without laying a solid foundation, you know."

Figgins laughed.

"Take his other arm, Kerr," he said, linking an arm with Fatty Wynn. "Let's march him out of the danger zone."

"Ha, ha! All right."

"Hold on!" said the fat Fourth-Former. "You see——"

"Hallo!" came a cheery hail from the tuckshop. "Hallo! Come and have some lemonade! It's home-made, and hot, and jolly good—the best Dame Taggles has ever made."

It was Tom Merry who gave the invitation. Figgins & Co. halted.

"Right-ho!" said Figgins, "we'll come!"

"Well, I suppose we can have some lemonade," said Kerr, as they turned back towards the tuckshop; "but no grub, mind, Fatty. You're not going to blow yourself out and lose the match to the Shell, if I know it."

Fatty Wynn grunted.

"I should keep goal better if——"

"If you filled yourself up to the chin with pastries," said Figgins, laughing. "Yes, I'll wager you would! Lemonade, Fatty, but no grub."

"Oh, all right, ass!"

And Figgins & Co. entered the tuckshop. It was already pretty well filled. Mellish was sitting in one corner, eating tarts. A pleased look came over his face as Fatty Wynn came in. He wasn't particularly pleased to see Fatty. It was not that at all. But he knew how it would make Fatty suffer to see a fellow eating tarts that he could not touch. That was very pleasant to the amiable Mellish.

The Terrible Three were there, with Kangaroo and several more of the Shell. Blake and D'Arcy and Digby stood at the counter with glasses. Mrs. Taggles was beaming behind her fortifications of tarts, and buns, and cakes, and bottles of sweets. Dame Taggles was a famous brewer of home-made lemonade, and it was a very pleasant drink on a cold day, hot and steaming.

"More glasses," said Tom Merry cheerily. "This won't hurt you, Figgy."

"No fear, my son."

"I should think that just a slice of cake with the lemonade——" began Fatty Wynn.

"Not a morsel."

"A biscuit or two——"

"Stuff!"

"That's what he wants to do," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn cast a longing glance at the piles of good things on the counter. As if by a special spite of fate, Mrs. Taggles had a new supply of tarts there, in luscious piles on a big china dish.

The fat Fourth-Former uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Was that Ratty calling?"

Ratty—Mr. Ratcliff—was House-master of the New House. Figgins and Kerr turned quickly towards the door, expecting to see the unamiable features of their House-master looking in.

But there was no one in the doorway but Jerrold Lumley Lumley, who was just coming in.

The moment they had turned their backs Fatty Wynn made a dive for the tarts. He simply couldn't resist them.

He had grabbed the first one, and was darting it to his mouth, when Figgins turned back and caught him fairly in the act.

Figgins did not speak. There was no time for words. But he caught Fatty's hand as it shot towards his mouth, and slanted it, so that the tart was dabbed upon his nose instead of into his mouth.

It was a nice, soft, flaky tart, with plenty of jam, and it dabbed on Fatty Wynn's round little nose and stuck there.

There was a yell of laughter in the shop.

"Ow!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Groooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty scratched off the tart, and glared at Figgins. Figgins roared.

"You ass!" howled Fatty. "You fathead! I——"

"Serve you right," said Kerr, with a grin. "You know jolly well Ratty isn't anywhere near here. You were just tricking us, you boulder."

"Well, I——"

"I wegard it as a wank deception," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the fat Fourth-Former.

"I am suppwised at you, Wynn."

"Rats!" said Wynn heatedly. "It was a stratagem."

"I wegard it as a wank——"

"Oh, bosh!"

"If you chawactewise my wemarks as bosh, Fatty Wynn——"

"Well, I do! Bosh! Rubbish!"

"Then I shall have no wesource——"

"Here, hold on, keep the peace!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "No rows till after the match. Keep your kids in order, Blake."

"All right," said Jack Blake cheerily. "If Gussy makes a row, I'll souse him in lemonade."

"I should uttably wefuse to be soused in lemonade, Blake. I——"

"Here, give a chap a chance to get to the counter," said Lumley-Lumley. "I want some of that lemonade."

"Pway excuse me, deah boy——"

"I'll excuse you if you get out of the way."

"Weally, Lumley——"

"Thanks!" said the Outsider, pushing D'Arcy aside, and taking his place at the counter. "Time you kids were getting down to the ground, I guess. Hallo, our friends the enemy!" he went on, looking at Tom Merry and his chums with a very cordial expression. "Will you have some lemonade with me?"

"Thanks, we've had some."

"Oh, have another glass—for the sake of good-fellowship!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Look here, I know you fellows were surprised at Blake's playing me. I know you don't like it. I guess I don't blame you. We haven't pulled together, and I own up that it was mostly my fault. I can't say fairer than that."

NEXT THURSDAY:

"The New Boy's Secret."

Another Splendid Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



"There's simply no limit to the feed, except the amount of cash you have in your pockets," explained Blake. Fatty Wynn gave him a freezing look, while the juniors burst into a roar. "You utter ass!" exclaimed the fat junior, indignantly. (See page 4.)

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as a vewy pwopah thing for Lumley to say."

"Fair enough," said Blake.

"Well, what I mean is, I want to look forward, and not backward, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley. "Blake will tell you that I play the game, on the footer field. I don't want you fellows to feel rusty about it. I mean to play up and beat you if possible, but you'll find that I play the game all the time. If I don't, Blake's at liberty to kick me out of the team, and I'll admit I deserve it. Now, all that's over—and you'll have a lemonade with me?"

"Oh, certainly!" said Tom Merry, in his good-tempered way. "I'm sure I don't want to keep up any ill-feeling, as far as that goes. I've never made an enemy purposely, and I don't want to begin now. I'm willing."

"Same here," said Manners. "As a matter of fact, I'm willing to admit that some of us have been a bit rough on you, Lumley, and haven't made enough allowance for the kind of training you had before you came here."

"All serene!" said Monty Lowther. "All olive-branches accepted as soon as offered, and misunderstandings made up while you wait. And it's jolly good lemonade, anyway."

"I guess that's all right, then," said Lumley-Lumley.

He took the steaming jug and poured out the lemonade. Mellish, with a strange, startled look, was watching him like a cat. Lumley-Lumley filled four big glasses, and then another.

"You, too, Kangaroo?"

"Oh, all serene!" said the Cornstalk, cordially enough.

Lumley handed the four Shell fellows the glasses. Then he raised his own.

"Good health and good fellowship!" he said.

"Hear, hear!"

Mellish sprang forward, white and excited.

"Don't drink!" he shouted.

"What?"

"Don't drink! For goodness' sake, dont!"

Tom Merry and his friends lowered their glasses in amazement. Mellish's scared face was enough for that, without his words. Lumley-Lumley's face seemed convulsed; but he was making a giant effort to calm himself.

"What do you mean, Mellish?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Why shouldn't we drink?"

"Because he's put something in the lemonade!"

"What?"

CHAPTER 12.

Accused.

THERE was a dead silence in the tuckshop. The four Shell fellows stood still with their glasses in their hands, their faces pale and startled. Lumley-Lumley seemed petrified.

He stood quite motionless, leaning on the counter, and save for the wild light burning in his eyes, might have been turned to stone.

The juniors stood crowding round breathlessly, amazed. The silence was suddenly broken.

The glass slipped from Manners's hand, and fell with a crash to the floor, where it was shattered to pieces.

The crash of the breaking glass broke the spell that seemed to have fallen upon the juniors. There was a buzz of voices.

"What do you mean, Mellish?"

"What has he put in it?"

"Are you joking?"

"Explain."

"It's—it's a lie," said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley thickly. "It's a rotten lie. I've put nothing in it."

Tom Merry looked at his pale, hardened face, and then turned his glance upon Mellish. Mellish had his hand still upraised as if to warn. He lowered it now to his side.

"What do you mean by that, Mellish?" asked Tom Merry quietly. "You say that Lumley has put something into the lemonade?"

"Yes."

Mellish gasped out the word.

"Do you mean that he is japing us—that he has put something nasty into it?"

"More than that?"

"What more?"

"Ask him," said Mellish—"ask him what was in the liquid he was mixing in the study just after dinner, when I interrupted him. Ask him what's in the bottle he's got in his waistcoat pocket at this minute."

"Have you a bottle there, Lumley?"

Lumley's hand had gone unconsciously towards his pocket. He tried to brazen it out with a laugh.

"Yes," he said.

"What was in it?"

"A medicine I've been taking lately. It's a soothing medicine—for the nerves."

"Is there any of it left?"

"I don't know."

"Let me see the bottle."

Lumley-Lumley drew a small phial from his waistcoat pocket, and held it up. It was of colourless glass, without a label, and quite empty.

"It's all gone," he said.

"It is in your lemonade," said Mellish.

"Liar!"

"Wait a bit," said Tom Merry quietly. "Mellish is a liar, as we all know very well, but it looks to me as if he's speaking the truth this time."

"And to me," said Kangaroo. "You remember what I said to you fellows—I felt all the time that Lumley intended some foul play."

"I guess I won't stay here to listen to this," said Lumley-Lumley fiercely, and he thrust forward through the crowd.

He thrust against Monty Lowther, and Lowther's glass went with a crash to the floor, and the liquid in it was gone in a moment. Kangaroo uttered a fierce exclamation, and held his own glass back in safety. But at the same moment Lumley's hand struck Tom Merry's glass, and sent it spinning. It crashed down and was broken.

"Hold him back!" cried Kangaroo. "He's trying to destroy the stuff."

Lumley was plunging towards the Cornstalk. But Tom Merry seized him in a grip of iron, and hurled him back towards the counter.

"None of that!" he said fiercely.

The Outsider, pale and breathless, reeled against the counter. Mellish looked at him with a hard, sneering smile. There was grim condemnation in every face now, and the cad of the Fourth was triumphant.

"Keep that glass safe, Kangaroo," said Tom Merry. "It's the only one left—it's pretty clear why Lumley wanted to destroy them."

"That—that was accidental—"

"You lie," said Tom Merry icily. "You know you lie, Jerrold Lumley. Keep that glass out of his reach, Kangy."

"What-ho!" said the Cornstalk.

"Now, Mellish, tell us what you know about this, and we'll see," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I knew he was up to some tricks, all along," said Mellish, with a gleam of great satisfaction in his eyes, and quite a relish in his voice. "I knew he never meant to play

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the game. I knew when he said so certainly that the Shell would lose, that the Shell would lose if he could work it. He knew he'd never be played in the junior team while Tom Merry was captain, and he wanted the captaincy to go to a Fourth Form fellow. That was his game. He was always certain of a good place in the team if Blake became junior captain, after to-day. Oh, I knew his game from start to finish, I can tell you."

Lumley's lips moved, but he did not speak.

"Enough of that," said Tom Merry. "Never mind your suspicions; tell us what you know."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I knew he intended some trick," said Mellish. "That's why I kept an eye on him. I went into the study after dinner, and found him mixing something in a glass—something that was in that little bottle. He was so startled that he dropped the glass and broke it."

"It was my medicine," said Lumley.

Mellish sneered.

"Then why did you jump at me like a wild cat, and half choke me?" he said. "I had a right to go into my own study if I liked, I suppose. D'Arcy saw how you were treating me."

"Yaas, that's quite true. I was in the passage, deah boys, and I saw Lumley tweekin' Mellish in a most wuffian way, and I stopped him. But for the circ, that he was playin' in the team to-day I should certainly have given him a feahful thwashin'."

"Cheese it, Gussy! Go on, Mellish."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Go on, Mellish! Buck up!"

"Well, I guessed something then," said Mellish, "but I wasn't sure. It seemed too horrible, and that's the truth. But when he came to me and tried to be friendly, and offered me some money, then I was certain. Tom Merry heard him offering me the money, and heard me refuse it."

"That's so," said Tom Merry.

"I told you I should have something to tell you about Lumley later?"

"You did."

"I couldn't tell you then—there was no proof. You'd have said it was some more of my lies," said Mellish unpleasantly.

"Very likely."

Mellish bit his lip.

"Well, I kept an eye on you fellows after that. I knew that Lumley meant to get at you somehow before the match. When he came in here, and proposed that you should drink with him, then I knew his game. I watched him. I suppose you others didn't see him pour anything into the jug before he filled your glasses?"

"No."

"Well, he did. He had the thing in his sleeve, I think. He filled his own glass, and then he dropped the stuff in. He's a cunning hound. I shouldn't have seen it if I hadn't been specially watching, knowing what was coming."

Mellish ceased.

Every eye was burning upon Lumley-Lumley now. The Outsider of St. Jim's had fully recovered his coolness.

"Well, what have you to say, Lumley?" asked Jack Blake, taking up the questioning.

Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"Only that it's a string of lies."

"You deny it?"

"Yes, from beginning to end."

"It does sound a bit thick," said Digby. "But Mellish has two witnesses for part of the yarn, at any rate."

"Oh, he's worked that, of course," said Jerrold Lumley.

"He made me break a glass, and I lost my temper and went for him. Then I thought I'd been a bit rough, and as he'd been bothering me for money lately, I guessed I'd lend him a few shillings. That's all there was in it."

The juniors exchanged dubious glances.

Certainly Lumley-Lumley's explanation was plausible enough, and it required an effort to believe that anyone could be base enough to drug an opponent on the eve of a football match.

But the sneering smile never left Mellish's face.

"You deny it all?" he questioned.

"I guess so, you liar!"

"Then you'll have no objection to drinking the glass of lemonade you poured out for Kangaroo—the only one you haven't contrived to upset?" said Mellish maliciously.

"Bai Jove! That's a pwoof, if you like!"

Tom Merry looked fixedly at the Outsider.

"Will you drink it, Lumley?"

But the face of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was pale, almost haggard, and he made no reply.

"THE BLUE CRUSADERS" is the most popular football team of the day.

SEE THE "B.R." FOOTBALL LIBRARY.

CHAPTER 13.

Guilty!

ACCUSING eyes were turned upon the Outsider of St. Jim's from all sides. Why should he not drink the lemonade, if it was harmless? In his haggard face, in his wandering glance and gasping breath, the juniors read guilt.

Guilt!

Yes, he was guilty; there was no doubt upon that point. The only question that remained to be settled was, the extent and depth of his guilt. What had he put in the lemonade? The darkest suspicion did not go to the extent of poison. It was a drug of some kind—but what?

There was a murmur of voices, growing louder.

"He's guilty!"

"He's drugged the lemonade!"

"The cad!"

"The coward!"

"The rotter!"

"The uttah wascal!"

Lumley-Lumley stood licking his dry lips. There was a wild light in his eyes. Kangaroo held the glass out before him, taking no care to defend it now.

"Drink it," he said—"drink it, or knock it from my hand. Take your choice. We shall know what to think."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Outsider raised his hand, and struck the glass from the fingers of the Australian. It shattered upon the floor.

"Very well," said Tom Merry quietly. "That's enough—that's proof. The lemonade was drugged!"

Lumley was silent.

"I rather think that this is a matter the police would take hold of, if it were known," said Tom Merry. "But I suppose nobody here wants it to go further?"

"Wathah not!"

"Oh, no!"

"Never!"

"Keep it dark!"

The juniors were all in earnest about that. The disgrace to the old school would be terrible if it were known. On an occasion, never quite forgotten, a St. Jim's fellow had tried to get an opponent away from a footer match by sending a bogus telegram. But that was nothing to this. An attempt to drug opposing players—it was unheard-of, horrible, on a level with the lowest dodges and devices of the racecourse!

Only to Lumley-Lumley, of all the fellows at St. Jim's, could such an idea have occurred.

This was the fruit of his training among the Bowery boys in New York; this was what he had learned in knocking about London and Paris when other fellows of his age were at school. Lumley-Lumley was very proud of his experience—but it had stood him in very ill stead.

It had led him to this!

The utter baseness of it shocked and disgusted the most reckless fellow there. Even Mellish, cad as he was, was incapable of planning and carrying out a scheme like this. The juniors drew away from Lumley-Lumley as if he were an unclean thing—a thing they could not touch.

The Outsider stood pale and stricken.

All was over now, he knew.

If he had been an outsider at St. Jim's before, he was doubly and trebly an outsider now. That anybody, even Mellish, would ever speak to him again he could not believe. He would be utterly barred—despised—ignored! The contract by which his father had so cleverly bound the Head prevented him from being expelled. But what would his life be like at St. Jim's after this?

His face grew more haggard at the thought.

Tom Merry glanced round at the juniors.

"Not a word of this outside," he said. "If it gets about—I suppose it will—don't say a word for or against. It's disgrace enough as it is."

"Quite so," said Figgins.

"The fellow meant to drug us so that we should lose the match. I don't believe there was anything in the lemonade to really hurt us. I can't believe that of even Lumley. But we should have been out of form for the match, and easily licked. I can see his whole game now, easily enough."

"So can we all," said Lowther. "It's no good talking to him. Words aren't strong enough."

"Bai Jove, you're wight, deah boy!"

"As for your playing him to-day, Blake," went on Tom

Merry, "I suppose there's no question of that. You won't play him?"

Blake coloured.

"Of course not," he said. "I'd sooner play a scorpion or a rattlesnake. He won't play in my team!"

"Wathah not!"

"There can't be any question of such a thing, of course," said Figgins.

"And I'll thank him not to speak to me again," said Blake, with a scornful look at the drooping head of the Outsider. "I may as well mention that if he speaks a word to me again, I shall hit out. I won't have him speak to me. It makes me feel soiled."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Same here," said a dozen voices. "Send him to Coventry."

"Vewy wight and pwopah."

"I certainly shall never speak to him again," said Tom Merry. "You fellows can please yourselves. If he has any decency, he'll leave St. Jim's. But I suppose it's no good expecting that of him. Let's get out of this. I feel poisoned in that fellow's company!"

Lumley-Lumley raised his eyes from the floor.

"I guess you needn't pile it on," he said thickly. "I know I've come to the end of my tether. It's no good saying I'm sorry, I suppose."

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"You're not sorry, except that you're found out," he said.

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess that's so, too," he said. "I'm no hypocrite, whatever I am. Perhaps it was playing it rather low down

"Is that all? Only rather low down, you—you cad!"

"I've seen worse things done."

"Not here, I think. But it's no good talking."

"It wouldn't have hurt you," said Lumley-Lumley. "It was only a tincture of opium, and I made it up carefully. I know about those things. You'd just have felt heavy and sleepy for a few hours—"

"And lost the match?"

"I guess so."

"And you've got the nerve to stand there and admit it? Oh, don't talk to me!"

Tom Merry swung out of the place. He felt that if he remained another moment he would not be able to keep his hands off Lumley-Lumley.

The juniors crowded after him. No one offered to touch the Outsider. His offence was too deep for a ragging. They simply let him alone.

Only Mellish remained for a moment. Lumley-Lumley stood leaning heavily on the counter, his face ghastly pale now. His hand was pressed to his heart, as if he felt a pain there.

"So I'm even with you!" said Mellish.

Jerrold Lumley did not reply.

"I'm even with you, I say."

Lumley-Lumley had fixed a glassy stare upon Mellish, but his lips did not move. The cad of the Fourth looked at him closely.

"Are you ill, Lumley?"

Lumley did not speak.

But he lurched suddenly forward, and fell with a crash at the feet of the cad of the Fourth Form.

Mellish started back.

"Lumley! I say, Merry! Help! Lumley's fainted!"

Some of the juniors looked into the tuckshop quickly. Tom Merry ran towards Lumley-Lumley.

"What's the matter with him?"

"I don't know. He fell down."

Tom Merry raised Lumley's head.

His face was ghastly, and he was breathing stertorously. He was quite unconscious. All the anger died out of Tom Merry's face.

"It's another of those attacks like the one he had in the gym," he exclaimed. "Lend a hand here, you fellows!"

Lumley's eyes opened.

"What's the matter? What is it? What do you mean?"

He dragged himself from Tom Merry's hands.

"You fainted," said Tom Merry.

"It's a lie!"

Lumley staggered to his feet, holding to the wall. The colour was coming back into his cheeks.

Tom Merry bit his lip.

"Very well," he said. "You don't want my assistance."

And he left the shop again. Mellish followed him, and Lumley was alone. The Outsider stood alone—alone!

He left the shop a few minutes later. He caught Dame Taggles' eye on him as he went out. The old lady was regarding him with unconcealed disgust and horror. Outside the shop Towser was basking in the sun. Herries had taken

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ANSWERS

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE NEW BOY'S SECRET."

A splendid long complete story of the Juniors of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

nim out for a little run, and Towser had got away, and Herries, hurrying off to the footer field, had no time to look for him. Towser blinked at Lumley-Lumley.

Lumley-Lumley, with all his faults, had one virtue which showed that he was not really bad—he was fond of animals. He stopped and spoke to the bulldog, and smoothed his huge head. Towser rose lazily and followed him.

It was little enough, but it brought an unaccustomed wet to the eyes of the Outsider of St. Jim's. In the terrible solitude he had made for himself the friendship of the dog was something. It was all the friendship he was likely to know so long as he remained at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 14.

The Form Match.

TOM MERRY & CO. hurried down to the footer-field. What little gloom had settled on the chums of the Shell soon wore away. Lumley-Lumley's duplicity was soon forgotten in their interest in the king of games, and Shell hopes ran high.

"Now, then!" cried Martin, leading a small coterie of enthusiasts. "Come on, my sons! You're almost late, for a football team!"

The Terrible Three laughed.

"As if Blake & Co. are any earlier," said Monty Lowther. In a minute the chums had whipped off their coats.

But Blake had his men on the field first. Filing on the ground at a brisk trot, he gave the ball a mighty punt, and the Fourth Form spectators cheered to a man.

"It's nice to be popular, Blake, deah boy. Aren't you glad 'um in the team?"

"Well, of all the cheek—" began Jack Blake. "Of all the nerve—"

"Surely, Blake, you didn't think all that was for you, deah boy? Why—"

Another mighty cheer rent the air.

"Bwavo! Bwavo!" cried D'Arcy, completely forgetting his subject.

Catching the general infection, he cheered lustily as Tom Merry led his "merry men" on.

"Hear, hear!" said Figgins. "It'll be a good game if we win. They're a jolly fit lot."

In another second or two the whistle went. The preliminary punting ceased, and Tom Merry, Blake, and the referee closed to toss for choice of ends. Blake won it. The Shell would have to face the wind.

It was the Shell's kick-off.

Everyone went to his place. Yet the referee paused.

"Great Scott!" cried Blake. "You blessed ass! Put that thing away, or I'll jump on you!"

"It's an expewiment, deah boy," returned D'Arcy, coolly screwing his monocle into his eye.

"I'll try another experiment of filling the other one up if you don't chuck it!" said the Fourth skipper.

"Weally, Blake—"

"There she goes!" cried Martin, as Lefevre piped them off.

Tom Merry kicked off. D'Arcy had to face him, and the eyeglass was put away quicker than Blake could have made him do it.

Both sides settled down at once to a determined game. The passing of the Fourth vanguard was beyond reproach, but the spotting of the Shell complement was equally so.

Do what they would, however, Tom Merry & Co. could not get away. Every subtle trick he knew the hero of the Shell tried. But in vain. Blake & Co. were always there, and Figgins in himself was a tower of strength.

"Now, Shell!" yelled Martin and his satellites. "Get the blinkers off!"

But still Fatty Wynn had a very easy time of it. The Fourth goal looked very select and respectable standing out from the press of the game, the Falstaff of St. Jim's walking the line in very proud fashion.

Hancock, who played in place of the Outsider, was well worth his place. Time and again he proved a thorn in the side of French.

"This scientific game is all rot!" said Martin decisively. "What the Shell want is the long-passing game."

"They'll get passing in a bit," said Smith of the Fourth, who heard him.

But brilliant as Blake & Co. were proving themselves, Tom Merry & Co. were as solid as a battleship in defence.

"Now, Shall!" came a roar from the crowd. "Now you've got 'em! Good old Tommy! That's the game! Sling it out!"

The Shell attack had at last thoroughly beaten Blake & Co. With the ball at their toes, they were "diddling" the halves.

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in fine style. Then Tom Merry did what the crowd asked for. Carefully steadying the ball he swung it out to French.

French was up like a streak. All praise to Hancock if he failed to hold him. Kerruish ran out a little.

But French timed his centre to a nicety, and the ball swerved through the air right in front of goal as Tom Merry raced under it.

But the lion was up in Fatty Wynn. He was racing for it, too. He knew the danger better than anyone.

He leapt in the air as it descended, and even Tom Merry went down like a ninepin as he collided with the redoubtable goalie of the Fourth.

There was a moment of suspense for the Fourth as Fatty seemed to glide through the forwards.

But it was Fatty's day. A tremendous punt sent the leather flying into midfield, and the spectators rocked with cheers and laughter.

"Bravo, Fatty!" shouted Wally of the Third. "Great save, sir!"

"That was an irresistible force against an immovable body, Tom Merry," laughed Kerr, as Tom Merry "expressed" it to the home half.

He was none too soon. The Fourth realised they had been a little slack, and were resolved to make up for it. Arthur Augustus covered himself with glory by hitting the cross-bar twice in five minutes.

"Come on, Fourth!" yelled their supporters. "Let D'Arcy have it! He'll find it next time! Give Gussy a chance! Send it to Gussy!"

"Will he?" chuckled Manners, to Tom Merry.

"I twost so, deah boy," said the swell of the School House, who was near enough to Manners to overhear it.

And truly in the next ten minutes the Shell were put to it. Their short passing tactics, so pretty to watch, were smashed to pieces. Attack became a dream for the moment, and defence a stern reality.

Blake & Co. flitted about the Shell territory like demons. Tom Merry & Co. fought like Trojans.

"By Jove!" cried Wally. "The Fourth are a fixture at this end!"

And the Fourth-Formers laughed.

"What did we tell you?" they said.

"Buck up, Shell! Get 'em away!"

But, in slang parlance, "it wanted some doing."

Blake & Co. realised that they were almost in, and the ball must be netted.

For one brief moment the ball went back. Kerr, however, made no mistake, and had it back again in a jiffy. D'Arcy was waiting for it.

"Now, Gussy!" yelled the Fourth. "Let's have it!"

And Arthur Augustus did.

Cleverly tricking Manners and Lowther single-handed, he passed to Blake. The skipper of the Fourth and Figgins simply romped round Tom Merry for once. In a trice the Shell half-back line were extended. Blake lost no time in sending the ball back to Arthur Augustus. The cheering was tremendous.

D'Arcy rushed in. The pass was rather high, but D'Arcy was determined. He couldn't kick it comfortably.

"Head it!"

The swell of the School House did not want twice telling. Jimson leapt into the corner of the net. But he was too late; the ball topped his finger-tips, and D'Arcy had scored.

Goal!

The Fourth went wild with delight. This certainly looked like winning. They'd show the Shell what football was.

Blake, Figgins, and Herries seized on D'Arcy and nearly wrung his hand off as they cantered back to midfield.

"You giddy fathead!" grinned Jack Blake. "Wanting to wear a monocle on a football-field when you are on the goal like that!"

"Well, you see, Blake, deah boy, you are in such a beastly hurry. I had smoked the glass with a view to keepin' the wotten sun out of a fellah's eyes!"

Tom Merry could not be expected to be pleased at having their net found first. But they forgave D'Arcy when they heard him explain the eyeglass incident.

One thing was certain—they were determined to win. Let the Fourth play as they would, the Shell were determined to come out on top somehow.

And the rest of the game up to the interval was a real ding-dong, hard and fast.

But although the Fourth goal was several times in danger, the Shell failed to net, and the whistle went for half-time with no alteration in the score.

It had been a gruelling first half, and the players on both sides were pretty well done when they came off the field for a brief rest.

"Jolly good!" said Lefevre of the Fifth, who had had plenty of running as referee. "Good on both sides, that's what I say—good on both sides!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Both sides are jolly good, deah boy, and, in fact, they are equal, you know, only that the Fourth Form is a little bettah of the two."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I see nothin' in my wemark to cause you to cachinnate in that diswespectful mannah."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"You uttah ass—"

"Have a lemon, old chap, and cheese it."

"Thank you vewwy much. I will have the lemon, but—"

"Catch!"

"Certainly, deah boy! I— Ow!"

D'Arcy caught the lemon—on his chin. The lemon dropped to the ground, and D'Arcy clasped his chin and glared at Tom Merry.

"You uttah ass! I considah—"

"My only hat! Did that hit your chin, dear boy?"

"Yaas, wathah; and—"

"Sorry."

D'Arcy's face cleared.

"If you assuah me that it was an accident, Tom Mewwy, of course, there is nothin' more to be said about it," he said gracefully.

"Then there's nothing more to be said about it."

"It was an accident?"

"Certainly."

"Then it's all wight. I—"

"Quite an accident," added Tom Merry. "You see, I meant it for your nose."

"You uttah fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Toot-toot-toot!

"Bai Jove! What's that?"

"Sounds like a motor-horn," said Blake, with a grin.

"Haven't you ever heard a motor toot before, Gussy?"

"Yaas, aas; but it's wemarkably loud, and—"

"Hark!"

"Bai Jove!"

The toot of the horn had come from the direction of the road—the Rylcombe road, a considerable distance from the football-field. From the same direction came a fainter sound, but a sound that sent a thrill through every heart.

It was a deep, throbbing scream.

"Good heavens!" cried Tom Merry. "What has hap—"

No one answered the question. No one stopped to speak. All knew well what had happened. It was an accident—a motor accident on the road—and someone was badly hurt. Was it a St. Jim's fellow?

With one accord the footballers and spectators, in an excited crowd, dashed from the field, and ran in the direction of the gates of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 15.

The Pluck of the Outsider.

"WHAT is it?"

"What has happened?"

"Tower!" cried Herries.

The crowd burst into the road in great excitement. The footballers, in their light attire, ran the fastest, and they were first on the scene.

A strange sight greeted the eyes of Tom Merry & Co.

A large car was drawn up in the road. Two men—one in the dress of a chauffeur, and the other in a fur-collared coat and silk hat—were bending over a form that lay motionless in the dust of the high-road.

Towser, looking frightened and dusty, ran to his master, and Herries laid a protecting hand on his collar. His first thought was that Towser had been hurt in the accident, but he soon saw that the bulldog was untouched.

But what was that form lying in the road?

The man in the silk hat and fur-collared coat looked round, and Tom Merry recognised him. It was Mr. Hicks, the mayor of the neighbouring town of Wayland. His fat and usually jolly face was pale and distressed.

"This is a terrible happening!" he exclaimed. "I am afraid the boy is hurt. Help me get him into the school."

"Who is it, sir?"

"I don't know. One of your boys, however."

Tom Merry leaned over the chauffeur as he supported the fallen form, and looked at the dusty, blood-stained face. He uttered a startled cry.

"Lumley!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Lumley!" cried Blake.

"Yes."

"Good heavens!"

"He is not—not—"

"No, no!" cried Mr. Hicks. "Nothing of the sort! He was knocked down, but I cannot blame my chauffeur. It was the dog's fault."

"The dog?" cried Herries.

"Yes. He was with this boy. The dog ran into the road before my car, and the boy dashed after him to save him. He dragged the dog out of the way, and the car caught his shoulder before he could get clear, and hurled him down. By Heaven's mercy, he was not caught fairly by the car, or he would have been smashed. He was almost clear when the car struck him."

"He tried to save the dog?"

"Yes; that was how it came about. It was not the chauffeur's fault in the least. He stopped with wonderful quickness. It was the lad's own courage that caused this. He is a brave lad. Help me carry him in."

The gentleman raised the insensible lad in his arms, aided by Tom Merry, Figgins, and Kangaroo.

The juniors were quite silent.

Lumley-Lumley was carried in.

With silent, grim faces they bore him to the School House, and he was carried up to the dormitory and laid upon his bed.

Then Mr. Hicks hurried back to his car, promising to dash off to Rylcombe and fetch the doctor, and return with him at top speed.

In a minute more the car was buzzing away down the dusty road.

Lumley-Lumley lay motionless upon his bed. He had not yet recovered his senses. Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, was with him, and the Head was sent for.

The juniors filed slowly and silently upstairs.

"Poor chap!" said Tom Merry. "Poor chap!"

"It can't be—" began Blake. He did not finish. He could not bring himself to add the terrible word "fatal."

"Heaven forbid!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "It would be tewwible, deah boys. Lumlay was not a bad sort, aftah all, you know."

"Not at all."

"It was jolly brave of him," said Digby. "You remember, he risked his life once before, to save the miller's little girl from drowning. The chap was brave enough."

"Yes, he had plenty of pluck," said Herries. "Tower's come through it all right, fortunately."

"I always knew that wotten bulldog would cause twouble, you know, Hewwie. You will wemembah I said so a dozen times."

"I don't remember anything of the sort," said Herries tartly. "And it wasn't Tower's fault. Lumley oughtn't to have been taking my bulldog out. I didn't know he had Tower. I wouldn't have let him if I'd known."

"I hope he gets over it, that's all," said Monty Lowther. "It would be awful if—if—if anything happened, especially after—"

Tom Merry nodded gravely.

"But I don't think we need reproach ourselves," he said quietly. "What has happened makes no difference to Lumley's action. He was guilty of baseness, and we were quite right to be down on him. There's no getting out of that, and we needn't be hard on ourselves for being down on him. At the same time, I'm awfully sorry this has happened, and I hope he's not much hurt."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I suppose you don't feel like going on with the match?" Blake said.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Not till the doctor's been, anyway," he said. "Of course, we can't do Lumley any good by staying here, but—well, it would look bad."

"Oh, we'll wait!"

"Yaas; I weally think that's the wight and pwopah thing to do, undah the cires, deah boys!"

The juniors waited.

The footballers put their coats on, and the whole crowd hung aimlessly about the passages till there was a zip-zip of a motor on the drive, and the car dashed up, with Mr. Hicks and Dr. Short, of Rylcombe.

The little medical man jumped out, and was at once taken upstairs by Mr. Railton. The Head was in the dormitory, and Mr. Hicks went up with the doctor.

The juniors waited below in great anxiety.

The accident was known over the whole school now. Everybody was anxious and disturbed. A football match on the senior ground had ceased, and Kildare, of the Sixth, and Darrel and North were waiting in the hall of the School House for news.

Deep anxiety was in every face.

There was a buzz among the juniors as Mr. Railton was

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seen coming downstairs. Tom Merry approached the School House-master.

"If you please, sir, can you tell us how Lumley is?" he asked. "We're all awfully anxious about him, sir."

"Certainly," said Mr. Railton. "Dr. Short has relieved our minds very much, Merry. Lumley has escaped fatal injuries almost by a miracle. His shoulder is terribly bruised, and his head and arm have been cut by his being hurled into the road. Thank Heaven it is no worse! The injuries are painful, but they are, not, in Dr. Short's opinion, serious. There is no need for anxiety."

Tom Merry drew a deep breath of relief.

"I'm jolly glad to hear that, sir," he said. "Then I suppose we can get on with our match?"

"Certainly. There is nothing to stop that. You boys will take care not to have any shouting loud enough to reach the School House. Lumley must be kept very quiet. He will be moved into the school infirmary this evening."

"And he is not in danger, sir?"

"Not at all."

"I'm so glad."

"Yaas, wathah! It's a twemendous welief, sir," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Of course, if he were in dangah, we should not think of finishin' the match. But, under the cires, I think we may as well lick you Shell boundahs."

The House-master went into his study. Mr. Hicks came down, looking much relieved by the medical man's verdict, and whizzed away in his car. Slowly the juniors returned to the football-ground.

The happening had caused them a shock. But the news that Lumley-Lumley was not in danger relieved their minds, and they returned to their game, less cheerfully, but quite in a mood for playing to win.

"Jolly long interval," said Blake, looking up at the clock-tower. "We shall have to hustle, that's all. It will be light enough to finish."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the teams lined up once more, and Lefevre blew the whistle, and they started again. The score was low so far, but each side was determined that it should not finish low; and that determination on both sides to get ahead gave promise of a gruelling second half.

CHAPTER 16.

The Second Half.

"**P**LAY up, Shell!"

Tom Merry and his men needed no encouragement. The accident to Lumley-Lumley had put them in a grim frame of mind.

Blake & Co. came up just as confidently as ever. The brilliant tactics of the first half were to be repeated, in their opinion.

But with their determination to win came a little roughness. But Lefevre soon cut that short. The whistle began to be monotonous.

Almost at the same instant Tom Merry & Co. began to do what they should have done much earlier in the game.

The tactics were now clearly upsetting Blake's men. The Fourth, all dash, were strangely nonplussed by the swinging long passes from wing to wing that the Shell indulged in.

Several times, when he expected a round of "fancy" passing, the chums of the Shell swung the ball about the field in an alarming manner.

Down they bore on the Fourth goal, and Fatty Wynn only just managed "it."

"By Jove!" cried Jack Blake. "The Shell have woke up!"

"Say they never went to sleep yet, old son," grinned Monty Lowther.

Fatty kicked off from the unsuccessful corner that followed his save. The game was resumed with terrific energy on both sides.

But Blake & Co. could not get into their old stride. The glorious time prior to D'Arcy's goal would not be revived.

"Let's have one, Shell!" shouted the supporters.

Tom Merry heard the shout, and it thrilled him. A tacit understanding seemed to fly down the forward line. Blake had run his men too hard. Now was the Shell's chance.

"Ah!" grinned the Shell spectators. "That'll beat them!"

The long passing was making the Fourth efforts look sick. French was always up whenever the ball swung out on his wing, and the Fourth were having qualms every second.

Nothing that Blake could do seemed any good. The Shell had got their measure to an inch.

"Buck up, chaps!" he said. "We'll never keep the lead at this rate!"

D'Arcy, Figgins, Reilly, Hancock were playing like

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marvels. They had to. The half line seemed demoralised, and if it hadn't been for one or two marvellous clearances by Kerr and Kerruish, Tom Merry & Co. would have more than equalised.

Blake managed to infuse a little more steadiness into his halves. But the Shell still continued to be the power in the land. Tom Merry and his chums were irresistible.

Their chance was coming.

Suddenly the whole of the Shell team seemed to swing forward with the precision of a machine. There was a mighty roar as the spectators saw the full-backs neatly beaten.

Fatty Wynn had to face the whole line of Tom Merry & Co.

As a result of the last round of passing, French had the ball away out on the left wing.

And then it came to Tom Merry.

"Great Scott! What a shot! French is too excited!" cried Martin.

But it had gone to the right man. Tom Merry made no mistake. He trapped the ball delightfully with his right, and a low, raking shot with his left brought Fatty Wynn full length on the goal line. But the ball was in the back of the net.

The cheering was tremendous till Tom Merry put up his hand. It ceased like magic as the crowd remembered Lumley.

"Nobody could have saved that, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus.

And no one disagreed with D'Arcy.

"How's that, Blake?" said Monty Lowther.

"Ripping!" said Jack, as he got ready for the restart.

Then both sides did wonders. The kicking was like clock-work. Every man played his last ounce. The spectators were dancing with excitement.

"Come on, Shell!"

"Come on, Fourth!"

"Rub it in, Shell!"

"On the ball, Blake & Co.!"

But whatever was playing, Jimson had an easier time than Fatty Wynn this half. The Shell were clearly a winning side.

Down the field they swept again and again. The Fourth had reason to be glad that Fatty Wynn was their custodian. His saves were simply splendid.

"It's like shooting at a stone wall," said Kangaroo.

"Then we shall have to shoot through it," said Manners grimly.

Tom Merry laughed.

Blake & Co. were getting desperate. Time was flying, and he had set his heart on a win.

Steadily the Fourth rallied a little, or, rather, they managed to stop some of the Shell combination. They had played well all through.

But Tom Merry wanted that other goal too. Resolutely putting aside all idea of "solo" performances, they played up like Spartans.

"Now, kids!" said their skipper quietly. "We are sliding back again into mere defence. Attack is the surest defence. Come on!"

And the Shell came with a vengeance.

Short passing, long passing, rush, dribble, feint, everything seemed to come at the right moment with the Shell. They swept down again like an avalanche.

Blake, D'Arcy, and Figgins replied like heroes. But it was the Shell's day. There was no stopping them.

"Just another!" yelled their supporters. "One more for luck, Tommy!"

"Keep 'em out, Fourth!" cried the opposition crowd.

The Fourth team knew all about that. But they did not lose heart for a moment. Jack Blake himself was equal to any man on the field, saving, perhaps, Tom Merry.

On came the Shell.

There could be no doubt about it. The Fourth were being beaten. Tom Merry got the ball.

"Now, Merry!"

Everyone expected the ball to fly out to French. But the captain of the Shell had other ideas. He kept the ball himself.

Figgins charged him. But he measured his length on the turf. Off went the captain with the ball at his toes.

Herries and Digby, the two nearest opposing halves, came for him in their turn. Tom Merry beat them both.

What a shout went up!

"Did you ever see anything better than that? Now, Merry!"

But Kerr and Kerruish were on him now.

"He'll not pass them!" cried the Fourth.

But Tom Merry had no intention of that. Suddenly he sent Lowther a beautiful pass with his left.

Monty had seen the game all along. He took the pass

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like a master. With no one to beat he raced down the right touch-line.

His centre was a beauty. It dropped in front like a dream.

"Hurrah! Merry has it again!"

"Bravo, Fatty!"

Tom Merry staggered as the fat junior charged him. But he managed to turn the ball to Kangaroo with his foot, and with an open goal before him the Cornstalk made no mistake.

Whiz!

There was a roar from the crowd—a roar that broke out in a momentary forgetfulness of the sick junior in the School House dormitory, so wild was the excitement.

For the ball went fairly in.

Right in—and Fatty Wynn was beaten! Right in, and the Fourth Form were beaten—beaten hollow, beaten to the wide!

From the Shell fellows in the crowd came a wild cheer.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"Goal! Goal!"

"Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry waved his hand warningly to the crowd. They understood, and the yelling died away. But deep satisfaction was in the face of every Shell fellow.

For they knew now that all was over, bar shouting. And so it was. In the little time that remained the Fourth Form rallied and played up splendidly, but in vain. Right to the finish they fought, and then they trooped off the field beaten—beaten with honour, it was true, but well licked.

Jack Blake, with rather a rueful grin, slapped Tom Merry on the shoulder.

"It was a fair fight, Tommy, and a fair win, and you remain captain of the junior eleven."

"Yaas, wathah! It's all wight, Tom Mewwy; I have no objection to make."

"Thanks!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "That settles it, Gussy. Of course, there's nothing more to be said."

And the rival juniors went off to a well-earned rest.

CHAPTER 17.

In Danger!

SUNDAY!

Sunday was always a quiet day at St. Jim's.

But this Sunday was quieter and sadder than any Sunday that Tom Merry and his chums remembered at the school.

Lumley-Lumley had been removed, on the Saturday evening, from the Fourth Form dormitory to the building among the elm-trees which was used as an infirmary at St. Jim's.

In the white bed in the school hospital he lay now.

Dr. Short had come from Rylcombe to see him twice the previous evening, and the first thing the juniors saw when they went down on Sunday morning was the doctor's cob and his trap in the quadrangle.

"That looks bad," said Monty Lowther, with a nod towards the trap. "That's the fourth visit, and I know old Short seldom comes out so early as this."

Tom Merry looked troubled.

"But Mr. Railton said last night that he was not in danger," he said.

"He may have taken a turn for the worse."

Tom Merry did not reply.

Nothing had been said to the juniors so far of Lumley-Lumley's state, but all of them had a curious feeling of something in the air—something indefinable, as if there were a shadow on the school.

Was there a shadow on St. Jim's—the shadow of death?

Tom Merry shuddered at the thought.

It was a terrible one.

Whatever Jerrold Lumley had been, whatever he was, this was terrible—to die so young, at the very threshold of life. And alone—alone in a strange land—for England, although his native country, was strange to him till but a short time before. His earlier days had mostly been spent in cosmopolitan wanderings with his father.

It was only of late that Lumleys Limited had gained that wonderful accession of wealth, and Jerrold had been sent to an English public school. In England he was alone—his father was in South America, and he had no relations—and he was not the fellow to have made many friends.

Friends!

There was Mellish—and even he had forsaken him—and by Lumley's fault, as usual.

The friends he might have had, if he had chosen to "play the game"—they were numerous enough. But he had made only enemies.

Tom Merry's heart was heavy. He, of all fellows, had no cause to love the Outsider. But he felt for him now.

The chums of the Shell were very silent that morning.

The elation the football victory would have caused at any other time was absent now.

The Shell fellows, in fact, hardly thought of it. The Fourth were in the same mood.

The feeling that Lumley-Lumley was in greater danger than they had believed oppressed every mind.

Nobody had liked him. But that fact made his illness, his possible doom, all the more touching.

He was alone. In the midst of a crowd of two hundred fellows and more, he was alone!

Did he care?

He must care. If he thought of anything as he lay upon his bed of pain, he must think of that—of the solitude he had, and of the throng of friends he might have had if he had chosen a different path.

There was a gloom upon the juniors. It was shared by the seniors as the day wore on. Kildare, Darrel, Monteith, and the other prefects were very quiet, and even Sefton and Knox, the bullies of the Sixth, forgot to raise their voices.

It was a calm, quiet day; the light wind just rustled the fallen leaves under the elms, and sighed among the bare branches. The fellows involuntarily lowered their tones when they spoke.

Again, before noon, the doctor's trap was seen driving up, and Dr. Short disappeared into the school infirmary.

Many eyes watched him go.

A crowd of fellows waited on the walk under the leafless elms for him to emerge, anxious for news.

It was a long time before he came out. When he appeared, a nurse was seen speaking to him, and then the juniors knew that a nurse had been sent in especially for Lumley-Lumley.

As the medical gentleman came down towards the School House, with the evident intention of going in and speaking to the Head, the juniors respectfully saluted him.

"Would you mind telling us how Lumley is, sir?" asked Tom Merry.

"We're awf'ly anxious, sir," said D'Arcy.

The doctor paused.

"We hope for the best," he said briefly.

Tom Merry started.

"Then he is in danger."

"I do not say so at present."

And the medical man walked on.

The juniors looked at one another in dismay.

"There's something fresh since yesterday," said Tom Merry, in a low voice.

"That's certain, deah boy."

"I wish he'd speak more plainly," said Blake sharply.

"Why can't a blessed medical man speak in plain English?"

"His not speaking plain makes it plain enough, Blake."

If there was no danger, he would say so at once."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Lumley is in danger," said Tom Merry quietly.

He shivered a little as he spoke. The old elms rustled in the wind. The shadow that had fallen on the school seemed to deepen.

Dr. Short was shown into the Head's presence at once. Dr. Holmes met him with a dark and anxious face.

"My dear Short, I hope you can give me some good news."

The medico shook his head.

"Not worse, Short?"

"Not worse. No."

"But not better."

"No."

The Head of St. Jim's took a long look at the little medical gentleman's serious face. What he read there startled him.

"Then there is danger?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What do you fear?"

"Complications."

"Complications! Of what sort?"

"I can hardly tell yet. But it is not the motor accident; that might be dismissed, if there were nothing else. But it is clear to me that Lumley has been suffering for some time from a nervous malady, of which he has apparently said nothing. This accident in itself would confine him to his bed for a few weeks. But the shock has brought his malady to a head—that is what I fear, and he—"

The medical man paused.

"Well?" said the Head.

"He is in danger. That is all I can say at present. But with your permission I shall call in a specialist to see him."

"To-day?"

"I shall wire to him immediately I reach Rylcombe."

The Head's look was very serious. He knew what this meant.

"Then one word more," he said. "This lad's father is in South America. His lawyers have his address for cables. Would you advise me to send a cable to him?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then you think—"

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"If all goes as I fear, I think Mr. Lumley-Lumley is not likely to reach England in time to see his son. But you must give him what chance you can."

"The cable shall be despatched at the earliest possible moment," said the Head sadly.

"Very good. I have left all instructions with the nurse. I shall return with the specialist."

"Thank you!"

And Dr. Short took his leave. He left heavy hearts behind him

CHAPTER 18.

The Shadow.

DANGER!

It was a terrible word to the ears of the St. Jim's fellows. Danger! It meant that Jerrold Lumley might never leave his sick bed—that he might die!

To the boys, happy and careless, so lately occupied with their boyish pursuits, it was a terrible shock.

Even when they knew it—even when the Head had allowed it to become officially known that Lumley-Lumley was in danger, they could hardly realise it.

The shadow of death was on the school. Jerrold Lumley was in the valley of the shadow of death, and its darkness was gathering upon him.

On tiptoe the fellows moved about. Voices were never raised above a whisper. Doors were closed silently, softly.

The boys would meet in groups in the passages and in the quad., and speak in whispers, and then the groups would dissolve, to gather again in fresh groups, and dissolve again.

Under that grim shadow the boys were aimless, quiet, almost dazed.

What was passing in the sick room?

What were the thoughts of the sufferer lying there?

"I—I can't stand it, you know," muttered D'Arcy, stopping in an aimless walk under the trees. "I feel simply howlid, Blake."

Jack Blake nodded glumly.

"It's rotten for all of us, Gussy."

"And his governah so far away, Blake. That's the worst of it, you know."

"It's rotten!"

"I wonder if he would like to see any of us chaps."

"He'll ask for us if he does, Gussy."

"Yaas, I suppose so. I wish I could do somethin', deah boy."

"I jolly well wish I could."

"He was wathah a decent chap, you know."

"Of course he was."

That was the general feeling now.

No one spoke of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley as the "Outsider" now. It was "Lumley," or even "old Lumley." All the Outsider's faults were forgotten in this dark hour. There were few things the juniors would not have done to restore him to his old self.

But they could only wait in grim anxiety.

At afternoon service the Head's voice faltered when he spoke. He chose his text from the 142nd Psalm: "I cried unto Thee, O Lord, and said, Thou art my hope, and my portion in the land of the living."

The Head's deep voice rolled through the chapel, and woke an unaccustomed thrill in many a heart there.

Boyishly the fellows often turned deaf ears to the sermon, but there were no deaf ears to-day.

With quiet, telling words, the Head pointed the lesson, and told the listening lads how, in a time of trouble, there was One to whom all could look for succour—One who would send help to the humble in spirit and contrite heart.

Even if the help did not come in the way and manner desired, yet surely it would come if it was good for it to come. And was there one present who could say that, after earnest prayer, he did not feel refreshed and strengthened?

And then the Head's voice trembled as he touched upon the subject of one lying sick even at that moment within those walls—sick perhaps unto death.

He asked the boys who were listening to him to pray for their schoolfellow; and there were wet eyes as the lads streamed at last out of chapel.

"I—I say, I feel—feel—oh, dear," said Blake, applying a surreptitious shirt-cuff to his eyes. "Hang it! What a draught there is in this church!"

"Ya-a-as, ww-w-wathah!" mumbled D'Arcy.

"Poor old Lumley!"

"The Head nearly broke down," said Tom Merry. "Poor old Lumley is worse than we know! Oh, I wish I could do something to help him out!"

"Bai Jove, yaas! If it was a question of fetchin' a doctah, or anythin', I'd wun like anythin'," said Arthur Augustus.

The boys drifted in aimless groups about the quadrangle.

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Towards evening Dr. Short and the London specialist arrived.

They were in the school hospital for some time, and the Head and Mr. Railton were both there. The London gentleman departed after some time, but it was understood that Dr. Short was to remain the night at the school.

In the evening the Head received a message from the Lumley lawyers. They informed him that his cable could not be sent, as Mr. Lumley-Lumley had already started for England the previous week, and might, as a matter of fact, arrive any day. The moment he arrived he should be informed of his son's state.

The Head could only hope and pray that he would arrive in time.

For there was little secret now about Lumley's state. The angel of death, who had hovered over the college and cast upon it the shadow of his wings, was about to swoop.

When bedtime came that night, the boys went up to their dormitories in sad silence.

There was nothing to be said.

But Tom Merry, ere he went to bed, careless of the eyes upon him, careless of the thoughts his action might excite, dropped upon his knees beside his bed, and bowed his head in his hands, and prayed, as the Head had asked all the boys to do, for his schoolfellow who lay sick and in danger.

Some of the fellows stared; but not a word was spoken—much less a word of mockery. But many of the boys followed Tom Merry's example, and an earnest prayer went up from the Shell dormitory—to that Throne where no prayer is unheard, though for God's own good reasons the answer may not always come in the way we wish.

CHAPTER 19.

The Shadow Falls.

"NURSE!"

The gentle, kind-faced woman turned to the bed. From the white coverlet looked out a face that was fully as white, save where dark bruises marked it.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley lay very quiet.

He knew!

The Outsider, the fellow whose keenness was a proverb, who was never deceived, was not likely to be deceived in a matter of this sort.

Those strange attacks he had suffered from, which he had so obstinately kept secret, lest he should be considered "soft"—he had always had a lurking fear that they meant something serious. The terrible shock of the motor accident had done the rest. He knew—or he thought he knew—that this was the end.

And he did not fear.

The boy who had led so strange a life, whose experience in strange places among strange people exceeded that of many men, had looked death in the face before, though not in the same way.

And he did not fear the terrible visitor.

Fear was not in Jerrold Lumley's composition. Regret, anger, yes—but not fear.

"Nurse!"

His voice was so faint that he hardly recognised it himself. And perhaps his hearing was growing a little dulled.

"Yes, dear."

"What time is it?"

"Seven o'clock."

"Monday evening?"

"Yes."

"I shall not see the sun rise to-morrow," said Lumley.

The nurse made a gesture.

"You must not think such thoughts," she said. "You must—"

He laughed silently. It would have been his old mocking laugh if it had been audible.

"I guess I know," he said. "I guess I've got sense enough to see it, nurse. I'm at the end of my tether."

"No, no!"

"You don't know," said Jerrold Lumley coolly. "But I know. Do you know, nurse, that I have no feeling whatever left in my legs."

"My dear—"

"I shall not last out the night. This must be death!"

"I will call—"

"Don't call the doctor. There's no need—he can't help me, and he can't deceive me. I know I'm going."

The nurse was silent.

"I'm not afraid," said Lumley quietly. "I never was afraid—of anything. I suppose I ought to be. I've not led a good life—and I'm only fifteen. God, what a fool I've been!"

"You must not speak any more, my dear lad!"

"I guess I'll do as I like, nurse. I want to see Tom Merry."

The nurse hesitated again.

"Come, you can't refuse me," said Lumley. "You know I'm dying, as well as I do. Call Dr. Short, if you must ask him."

"Very well. Lie quiet now."

"You needn't be afraid of my moving," said Lumley, with grim humour. "I couldn't stir a finger at this moment if the bed were on fire. I shan't be able to speak soon."

The nurse stepped into the next room and spoke with the doctor, and Dr. Short came to the bedside. For the last twenty-four hours he had not left the school, except for a short drive in the afternoon to see his other patients.

"You must be quiet, my dear boy!" he said.

"I want to see Tom Merry—"

"Nurse, will you take the message?"

The nurse quietly left the sick-room.

Lumley-Lumley lay quiet. Dr. Short sat by the side of the bed. The case puzzled him. But he had no doubts in his mind. It was the end. He had told Dr. Holmes so, and the Head knew that he expected the end that night.

"I suppose they're having tea in the studies now," said Lumley-Lumley dreamily. "No—they'll be doing their prep."

"Be quiet, my lad. You must keep up your strength."

"My strength is very nearly gone, doctor. Where is Tom Merry?"

"He is coming."

"I want to see him. I treated him rottenly."

"I am sure he will forgive you, then."

"I want him to say so."

There was silence in the sick-room—silence, save for the faint tick of the clock in the next room, and the rustle of the elm branches without. It was dark in the quadrangle, and a wind was blowing in the elms.

The House was very silent.

In the furthest passages of the great building of St. Jim's the boys moved about on tiptoe, and spoke in whispers, though the sick lad could not have heard them if they had shouted.

Lumley lay looking steadily before him.

What was he thinking of now?

The door opened softly. The nurse reappeared, and the Head came in with her, with a grave and solemn face. Tom Merry followed the Head into the room. Outside, in the passage, there was a faint sound of whispering voices. Other fellows had come with Tom Merry—Blake, and D'Arcy, and Lowther, and Mafners, and some more—but they waited outside, not to disturb the sick lad unless he asked to see them.

Tom Merry's face was very pale.

He knew the truth—he knew that Jerrold Lumley was dying, and that he had come to look upon a lad from whose face the light of life was departing.

Lumley made a slight movement as he came in.

"Is that you, Merry?"

"Yes, Lumley, old man."

"Come here!"

Tom Merry approached the bedside. Lumley's hands lay outside, on the white coverlet, and he made a feeble groping motion with one of them. Tom Merry understood; and he took Lumley's hand in his. It struck a chill to his own warm palm as his fingers closed upon it. But his face gave no sign of that.

"I cannot feel your hand," said Lumley. "But you are holding mine."

"Yes."

Lumley's eyes sought his face. There was a strange expression in them—something of the old, mocking light, mingled with strange emotions.

"I'm glad you've come, Merry," he said. "It was good of you to come!"

"It was little enough for me to do," said Tom, with a catch in his voice. "I only wish I could help you, old fellow."

"Too late for that," said Lumley.

Tom Merry was silent.

"I'm going," said the Outsider, in a weaker voice. "I know that. I may be dead in an hour."

"Oh!"

"I'm not afraid. But—but—I want to ask you a favour, Tom Merry."

"What is it, old chap?"

"You know how I've treated you—"

"Don't speak of that now."

"I guess I must speak of it. You know how I've treated you—rottenly. Like a cad. But—but I want you—"

"Yes." Tom Merry bent to catch the faint words. "What is it? Anything?"

"I want you to stay with me till—till the end. It makes me feel better somehow to have you here."

"I shall be glad to stay, Lumley!" Tom Merry's voice choked a little. "Lumley, old man, I wish I'd treated you better, too."

"Stuff!" said Lumley. "I only got what I deserved, but not enough of it. I guess that's all right. But if you think you can look over what I've done—and I've done a lot I'd like to recall now—"

"Of course—of course!"

"I know you're not the sort to bear malice, Tom Merry. But it makes me easier to hear you say it, all the same."

"And you'll forgive anything I've done—or said—that's caused you any pain," said Tom Merry, in a low voice.

"I've said that I guess I never had as much as I deserved. That's all right. Sit down, Tom Merry—there's a chair there."

Tom Merry sat in the chair by the bedside. Even in that little matter, he marked a change in the Outsider. Lumley was not wont to be so considerate to others. Tom Merry sat by the bed, Lumley's hand still in his.

There was silence in the room. Dr. Holmes had spoken a few words to Lumley-Lumley, but the boy had not answered. He hardly seemed to hear.

A strange and terrible expression was coming over his face—an expression that Tom Merry, unversed as he was in such matters, thought he knew the meaning of.

The hand of the Outsider lay like a mass of lead in his own. Was this the end?

Lumley was very still and silent.

In the stillness of the room, even the faint, barely-audible ticking of the clock in the next chamber sounded oppressive. The branches of the elms without swayed and creaked, and every faint sound was heard.

Lumley's head stirred on the pillow.

His eyes turned towards Tom Merry.

The hero of the Shell was holding back his tears.

Outside, in the passage, a group of juniors waited and watched, in deep and terrible anxiety. They could not go. They felt that they must remain till they knew the worst. They were very silent; only occasionally a faint whisper was audible.

In the sick-room the stillness was heavy; there the watchers of the sick bed waited—they knew not for what!

The shadow of death had been hovering over the school—they were waiting for it to fall.

To fall—and to blot out the young life. To fall—and to drive out the gleam from those eyes that had always been cynical and mocking, but which were very soft now.

The boy's lips moved.

Tom Merry bent nearer.

"Merry! Tom Merry!"

"Yes."

"I—I—I'm sorry!" said Lumley, low and faint. "Sorry—for—what—I've done amiss, Tom! I'm sorry! I've been a waster and a wanderer all my time—now—I'm—going—home!"

His lips were still.

His eyes closed.

Tom Merry still held his hand, but it felt like ice in his grasp. The junior was blind with tears.

"Lumley, Lumley, old man!"

But the voice of the Outsider did not reply; his eyes did not open. The Head took the still hand and released it from Tom Merry's grasp, and laid it gently upon the coverlet. It lay there like a stone.

"Merry, it is over. Go now, my lad!"

Tom Merry could not see clearly for the moment. He gazed at the still white face through a mist of tears.

One last blurred look—but there came no answering look from the still face. Tom Merry turned blindly away and stumbled to the door.

He passed from the sick-room like one in a dream.

Outside, in the passage, the juniors were waiting—waiting with heavy hearts and shadowed faces. Blake grasped Tom Merry's wrist.

"Tom Merry! Is it over?"

The hero of the Shell nodded in silence. The warm drops that ran down his cheek dropped on Blake's hand.

Jack Blake pressed his hand.

He did not speak. What was there to say? With silent footsteps the juniors moved away—with silent, awed footsteps.

And within the sick chamber, with closed blinds and lowered light, lay what had been Jerrold Lumley—the Outsider of St. Jim's—now

O'er which the raven flaps his funereal wing."

THE END.

Another splendid, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., next Thursday, entitled: "The New Boy's Secret," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy of the "Gem" Library in advance; and at the same time please remember to order the new enlarged "Empire" Library, containing a magnificent new story of Tom Merry's Chum, entitled: "Cousin Ethel's School-days," by Martin Clifford. Don't forget! The enlarged "Empire" Library. Out on Wednesday. Price One Halfpenny.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE NEW BOY'S SECRET." A splendid long complete story of the Juniors of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Splendid New Nature-Story Feature.

MUS, The Explorer.

By F. ST. MARS.

An Animal Story.**II.**

THINK there must have been something of the explorer running in the veins of Mus, the town mouse. Anyway, he was as restless as an American, and would not stop to sleep, even though his wife indicated a comfortable bed in a hayrick. Perhaps it was because he had never seen a farm before in all his little life.

In and out among the long grass that grew in the stack-yard, and through the beds of nettles, that to him were forests, they wandered. Except that he knew better than to venture again into the open, he was still quite a novice in the arts of the ceaseless warfare of the wild.

They came, anon, to an open space, where the snow glimmered like a spread sheet in the moonlight, and here were gnemlike things which ran about in the moonlight and made noises. Mus and his wife sat on their haunches under cover of some grass to watch these things, for they were rats.

Suddenly it seemed as if a white shadow, or a ghost, had passed overhead. So quick and so silent was it in passing that one could not really be quite certain if it was real or imaginary. But the rats knew. In a second they had flattened to the ground. Those that were near bundles of straw or grass-tufts dived underneath the same. They were not gone, you understand, but invisible, because they were all lying absolutely still like stones.

Mus was still sitting up, carelessly gazing at the wonderful happening, and wondering what on earth it all meant, when suddenly, and without any preliminary noise to warn one, there broke from the top of a great wheat-stack, which towered almost overhead, a terrible, deep, booming cry.

"To-who-oo-o! To-who-oo-o-oo-o!" it cried, and it was like the voice of death speaking. It came from the spot where the ghostlike thing had vanished, and was really sitting motionlessly upright and white on the top of the rick.

The cry was so horrible and so sudden that it made one start or jump with fear—at least, that was what it would naturally do if one was not up to it. The rats knew better, however. Not one of them moved so much as a whisker where he lay.

Mus, on the other hand, knew nothing at all about it. He had never heard such a fiendish cry before, and he jumped, and the jumping made a rustle. It was only a tiny sound, but in that snowed-up silence it was enough.

Instantly the ghostly thing slid down from the top of the wheat-stack, and hung on great flapping, but silent, wings above the grass-tuft where Mus and his wife lay flat and trembling.

The ghost was a white owl. That was its own patent way of hunting—to sit quite quiet, and suddenly hurl forth its diabolical cry. In nine cases out of ten some hidden prey would jump and rustle at the sound, and the owl's quick ears catching the rustle, he would pounce upon the spot.

Fate must have had Mus in her keeping that night, I fancy. There came at this moment, slinking across the snow, a lean, half-starved, cunning old fox. He saw the hovering owl, and guessed there was prey beneath it. In two bounds he had reached the spot, and had his paw on poor Mus, now frozen stiff with fear. Then the fox lifted his long, gleaming jaws to the owl, and snarled.

He said as plain as words:

"Git, boss! This is my kill!"

The owl, however, was starving, too. That was why, like the fox, he was troubling about so small a capture as a mouse. He did not by any means "git." Instead, he lifted a little in his flight, then came down again quick as a falling stone, and he landed upon the fox's back. Nor did he land merely. He got to work with his terrible claws and beak, which was worse than a big fish-hook. And fur and blood flew from beneath his attack.

The fox turned upon himself. There are no words to tell you the lightninglike rapidity of the movement. His jaws came together with a clash like the jaws of a steel trap. The owl, however, was only grazed by those white fangs. He rose again, and fell again, rising instantly.

The fox leapt high in the air at him, dragging feathers. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 141.

"THE BLUE CRUSADERS" is the most popular football team of the day.

from his tail, and Mus rolled over four times, bounced like a rubber ball on to his feet, and streaked.

Then came a race. It was a number one race. A quite exciting affair, especially for Mus, the mouse. In front hopped his wife across the white. Behind came Mus, going in leaps half a foot to a leap, knowing death was close to his long tail that flowed out behind. Behind came the fox, bleeding and savage, alternately snapping at the owl that followed close above and Mus that fled always like a tiny ghost just in front.

Had it not been for each other, one or other would have caught Mus easily enough. They bungled each other's chances, however; spoil one another's aim, and Mus reached the hedge.

Mus did more than reach the hedge; he executed an amazing mazy dance down the hedge, in and out among the gnarled and tangled roots, which annoyed the fox—he twice got a mouthful of dry leaves in place of Mus—and upset the owl. Finally, they both ducked down a hole like Jack-in-the-box, and the fox and the owl both went away, looking foolish.

If Mus and his wife thought that by reaching the hole they had also reached safety, rest, and peace, they were reckoning without the gentleman who owned that hole, and lived therein.

Mus was before everything suspicious. He knew all about poison, and the ways and eccentricities of mouse-traps with or without natural-looking holes in them. He knew, also, what cats to avoid, and what not to trouble about. Till then, however, he did not know that any other creatures dwelt in the world save humans, cats, dogs, sparrows, rats, and other mice.

Because of these things he explored this dwelling throughout all its mazy tunnels; found its numerous entrances along the hedge-bank; discovered cunning little emergency exits hidden under moss, and a store-room full of stolen grain.

Then he heard a sound.

He and his wife stood still.

It was coming from one of the entrances of one of the holes a yard away, and it was an odd little quivering, singing noise, as of one creature crooning all to itself in the cold.

In a moment it came close, still squeaking and mooning away to itself, and ascended the passage. Mus, with his wife behind, backed slowly, ready to fight or fly, as the size of the singer demanded. Goodness, what more of strange beasts this wonderful new kind of world might hold, Mus must have been thinking.

Then the new-comer—who was also the owner of the place—came in sight. Day was beginning to dawn, and enough light crept up the tunnel to enable them to size him up by, and Mus swung clean round. He no longer saw reason to fly, for the new beast was no larger than himself—about five inches, to be correct. Superficially, it was very much like him, too. You would have called it a mouse. So it was of a sort. Its correct name was bank-vole, however. It was redder than Mus, had a shorter tail and a blunt nose. Usually it slept most of the winter, but the warmth of the snow fair above had awakened it to consciousness that someone was breaking into its house, I fancy, or perhaps it required a drink.

Be that as it may, if Mus was inclined to be friends, the bank-vole would have none of him. It saw in him a burglar, and one not too big. It stopped its song, and flew at his throat, and its wife and an uncle, or someone, came out of a side-tunnel to help it, and Mus's wife joined in the fray for the honour and the glory of old London, and there was the makings of about the biggest little riot down there in that little mouse-hole under the snow on the hedge-bank that ever you saw.

Mus was not a London mouse for nothing. Nor was his wife backward in coming forward. She was like a coster in that, and although the bank-voles called relations to help them, they got all they required from the London mice, and a bit more. All you could see was a heaving, squeaking jumble of tiny furry bodies, but the jumble broke up at length, and resolved itself into fleeing and variously blood-bedaubed bank-voles, with the triumphant, but also carmine-painted London mice in hot pursuit. One vole stayed. He had to. He was dead.

Then Mus and his wife returned—Mus minus one ear, and with one eye closed, cocking his whiskers like a budding Kitchener; and they went to sleep in the bank-voles' cosy nest, and fed on the bank-voles' stored corn, and started a London mouse republic on their own.

And thus ended the explorations of Mus.

THE END.

(Another of these wonderful little stories next Thursday.)

SEE THE "B.R." FOOTBALL LIBRARY.

You can Start Reading this Story now.



Read this First

Oswald Yorke, one-time knight of the road, joins the Navy as midshipman under the name of John Smith. His ship, the Fireball, is despatched to the Isle of San Andrade, to investigate the conduct of a certain family of planters named Wilson, who are suspected of complicity with the notorious pirate, Kester. Oswald is captured while scouting round the house, and is thrust into a cupboard. He is rescued by Norah Wilson, but finds that his ship has left the island. He rows after it in a canoe, and is eventually picked up by a "trader" called the Peter and Mary Harris. The ship is attacked by pirates, but is rescued by the Fireball. Oswald goes on to Kingston, where he meets the admiral, who pays a personal visit to the skipper of the trader, in company with Oswald and his friend Maxwell.

(Now go on with the story.)

On Board the Cynthia.

Maxwell, in the bows of the boat, hailed the brig while a little way off.

"Brig ahoy!" he shouted, using his hands as a speaking-trumpet.

"Ahoy, ahoy!" cried old Captain Harris, tumbling up on to deck in a hurry.

"Come, my man," said Maxwell coolly, "the admiral of the port has come off to pay you a visit."

"Don't you try none of them monkey tricks, young master," said old Peter Harris, looking over the bulwarks; but the moment he caught sight of the admiral's cocked hat and gold lace, his tone altered.

It is not often a humble brig-owner receives a visit in person from an admiral in full rig, and Mr. Harris was a good deal flustered. He piped all hands on to deck, and instructed them in a few words how to behave, then rushed down below to apprise his better half and his daughter of the admiral's coming. Then, breathless, he rushed back on to deck again, just in time to receive the admiral.

"I have come on board, Mr. Harris," said the admiral kindly, "to thank you in person for the great kindness that you have shown to a young officer in His Majesty's Service—Mr. Smith." The admiral motioned to Oswald to come forward, and old Peter's jaw dropped at the sight of Oswald in such grand company. "Mr. Smith," continued the admiral, "has told me how you have acted the good Samaritan, sir. You are a good fellow—a very good fellow—and I should like to shake hands with you."

The old skipper was at a loss for words. Never in his wildest dreams had he imagined that he and an admiral of the fleet would ever shake hands upon the deck of his own ship. He could say nothing, but gasp and goggle his eyes. And at that moment his wife and daughter came on deck.

The admiral bowed to the elder lady, and, with old-fashioned courtesy, paid a compliment to the younger one, which brought a blush of pleasure to her cheeks.

"I compliment you on your ship's company, Mr. Harris," said the admiral, with a twinkle in his eye. "I only hope if ever I should find myself in the position Mr. Smith was that I may be as fortunate as he."

"Aw, haw!" said the skipper, for want of something better to say.

"I thank you kindly, sir—my lord, I mean," said Mrs.

Harris, dropping a curtsy, "for the honour you have done us. What we done for the young gentleman we done with all our hearts. It was little enough, and he was very welcome; and a very gallant young gentleman he is, too. And it was a comfort to us to have him on board when them two terrible pirates chased us."

While the admiral stood on the quarter-deck talking to the skipper and his wife, Maxwell nudged Oswald.

"Introduce me to the young lady, you lucky beggar!" he whispered.

"This is my great friend—Mr. Maxwell," Oswald said, introducing him to the skipper's daughter.

The young lady dropped a curtsy, and then, to Maxwell's great disgust, turned her back on him, and devoted all her attention to Oswald.

"I should like to speak to you, only two words," she said hurriedly.

"To me?" Oswald asked.

"Yes, come a little further away, so no one can hear," she said, with unmistakable agitation.

A few steps took them out of earshot. She leaned forward, with her arms on the rail, and looked down into the blue water.

"You—you are glad to leave us—glad to go back to your own ship?" she asked.

"I am glad to go back to my duty, but very sorry to say good-bye to you," Oswald answered.

"You mean that, really?" she asked wistfully.

"Of course, after your kindness."

"Ah, kindness! I was not thinking of that. You remember the offer my father made you? It—it was my suggestion. I—I thought—"

She stopped, and flushed scarlet.

She was really an uncommonly pretty girl, and Maxwell, who had been watching the little scene from a distance, thought so, too.

He uttered a low whistle, and walked away.

"Perhaps one day you will alter your mind. Perhaps one day you will grow tired of war. And then I want you to remember my father's offer is still open to you."

"You are very good to me, and I don't know what I have done to deserve—"

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"You have done nothing to deserve it," she said quickly.

"I—I don't understand!" Oswald muttered, thinking that he had never met such a contrary young person before in his life.

"No; I—I thought you didn't," she said slowly. Then she held him out a piece of paper. "When we sail from here we shall return to England. I have written the address of our home here. One day you will come back to England. Will you come and see me—us again, then?"

"Of course I will, gladly!" Oswald said eagerly.

"It may be a very long time—years, perhaps," she said sadly.

"Perhaps," he answered lightly. "But I shall not forget."

She held out her hand to him.

"Good-bye!" she said quietly.

He held it tightly for a moment, and as he did so the mist suddenly cleared away from his brain. He understood now and a scarlet flush dyed his cheeks.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE NEW BOY'S SECRET." A splendid long complete story of the Juniors of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Good-bye!" he said. "God bless you!"

Oswald was very quiet during the row back to the Cynthia. "Too bad of you," said Maxwell, "to keep that young lady all to yourself. She is a fine-looking girl, too!" he added. "Some fellows get all the luck!"

"I don't think luck comes much in my way," said Oswald. "Poor old chap!" said Maxwell sympathetically. "It is a bit of a wrench parting, ain't it? Never mind, you'll get over that all right."

He spoke with the air of a man of experience, and Oswald laughed outright.

"Parting is always unpleasant, and the people on the brig have been very good to me," he said.

"The people!" sneered Maxwell. "Why, I'd be as blind as a bat if I hadn't seen that pretty young woman was head over heels in love with you!"

"Don't talk rot!" said Oswald sharply.

Within half an hour of boarding the Cynthia again, the frigate weighed anchor, and stood out to sea, favoured by a fresh land breeze.

The captain sent for Oswald down to his cabin, and there made him recount all his adventures on the island again, in the presence of Mr. Lancing, the first lieutenant.

"I think it is a clear case against those rascals, the Wilsons," said Captain Garvin.

"A very clear case. The villains would evidently have murdered you, Smith, if it had not been for that girl's plucky interference on your behalf."

"I am sure of it, sir. I felt like a cur to go and leave her behind," Oswald said.

"Yes, yes, of course. But what else could you do?" said Mr. Lancing. "She is their own flesh and blood, and surely they will not harm her, even if they guess that she connived at your escape."

"If they have—" Oswald stopped, and clenched his teeth together.

"I can understand your feelings on the subject, Smith," said Captain Garvin kindly. "Believe me that if those wretches have harmed a hair of that girl's head, we will exact a very bitter vengeance!"

"The only thing I hope is that nothing may delay our voyage to the island," said Mr. Lancing earnestly.

"What do you fear—the weather?" asked the captain.

"It looks ugly, sir—threatening. I hope I may be mistaken, but I fear not," said Mr. Lancing, shaking his head.

The captain and Mr. Lancing, followed by Oswald, went up on to the deck. It was a brilliant morning, the sea and sky as blue as the heart of a sapphire; a fresh breeze broke the curling tops of the waves into dazzling white foam.

"I confess," said Captain Garvin, "that I cannot share your forebodings, Mr. Lancing. Surely you are not of the same opinion still?"

"I am obliged to confess, sir, that I am," said Mr. Lancing. He pointed to the east, where the brilliancy of the sky and sea was slightly marred by a thin grey mist. "That is where the danger lies, sir," he said.

"Heat—nothing but heat," said Captain Garvin.

"I hope that you may be right, sir," said Mr. Lancing.

"But I fear that you are not."

"I would stake a thousand pounds on my opinion!" said the captain, rather testily.

Mr. Lancing bowed, and said no more.

But within two hours the captain was obliged to confess that it was he, not Mr. Lancing, who had been at fault.

Strange what a marvellous difference had come over the aspect of the sky and sea in that short space of time.

The wind had dropped entirely; the heat was insufferable. It was like the blast from the open door of a furnace. On the sweltering decks the pitch bubbled in the seams. The awful heat seemed to have taken life and movement out of all Nature. The men crawled listlessly about the decks. The sea no longer broke into curling, foam-crested waves, but rolled in long, unbroken, oily swells, which imparted a sluggish rolling movement to the vessel.

And the mist in the east grew and grew into a purple haze, which began to envelope the sky. Through the haze the sun shone down like a great globe of dark red fire.

The captain and Mr. Lancing stood on the quarter-deck, talking together in low, earnest voices.

"What next, Mr. Lancing?" the captain asked.

"That is impossible to say, sir. If I might offer my advice—"

"Do! I must confess that this is the first time I have witnessed this phenomenon."

"Then I should advise you to give orders to close reef all sails. Just keep a head-sail set to steer by, and no more. I believe that this is but the forerunner of a furious storm, and we should do well to be prepared to meet it."

Unlike a good many in his position, Captain Garvin was always ready to admit when he was at fault, and ready to take the advice of a man whom he knew to be capable of

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giving it. Well for him, and for the safety of the Cynthia, that it was so in this case.

He gave the order, and the men, awakening into activity, awarmed aloft, and reefed the sails.

There was danger in the air; the atmosphere was laden with electricity. Now and again a faint blue light, like a streak of lightning, but unaccompanied by thunder, flashed through the mist, which was momentarily growing denser and denser.

From purple the mist was changing to black. Although it was but a little past midday, it seemed as if twilight had settled over the sea.

In half an hour the twilight had deepened into night—dense and impenetrable, without moon or stars. And still the awful silence and stillness continued, and, if possible, the heat grew more and more intense.

It was stifling, unendurable. The men flung off their clothes, and gasped for breath.

"We should do well to make certain that the guns are lashed securely. Will you see to it, Mr. Lancing?" said the captain.

Mr. Lancing left the quarter-deck to attend to this important matter.

"It is not possible to do more than we have done for the safety of the ship," he said to Mr. Briggs.

"I have never seen anything like it in my life, or felt anything like it, either," said Mr. Briggs.

"I had such an experience once before," said Mr. Lancing, "but even that was not so bad as this. We never entirely lost the light of the sun as we have now."

They attended to the guns by the light of lanterns, although at that very moment the sun must be shining above the dense, impenetrable mist.

"Smith, you and Maxwell go and make sure of the bow gun!" Mr. Lancing ordered.

The two boys went forward together, and as they walked the sound of their footsteps on the deck planks echoed loudly throughout the ship.

There was something uncanny in it. Wind and storm both had faced before, but this awful stillness and terrific heat told upon the nerves.

"I feel that I must scream," said Maxwell. "My head feels as if it was bursting."

The next moment he did scream, or so it seemed, though he had in reality only uttered a low cry; but the denseness of the atmosphere seemed to intensify sound a hundred-fold.

"What is it? What is the matter?" asked Oswald quickly.

Maxwell had laid his hand upon the gun, and the metal had seared him like a red-hot iron.

It was not until they had cooled the gun with water that they were able to handle it; and then, their task done, they were turning away when suddenly Maxwell gripped Oswald by the arm.

"Look there! Straight over our bows! What is it?" he whispered excitedly.

Oswald looked, and saw, straight over the bows, a red spot of fire. For some moments it seemed to burn with a steady glow, like a star.

Oswald went and drew the captain's attention to it.

"What do you make of it, Mr. Lancing?" asked Captain Garvin.

For some moments all eyes on the ship were turned in the direction of the red light, which now seemed to grow and increase.

"I know!" cried Maxwell excitedly. "A ship on fire!"

Even as he spoke, the red, glowing spot seemed to shoot out flames in all directions. It changed from red to yellow. With the aid of a glass, they could see the forked tongues of fire leaping and revelling in the rigging and playing about the masts of the ill-fated ship.

She was too far away for the Cynthia to offer her any aid. Those on board the frigate could do nothing but watch and pity the unfortunate wretches, doomed to die in this unearthly blackness.

Then suddenly the flames seemed to leap right up to the heavens. Even on the deck of the Cynthia they could hear the distant rumble of a violent explosion, and then the light was extinguished. It was over!

As though the blowing up of the distant ship had been the signal for the breaking of the storm, the deathly silence came to an end. The air was now suddenly filled with sound. The sea grew strangely agitated a few moments later; a breeze, sharp and cold as a knife, rushed over the decks. A moment before, gasping for breath scarcely able to breathe because of the frightful heat, the half-naked men shuddered and shivered in the icy blast.

The captain himself and Mr. Lancing had taken the wheel, and stood firmly gripping it with their united strength.

"It is coming straight down upon us!" said Mr. Lancing.

The next moment it came, heralded by a cloud of flying spume.

With a roar and a rush, the tempest was on them. The sea boiled beneath them; huge waves came leaping and careering across the inky waters, and hurled themselves furiously against the creaking and groaning ship. Thousands of tons of water crashed against her sides. She spun round; not all the strength of the two men at the wheel could avail. The vessel was like a mad thing—now with her bows this way, now that. Her masts groaned and shrieked, her cordage flogged the air.

Right into the heart of the tempest she drove; now lifted on the crest of an enormous wave, now plunged down, down, down into the valleys.

It seemed impossible that anything could save her. It seemed madness to hope that she could ever emerge from this seething, shrieking demoniacal storm.

It seemed as if invisible hands from the sea were tearing at her stout oaken sides—as if some huge marine monsters had harnessed themselves to her bows, and were plunging through the water, towing her behind them at a furious rate. Only the two men at her wheel stood erect; the rest crouched on the deck, holding on to anything that offered them security.

Buffeted by the storm, blinded by the spray, they stood, firm as rocks, peering ahead into the tempest and the blackness.

Crouching under the lee of the mizzen-mast, Oswald watched their dark figures, outlined against the almost as dark sky, and thought of Captain Burgoyne, and wondered dimly how he would have acted in this pass—not as Captain Garvin was acting; he knew that.

He remembered how, during such another storm as this, Captain Burgoyne had remained below deck, drinking his senses away, leaving his ship to the care of others, and repaying their devotion with curses and lies. Oswald shuddered as he thought of the man—as he remembered how bitter an enemy he was.

And now there was at last a break in the gloom. Right overhead the mist seemed to part like some huge black veil torn asunder by giant hands. Through the jagged rent gleamed the brilliant light of the day beyond, dazzling in its brightness. The bright sunray fell direct upon the ship, and seemed to light up like some glorious halo the figures of the two devoted men at the wheel.

"Thank Heaven for the daylight!" Captain Garvin cried. The storm was spent. Its fury was subsiding. The sea still ran mountainous waves, the ship now rising like a buoyant cork, now sinking into the whirlpool in the valleys between the waves.

Much of her overhead gear had broken loose, and the ropes, with their heavy blocks attached, thrashed the air. But the hull was sound. They could tell that by her buoyancy and the graceful ease with which she surmounted the huge watery obstacles in her path.

And now for the first time since the storm began, Captain Garvin left his post at the wheel, handing it over to the master.

The one topsail which had remained set had been blown away, and the vessel was running under bare poles that thrashed the air like long and flexible wings. It was hopeless to attempt to set another sail, and useless as well.

And so under bare poles the frigate raced on and on through the day, while the gale continued, and took her many and many a league out of her true course.

When night fell the sky was as clear as a bell overhead, the dark vault of the heavens studded with myriads of stars. The wind had dropped a little, but was still blowing half a gale, and the sea was running high.

Captain Garvin called up Mr. Franks, the carpenter, and set him to sound the vessel. His examination was satisfactory. He pronounced the hull sound from stem to stern.

"We have had a miraculous escape," said the captain. "Fate has been kind indeed to us—kinder than to those poor fellows who perished in the blackness. I wonder what ship it could have been."

"Some merchantman bound for Kingston, probably," said Mr. Lancing. "Perhaps she had some inflammable cargo on board, and the terrific heat ignited it."

This seemed the most probable solution. There was one thing certain, and that was that the luckless crew must have perished to a man. If they had escaped being burnt to death by taking to the boats, no boat could possibly have floated in that fearful sea.

As the night passed, the wind moderated, and the sea ran less and less high. By dawn, though still a little rough, there was no danger left to fear. The wind had dropped to a breeze.

The overhead rigging was being repaired, and as soon as this was done, sail was set, and the captain put the ship about, intending to beat back and make up what he had lost during the previous afternoon and night.

Under normal conditions, the voyage from Kingston to the island would have occupied rather less than two days. As it was, Captain Garvin estimated that at least four days must elapse, even if the weather continued propitious, before they could hope to sight the island.

The delay was unavoidable, but it was annoying. It would give the Wilsons opportunity to escape.

The only thing he hoped was that the Wilsons, knowing nothing of Oswald's rescue, may have decided that he had been drowned, and carried the secret of their treachery to the bottom of the sea with him.

Shortly after noon the look-out man signalled something over the frigate's bows.

"I can't make it out quite. I should say it might be a dead whale," he said.

"That is out of the question," said Mr. Lancing.

He took out his glass and went up into the top.

"It certainly does look like a whale, as you say, Mildon."

"So I made it out to be, sir. Not that I think whales are many in these parts."

"Killed by the storm, probably," said the first lieutenant.

"However, we shall know beyond a doubt presently."

Mr. Lancing remained aloft, and kept his eyes on the object that they were rapidly approaching.

"By heavens, it is no whale, Mildon," he said excitedly.

"It is a ship's boat, bottom upwards!"

"So it is, sir—so it is! And, maybe, it is one of the boats of that vessel we sighted during the storm."

When they were within less than a quarter of a mile from the boat, a boat was lowered from the side of the Cynthia, and, under Oswald's directions, was pulled in the direction of the derelict ship's boat. It was floating low in the water, so that little beyond her keel was visible above the green waves.

"That ain't no merchant vessel's boat, sir," said one of the boat's crew—"not that. She belonged to a King's ship, she did."

"Are you sure, French?" asked Oswald.

"Sartin positive, sir," said the old sailor who had spoken.

"There's a build about her that they never get in the merchant service. Look at her clean bows."

"Yes, she's a ship's boat, sure enough," chimed in another.

"Then she will probably have the name of her ship painted on her, and we shall soon know what the unfortunate vessel that went down in the storm was. What do you make of that—that dark mark on her starboard side, French?" said Oswald.

"I make o' that a burn, sir," said the old sailor promptly. "She must ha' caught fire afore they could launch her. By thunder, it must ha' been close work for 'em, poor chaps!"

There was no doubt about it. One side of the boat was scorched very considerably. This fact alone proved that she must have belonged to the ship they had watched burning.

But so low did she float in the water that it was impossible to see the name that would almost certainly be found painted on her bows.

With some difficulty they got her in tow and started back to the frigate, which had now drifted considerably to leeward. It was a long row and a hard row with the heavy, water-logged boat in tow, but they made a frigate at last.

"What do you make of her, Mr. Smith?" asked Captain Garvin from the deck.

"We can't read her name, sir. She lies too low in the water. But the men seem to think she belonged to a ship in the Service."

"I hope not," said the captain.

"There is little doubt, sir, but that she belonged to the vessel that we saw burning yesterday. Her starboard side is all scorched."

"We will have her up on deck," said the captain, "and perhaps we may learn something further."

Little did he guess when he spoke what further he would learn.

Ropes were attached to the boat, and then she was slowly drawn up out of the water towards the deck, while Oswald and his men remained in their boat to direct operations from below.

Hardly, however, had the boat been raised above the level of the water, when a shout of horror burst from the lips of the men in the boat.

In the overturned boat was the corpse of a man. The poor wretch had secured himself to his seat by a leather strap, and as the boat slowly ascended the frigate's side, there he hung head downwards, his head and lifeless arms dangling.

After the first shout of horror, Oswald stood silent for a moment. The face of the dead man had hung on a level with his own, and, looking into it, he had recognised it—recognised it in spite of the awful change that had come over it since he saw it last. The jolly round red cheeks were puffed out and purple, the merry, twinkling eyes were open, and fixed in an awful, unseeing stare.

It was Captain Turnbull, and the ship that had gone down

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE NEW BOY'S SECRET."

A splendid long complete story of the Juniors of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

in flame and smoke in the hideous blackness of yesterday was the Fireball.

"Turnbull! My Heaven!" cried Captain Garvin, as he saw the swollen corpse. "Turnbull dead, the Fireball gone!"

Awed and silent, the crew gathered round the boat with its dead occupant.

Captain Garvin raised his hat.

"He was a brave and noble gentleman," he said softly.

Oswald staggered as he reached the deck. Recollections of his two days on the Fireball came back to him. He thought of Cospatrik and of Jackson, his messmates, of Mr. Handy-side, and Mr. Patch, and the Scotch doctor. He remembered the Fireball, as he had seen her last swooping down upon the pirate, saving the brig from their clutches. He remembered how his heart had swelled within him as he had watched her. And now—now she was gone, and only this charred boat and swollen corpse were left to tell of her terrible end, and of the end of all those gallant souls who had been in her.

The body was removed from the boat, and the sailmaker did his duty.

Before evening, sewn in his shroud, with a shot at his feet, Captain Turnbull, of the Fireball, was lowered to his last rest. Every man there had known him, almost all had loved him for his kindly nature, his love of justice and of truth, and his charity. And the man who read the Burial Service over him had been his friend. They had known each other since boyhood; they had fought side by side against the country's foe.

Captain Garvin's voice was low, yet it reached to every part of the vessel:

"We therefore commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body, when the sea shall give up her dead."

And then, with a sullen splash, the body struck the waves, and sank down, down to its last home in the bed of the ocean.

More Delay—The Island at Last.

"I have been thinking," Maxwell said that night, "that it is just as well for you that things have turned out as they have."

"For me?" asked Oswald.

"Certainly. Where would you be now if you had been caught on the island by those Wilsons? Why, my lad, you would have gone back on board the Fireball, and—"

"Yes, I have thought of that. Fate has been kind to me, and yet—"

"Don't talk rot, or don't think it, which is the same thing," Maxwell said. "I know what you were going to say. You were going to say that it wouldn't matter much if you had gone down with the other poor fellows on the Fireball."

"Well, but you are right, I am ungrateful; only sometimes, old fellow, it seems to me that I haven't got much to look forward to in life. I am outlawed from my native country. I dare not set foot in England. Burgoyne will have returned there. Burgoyne hates me, and if he finds that I have returned, he will lose no time in effecting my arrest."

"But perhaps Burgoyne has not returned there?" said Maxwell.

"I wish it was he who had been on the Fireball," he muttered.

"Oswald, what a fool you were to save that villain's life!"

"Perhaps I was; but what would you have done?"

"Let him sink, and helped him down, if necessary," said Maxwell.

"Would you? I know better."

"I wonder what has happened on the island since you left it?" said Maxwell.

Oswald clenched his hand.

"If they have harmed her, I will kill them!" he said fiercely.

"The girl who saved you—Norah Wilson?"

Oswald nodded.

For a moment Maxwell looked him squarely in the face.

"So," he muttered, "now I can see it all. No wonder that poor girl on the brig looked so upset."

"What do you mean?" asked Oswald fiercely.

"My dear chap, I ain't blind! You are simply dying to see pretty Norah again, and you hadn't a thought for the young lady on the brig, and she knew it, poor thing!"

"And wouldn't you be dying to see the girl who had saved your life at the risk of her own? Wouldn't you be half mad with anxiety to know if she is safe?"

"I dare say I should," said Maxwell.

"We left Kingston yesterday, and to-day we are a day's sail farther away from the island than we were when we started. Wouldn't that be enough to madden you?" said Oswald.

"You'll have to be patient. She will be all right. They wouldn't harm her. She is their own flesh and blood, and, after all, bad as they are, they can't be absolute fiends."

Oswald was, as he had said, mad with impatience to sight the island again. But fate seemed against him. The wind, that had blown freshly all through the day following the storm, dropped entirely at dawn on the following day. All through the long day the calm continued; the sails hung heavily in the absolutely still air, the sea beneath them was like glass.

"It is enough to drive a man mad to think that he is absolutely dependent on a puff of wind from the sky!" said Oswald to Maxwell.

"One is never content," said Maxwell cheerily. "Sometimes we get too many puffs from the sky, and sometimes we don't get enough. Perhaps one of these days we shall have ships that will be able to sail just as they please without counting on the wind at all."

"Ships that sail without wind," said Oswald, with a laugh. "Yes, I dare say we shall have them when we have ships that sail without sails."

Young Garvin, who had been within earshot, turned and looked at these two.

"I should think the sun has touched your brains," he said.

All through the day and far into the next the calm obstinately continued. Late in the afternoon of the following day a slight breeze sprang up, and once more the Cynthia resumed her course.

It was on the evening of the fifth day after leaving Kingston, that her look-out man signalled "Land ahead!"

It was the island at last!

White to the lips, Oswald stood on deck watching the distant land, lying like a grey shadow in the track of the sunset.

Yes, it was the island at last! A few hours more, and Oswald would know—know if the girl who had risked her life for him was safe.

The blood-red sun dipped to rest beneath the line of the western horizon, the twilight came stealing up into the sky, and the Cynthia, her sails glinting with the red light of the departed sun, moved on swiftly through the dancing waters.

Darkness had completely settled down when the Cynthia dropped her anchor.

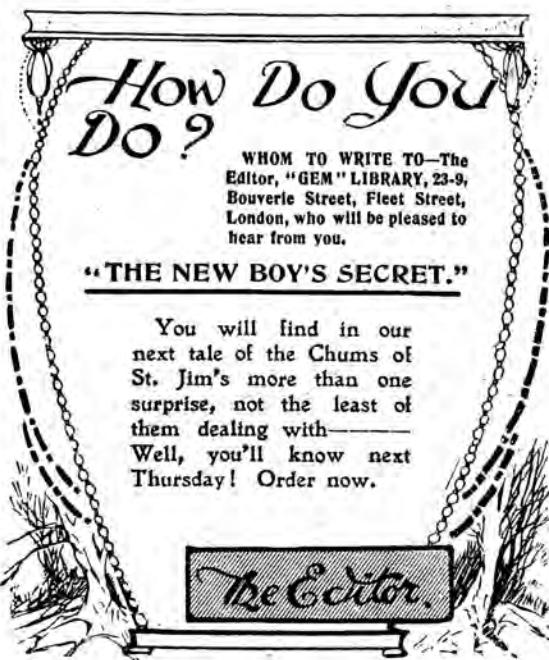
Not only Oswald, but to a man the crew of the Cynthia were mad with eagerness to land.

They had heard the story of the treachery of the Wilsons, and of the heroism of the girl who had saved Oswald's life, and such a story as this was calculated to arouse them to the highest pitch of excitement and enthusiasm.

But, to the intense disappointment of the crew, Captain Garvin refused to land on the island that night. To Oswald this decision seemed cruel and callous.

He felt that he hated the captain for it. In the cockpit he declared that the captain was a coward.

(Another splendid instalment of this thrilling serial in our next issue.)



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